



Dharma Flower Sutra

with commentary of Tripitaka Master Hua

a BTTS translation

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...And perfected the Eight Liberations. In order to have the Eight Liberations, you must have samadhi power. Without samadhi power, you cannot be liberated. Unless you are liberated, you are tied up. Who ties you up? You tie yourself up!

The Eight Liberations are:

1. The liberation in which inside there is form; outward form is contemplated.
2. The liberation in which inside there is no form; outward form is contemplated.

Inside, there is no emotional love, no material attachment, and no desire. Outwardly, however, form is still seen, but inside it is empty. When an external state arises and things are no longer empty, then you don't have this liberation. Perhaps ordinarily you haven't the slightest desire. You have no greed, no hate, no stupidity at all. That's called "inwardly there is no form." Inside you are very pure, clear, and lucid. But, that is only when no external state exists to upset you. Once an external circumstance arises, your samadhi power is not yet perfect. When you see some external state, basically you shouldn't let it affect you. But, now you see a state, and you get all excited! Say, a lot of people show up, and you fear trouble. You think immediately about running off to the mountains to cultivate alone, eat when you're hungry, sleep when you're tired, meditate when you feel like it, and recite the Sutras when you want to. You feel that would be much better than having to be with all these people. But, such thoughts indicate that you are not truly liberated. You are simply attached, turned by states. If you are not turned by states, then as the saying goes,

When you see affairs and are awake, you can transcend the world.

If you see affairs and are confused, you fall beneath the wheel.

If you see something and you wake up, then you are liberated. You qualify for the second of the eight liberations: Inside there is no mark of form, and outward form is contemplated. You are not turned by external states.

3. The pure body of liberation certifies to the perfect dwelling.

At this time, there is no inside or outside. This state is arrived at through the cultivation of Dhyana meditation at the level of the Fourth Dhyana.

4. The liberation of emptiness without limit.

You realize that you cannot find the limit of space, that space is infinite. That is liberation.

5. The liberation of consciousness without limit.

Consciousness is very subtle, and also boundless.

6. The liberation of nothing whatsoever.

7. The liberation of neither perception nor non-perception.

8. The liberation of the samadhi of the extinction of feeling and thought.

The Storehouse Teaching is called the "Half-word Teaching." It was only "half." When you get to the Prajna Period, that is called clarifying the "Full-word Teaching " to the "Half-word Teaching."

The second, third, and fourth times he set forth this dharma, thousands of myriads of millions of nayutas of living beings, their numbers like the Ganges sands, also because they did not grasp at any dharmas, had their minds liberated from outflows. From that time onwards the assembly of Sound Hearers was unlimited, boundless and unreckonable.

SUTRA: T. 25a18

AT THAT TIME THE SIXTEEN PRINCES ALL LEFT HOME AS VIRGIN YOUTHS AND BECAME SHRAMANERAS. THEY ALL POSSESSED SHARP FACULTIES AND CLEAR WISDOM. THEY HAD ALREADY MADE OFFERINGS TO HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF MYRIADS OF MILLIONS OF BUDDHAS, PURELY CULTIVATING BRAHMAN CONDUCT, SEEKING ANUTTARASAMYAKSAMBODHI.

COMMENTARY:

At that time, the sixteen princes all left home as virgin youths. The Buddha's sixteen sons left the home life. This is called, entering the Way as a chaste virgin. ...and became Shramaneras. They all possess sharp faculties and clear wisdom. "Sharp faculties" means that they had the six spiritual penetrations. Their eyes could talk! Their ears could see!

"What do you mean, 'Their eyes could talk?' Mine certainly can't," you say.

Don't you know that sometimes people can communicate very clearly with just a glance? Isn't that like knowing other people's thoughts, like talking with your eyes?

Sometimes, too, the eyes can eat. When the food is brought out, you just see it, and you are full.

"Oh, that's just false thinking," you say. You may think so, but when you attain that state, you really will be full right when you see the food. Your ears will be able to see, and your eyes will be able to hear.

And clear wisdom, they were extremely intelligent.

They had already made offerings to hundreds of thousands of myriads of millions of Buddhas, purely cultivating Brahman conduct, seeking anuttarasamyaksambodhi.

