

# *The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra*

*with commentary by Tripitaka Master Hua*

## *Chapter Eleven: Vision of the Jeweled Stupa*

*Sutra:*

*GODS, DRAGONS, YAKSHAS, GANDHARVAS, ASURAS, GARUDAS, KINNARAS, MAHORAGAS, HUMANS, NON-HUMANS, AND SO FORTH,*

*COMMENTARY:*

I have told you before that each of us has innumerable karmic obstacles. Gwan Yin Bodhisattva is always sprinkling her sweet dew, but because of the magnitude of their karmic obstacles, people sometimes give rise to their own mental demons. These mental demons cause them to lose perspective and the demon takes them over. This is a pitiful situation. It's a matter of great concern for everyone. Those attending this Summer Session should be aware of the fact that if you want to improve, your past offenses will attack you and try to get in your way. If you want to become a Buddha, you must undergo testing by the demons, too. So don't have so much false thinking. Study the Buddhadharma with one mind and one heart. When you listen to the Dharma lectures, take notes. When sitting in meditation, don't indulge in false thinking. That makes it harder for demonic obstacles to arise. Those who haven't had demonic obstacles should help those who have. Aid them with the power of contemplation in meditation. Help them beat their demons back and overcome their obstacles. In this way they can, as the saying goes:

Have a share in the true Way  
And make progress in the Way, and avoid demons.

Everyone has a share in cultivation. I will be doing this sort of contemplation and all of you should, too. Don't be turned by states.

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The Heaven of the Thirty-three also has another explanation. The number thirty-three represents the: Ten Bodhisattva Dwellings, Ten Bodhisattva Conducts, Ten Bodhisattva Transferences to make thirty. Then you add the Ten Grounds, counting them together as one and you get thirty-one. Then you add Equal Enlightenment and that makes thirty-two, and then Wonderful Enlightenment and you get thirty-three. These are taken from the Fifty-five Stages of Bodhisattva Development.

GODS and DRAGONS represent the good subsidiary mind dharmas. YAKSHAS, GANDHARVAS, ASURAS, GARUDAS, KINNARAS, MAHORAGAS, HUMANS, NON-HUMANS AND SO FORTH represent the evil subsidiary mind dharmas.

In his Shastra of the Door of Understanding the One Hundred Dharmas, the Bodhisattva Vasubandhu explains the One Hundred Dharmas in detail. They are divided into five general categories:

1) 11 form dharmas

- 2) 8 mind dharmas
- 3) 51 subsidiary mind dharmas
- 4) 24 dharmas not interactive with the mind
- 5) 6 unconditioned dharmas

The present analogy makes reference to the third category.

Dragons can go through all kinds of transformations; they can become big or small. They can appear and disappear. How did they get to be dragons? They are said to be "spiritual," that is, inconceivable. How did they get to be dragons, that is animals, if they have spiritual penetrations? When they were cultivating the Way, they were "quick with the Vehicle but slow with the Precepts." They cultivated the Great Vehicle Dharma with great vigor, but they did not keep the precepts. Because they cultivated the Great Vehicle Dharma, they gained spiritual penetrations. Because they failed to keep the precepts, they turned into animals.

Birds become birds because they are fond of "flying high," and have high ambitions. All day long they think about flying so they turn into birds.

"Yakshas" are "speedy ghosts." They get around very fast. There are ground-traveling yakshas and space traveling yakshas. There are water-traveling Yakshas, too. Speaking of yakshas, they are very fierce. Some specialize in sapping people of their energy. You may know some people who have very weak energy-systems. No matter what kind of food they eat, they never have any energy. Most likely a yaksha ghost is busy living off of their energies. Some yakshas drink human blood, some eat people's essence. There are many varieties of yakshas.

"Gandharvas" are "incense inhaling spirits," musicians in the court of the Jade Emperor. When the Emperor wants some music, he lights some incense and the Gandharvas all come to play.

"Asuras" have big tempers. Take a look around you. Whoever has a big temper is an asura. There are human asuras, ghost asuras, animal asuras. Take for example our two pigeons: Seven Bodhi Shares hasn't much of a temper, but Twelve Links has a terrible temper. He's an animal asura. If he gives rise to the Bodhi mind, then he won't have such a temper, but unfortunately he is still turning on the wheel of the "twelve links," and so his temper remains formidable. Anger is just ignorance. The more ignorance, the more anger.

Asura is a Sanskrit word which means "ugly." It also means "no wine." They have the blessings of the gods but not the authority. They enjoy heavenly blessings, but they have no say in running things. Since they have no power, they are always fighting for power, battling with the heavenly armies.

"Garudas" are the great gold-winged Peng birds. They have a wingspan of 360 yojanas. It used to be that when they flapped their wings, the ocean waters parted and all the dragons at the bottom of the sea were exposed. The dragons had no time to transform into anything. They were gobbled up on the spot by the garudas, who ate them like we eat noodles. All gone!

The dragons were getting very upset about this, because large numbers of them were being eaten, their species had become "endangered." They went to the Buddha to complain and the Buddha gave them each a thread from his precept sash, saying, "You can wear this and then you will be invisible to the Peng bird!"

