

FLOWER ADORNMENT

Prologue by Tang Dynasty national Master Ch'ing Liang"

with commentary of TRIPITAKA MASTER HUA

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Within the Buddhadharma faith is a matter of causes and conditions. If a person has the appropriate affinities, then even if you don't speak well, the person will believe. But if someone has no affinities with you, then no matter how well you speak they won't believe. Also the person needs to have good roots to be able to have faith. Therefore there's a matched couplet that goes:

Heaven's rain, though vast, does not moisten grass that has no roots.
The Buddha's door, though great, does not save people who are not good.

Even though the rainfall may cover a vast area, it will only revive grass that does have roots. If the grass lacks roots altogether, no matter how heavy the rainfall, it won't come to life. In the same way, as wide-open as the door of Buddhadharma is, it's extremely difficult to save people who are not good. Although it's said:

The butcher puts down his knife,
And immediately becomes a Buddha,

he does have to put it down. If he doesn't, there's no way he can accomplish Buddhahood.

For example, perhaps one of the left-home people translates well, but then a layperson lets him know that he thinks he's the best translator, and is telling people to wait and come on the night he's translating. The translator might have been experiencing a bit of response, but as soon as he hears those words of praise he starts to have arrogant thoughts like, "I translate best. So and so says I'm the best translator and waits to come on the day I'm translating. That's fantastic." He becomes arrogant and that covers over his wisdom. Ordinarily when he didn't know anything like that was going on and didn't think, "I want to translate well," he did a good job of translating. But now he uses thought. He has a false idea in front of him that goes, "I'll translate well, and after I've translated, all those people will understand the Buddhadharma."

As soon as he thinks that way, it obstructs his wisdom, and he doesn't translate well anymore, for the wisdom he had to start with is blocked by that false thought. Therefore, laypeople absolutely should not talk about how this Dharma Master is good and that one isn't, or about which Dharma Masters have Way virtue and which don't cultivate. As soon as you say one of them has Way virtue, he or she starts to think, "Upasaka So-and-So says I have Way virtue. Hey, my Way virtue is not slight. I *do* have a bit of cultivation."

That is what happened to National Master Wu Ta, "Penetrating Enlightenment." I'll tell you about him. In the Han Dynasty he was a great general, but he was jealous of a fellow general and so he framed him on false charges and had him executed. His name at the time was Yuan Nang, and the person he had killed was called Ch'au Ts'o. After killing Ch'au Ts'o he felt very sorry and repented, and he left home to cultivate. Ch'au Ts'o's ghost wanted revenge, but couldn't find him since he had left home and was cultivating, so he waited ten lifetimes for his chance. But in every one of those ten life-times, Yuan Nang left home and cultivated ascetic practices and all sorts of Dharma doors. He didn't do anything wrong during the first nine of those lifetimes, and his wisdom became more lofty in each life. In the life he was called Dharma Master Wu Ta, his wisdom was especially lofty, and so the Emperor bowed to him as National Master, as his Teacher. The Emperor had a special seat for lecturing Sutras and speaking Dharma carved for him out of sink-in-water sandalwood, which basically was reserved exclusively for imperial use. As soon as National Master Wu Ta took his seat, he became arrogant and felt his head was in the heavens while his feet were on the earth. He thought to himself, "How many Dharma Masters are there in this world who can sit in a precious seat of sink-in-water sandalwood?"

As soon as he had that single thought of arrogance, the ghost of Ch'au Ts'o arrived on the scene, and the Dharma protectors didn't protect him but left him, due to that thought of arrogance. That allowed the vengeful ghost to come and pull him off the Dharma seat, hitting him on the leg as it did so. That made a human-faced sore on his leg. The eyes, ears, nose and mouth were all there, right on his leg. It wasn't just the outline of a mouth-it really could eat, and demanded meat. Dharma Master Wu Ta himself was a vegetarian, but the mouth wanted meat, and hurt unbearably if it didn't get it. So you see, that one thought of arrogance let the avenging ghost find him, but Dharma Master Wu Ta didn't know he had that illness due to his arrogant thought.

Long before Dharma Master Wu Ta had contracted that human-faced sore, he had met the Venerable Kanaka who dwelt on Mount Omei and who manifested as having an illness to save National Master Wu Ta. He seemed to have ulcers all over him that oozed pus and blood, and National Master Wu Ta cared for him for many days until he was cured. Then the Venerable Kanaka said to him, "After this, if you have some problem you can't resolve, you can look me up. Come to where I am and I'll help you." So when he developed the human-faced sore, National Master Wu Ta suddenly thought of the Venerable Kanaka, and went to Szechwan Province and found him.

When the Venerable Kanaka was preparing to use samadhi water to cleanse it, the human-faced sore spoke up and said, "After you cleanse him, what about me?" It was the ghost speaking.

The Venerable Kanaka said, "What about you? I'll cross you over. When will this enmity between you cease? Whenever you give up your desire for revenge, then I'll cross you over."