SUTRA: T. 25a21

THEY ALL SPOKE TO THE BUDDHA SAYING, "WORLD HONORED ONE, ALL THESE LIMITLESS THOUSANDS OF MYRIADS OF MILLIONS OF GREATLY VIRTUOUS SOUND HEARERS ALREADY HAVE REACHED ACCOMPLISHMENT. WORLD HONORED ONE, YOU SHOULD, FOR OUR SAKES, ALSO SPEAK THE DHARMA OF ANUTTARASAMYAKSAMBOODHI. HAVING HEARD IT, WE WILL ALL CULTIVATE AND STUDY IT. WORLD HONORED ONE, WE ALL ASPIRE TO THE THUS COME ONE'S KNOWLEDGE AND VISION. AS TO THE THOUGHTS DEEP WITHIN OUR MINDS, THE BUDDHA HIMSELF KNOWS."

COMMENTARY:

The sixteen Shramaneras, the sons of the Buddha, Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory, left home under the Buddha, along with the five thousand myriads of millions of Brahma Kings, and the hundreds of myriads of millions of gods and humans, and so on. They all spoke to the Buddha, saying, "World Honored One, all these limitless, thousands of myriads of millions of greatly virtuous Sound Hearers already have reached accomplishment. Now, in this Bodhimanda," said the sixteen princes, "there are limitless millions of greatly virtuous sound hearers. They have great virtue." What is great virtue? This means that in past lives, they did many, many good deeds. They practiced much virtue, so they are called greatly virtuous ones. They are called Sound Hearers because they were enlightened to the Way when they heard the Buddha's voice preaching the Four Holy Truths. Have already reached accomplishment. What have they accomplished? They have accomplished: the fruition of being Sound Hearers. But now they have a certain doubt about whether or not they have truly attained Nirvana. They accomplished the Sound Hearer's fruit, but have begun to give rise to the mind of the Great Vehicle.

"World Honored One, you should, for our sakes, also speak the Dharma of Anuttarasamyaksambodhi. You who are honored both in and beyond the world, O Buddha, really should, for all of us living beings, teach the Dharma of the utmost right and perfect enlightenment. How do you cultivate this Dharma door which is given the name 'the fruition of Buddhahood?' It is the position of Buddhahood, but there must be some method by which this position is cultivated and attained. If there is no way to attain it, and you just say, 'anuttarasamyaksambodhi,' it doesn't mean a whole lot to us. How do you attain it? How do you arrive at that position? There's got to be a method. Someone must explain it to us. If no one explains it, we'll never understand it, and we'll never get there." The sixteen princes are seeking the Dharma for the sake of the entire assembly of humans and gods. Basically, when they heard *THE AVATAMSAKA SUTRA*, the sixteen princes already certified to the fruit and understood the Dharma of anuttarasamyaksambodhi. Although they understood, the others hadn't understood, and so they pretended that they didn't understand, so they could request it for the sake of other living beings. It's not the case that the sixteen princes, the sixteen Shramaneras, the sixteen Bodhisattvas, didn't understand it. They did long ago.

Why do they ask the Buddha to speak this Dharma? They want to seek the Dharma on behalf of all living beings.

"Having heard it, we will all cultivate and study it. Once you have spoken this Dharma for us, we aren't going to let it go in one ear and out the other, like a breeze just blowing by. No way! We are all going to cultivate and study it. Understanding the Dharma of utmost right, perfect enlightenment, we will definitely practice in accord with it. We will cultivate according to the method given us and will not be lazy. Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory Buddha, don't worry about us! We will certainly be vigorous in our cultivation. We certainly won't be lazy. We will forget even about food, we'll be so vigorous. And we'll be so happy, we'll forget about worrying. We will be so happy with the Dharma that we'll forget all our troubles!

"World Honored One, we all aspire to the Thus Come One's knowledge and vision. We, here in the assembly have our hearts set on attaining the knowledge and vision of the Buddha." What is the knowledge and vision of the Buddha? *THE DHARMA FLOWER SUTRA* talks about,

1. Opening the knowledge and vision of the Buddha.
2. Demonstrating the knowledge and vision of the Buddha.
3. Awakening to the knowledge and vision of the Buddha.
4. Entering into the knowledge and vision of the Buddha.

That is, opening, demonstrating, awakening, and entering the Buddha's knowledge and vision. The Buddha first spoke *THE AVATAMSAKA SUTRA*. The next teaching was the Agama teaching, the Storehouse Teaching. Next, he taught the Vaipulya Teaching, the Pervasive Teaching. The next teaching was the Prajna, Separate Teaching; and the final teaching was the Lotus-Nirvana, the Perfect Teaching. Now, all living beings want to hear *THE DHARMA FLOWER SUTRA*; they want to get rid of the Half-word Teaching, and be clear about the Full-word Teaching. *THE DHARMA FLOWER SUTRA* is the genuine, perfect, great teaching.

