

# DHARMA FLOWER SUTRA

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Sutra: T.24 b1

*At that time, the Brahma Heaven Kings, having praised the Buddha, said, "We only pray that the World Honored One will turn the Dharma wheel, causing the entire world with its gods, maras, Brahmans, shramanas, all to become peaceful and calm and to attain liberation." Then, the Brahma Heaven Kings, with a single mind and the same voice, spoke verses in praise, saying,*

*"Honored One among gods and humans,  
Pray turn the unsurpassed wheel of Dharma.  
Beat upon the Dharma drum,  
And blow the great Dharma conch,  
Let fall everywhere the great Dharma rain,  
To cross over limitless living beings.  
We all beseech you to expound and proclaim  
The profound, far reaching sound.*

## COMMENTARY:

At that time, the Brahma Heaven Kings, having praised the Buddha, said, "We only pray that the World Honored One will turn the Dharma wheel, **the wonderful wheel of Dharma**, Causing the entire world with its gods, maras, brahmans, shramanas, **left home people who diligently cultivate morality, samadhi, and wisdom and eradicate greed, hatred, and stupidity**. All to become peaceful and calm and to attain liberation, **to be delivered from the sufferings of the three evil paths**. Then, the Brahma Heaven Kings, with a single mind and the same voice, spoke verses in praise, saying,

Honored One among gods and humans/ Pray turn the unsurpassed wheel of Dharma/ **The Buddha is honored in and beyond the world. We only pray that you will turn the unsurpassed great wheel of Dharma**. Beat upon the Dharma drum/ and blow the great Dharma conch/ **Before the Dharma is spoken, before the ceremonies, or before we start translating, we beat the drums and bells. Don't think they can't hear it in the heavens. They do! They hear it and think, "Oh, they're going to work, there, in San Francisco; they are translating! And, unseen by ordinary people, they stop by to see how the work is going, "Hmm...are they translating correctly? Are they just goofing off?" So, don't think you can get away with anything!!**

In the Forty-two Hands, there is a Jeweled Conch Hand. When you blow the Jeweled conch, it fills space and the Dharma Realm.

Let fall everywhere the great Dharma rain/ **Speaking the Dharma for the benefit of all beings**, To cross over limitless living beings/ **There are a great many living beings. If I had been translating these two lines, I would have said,**

LET FALL EVERYWHERE THE GREAT DHARMA RAIN,

AND EVERYWHERE SAVE GREAT LIVING BEINGS!

But, the text, as it stands, is okay, too.

**Why do I want to change the line to read, "And everywhere save great living beings?"** Because, **living beings, in the future, all can become Buddhas. Everyone is really very great. If I had said, "And everywhere save insignificant living beings,"** people would have assumed that they were very small and wouldn't cultivate. **Great living beings can, in the future, realize the great Buddha Way. That's the way I would have translated it, but it's already been done the other way, and it can't be changed now!**

We all beseech you to expound and proclaim/ **We beg you to turn the Dharma wheel, and proclaim** The profound, far-reaching sound/ **You simply must proclaim the profound, far-reaching sound. Would you say it was far reaching, or not? Shakyamuni Buddha is telling us about the Buddha, Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory. Wouldn't you say his sound has reached far into the future?**

**Sutra: T.24 b9**

*Thereupon, the Thus-Come-One Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory assented by his silence.*

COMMENTARY:

Thereupon, the Thus Come One, Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory assented by his silence. He had been asked to speak the Dharma. His silence indicated that he would do so.

*Sutra: T. 24 b9*

*And so it was in all directions from the southwest to the lower direction.*

COMMENTARY:

And so it was in all directions from the southwest to the lower directions. This includes six directions not yet mentioned; the southwest, west, northwest, north, northeast, and

the lower direction. Since the process of seeing the light, investigating it, following it and seeing the Buddha, making offerings, and requesting the turning of the Dharma wheel had been set forth for the gods in the east, southeast, and south, that makes nine directions, in all. The last direction to be mentioned is the upper direction, which follows:

*Sutra:T.24b10*

*Then, five hundred myriads of millions of great Brahma Kings in the upper directions, seeing the palaces they rested in shining with awesome brilliance as never before, jumped for joy, thinking it rare indeed.*

COMMENTARY:

Then, five hundred myriads of millions of Brahma Kings in the upper directions, seeing the palaces they rested in, where they lived, Shining with awesome brilliance as never before... It was a state they had never experienced. They were startled, amazed! They, Jumped for joy... They were so happy. They were like children at their first puppet show; they danced with glee and forgot all about who they were and where they were and just jumped for you, Thinking it rare indeed.

They thought, "Since being born in heaven, we've seen many fine light shows, but this is the best one we've seen." And they were very happy.