When the ghost heard it would be crossed over, it agreed and set National Master Wu Ta free, and when samadhi water was used on the human-faced sore, it was cured.

PROLOGUE:

IN TERMS OF DHARMA THIS IS CALLED THE BRANCH-TIPS ARISING FROM THE ROOT, BECAUSE WITH REGARD TO THE ONE BUDDHA VEHICLE, BY WAY OF DISCRIMINATION THERE ARE SAID TO BE THREE, FOR THE EIGHTEEN AND THE BASIC TWO ALL ISSUE FORTH FROM THE GREAT VEHICLE. IN TERMS OF POTENTIALS, EACH ARE POTENTIALS OF ONE KIND. IT IS NOT THAT FOR ONE POTENTIAL THERE IS BEFORE AND AFTERWARDS, GREAT AND SMALL.

COMMENTARY:

IN TERMS OF DHARMA THIS IS CALLED THE BRANCH-TIPS--the Three Vehicles--ARISING FROM THE one fundamental ROOT--the One Vehicle. Therefore it says BECAUSE WITH REGARD TO THE ONE BUDDHA VEHICLE, BY WAY OF DISCRIMINATION THERE ARE SAID TO BE THREE. Fundamentally there is just the One Vehicle, but because of the differing dispositions of living beings, there are said to be the three different Vehicles of Sound Hearers, Those Enlightened to Conditions and Bodhisattvas--FOR THE EIGHTEEN Schools AND THE BASIC division into the TWO major types of Schools in the Small Vehicle ALL ISSUE FORTH FROM THE GREAT VEHICLE. You could also say this refers to the Eighteen Dharmas Special to a Buddha, which are basically not common to the Two Vehicles or to Bodhisattvas either, and only the Buddha Vehicle has them, yet these principles basically are all Great Vehicle Buddhadharma.

The Eighteen Dharmas Special to a Buddha

1. His body makes no errors.
2. His mouth makes no errors.
3. His mind makes no errors.
4. He has no differentiated thoughts.
5. His mind is never not in samadhi.
6. There is nothing he does not know and has not already renounced.
7. His zeal never lessens.
8. His vigor never lessens.
9. His mindfulness never lessens.
10. His wisdom never lessens.
11. His liberation never lessens.
12. His liberation of knowledge and views never lessens.
13. All of his bodily karma operates in accord with wisdom.
14. All of his mouth karma operates in accord with wisdom.
15. All of his mental karma operates in accord with wisdom.
16. His wisdom knows the past without obstruction.
17. His wisdom knows the future without obstruction.
18. His wisdom knows the present without obstruction.

IN TERMS OF POTENTIALS, EACH ARE POTENTIALS OF ONE KIND. Each kind of living being is of a single potential. Those of the Small Vehicle are potentials for the

Small Vehicle, those of the Great Vehicle are potentials for the Great Vehicle, and those of the Three Vehicles are potentials for the Three Vehicles. IT IS NOT THAT FOR ONE POTENTIAL THERE IS BEFORE AND AFTERWARDS, GREAT AND SMALL. It's not talking about the potential of a single category of living being when it says that there is a before and an afterwards, or that there is small or great. Rather, at one and the same time there is before and afterwards, great and small, suited to all the varieties of potentials. When there is said to be before and afterwards, small and great, it's not talking about a single kind of potential having them.

PROLOGUE:

THREE IS THE DOOR OF GATHERING THE BRANCH-TIPS TO RETURN TO THE ROOT. RELYING UPON THE *LIMITLESS MEANINGS*, THE FIRST PERIOD IS SPEAKING THE SMALL, NEXT SPEAKING THE MIDDLE VEHICLE, AND IN THE LAST PERIOD SPEAKING THE GREAT. THEREFORE THE *DHARMA FLOWER* ALSO SPEAKS OF TURNING THE FOUR TRUTHS, AND ALTHOUGH THE *DEEP SECRET* AND THE *WONDROUS WISDOM* ARE TWO FURTHER PERIODS WITH THE THREE AND THE ONE NOT THE SAME, STILL THEY ALL BEGIN WITH THE SMALL AND END WITH THE GREAT.

COMMENTARY:

THREE IS THE DOOR OF GATHERING THE BRANCH-TIPS--the Three Vehicles--TO RETURN them TO THE ROOT--the One Vehicle. RELYING UPON THE principles spoken in the *LIMITLESS MEANINGS Sutra*, it says THE FIRST PERIOD IS SPEAKING THE Dharma of the SMALL Vehicle, NEXT, when speaking of the Small Vehicle is over, then SPEAKING the Dharma of THE MIDDLE VEHICLE, AND IN THE LAST PERIOD SPEAKING of THE GREAT Vehicle Dharma--and that's how there is a division into Three Vehicles. Due to those considerations, THEREFORE in THE *DHARMA FLOWER Sutra* it ALSO SPEAKS OF FIRST TURNING THE Dharma Wheel of the FOUR Sagely TRUTHS in the Deer Park near Benares. AND ALTHOUGH THE *DEEP SECRET Sutra* AND THE *WONDROUS WISDOM Sutra* ARE spoken as TWO FURTHER PERIODS WITH THE account of THE THREE Vehicles AND THE ONE Vehicle NOT being THE SAME, STILL THEY ALL BEGIN WITH THE speaking of the SMALL Vehicle AND END WITH speaking of THE GREAT Vehicle.

