

Dharma Flower Sutra

with commentary of Tripitaka Master Hua

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FIVE HUNDRED DISCIPLES RECEIVE PREDICTIONS

Chapter 8

AT THAT TIME, PURNAMAITREYANIPUTRA HAD HEARD ABOUT WISDOM AND THE EXPEDIENTS FROM THE BUDDHA WHO SPEAKS OF DHARMA IN ACCORD WITH WHAT IS APPROPRIATE. HE HAD HEARD ALL THE GREAT DISCIPLES RECEIVE PREDICTIONS OF ANUTTARASAMYAKSAMBOBODHI. ALSO HE HAD HEARD OF THE MATTERS OF CAUSES AND CONDITIONS OF PREVIOUS LIVES. FURTHERMORE, HE HAD HEARD OF THE BUDDHA'S GREAT COMFORT AND THE POWER OF HIS SPIRITUAL PENETRATIONS. UPON HEARING ALL THIS HE OBTAINED WHAT HE HAD NEVER HAD BEFORE. HIS MIND WAS PURIFIED AND HE REJOICED.

COMMENTARY:

AT THAT TIME, PURNAMAITREYANIPUTRA, whose name means "son of fullness and compassion," HEARD ABOUT WISDOM AND THE EXPEDIENTS FROM THE BUDDHA. In the presence of the Buddha, the Venerable Purna heard the Dharma-door of wisdom and expedients from the World Honored One, WHO SPEAKS OF DHARMA IN ACCORD WITH WHAT IS APPROPRIATE. In accord with the potentials of living beings the Buddha speaks all the provisional dharmas. HE HAD HEARD ALL THE GREAT DISCIPLES RECEIVE PREDICTIONS OF ANUTTARASAMYAKSAMBOBODHI, the unsurpassed Proper and Equal, Right Enlightenment. ALSO, HE HAD HEARD OF THE MATTERS OF CAUSES AND CONDITIONS OF PREVIOUS LIVES. He had listened to the causes and conditions concerning the past lives of the Buddha Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory. FURTHERMORE, HE HAD HEARD OF THE BUDDHA'S GREAT COMFORT AND THE POWER OF HIS SPIRITUAL PENETRATIONS. All the Buddhas have the ability to use spiritual penetrations in inconceivably wonderful ways. UPON HEARING ALL THIS, HE OBTAINED WHAT HE NEVER HAD BEFORE. He had never heard such a wonderful Dharma. HIS MIND WAS PURIFIED AND HE REJOICED. His mind became pure and he was so happy he jumped for joy. He wanted to sit still, but he just couldn't contain himself, so great was his gratitude.

SUTRA:

THEREUPON, HE ROSE FROM HIS SEAT, BOWED WITH HIS HEAD AT THE BUDDHA'S FEET, AND WITHDREW TO ONE SIDE, GAZING UNBLINKINGLY AT THE HONORED ONE'S COUNTENANCE.

COMMENTARY:

THEREUPON, HE ROSE FROM HIS SEAT, and BOWED WITH HIS HEAD AT THE BUDDHA'S FEET. He was pure and rejoicing and filled with anticipation. He may even have reflected his awesome demeanor a bit so he went quickly before the Buddha to make obeisance. Then he calmed himself down and WITHDREW TO ONE SIDE, to be more respectful. There he stood, GAZING UP UNBLINKINGLY AT THE HONORED ONE'S COUNTENANCE. He looked up at the Buddha, the World Honored One, and didn't turn his gaze away. It was as if he had entered samadhi.

SUTRA:

HE THEN THOUGHT, "THE WORLD HONORED ONE IS UNIQUE. HIS DEEDS ARE RARE. HE ACCORDS WITH ALL THE VARIOUS DISPOSITIONS OF BEINGS IN THE WORLD. EMPLOYING EXPEDIENT DEVICES WITH KNOWLEDGE AND VISION, HE SPEAKS THE DHARMA FOR THEM, RELEASING THEM FROM VARIOUS TYPES OF GREED AND ATTACHMENT. WE COULD NEVER FULLY EXPRESS IN WORDS THE MERIT AND VIRTUE OF THE BUDDHA. ONLY THE BUDDHA, THE WORLD HONORED ONE, CAN KNOW OUR DEEPEST THOUGHTS AND PAST VOWS.

COMMENTARY:

His eyes may not have been moving, but his mind was striking up some false thinking. HE THEN THOUGHT, "THE WORLD HONORED ONE IS UNIQUE. The Buddha is extremely great, special beyond compare. HIS DEEDS ARE RARE. He does what no one else can do. He carries out his every action to perfection. HE ACCORDS WITH ALL THE VARIOUS DISPOSITIONS OF BEINGS IN THE WORLD, finding ways to comply with all their different temperaments. EMPLOYING EXPEDIENT DEVICES WITH KNOWLEDGE AND VISION, HE SPEAKS THE DHARMA FOR THEM, RELEASING THEM FROM VARIOUS TYPES OF GREED AND ATTACHMENT. He is skillful in helping beings get rid of all their attachments, regardless of what they may be, wealth, sex, fame, food, or sleep, forms, sounds, smells, tastes, or objects of touch.