*Sutra:T.24b12*

*They visited one another and discussed this matter, wondering, "why do our palaces shine with this bright light?"*

*Then, in the assembly, a Brahma Heaven King by the name of Shikhin, on behalf of the Brahma hosts, spoke verses, saying,*

*Now, for what reason  
Do our palaces shine  
With such an awesome light  
Adorned as never before?  
Wondrous marks, such as these  
We have never seen before  
Has a great and virtuous god been born?  
Has a Buddha appeared in the world?*

COMMENTARY:

They visited one another and discussed this matter. Because the light was so unusual, they wanted to find out where it was coming from. Wondering, "Why do our palaces shine with this bright light?" They all got together for a meeting, asking one another,

"Does your palace shine with that bright light too?" "Yes! Does yours?" And they all asked one another. Thinking it weird, they decided to go find out.

Then, in the assembly, a Brahma Heaven King by the name of Shikhin, on behalf of the brahma hosts, spoke verses, saying,

"Now, for what reason,  
Do our palaces shine,  
With such an awesome light?  
Adorned as never before,  
Wondrous marks such as these,  
We have never seen before.  
Has a great and virtuous god been born?  
Or has a Buddha appeared in the world?"

*Sutra:T.24b20*

*At that time, five hundred myriads of millions of Brahma Heaven Kings, together with their palaces, each with sacks filled with heavenly flowers, went to the lower direction to seek out this sign. They saw the Thus-Come-One Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory seated on the lion throne beneath the Bodhi tree in the Bodhimanda, revered and circumambulated by gods, dragon kings, gandharvas, kinnaras, mahoragas, and beings both human and non-human. They saw, as well, the sixteen sons of the king requesting the Buddha to turn the Dharma wheel.*

COMMENTARY:

The Brahma Kings all got together in their palaces. Since their palaces can undergo limitless changes and transformations, "as you will," it is possible to use them as cars, planes, and even boats. The palaces are very much like our present-day cars, except that they are much bigger than cars. Each Brahma King brought his sack full of flowers. These sacks can hold Mount Sumeru! Mount Sumeru, can fit in their sacks without even shrinking down in size. It's an inconceivable state. You can't figure it out with your ordinary mind. Scientists do their research and philosophers make their inquiries. The research and inquire; coming and going, but they never get their questions all answered. Eventually, they get old and their wits grow dull; their eyes go on strike, their ears refuse to help them out, and their teeth fall out. These signs are telling them that their time to die is drawing near, and that is why their six organs are all getting lazy. They say, "We have helped you out for so many years. What have you ever done for us, your eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind, huh?"

"Well, nothing, I guess," you mutter.

"That's right. And now it's time to say fare-thee-well, because we are splitting!" Then, you can't see, can't hear, and your sense of smell starts failing. That reminds me, in Paris, there are people who make their living smelling perfumes. They can tell you exactly what fragrances are combined to make any perfume. It may be made of

hundreds of different ingredients, but they can name them all. However, they are prone to developing lung disease. Their lungs give out, saying, "Knock it off, for heaven's sake. We can't stand inhaling all that perfume." The tongue hangs in there however. No matter how old you are, you can still taste. The tongue may have a sense of loyalty, but your teeth don't. They run off.

"That's no problem," you say. I can get false teeth."

You can, but they won't work as well.

I once had a conversation with an old man over eighty. "Sir," I said, "you are advanced in years and have a great deal of experience. No doubt you have seen people lose their teeth."

"I certainly have," he replied.

"Well, have you ever run across anyone who had their tongue fall out?"

"No. Indeed I haven't." He said.

"Have you?"

"Of course I haven't!" I said. "If I had, I wouldn't be asking you!"

"What are you asking me for?"

"Since you don't understand, I will tell you. Why do people lose their teeth but never their tongue? It's because their teeth are too stiff and rigid. They insist on chewing on bones and other hard things. The tongue isn't so stiff. It's very pliable. The teeth know when to advance, but the tongue knows when to retreat. Consequently, one's tongue doesn't fall out, while one's teeth do. The teeth are like a knife made out of steel that is too rigid. When it hits a stone, it snaps in two. If the blade is just right, it will give a bit when it hits the stone, and therefore, not break.

When the body gets old, it falls apart. Once the body starts falling apart, the mind starts going, and soon it's time to die. Nobody can avoid this.

The gods got in their palaces and went off with their sacks of flowers to seek out the light. They found the Thus Come One, Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory, the Buddha of great spiritual penetrations, great wisdom, a great victor with great power in morality, samadhi, and wisdom. He was in the Bodhimanda beneath the Bodhi tree, the Tree of Enlightenment, seated on the Lion Throne.

