



Dharma Flower Sutra

with commentary of Tripitaka Master Hua

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CHAPTER 7 Cont.

SUTRA:

OF THESE LIVING BEINGS, THERE ARE THOSE WHO ARE AT THE LEVEL OF SOUND HEARERS. I CONSTANTLY INSTRUCT AND TRANSFORM THEM IN ANUTTARASAMYAKSAMBODHI ALL THESE PEOPLE WILL, BY MEANS OF THIS DHARMA, GRADUALLY ENTER THE BUDDHA PATH. WHY? THE THUS COME ONE'S WISDOM IS HARD TO BELIEVE AND HARD TO UNDERSTAND.

COMMENTARY:

"Of these living beings, there are those who **already** dwell at the level of Sound Hearers. I constantly instruct and transform them in anuttarasamyaksambodhi, **teaching them the Dharma of perfect enlightenment**. All these people will, by means of this Dharma, gradually enter the Buddha Path. Why? The Thus Come One's wisdom is hard to believe and hard to understand. **Because it is hard to believe, it is difficult to cultivate. Because it is hard to understand, it's difficult to attain the fruit.**

SUTRA:

THE LIVING BEINGS, LIMITLESS AS GANGES' SANDS, WHOM I TRANSFORMED AT THAT TIME ARE YOU, YOURSELVES, BHIKSHUS AND ARE ALSO THOSE WHO WILL BE SOUND HEARER DISCIPLES IN THE FUTURE, AFTER MY EXTINCTION.

COMMENTARY:

The living beings, limitless as Ganges' sands, whom I transformed at that time are you, yourselves, Bhikshus. **They are all of you present here**, and are also those who will be Sound Hearer disciples in the future, after my extinction--**disciples of the Sound Hearer vehicle who will attain the fruits of Arhatship. They are those I taught before.**

The Buddhadharma tells about causes and conditions. If there are no causes, then there is no effect. For example, before Shakyamuni Buddha became a Buddha, he taught and transformed limitless living beings. Every time he appeared in the world,

he became a Bhikshu and went about everywhere propagating the Buddhadharma. He lectured on the Sutras and spoke the Dharma, and all living beings believed in him. They thought more of him than they did of their own parents. They felt closer to him than even to themselves! Therefore, they were determined to follow their "Dharma-body parent." Shakyamuni Buddha used his great and equal compassion to teach those living beings. Day by day, their numbers grew, and his fruit-position rose higher day by day, as well, until he finally became a Buddha named Shakyamuni. All his students had tremendously deep affinities with him and came to protect the Dharma. Before he became a Buddha, he was also protected by those disciples throughout life after life. They helped him spread the Dharma in every life, right up to and including the lifetime in which he became a Buddha. When he became a Buddha, they all showed up to protect the Dharma. Some didn't show up, however. But they are the ones referred to there in the text, "who will be Sound Hearer disciples in the future, after my extinction." Things depend on causes and conditions. So, the Buddha said,

**"All dharmas arise from conditions;
All dharmas from conditions cease.
Our teacher, the Buddha, the great Shramana,
Always teaches it thus."**

SUTRA:

AFTER MY EXTINCTION, FURTHERMORE, THERE WILL BE DISCIPLES WHO WILL NOT HEAR THIS SUTRA, WHO WILL NOT KNOW OR BE AWARE OF THE BODHISATTVA CONDUCT, BUT WHO WILL THROUGH THE ATTAINMENT OF THEIR OWN MERIT AND VIRTUE GIVE RISE TO THE THOUGHT OF EXTINCTION AND WHO WILL ENTER NIRVANA. I SHALL BE A BUDDHA IN ANOTHER LAND, WITH ANOTHER NAME. ALTHOUGH THESE PEOPLE WILL HAVE PRODUCED THE THOUGHT OF EXTINCTION AND ENTERED NIRVANA, THEY WILL, IN THOSE LANDS, SEEK THE BUDDHA'S WISDOM AND GET TO HEAR THIS SUTRA, AND KNOW THAT IT IS ONLY BY MEANS OF THE BUDDHA-VEHICLE THAT EXTINCTION CAN BE ATTAINED. THERE ARE NO OTHER VEHICLES, EXCEPT FOR THOSE EXPEDIENT DEVICES TAUGHT BY OTHER THUS COME ONES.

