

# FLOWER ADORNMENT

*Prologue by Tang Dynasty National Master Ch'ing Liang  
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## PROLOGUE:

IN THE FIRST, THE ROOT AND THE BRANCH-TIPS ARE SIMULTANEOUS, AND INITIAL AND FINAL ARE OF ONE KIND, EACH WITHOUT DIFFERENT SPEAKINGS.

## COMMENTARY:

IN THE FIRST, the beginning Door of Difference of the Root and Branch-tips, THE ROOT AND THE BRANCH-TIPS ARE SIMULTANEOUS. They exist at the same time instead of one after the other, AND the INITIAL AND the FINAL Teachings ARE OF ONE KIND. That is, those of the Small Vehicle keep studying, hearing, and understanding the Small Vehicle in the one sound spoken by the Buddha, whereas living beings with dispositions for the Three Vehicles continually hear about the Three Vehicles in that same sound. The living beings with dispositions suited to the One Vehicle regularly hear teaching of the One Vehicle within it, so the initial and final are said to be of one kind according to each kind, EACH WITHOUT two DIFFERENT kinds of SPEAKINGS.

## PROLOGUE:

MOREOVER, THERE ARE THREE POSITIONS: ONE, IF WITHIN THE SMALL VEHICLE, THEN AJNATAKAUNDINYA IS SAVED FIRST AND SUBHADRA LAST, AND IN BETWEEN THERE IS ALSO ONLY SPEAKING OF THE SMALL TO BENEFIT THE SMALL, AS IN THE SUTRAS OF THE FOUR AGAMAS AND THE VINAYA IN FIVE DIVISIONS; TWO, IF IN TERMS OF THE THREE VEHICLES, THEN THE INITIAL AND FINAL SPEAK OF THE THREE, COLLECTIVELY BENEFITING THREE POTENTIALS, AS IN SUCH SUTRAS AS THE *SECRET TRACES*; THREE, IF IN TERMS OF THE ONE VEHICLE, THEN INITIAL AND FINAL ARE ONLY SPOKEN FOR THOSE WITH POTENTIAL FOR THE PERFECT, WITH THE PERFECT AS THEIR CULMINATION, AS THE *FLOWER ADORNMENT* AND SO FORTH. WITHIN IT THERE IS NO CONNECTION WITH THE SMALL VEHICLE. FURTHERMORE IT GATHERS IN THE NINE TIMES, ENCOMPASSING BEFORE AND AFTERWARDS, SO IT EVEN MORE IS WITHOUT DIFFERENCES OF SPEAKINGS.

COMMENTARY:

MOREOVER, THERE ARE THREE POSITIONS of Small Vehicle, Three Vehicles, and One Vehicle. ONE is that IF taken as being WITHIN THE SMALL VEHICLE, THEN AJNATAKAUNDINYA IS SAVED FIRST AND SUBHADRA LAST, AND IN BETWEEN THERE IS constantly ONLY SPEAKING OF THE SMALL Vehicle Dharma TO BENEFIT the people of THE SMALL VEHICLE. This is AS IN THE SUTRAS OF THE FOUR AGAMAS AND THE VINAYA IN FIVE DIVISIONS which are to rescue adherents of the Small Vehicle. TWO is that IF one speaks IN TERMS OF THE THREE VEHICLES, THEN THE INITIAL AND FINAL SPEAK OF THE THREE Vehicles Dharma, COLLECTIVELY BENEFITING the THREE POTENTIALS. It benefits Sound Hearers, those Enlightened to Conditions, and the Bodhisattvas. This is AS the doctrines expressed IN SUCH SUTRAS AS THE *SECRET TRACES Sutra* AND SO FORTH. THREE is that IF one speaks IN TERMS OF THE ONE VEHICLE, THEN INITIAL AND FINAL ARE ONLY SPOKEN FOR THOSE WITH POTENTIAL FOR THE PERFECT, WITH THE PERFECT AS THEIR CULMINATION, the wonderful Dharma of utmost interpenetration and perfect fusion. That is AS in THE *FLOWER ADORNMENT Sutra* AND SO FORTH. WITHIN IT, the *Flower Adornment Sutra*, THERE IS NO CONNECTION WITH THE SMALL VEHICLE even though it includes the Small Vehicle. FURTHERMORE, IT, the *Flower Adornment Sutra*, GATHERS IN THE NINE TIMES.

