

Dharma Flower Sutra

with commentary of Tripitaka Master Hua

Translated by BTTS

Reviewed by Bhikshuni Heng Ch'ih

Edited by Upasika Kuo Lin Lethcoe

SUTRA:

THE WORLD HONORED ONE, HAVING LIMITLESS WISDOM,
RECEIVED THE MULTITUDE'S REQUEST
AND PROCLAIMED VARIOUS DHARMAS FOR THEIR SAKES.
THE FOUR TRUTHS, THE TWELVE CONDITIONS,
FROM IGNORANCE UP TO OLD AGE AND DEATH--
ALL ARISE BECAUSE OF BIRTH.
IN THIS WAY THE HOST OF CALAMITIES COMES TO BE;
YOU SHOULD ALL KNOW THIS.
WHEN HE EXPOUNDED ON THIS DHARMA
SIX HUNDRED MYRIADS OF MILLIONS OF BILLIONS
EXHAUSTED THE LIMITS OF ALL SUFFERING
AND ALL BECAME ARHATS.
WHEN HE SPOKE THE DHARMA THE SECOND TIME,
HOSTS LIKE THE SANDS OF A THOUSAND MYRIADS OF GANGES
RIVERS
THEIR MINDS GRASPING NO DHARMAS,
ALSO ATTAINED ARHATSHIP.
AFTER THAT, THOSE WHO GAINED THE WAY,
WERE INCALCULABLE IN NUMBER:
WERE ONE TO COUNT THROUGH MYRIADS OF MILLIONS OF AEONS
ONE COULD NOT REACH THEIR LIMIT.

COMMENTARY:

The World Honored One, having limitless wisdom/ The wisdom of the Buddha is boundless. No one's wisdom is greater than the Buddha's. Received the multitudes' request/ received the request of all the hundreds of myriads of millions of Brahma Kings and of the sixteen sons. And proclaimed various Dharmas for their sakes/ He explained all the various Dharma-doors to them. The Four Truths. . . He began with the Dharma-door of the Four Holy Truths: Suffering, origination, stopping, and the Path. ...The Twelve Conditions/ Then he preached the Twelve Causal Links. From ignorance up to old age and death/ Ignorance is the first of the twelve, and old age and death comprise the last link.

All arise because of birth/ because of production. Without birth, none of the other twelve would exist. In this way the host of calamities comes to be/ all the cares and worries of the world. You should all know this/ You should all know suffering, cut off origination, long for extinction, and cultivate the Way. When he expounded on this

dharma/ When the Buddha, Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory, spoke the Four Truths and the Twelve Links, Six hundred myriads of millions of billions/ Exhausted the limits of all suffering/ All their sufferings were over, And all became Arhats/

When he spoke the Dharma the second time/ The first speaking here refers to the Agama Period of the Buddha's teaching. The second speaking refers to the Vaipulya Period. Hosts like the sands of a thousand myriads of Ganges rivers/ Their minds grasping no dharmas/ This means that their minds took in no unwholesome dharmas of affliction, Also attained Arhatship/ They certified to the Fourth Fruit of Arhatship. After that, those who gained the Way/ Those who went from Arhatship on to the Bodhisattva Path, were incalculable in number/ You couldn't count them; no way. One could not reach their limit/ This Buddha saved an uncountable number of beings. They could never be counted.

SUTRA:

AT THAT TIME, THE SIXTEEN PRINCES,
LEFT HOME AND BECAME SHRAMANERAS.
TOGETHER THEY REQUESTED THAT THE BUDDHA EXTENSIVELY
PROCLAIM THE DHARMA OF THE GREAT VEHICLE:
"MAY WE AND OUR FOLLOWERS ALL PERFECT THE BUDDHA WAY.
WE WISH TO BECOME LIKE THE WORLD HONORED ONE,
WITH THE WISDOM-EYE AND FOREMOST PURITY. "
THE BUDDHA, KNOWING THE INTENTIONS OF THE YOUTHS,
THEIR PRACTICE IN FORMER LIVES,
USED LIMITLESS CAUSES AND CONDITIONS
AND VARIOUS ANALOGIES, TO TEACH THEM THE SIX PARAMITAS,
AS WELL AS MATTERS OF SPIRITUAL PENETRATIONS.
HE DISCRIMINATED THE REAL DHARMA,
AND THE PATHWAY WALKED BY THE BODHISATTVAS.
HE SPOKE THE DHARMA FLOWER SUTRA
ITS VERSES IN NUMBERS LIKE THE GANGE'S SANDS.
AFTER THAT BUDDHA HAD SPOKEN THE SUTRA
IN A QUIET ROOM HE ENTERED DHYANA SAMADHI
SINGLE-MINDEDLY SITTING IN ONE PLACE,
FOR EIGHTY-FOUR THOUSAND AEONS.

