



Dharma Flower Sutra

with commentary of Tripitaka Master Hua

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SUTRA: T.25a25

THEN, THE MULTITUDES, LED BY THE WHEEL TURNING SAGE KING, EIGHTY THOUSAND MILLION OF THEM, UPON SEEING THE SIXTEEN PRINCES LEAVE HOME, ALSO SOUGHT TO LEAVE HOME, AND THE KING PERMITTED THEM TO DO SO.

COMMENTARY:

Then, the multitudes, led by the Wheel Turning Sage Kings, that is, the father of the Buddha, Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory, and grandfather of the sixteen princes...He had millions of followers--Eighty thousand millions of them, upon seeing the sixteen princes leave home, renounce all their wealth and property, their wives and concubines, and become Bhikshus, they all decided to leave home along with them and become Bhikshus, And the king permitted them to do so. He said, "Fine. Leave home. I'll help you out, in fact. If any one of you need anything, I will give it to you." So, all eighty thousand million of them suddenly had a patron, someone to support them. They weren't afraid then, of starving, freezing, or dying of thirst, or poverty or anything else. They went right ahead and, with one heart, left home to cultivate the Way, and become Bhikshus. In the future, they will all become Buddhas. A lot of them have already become Buddhas, and some are still cultivating and will do so in the future. Eighty thousand millions of them limitless aeons ago made vows to become Buddhas. Their patron was the Wheel Turning Sage King; he made it easy for them to cultivate the Way.

SUTRA: T. 25a27

AT THAT TIME, THE BUDDHA, HAVING RECEIVED THE REQUEST OF THE SIXTEEN SHRAMANERAS, AFTER TWENTY THOUSAND AEONS, THEN AT LAST, AMIDST THE FOUR-FOLD ASSEMBLY, SPOKE THE GREAT VEHICLE SUTRA BY THE NAME OF THE *WONDERFUL DHARMA LOTUS FLOWER*, A DHARMA FOR INSTRUCTING BODHISATTVAS OF WHOM THE BUDDHA IS PROTECTIVE AND MINDFUL. AFTER HE SPOKE THE SUTRA, THE SIXTEEN SHRAMANERAS, FOR THE SAKE OF ANUTTARASAMYAKSAMBODHI, ALL RECEIVED, UPHELD AND RECITED IT AND KEENLY PENETRATED ITS MEANING.

COMMENTARY:

At that time, the Buddha, having received the request of the sixteen Shramaneras, after twenty thousand aeons, during which time he spoke the, Vaipulya and Prjna teachings, then, at last, amidst the four fold assembly,-- Upasakas, Upasikas, Bhikshus, and Bhikshunis--spoke the Great Vehicle Sutra by the name of, *THE WONDERFUL DHARMA LOTUS FLOWER*.. This Sutra, is a Dharma for

instructing Bodhisattvas of whom the Buddha is protective and mindful. The Buddha watches over and protects those who recite, *THE LOTUS SUTRA*.

After he spoke the sutra, the sixteen Shramaneras, for the sake of anuttarasamyaksambodhi, the utmost right and perfect enlightenment, the Buddha-fruit, all received, upheld, and recited it and keenly penetrated its meaning. They recited it until they could recite it from the beginning to the end from memory! And they never forgot it; it stuck right in their eighth consciousnesses.

SUTRA: T. 25b1

WHEN THE SUTRA WAS SPOKEN, THE SIXTEEN BODHISATTVA-SHRAMANERAS ALL RECEIVED IT WITH FAITH. AMONG THE HOST OF SOUND HEARERS, TOO, THERE WERE THOSE WHO HAD FAITH IN IT AND UNDERSTOOD IT. THE REMAINING THOUSANDS OF MYRIADS OF MILLIONS OF LIVING BEINGS, HOWEVER, ALL GAVE RISE TO DOUBTS.