"As to the thoughts deep within our mind, the Buddha himself directly knows." What's this? Are there deep and shallow thoughts in the minds, or what? How deep are the deep ones? How shallow are the shallow ones? The deep thoughts are the ones that have been in there for a long, long time. They have thought for a long, long time about asking for this Dharma. Which Dharma? The Dharma of becoming a Buddha, the utmost, right and perfect enlightenment. Ultimately, how does one cultivate this Dharma? You need compassion, kindness, sympathetic joy, and giving--the Four Unlimited Minds of the Buddha. You also need the unconditioned mind, and the undefiled mind. An undefiled mind is the most important. Take care not to have desire. If you have desire, you are defiled. If you are defiled, you won't obtain self-mastery.

One must also cultivate the Six Perfections and the ten thousand Conducts, The Twelve Causal Links and the Four Truths, and The Thirty-seven Wings of Enlightenment. These are all Dharmas for becoming a Buddha. But, there is a quicker method, one which enables you to become a Buddha without having to pass through the usual three great asankheya aeons. What is it? The Shurangama Mantra, which we recite every day. In the verse before the mantra, Ananda says,

"The wonderfully deep Dharani, unmoving honored one,
The foremost Shurangama is seldom seen in the world.
It melts away my aeons worth of upside-down thinking,

So that I needn't pass through asankheya aeons to attain the Dharma body.
I wish now to obtain the fruit and become an honored King,
And return to save as many beings as there are sand grains in the Ganges River."

One can become a Buddha quickly, without passing through those uncountable aeons. What for? So that one can return and save other living beings. That's what, Ananda said. If you can recite the Shurangama Mantra often, you will certainly become a Buddha very quickly.

You say, "But the mantra is so long. It takes at least twenty minutes to recite once through."

Yes, twenty minutes is a long time to say a mantra. But you take twenty minutes every day to eat lunch and you don't feel that's such a long time, do you? You don't complain how long it takes to eat lunch and try to cut back on the time. Why complain about the mantra? Weird! You sleep for hours at a time and never complain about getting too much sleep. Why do you not object to sleeping and eating but object to saying the mantra? Hmm? I really don't understand your attitude towards studying the Buddha-dharma. You don't even have twenty minutes to spare. And also, there's the Great Compassion Mantra and the Dharma of the Forty-two Hands. Those are the most wonderful Dharmas for becoming a Buddha. Those who cultivate these Dharmas can attain the Five Eyes and the Six Spiritual Penetrations very quickly. But, you're afraid of all the trouble. You think if you get those powers you'll have more work to do, but by the time you've got them, it will be too late for regret. Trouble or no trouble, you're going to have to take the trouble, that's all.

"Well, I'd be better off to stay just like I am, then," you say.

Fine, if that's what you like. I never force people to do anything. It's up to each one of you to decide what you're going to do. Do what you like. Don't do what you don't want to do. But the methods for attaining the utmost right and perfect enlightenment are just the methods I have taught you. Today, someone said to me, "You have taught us so many Dharmas, I don't even know where to start cultivating. I don't know which ones to do. I'd like to concentrate on one single Dharma and succeed very quickly, but you've given us so many!"

Among the Dharmas I have taught you, there are those which one can specialize in exclusively. But, it's like going to school. First you have to study all the materials assigned. Then, when you take the test, you may be asked one or two questions which are taken out of all the material. You must have studied all of it to be able to answer those few questions. And you can't take open-book tests in the Buddhadharmas. Among all the Dharmas I have taught you, there is certainly one which will get you to Buddhahood, but you're going to have to learn them all to get there. It's for sure you'll make it. But, if you start complaining about having too many Dharmas to study, well...why don't you complain about having to eat everyday? You have plenty of time to eat. You're not afraid of sleeping too much either. Quite inconceivable. So, the text says, "We all aspire to the Thus Come One's knowledge and vision. As to the thoughts deep within our minds, the Buddha himself knows." The Buddha knows them quite well. They are asking the Buddha to speak *THE DHARMA FLOWER SUTRA*. Their deepest thoughts, the Buddha knows. The Buddha knew long ago that this was what they wanted, but since they didn't request the Dharma, the Buddha didn't speak it. Now, they are requesting

the Dharma, hoping that he will compassionately receive their request, teach and transform them. After the sixteen princes asked for the Dharma, the Buddha was delighted, and he spoke the Dharma.