COMMENTARY:

At that time, the sixteen princes/ the sixteen sons of the Buddha, Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory, Left home and became Shramaneras/ A Shramanera, is a novice monk. Novices take ten precepts. Together they requested that Buddha/ the Buddha, Great Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory, To extensively proclaim the Dharma of the Great Vehicle/ to speak *THE WONDERFUL DHARMA LOTUS FLOWER SUTRA*. They said, "May we and our followers/ All perfect the Buddha way/ May we all become Buddhas. We wish to become like the World Honored One/ We want to be exactly like the

Buddha. With the wisdom eye and foremost purity"/ The Buddha possesses the Eye of wisdom and is ultimately pure.

The Buddha, knowing the intention of the youths/ knowing the thoughts of his sixteen sons. A "youth", is a child who is still a virgin. Their practices in former lives/ He knew what kind of practices they had previously engaged in. Used limitless causes and conditions/ and various analogies to teach them the six paramitas/ Giving, morality, patience, vigor, concentration, and wisdom. Paramita is a Sanskrit word which means, "arrived at the other shore." As well as matters of spiritual penetrations/

He discriminated the real Dharma/ And the pathway walked by the Bodhisattvas/ He defined the real, genuine Buddhadharma and the Bodhisattva Path.

He spoke the DHARMA FLOWER SUTRA/ The Sutra of the Great Vehicle, *THE WONDERFUL DHARMA LOTUS FLOWER SUTRA*. Its verses in number like Ganges' sands/ After that Buddha had spoke n the Sutra/ After the Buddha, Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory, had spoken the Sutra, In a quiet room, he entered dhyana samadhi/ He went to his room and entered samadhi. Single-mindedly sitting in one place/ He meditated there For eighty-four thousand aeons/

SUTRA:

ALL THE SHRAMANERAS,
KNOWING THE BUDDHA HAD NOT YET LEFT DHYANA,
FOR THE SAKE OF THE LIMITLESS
MILLIONS ASSEMBLED,
SPOKE OF THE BUDDHA'S UNSURPASSED WISDOM.
EACH SEATED ON HIS DHARMA THRONE,
SPOKE THIS GREAT VEHICLE SUTRA.
AFTER THE BUDDHA HAD BECOME PEACEFULLY STILL,
THEY PROPAGATED AND TAUGHT THE DHARMA.
EACH ONE OF THE SHRAMANERAS
TOOK ACROSS LIVING BEINGS
TO THE NUMBER OF GRAINS OF SAND
IN SIX HUNDRED MYRIADS OF GANGES RIVERS.

COMMENTARY:

All the Shramaneras/ the sixteen Shramaneras and the Arhats, knowing the Buddha had not yet left Dhyana./ for the sake of the limitless millions assembled/ for all the living beings, Spoke of the Buddha's unsurpassed wisdom/ taught the supreme wisdom of the Buddha. Each seated on his Dharma throne/ Each of the sixteen princes took their Dharma-seat and Spoke this Great Vehicle Sutra/ *WONDERFUL DHARMA LOTUS FLOWER SUTRA*. After the Buddha had become peacefully still/ They propagated and taught the Dharma/ They spread the teachings of the Buddha. Each one of the Shramaneras/ the sixteen, Took across living beings/ To the number of grains of sand/ In six hundred myriads of millions of Ganges Rivers/

Someone has heard the word, Arhat, and is wondering what it means. Those who listen to Sutra lectures often will know, but those who are new won't. Arhat, is a Sanskrit word which is interpreted in three ways, "Worthy of Offerings," "Destroyer of Evil," and "Killer of Thieves." Arhats are worthy of receiving offerings from gods and humans. If no one makes offerings to them, they won't force people. They just return the light and say, "Probably in former lives I didn't cultivate blessings. As a result, now my bowl is empty." As "destroyers of evil," they have wiped out the evils of affliction. As, "killers of thieves," they have killed the thief of ignorance. Ignorance is a thief who ruins one's Way karma. Why do people do confused things? They do them out of ignorance. Why do people do things that are upside-down? It's out of ignorance. Why is it that, when one has no attachments, one deliberately looks for attachments? It's all out of ignorance. In spite of the fact that it is in our power to end birth and death, why do we fail to do so? Because of ignorance. So, ignorance is just terrible! Arhats kill ignorance. While we say they "kill" ignorance, they haven't killed it entirely. They have killed coarse ignorance, but a subtle ignorance remains. Ignorance could be likened to a virus. Perhaps you break out in a sore. When you put some medicine on it, it clears up. But, as soon as you quit applying the medicine, it breaks out again, and your skin itches like crazy. The Arhats have the medicine and put it on the sore, but they haven't gotten rid of the disease at its source. The only way to get rid of it entirely is to become a Buddha. I have told you before many times that even Bodhisattvas at the level of Equal Enlightenment still have one share of production-mark ignorance which they haven't severed. Arhats have ignorance, and so do the Bodhisattvas. They don't use their ignorance, that's all. Ignorance is stupidity. If the Equal Enlightenment Bodhisattvas break through that last remaining part of stupidity, they become Buddhas. Because the word Arhat encompasses all these meanings, we retain the Sanskrit word and do not translate it.

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