COMMENTARY:

When the Sutra, *THE DHARMA FLOWER SUTRA*, was spoken, the sixteen Bodhisattva-Shramaneras, or, you could say, "Shramanera-Bodhisattvas." This means that they had received the ten Shramanera Precepts, but they had not yet received the two-hundred fifty Bhikshu Precepts. How could they become Bodhisattvas if they hadn't even taken the Bhikshu precepts? It was because the sixteen Shramaneras cultivated with great vigor. They were so vigorous, in fact, they didn't even have time to take the Bhikshu precepts! Too busy! Busy doing what? Lecturing on the Sutras, turning the Great Dharma Wheel, and reciting *THE LOTUS SUTRA*. Basically, precepts are designed for those who need them; that is, people who might not observe the precepts. If, however, you are busy reciting *THE LOTUS SUTRA*, all day long, you won't have time to break any precepts, because you'll be keeping strict control over the three karmic vehicles: body, mouth, and mind. If you are reciting the Sutra with your mouth, your mouth won't commit the four evils of the mouth: lying, harsh speech, double-tongued speech, frivolous speech. If you're kneeling there reciting it, you won't commit the three evils of the body: killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct. If you are keeping the meaning of the Sutra in your mind, you won't commit the three evils of the mind: greed, hatred, and stupidity. That means you will be pure in the three karmas. If you are pure in this way, taking or not taking the precepts doesn't matter. That's why the sixteen Shramaneras were also Bodhisattvas.

What is more, these sixteen Shramaneras, although they were said to be shramaneras, were actually, "people who had come back again." This means that they were born into that time and place in order to protect the Bodhimanda of, Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory Buddha. In past lives they made deliberate vows, saying, "When this person becomes a Buddha, I am going to protect his Bodhimanda." This is like, Kuo-hu, who made a vow that when I become a Buddha, he will protect my Bodhimanda. I haven't become a Buddha yet, and he is already protecting my Bodhimanda! He didn't even wait for me to become a Buddha. That's a real vow for you! Actually, when someone becomes a Buddha, he gains great spiritual powers and miraculous abilities, and it doesn't matter whether anyone protects his Bodhimanda or not. He can take care of himself. But, before one becomes a Buddha and gains spiritual powers, if you protect his Bodhimanda, then you are really protecting it. It's like, if there were a wealthy person who ate the world's finest food every single day, and you said, "Today I'm going to treat you to a fine lunch," he wouldn't necessarily be too excited, because he gets terrific food at home all the time. But, if you offered to take a poor person, someone who doesn't eat

too well, out to lunch, he would really appreciate it. So, after this, if you make vows to protect my Dharma, don't wait until I become a Buddha to protect it. At that time, there will be a lot of Dharma protectors. When you really need Dharma protectors is before you have become a Buddha.

They all received it with faith, accepted the wonderful Dharma spoken by the Buddha Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory. Among the host of Sound Hearers, too, there were those who had faith in it and understood it. The remaining thousands of myriads of millions of living beings, however, all gave rise to doubts. They had doubts about that wonderful Dharma.

You say, "The Buddha has great spiritual powers. For example, when the Sutra began five thousand people rose and walked out. Perhaps the Buddha moved them to another land altogether, so that they wouldn't commit the offense of having doubts and perhaps slandering the Dharma." Just having doubts wouldn't mean that they would fall into lower realms, but if they went so far as to slander the Dharma, the Great Vehicle Scriptures, they would fall into the three evil paths. So, when Shakyamuni Buddha spoke, *THE DHARMA FLOWER SUTRA*, he forced the five thousand arrogant Bhikshus to leave. When the Buddha Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory spoke the Dharma thousands of myriads of millions of beings gave rise to doubts, so why didn't he have them removed to other lands to avoid their doubts? He didn't do this because he knew that although they may have given rise to doubts they would not slander the Dharma. So, he didn't need to have them relocated.

SUTRA T. 25b4

THE BUDDHA SPOKE THIS SUTRA FOR EIGHTY THOUSAND AEONS WITHOUT CESSATION.

COMMENTARY:

The Buddha, spoke this sutra, for eighty thousand aeons without cessation; he spoke without stopping; without interruption. That's a long time. Shakyamuni Buddha spoke *THE DHARMA FLOWER SUTRA* in just eight years. Why did one Buddha take so long and the other take such a short time? Discriminations of short and long periods of time are done by living beings. Really, there is no such thing as "long and short" periods of time. "Long and short" are created by mental discriminations. The Buddha Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory spoke *THE DHARMA FLOWER SUTRA*, the real mark Dharma-door, for eighty thousand aeons, and Shakyamuni Buddha spoke this real mark Dharma-door for only eight years, but there's no problem with the difference in time. The Buddha spoke for eighty-thousand aeons without cessation.

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