He was being circumambulated by gods, dragon kings, gandharvas, kinnaras... Why do the kinnaras have just one horn on their heads? Oxen have two horns, moose have horns with lots of forks on the top, but kinnaras have only one single horn

atop their heads. Ku Hu, said he saw a woman who had two horns on top of her head. She looked just like a woman except she had these horns. Hmm. How come oxen have horns and dogs don't? What's the reason for this? If you have been raised in a scientific society, you should be aware of these things. The oxen didn't listen to what their parents said. Whenever their parents said anything, they would lose their heads, like an ox butting up against something. "Hey! Shut up!" they said, striking out at their parents, hitting them over the head with their words. Kinnaras, now, they didn't strike out at both parents, only at their mother. They would listen to their father, but not their mother. This was because they were afraid they would get clobbered by their father! Since they only struck out at one parent, they grew only one horn. They wouldn't listen to their mother. They insisted on listening to music, running off to the movies, or going dancing all the time. When they came back, their mother would entreat them, "Why don't you do a little work around the house?" Hah! And then they'd blast her. "What? Me, get a job? I've got a place to live and food to eat, and my allowance. What in the heck do I want with a job?" They just did nothing but play, and so they turned into musical spirits, kinnaras, with one horn on their head. Since they like to play so much, they go play music for the Jade Emperor. The gandharvas love to smell incense, and when the Jade Emperor, burns the incense, they run off to play music for him. They are incense addicts, sort of like present-day dope addicts. They get intoxicated on the incense and play music and jump around thinking it the greatest thing in the world.

Although, asuras aren't mentioned outright in this list, they are implied. I have lectured on them many times before, but ultimately, I don't know if you would recognize one if you saw one. In case you wouldn't, I'll introduce you again. Have you ever seen people who are just down-right hostile? People who are always fighting, who carry guns, and knives? They are asuras! There are household asuras, national asuras, and inter-personal asuras. In the home, they are people who just won't listen to each other. They prefer to fight and get all afflicted, thinking it more fun than entertaining guests. In fact, they would rather eat afflictions than food! The husband invited the wife to eat some afflictions, and the wife says, "Okay, I will return the invitation!" The two of them eat two helpings of afflictions, but still aren't satisfied. They want to share it with their children. They have a meeting and invite the kids to join in. When the kids have had their fill of afflictions, they run outside and treat their friends to some afflictions too. Their friends return home and invite their own parents to eat some afflictions. One may want to cut off afflictions, but it is not easy. They just keep rolling along. That's the realm of asuras--ever-widening circles of affliction. Afflictions in the home all day long. They're filling and don't cost anything. Better than bread and butter! Now do you understand? If you have afflictions, you are an asura. If I have afflictions, I am an asura. If he has afflictions, he is an asura. Afflictions, just means getting angry, giving people a bad time. It means thinking, "Everyone is bad, bad! I am the only good person there is. Where can I go to get away from these bad people?" You think about it all day long, but you never come up with anything. Why not? Because you are afflicted. If you had no afflictions, you would see everyone else as the Buddha. Just take me, for example. I look upon all of you disobedient disciples with such patience! I teach you to be filial to your parents, but you aren't, I teach you

not to get angry, and insist on getting even angrier. I tell you not have a temper, and you say, "How can I do that? I was born with this temper. It's by old friend. How can you expect me to break off with my old friend?" You don't listen to me, But I don't get angry. If you want to be an asura, it's up to you. When you have been asuras long enough, you'll turn into something else.

Garudas, too, are included in the eight--fold division. They are the great gold-winged P'eng bird. No one has ever seen one. How big are they? Well, dragons are several thousand feet long, and the P'eng birds eat them like we eat noodles! They grab them by the legs, hold them upside down, and gulp them down, one after another. Now, if you want to see one, I'll let you see one. But, you must promise not to eat them. It's dangerous! If they see a person, they will want to eat him. He will take you for a sazy worm, and swallow you in one gulp. How big is the garuda? His wingspread is three hundred and sixty yojanas! Pretty big. With one flap of his wings he fans the ocean dry, and all the dragons in the sea are exposed. He gulps them all down, as he considers dragons his optimal diet.

Kinnaras, are partners with the, Gandharvas. Mahoragas, are the big snakes. They aren't like the snakes that we can see. They are so big that they wind around Mount Sumeru three times. And just how big is Mount Sumeru? You don't know? I don't know, either! If you opened your Heavenly Eye, you would know, though.

And beings both human and non-human. How do people get to be people? If you are filial to your parents, you can become a person. How does one get to be "non-human," that is, an animal, a hell-being, or a hungry ghost? By not being filial to one's parents. People differ from animals, in that people know to be filial to their parents, to repay their kindness, and to respond to their virtue. Some animals know how to do this, too, but most of them don't, because they don't have enough sense; they are too stupid. Stupid people don't even know if you are being good to them or not. Eventually, they become "non-human." Reverently circumambulated--the gods, dragons, and eight-fold division paid their respects to the Buddha Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory.

...And saw the sixteen sons of the King requesting the Buddha to turn the Dharma wheel, to lecture on the Sutras, teach them the Dharma, and transform living beings.

-to be continued