WE COULD NEVER FULLY EXPRESS IN WORDS THE MERIT AND VIRTUE OF THE BUDDHA. When it comes to the Buddha, we can't describe his virtue and wisdom in words. ONLY THE BUDDHA, THE WORLD HONORED ONE, CAN KNOW OUR DEEPEST THOUGHTS AND PAST VOWS. The Buddha knows all the thoughts in our minds and the vows we made in the past under all their different circumstances. We don't know ourselves, but the Buddha knows these things about us. The Buddha knows all the causes and conditions from past and present lifetimes.

SUTRA:

AT THAT TIME, THE BUDDHA TOLD THE BHIKSHUS, "DO YOU NOTICE HOW I CONSTANTLY PRAISE PURNAMAITREYANIPUTRA AS BEING FOREMOST OF THOSE WHO SPEAK THE DHARMA. I EXTOL HIS VARIOUS MERITORIOUS QUALITIES AND HIS VIGOROUS AND DILIGENT SUPPORT IN HELPING TO PROCLAIM MY DHARMA. IN THE MIDST OF THE FOUR-FOLD ASSEMBLY, HE CAN DEMONSTRATE THE TEACHING TO THE DELIGHT AND ADVANTAGE OF ALL. HE PERFECTLY INTERPRETS THE PROPER DHARMA OF THE BUDDHA, GREATLY BENEFITTING HIS FELLOW PRACTITIONERS OF PURE CONDUCT. EXCEPT FOR THE THUS COME ONE, NO ONE CAN FULLY APPRECIATE HIS ELOQUENCE IN DISCUSSION."

COMMENTARY:

AT THAT TIME, THE BUDDHA TOLD THE BHIKSHUS, "DO YOU NOTICE HOW I CONSTANTLY PRAISE PURNAMAITREYANIPUTRA AS BEING FOREMOST OF THOSE WHO SPEAK THE DHARMA. Do you see this Sound Hearer disciple? In previous lives, he made great vows to help the Buddha propagate the Buddhadharma. I always praise him in the great assembly as being the best at speaking Dharma." So the Buddha also had his disciples take turns in speaking the Dharma. Doesn't the *SHURANGAMA SUTRA* speak of the Four Great Disciples turning the Dharma wheel? That just means taking turns speaking the Dharma. The Buddha didn't necessarily speak the Dharma every day. The Buddha's intention in praising the Venerable Purna was to encourage his disciples to be more vigorous. None of them wanted to be the worst speaker, and the best speaker would work harder. By the time the Buddha went to Nirvana, all of his disciples could speak the Dharma and turn the Great Dharma Wheel.

Now, I'm no Buddha, but I want to copy this Dharma of the Buddha, and so frankly, I'll tell you what I know, but I could never tell you all I know. There's no end to that, and there's not enough time. So, when you lecture, you don't have to think, "Well, the Master didn't explain that." There's a lot of things I don't explain! It's up to you to investigate these things in more detail, and expand your knowledge. Take care to keep within the scope of the Sutra's principles, however.

Anyway, Shakyamuni Buddha always praised Venerable Purnamaitreyaniputra as being foremost in lecturing the Dharma. He spoke the Dharma most miraculously. The gods like to hear him speak the Dharma. The hungry ghosts like to hear it too. Animals enjoyed his discourses, and the asuras, hearing him, would immediately quit fighting. They would strike up a truce and go hear the Dharma. The Arhats and the Bodhisattvas also like to hear him. So, among those who spoke the Dharma, Purnamaitreyaniputra was foremost, unsurpassed.

"I EXTOL HIS VARIOUS MERITORIOUS QUALITIES. I always praise the deeds he did in previous lives when he made offerings to all Buddhas, and to the Triple Jewel, thereby nurturing various meritorious qualities.

I laud HIS VIGOROUS AND DILIGENT SUPPORT IN HELPING TO PROCLAIM MY DHARMA. He is energetic in helping me to spread the Buddhadharma.

"IN THE MIDST OF THE FOUR-FOLD ASSEMBLY, HE CAN DEMONSTRATE THE TEACHING TO THE DELIGHT AND ADVANTAGE OF ALL. Amidst the Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas and Upasikas, he can demonstrate the methodologies of the Buddha-dharma. His delighted listeners gain a great benefit.

"HE PERFECTLY INTERPRETS THE PROPER DHARMA OF THE BUDDHA. His knowledge and views are the same as the Buddha's. That is why he can interpret the Buddha's proper Dharma.

"By his speech he greatly benefits HIS FELLOW PRACTITIONERS OF PURE CONDUCT. He helps all those who cultivate the Bodhisattva Path, pure Brahma conduct.

"EXCEPT FOR THE THUS COME ONE, the Buddha, NO ONE CAN FULLY APPRECIATE HIS ELOQUENCE IN DISCUSSION. The Bodhisattvas, Sound Hearers, and Conditioned Enlightened Ones cannot out-debate the eloquent Great Bhikshu Purnamaitreyaniputra. "

-continued next issue

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