COMMENTARY:

"After my extinction," says, Shakyamuni Buddha, "when I have gone to Nirvana, furthermore, there will be disciples who did not see me when I appeared in the world, who will not hear this Sutra; because they will cultivate the Dharmas of the Small Vehicle, they will not understand the wonderful principles of the Great Vehicle. Therefore, they will not hear, *THE DHARMA FLOWER SUTRA*... who will not know or be aware of the Bodhisattva conduct. They won't know what it is to practice as a Bodhisattva, that is, what Bodhisattvas are supposed to do. But who will, through the attainment of their own merit and virtue--they may have sat in Dhyana meditation or

attained some state, and so will give rise to the thought of extinction and enter Nirvana." They will give rise to the thought of the "expedient" fruition and attain the one-sided "Nirvana" of the, Arhat, calling it ultimate salvation. They will think, "Oh, I have already passed into extinction. I give rise to no thought at all. I must have entered Nirvana.

"I shall be a Buddha in another land, with another name. **I won't be in the Saha World; I'll be in another world. I won't be called, Shakyamuni Buddha, either. I'll have another name.**" Although these people will have produced the thought of extinction and entry into Nirvana--**although these disciples of the Buddha will have had the false thoughts that they have entered into Nirvana, and attained the state of Nirvana, which is beyond production and extinction--**they will, in those lands, seek the Buddha's wisdom and get to hear this Sutra and know that it is only by means of the Buddha-vehicle, **the One Buddha Vehicle**, that extinction can be attained. There are no other vehicles, except for those expedient devices taught by other Thus Come Ones. **The one-sided emptiness of the Sound Hearers does not count as true extinction. THE DHARMA FLOWER SUTRA sets forth the One Buddha Vehicle, so that they can enter Nirvana. Sometimes the Buddha will use expedient devices suited for a particular period so he can become enlightened, but these are just expedient devices.**

SUTRA:

BHIKSHUS, WHEN THE THUS COME ONE KNOWS OF HIMSELF THAT THE TIME OF HIS NIRVANA HAS COME, THAT THE ASSEMBLY IS PURE, THAT THEIR FAITH AND UNDERSTANDING ARE SOLID AND FIRM, THAT THEY FULLY COMPREHEND THE DHARMA OF EMPTINESS AND HAVE DEEPLY ENTERED INTO DHYANA SAMADHI, HE WILL GATHER TOGETHER THE HOST OF BODHISATTVAS AND SOUND HEARERS AND SPEAK THIS SUTRA FOR THEM, SAYING, "THERE ARE NOT TWO VEHICLES BY WHICH EXTINCTION IS ATTAINED. THERE IS ONLY THE ONE BUDDHA VEHICLE BY WHICH EXTINCTION CAN BE ATTAINED."

COMMENTARY:

Bhikshus, when the Thus Come One knows of himself that the time of his Nirvana has come, that the assembly is pure--**all his students have attained purity--and** that their faith and understanding are solid and firm--**they won't be moved; they won't waver--**that they fully comprehend the Dharma of emptiness--**they understand that all Dharmas are empty appearances--**and have deeply entered into Dhyana Samadhi, he will gather together the host of Bodhisattvas and Sound Hearers and speak this Sutra for them, The Dharma Flower Sutra, saying, "There are not two Vehicles by which extinction is attained. **As far as methods of cultivation go, one can only gain extinction through the One Buddha Vehicle. The Two Vehicles may make claims to extinction, but their extinction is not ultimate. Those of the Two Vehicles do not attain extinction.** "There is only the One Buddha Vehicle by which extinction can be attained."

The position of extinction can be attained only through cultivating the One Buddha Vehicle. Other vehicles will not get you there.

SUTRA:

BHIKSHUS, YOU SHOULD KNOW THE EXPEDIENTS OF THE THUS COME ONE DEEPLY ENTER THE NATURES OF LIVING BEINGS. KNOWING THAT THEY ASPIRE TO AND ARE CONTENT WITH LESSER DHARMAS, AND ARE DEEPLY ATTACHED TO THE FIVE DESIRES, HE SPEAKS TO THEM OF NIRVANA. WHEN THEY HEAR HIM, THEN THEY IMMEDIATELY BELIEVE AND ACCEPT IT.