PROLOGUE:

FOUR IS THE DOOR OF NON-OBSTRUCTION OF THE BRANCH-TIPS AND THE ROOT. IT FIRST BRINGS UP SPEAKING THAT SHINES ON THE VERY TOPS OF THE KINGS OF MOUNTAINS, WHICH CLARIFIES THAT IF IT WERE NOT FOR THE ROOT THERE WOULD BE NO TRAILING BRANCH-TIPS. AFTERWARDS IT POINTS TO THE DIFFERENT STREAMS RETURNING TO THE GREAT SEA, WHICH CLARIFIES THAT IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE BRANCH-TIPS THERE WOULD BE NO RETURNING TO THE ROOT. THEREFORE, ROOT AND BRANCH-TIPS INTERMINGLE, WHILE BESTOWING AND DEPRIVING ARE

RECIPROCALLY SUSTAINED--WHICH IS SKILL-IN-MEANS INDEED TO DRAW IN LIVING BEINGS!

COMMENTARY:

FOUR IS THE DOOR OF NON-OBSTRUCTION OF THE BRANCH-TIPS AND THE ROOT, in which the very root is the branch-tips and the very branch-tips are the root. The root doesn't gather in the branch-tips, nor do the branch-tips gather in the root. They are mutually non-obstructive. You can say it's the root or say it's the branch-tips. The fourth door is of nothing being fixed or exclusive about it. How is it put? It says that there was speaking of the Great Vehicle, and afterwards of the Small Vehicle, and that after talk of the Small Vehicle was finished, the Great Vehicle was again discussed. That is, the speaking could be of the Small Vehicle or the Great Vehicle, without any fixed succession of prior and latter.

IT FIRST BRINGS UP SPEAKING THAT SHINES ON THE VERY TOPS OF THE KINGS OF MOUNTAINS, meaning the time when the *Flower Adornment Sutra* was spoken, which was like the newly arisen sun first shining on the lofty mountains, WHICH CLARIFIES things so people will understand THAT IF IT WERE NOT FOR THE ROOT THERE WOULD BE NO TRAILING BRANCH-TIPS. Branch-tips cannot exist unless they grow from the root, so there must first be a root for there to be branch-tips trailing down from the branches, for example, of a tree. That part of the doctrine is made clear, and then AFTERWARDS IT POINTS TO THE DIFFERENT STREAMS RETURNING TO THE GREAT SEA. It makes explicit how the myriad streams--all other kinds of water which are smaller than the sea, such as rivers, lakes, creeks and streams--must return to the ocean. Their water wasn't salty to begin with, but when they return to the ocean they all have one identical salty flavor, WHICH CLARIFIES THAT IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE BRANCH-TIPS THERE WOULD BE NO RETURNING TO THE ROOT. The branch-tips are represented by the lesser streams that have to go back to the sea--it couldn't happen without them. THEREFORE, ROOT AND BRANCH-TIPS INTERMINGLE. There is root within the branch-tips and branch-tips are within the root, neither interfering with each other, WHILE BESTOWING AND DEPRIVING ARE RECIPROCALLY SUSTAINED. Giving and taking away help each other out. It's a constant give and take of bestowing and then snatching away. This is talking about how when the Buddha speaks the Dharma he:

Contemplates the potentials to entice with Teachings,
And according to the person, speaks the Dharma.

Some people can become enlightened through Great Vehicle Dharma, and so he gives such people principles of the Great Vehicle. Others are due to open enlightenment through Small Vehicle Dharma instead, and so he takes back the Great Vehicle Dharma and speaks a little Dharma of the Small Vehicle. That's an example of bestowing and depriving being reciprocally sustained. It's correct to give it, and it's also right to take it back. Both the bestowing and the taking back are the Buddhadharmas. This is also:

Prescribing the medicine according to the illness.

The medicine is given when you're sick. You take it, get well, and then the medicine is removed so you won't continue to take it, which wouldn't work. For example, if you catch cold you take some Yin Ch'ao tablets, but you should not continue to take them once you're cured. That's bestowing and depriving being reciprocally sustained, WHICH IS SKILL-IN-MEANS INDEED TO DRAW IN LIVING BEINGS! This is really clever, employment of expedient methods to teach and transform living beings and draw them in and hold them. It's not saying that it's necessarily good to give it to you or that it's good to take it back. You have to do it right whichever way you do it, and then either way will be correct. But if you do it wrong, then either way will be wrong.

-continued next issue