The Nine Times

- |                           |   |                                |
|---------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. The past's past.       | } | The Three Times of the Past    |
| 2. The past's present.    |   |                                |
| 3. The past's future.     |   |                                |
| 1. The present's past.    | } | The Three Times of the Present |
| 2. The present's present. |   |                                |
| 3. The present's future.  |   |                                |
| 1. The future's past.     | } | The Three Times of the Future. |
| 2. The future's present.  |   |                                |
| 3. The future's future.   |   |                                |

The *Flower Adornment Sutra* speaks of ten times, opening out into infinity, the tenth time being all of the above nine times. The Sutra itself is the tenth time, so it is said to include the other nine times, ENCOMPASSING BEFORE AND AFTERWARDS, SO IT EVEN MORE IS WITHOUT DIFFERENCES OF SPEAKINGS.

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***A LONG HISTORY OF PLANTING FOR BODHI***

Keeping one's accounts straight is no easy matter. So:

Don't think that leaving home  
is an easy thing to come by.  
It comes from a long history  
of planting for Bodhi.

Don't look lightly on leaving home--without good roots there's no way to do it. While the Buddha was in the world, all the disciples who left home under the Buddha had great good roots. Living beings who lacked good roots had no way to leave home. Even if they wanted to it wouldn't work out. At that time there was an old man who arrived at the Aranya wishing to leave home under the Buddha at a time when the Buddha was away and not at the Jeta Grove. When the Great Arhats heard that a man wished to leave the home-life, they contemplated his causes and conditions from previous lives. Arhats can see as far back as 80,000 great kalpas, and in this case they saw that in all that long time, the old man had not planted the tiniest trace of good roots. So they said to him, "You can't leave home because you haven't planted good roots or seeds for Bodhi."

The old man had planned to be able to leave the home-life in his old age and eat ready-cooked food and wear ready-made clothes. He never expected that it would be so hard to get accepted. So after hearing that, he left, crying as he walked. When he reached the Ganges River, he decided to jump in and end it all. Right when he was about to do so, the Buddha came up behind him and said, "Old virtuous one, what are you about to do?"

The old man said, "I wanted to leave home under the Buddha but the Buddha was not in the monastery and the Buddha's disciples said I didn't have any good roots and wouldn't accept me. Now I'm old, and food, clothes, and shelter are a real problem, so I'd rather jump in the Ganges River and die and forget the whole thing."

The Buddha said, "You shouldn't jump in the Ganges River. I'm the Buddha, the Buddha is I. I'll accept you to leave home and no one will dare object."

The old man said, "You'll let me leave home?"

So the Buddha took him back to the Jeta Grove and allowed him to leave home. All the great Arhats were astonished and said, "He doesn't have any good roots, and he gets to leave home." But not long after that, the old man certified to the Fruit. So the Arhats asked the Buddha, "He doesn't have any good roots, so how can he leave home and certify to the Fruit?"

The Buddha said, "Ah. You can only see what has happened inside of 80,000 great kalpas, but you still don't know anything about what's beyond 80,000. Longer than 80,000 great kalpas ago, this old man was a wood-cutter. He was collecting firewood on the mountainside one day when a tiger came along and prepared to attack and eat him. The wood-cutter climbed a tree, but the tiger was very smart and started gnawing at the trunk of the tree. When it was just about gnawed through, the old man in the tree saw he was about finished and cried out, "Na Mwo Buddha!" That one cry of "Na Mwo Buddha!"

scared the tiger away so it didn't eat him. Now the good roots planted by that one cry of "Na Mwo Buddha!" have matured and he's come to leave home."

PROLOGUE:

MOREOVER, THESE THREE KINDS, DEPENDING ON HOW THEIR DISPOSITIONS ARE FIXED AT THIS TIME, CONSTANTLY HEAR THE DHARMA OF ONE KIND AS ABOVE. THEREFORE ALL THAT THE BUDDHA PROCLAIMS COVERS BOTH INITIAL AND FINAL, AND DOES NOT HAVE BEFORE OR AFTERWARDS."

COMMENTARY:

MOREOVER, THESE THREE KINDS--the preceding Teachings of the Small Vehicle, the Three Vehicles, and the One Vehicle respectively--DEPENDING ON HOW THEIR DISPOSITIONS ARE FIXED AT THIS TIME, CONSTANTLY HEAR THE DHARMA OF ONE KIND AS ABOVE. "At this time" means in their present life, and their dispositions being fixed doesn't mean they are Fixed Nature Sound-Hearers. Rather it means the kind of disposition they are settled in for this lifetime. It doesn't mean they necessarily had that kind of root-nature in past lives or that they will be disposed in a particular way in the future. But depending on what they are like in the present life, they hear speaking of Dharma either as the Small Vehicle Teaching, the Three Vehicles Teaching or else the One Vehicle Teaching as was talked about before. THEREFORE ALL the Dharma THAT THE BUDDHA PROCLAIMS COVERS BOTH INITIAL AND FINAL, AND DOES NOT HAVE BEFORE OR AFTERWARDS. This means that in his lifetime, at the beginning the Buddha spoke the Teaching of the Small Vehicle, and was still speaking Dharma of the Small Vehicle Teaching at the end of his career. He was speaking the Teaching of the Three Vehicles from the start, and at the end was still speaking the Teaching of the Three Vehicles. He started out speaking the Teaching of the One Vehicle, and at the very end was also continuing to speak the Teaching of the One Vehicle. That's because living beings of each category of disposition heard their own kind of Dharma, and that's how it covered both initial and final and had no before or afterwards. It's not that he first spoke the Small Vehicle and afterwards spoke the Great Vehicle; or that he first spoke the Great Vehicle and afterwards spoke the Small Vehicle. Rather, the Dharma spoken during the entire generational Teaching of the Buddha was always speaking the same kind of Dharma. It's not that first he spoke the Small Vehicle and then didn't speak it anymore. It's that each kind of living being heard the Dharma suited to that particular being, so all teachings covered the beginning and the end and there was no before or afterwards.

PROLOGUE:

TWO, THE DOOR OF BRANCH-TIPS ARISING FROM THE ROOT HAS FIVE KINDS WHICH ARE AS FOLLOWS. THE FIRST IS SPEAKING THE GREAT FOR THE BODHISATTVAS. THE SECOND IS FOR THOSE ENLIGHTENED TO CONDITIONS. THE THIRD IS FOR THE SOUND HEARERS. THE FOURTH IS FOR

LIVING BEINGS WITH GOOD ROOTS. THE FIFTH IS FOR THOSE OF DEVIANT SAMADHI. THIS IS AS IN THE DETAILED DISCUSSION FOUND IN THE MANIFESTATIONS CHAPTER'S ANALOGIES OF THE SUN ILLUMINING THE HIGH MOUNTAINS AND FIRST ACCOMPLISHMENT ON THE PART OF THE THREE THOUSAND, WHICH CLARIFIES HOW THERE IS FIRST THE GREAT AND AFTERWARDS THE SMALL.



COMMENTARY:

TWO is THE DOOR OF the BRANCH-TIPS--the Three Vehicles—ARISING FROM THE ROOT--the One Vehicle. The preceding door talked of how all covered both initial and final with no before or afterwards, but now there is before and afterwards. See how packed with meanings the Buddhadharma is! You can discuss the same thing in different ways and all of it is full of principle. But you have to be able to talk; otherwise, even though the principles are there, you won't be able to express them. But if you can speak them,

Every point is the Way.  
Left and right one meets the Source.

The fountainhead is wherever one turns, and so there is this second door of speaking the Small Vehicle based upon the Great Vehicle, which Dharma HAS FIVE KINDS. What are they? THE FIRST IS SPEAKING THE GREAT—the *Flower Adornment Sutra* FOR THE BODHISATTVAS, the Great Knights of the Dharma Body, right at the outset. This is as when the sun first rises it shines initially on the high mountains--which stand for the Great Bodhisattvas. THE SECOND IS FOR THOSE ENLIGHTENED TO CONDITIONS, Pratyekabuddhas, which involves speaking the Small Vehicle Dharma of the Twelve Links of Conditioned Coproduction. THE THIRD IS FOR THE SOUND HEARERS. THE FOURTH IS speaking the Dharma of the Five Precepts and the Ten Goods FOR LIVING BEINGS WITH GOOD ROOTS. THE FIFTH IS speaking Dharma for transcending the world FOR THOSE OF outside ways who practice DEVIANT SAMADHI. THIS IS AS IN THE DETAILED DISCUSSION FOUND IN THE MANIFESTATIONS CHAPTER'S ANALOGIES OF THE SUN. The sun first rising

represents the Buddha first speaking the *Flower Adornment Sutra* and ILLUMINATING THE HIGH MOUNTAINS, which stand for the great Bodhisattvas, AND FIRST ACCOMPLISHMENT of the Fruit ON THE PART OF the THREE THOUSAND Bhikshus. That chapter of the Sutra explains this at length, WHICH CLARIFIES HOW THERE IS FIRST the speaking of the Dharma of THE GREAT Vehicle, AND AFTERWARDS the speaking of the Dharma of THE SMALL VEHICLE.

*continued next issue*