COMMENTARY:

Bhikshus, you should know, the expedients of the Thus Come One deeply enter the natures of living beings. **If you started right out teaching living beings the real Dharma, living beings' natures are such they would not believe it. If you use expedient Dharma-doors, and teach them expediently, they will believe you. The expedient devices of the Buddha are in direct accord with the nature of living beings. Why does he use expedient devices to teach living beings? Because they have their own individual potential. He speaks according their individual dispositions, knowing that they aspire to and are content with lesser dharmas and are deeply attached to the five desires. He knows that they can't see far ahead. All they know is petty things, minor principles. If you spoke to them about the entire universe, they wouldn't understand you. All they know are their own small problems. If you try to talk to them about the big picture, they won't understand you. They like to cultivate on a tiny pathway and are deeply attached to the five desires. They crave wealth, sex, fame, food, and sleep.**

Wealth: In this world, money talks. You can get anything with it. Everyone clings to it madly. If you can view money as "empty" then you won't be attached to it. If you can't see it as empty, you'll have to fight for it. I have often told you about the word for money. In Chinese it is, (錢), a word composed of two swords, (戔); on the left of the swords stands the radical for gold, (金). This means, "You have a sword, and I have a sword, and the two of us fight over the gold." If you have money, you have a lot of problems. If you have no money, you won't have so many problems; but everyone wants money and they aren't afraid of the trouble involved. If you know how to use your money, you can create blessings; if you don't know how to use it, you create offenses. With money you can create merit and virtue, or else you can create offenses. Money is really the worst thing there is! It's also the filthiest thing there is! Haven't you noticed that whenever people count money, they spit on their fingers and then count up the bills? Who knows how many germs are on that money? Quite unsanitary, and yet no one minds; when it comes to money, no one is concerned about hygiene. The desire for money is one thing.

There is also the desire for sex, which includes desire for beautiful things.

Everyone wants fame; everyone wants a good reputation. If someone says something bad about you, you feel as hurt as if someone had struck a knife into your heart. Reputation is very important to people, but it's just one of the five desires.

Everybody likes to eat. If you eat one kind of food for a while, you will start feeling like you'd like something else. You never quite satisfy your desire for food. If you eat something else, you can't eat another and so you think about the first kind. If you eat both kinds at the same time, you can't eat enough of either one to get full. In general, there is no way you can ever satisfy your desire for food. If you cultivate the Way, you must not look upon food and drink as so important. You should think of it as medicine that you use to keep your body from falling apart.

The fifth desire is sleep. If you sleep one hour, it's not enough. Two, three, four, five, six hours--you sleep for seven or eight hours, and enjoy it immensely. These are the five desires which everyone thinks are so important. Everyone feels that they just can't get along without wealth, sex, fame, food and sleep.

Once a person asked me a question. He said, "You lecture on so many principles, and set forth so many methods. Ultimately, do you know how many people there are in the world? If you know how many people there are in the world, then I will take refuge with you, and you can be my teacher; but, if you have no exact figures..."

I said, "If you are thinking of taking refuge with me; basically, I can't answer your questions. Why not? I don't take disciples with questions like that. If you haven't even taken refuge and you have so many questions, you will have even more once you take refuge. So, I don't want you for a disciple. However, I will tell you how many people there are in this world. In this world there are two people—one man and one woman. These two people also fit into two categories based on their behavior; the first seeks fame and the second seeks benefit. Those who seek fame try to think of ways to get famous. Haven't you seen such people? There are those who have no fame and try to think of a way to get attention so they fake suicide! They may overdose on sleeping pills, not enough to finish them off; enough to get the attention of the police and get their name and picture in the newspaper. 'So-and-so tried suicide, is in serious condition in such-and-such a hospital...' Others, feeling that faking suicide is too dangerous, go out and try to kidnap someone. All for fame.

There are many variations on the publicity game. Those who seek fame get "burned by the fire." They aren't immune to the flames. If you can be unattached to a good and bad reputation, then you can "enter the flames and emerge unburned."

Those who seek benefit think up many plots; they may sell dope, or engage in various illegal activities. Those who seek benefit "drown in the water." If you seek benefit too energetically, you will drown yourself. So, I answered him that in the world there are only two people. Can you find a third?

He agreed wholeheartedly with me and asked to take refuge. I said, "I won't accept you as a disciple." I put him outside the door, as it were. That was a long time ago.

He speaks to them of Nirvana. **To those of the Two Vehicles who delight in lesser dharmas, he teaches the Four Truths and the Twelve Links, so they can attain their "Nirvana," but actually, it's an expedient device. Those of the Two Vehicles cannot attain Nirvana.** When they hear him, then they immediately believe and accept it.

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