That worked out fine for the dragons, but the Peng bird was then going hungry. So he went to the Buddha and said, "What about me? Dragons are my primary food supply. I'm going to starve!"

Shakyamuni Buddha said, "Don't worry. I'll tell all my disciples to set out some food for you when they eat lunch every day." That's why left-home people send some food out for the Peng bird.

"Kinnaras" are also musical spirits in the Jade Emperor's court. The Jade Emperor likes to entertain and always has the kinnaras play music so the gods can dance.

"Mahoragas" are huge snakes. "Humans and so forth, THOUSANDS OF MYRIADS OF KOTIS OF THEM, MADE OFFERINGS TO THE JEWELLED STUPA OF ALL KINDS OF FLOWERS, INCENSE, BEADS, BANNERS, CANOPIES, AND INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC--music of all kinds. This can also refer to disciplines such as yoga and the martial arts. REVERING, HONORING, AND PRAISING IT. Everyone was very respectful of the Jeweled Stupa and spoke in praise of it.

SUTRA:

*AT THAT TIME, A LOUD SOUND ISSUED FROM THE STUPA SPEAKING IN PRAISE, SAYING, "GOOD INDEED, GOOD INDEED, SHAKYAMUNI, WORLD HONORED ONE, THAT YOU ARE ABLE, BY MEANS OF YOUR LEVEL AND EQUAL GREAT WISDOM, TO SPEAK FOR THE GREAT ASSEMBLY THE WONDERFUL DHARMA FLOWER SUTRA, A DHARMA FOR TEACHING BODHISATTVAS, ONE THE BUDDHAS ARE PROTECTIVE AND MINDFUL OF. SO IT IS, SO IT IS, SHAKYAMUNI, WORLD HONORED ONE, THAT ALL YOU SAY IS TRUE AND REAL."*

COMMENTARY:

In this passage of text, the Thus Come One Many Jewels certifies that Shakyamuni Buddha's speaking of *The Dharma Flower Sutra* is genuine and not false. AT THAT TIME, A LOUD SOUND ISSUED FROM THE STUPA SPEAKING IN PRAISE, a mighty and wonderful sound praising Shakyamuni Buddha. SAYING, "GOOD INDEED! GOOD INDEED, SHAKYAMUNI, WORLD HONORED ONE!" Shakra means "able to be humane." Muni means "still and silent." "Able to be humane" refers to the Buddha's compassionate rescuing of living beings. "Still and silent" refers to the accumulation of virtue gained through pure cultivation. Able to be humane refers to movement. Still and silent refers to stillness. Within movement, there is stillness, and within stillness there is movement. Movement does not obstruct stillness, and stillness does not obstruct movement. Movement *is* stillness, and stillness *is* movement. Within movement there is stillness, as stillness is the movement of non-movement. Within stillness there is movement, as movement is the stillness of non-stillness. Moving and yet still, still and yet moving. Moving and yet still, still and yet moving. Movement functions in stillness, and stillness functions within movement. this is called the non-dual Dharma door. Common people look upon them as dual, but those who have opened their wisdom see them as one. Shakyamuni Buddha, although in samadhi, can teach all living beings. Although he is teaching and transforming living beings, he remains in samadhi. That's what's called "wonderful."

In case you don't understand the principle, I will demonstrate it by means of a very simple analogy. I know it's simple, because I understand it myself. We can say that sleeping is just the same as being awake. Being awake is the same as sleeping. Now, do you understand? You don't have to talk on and on about

"movement doesn't obstruct stillness, etc., etc., etc." Just remember that sleeping is waking, and waking is sleeping. If you can feel like you are asleep when you are awake and awake when you are sleeping, then you won't need to sleep. The reason you feel you must sleep is because you think it's different than being awake.

"YOU ARE ABLE, BY MEANS OF YOU LEVEL AND EQUAL GREAT WISDOM, the universal rain of your Dharma words, TO SPEAK FOR THE GREAT ASSEMBLY *THE WONDERFUL DHARMA FLOWER SUTRA*, A DHARMA FOR TEACHING BODHISATTVAS, ONE THE BUDDHAS ARE PROTECTIVE AND MINDFUL OF. SO IT IS, SO IT IS, SHAKYAMUNI, WORLD HONORED ONE, THAT ALL YOU SAY IS TRUE AND REAL." It's all for real! You all should believe it and have no doubts.

Shakyamuni Buddha was speaking the Dharma and Many Jewels Thus Come put in an appearance to certify to the fact that he was right and telling the truth! He acted as a certifier.

I just said that sleeping and waking were the same. You may think of sleeping as an analogy for confusion and waking as an analogy for enlightenment.

Now, while you are asleep are you aware of what your activities were during the day when you were awake? Do you still remember them? I believe most common people won't remember. When they are asleep they forget all about them. In dreams, they may remember some of it, but it's still unclear. When you are asleep, you forget about what you did yesterday, and you can't imagine what you will be doing tomorrow. That's the way with people in the world.

"Sometimes I have dreams and the things I dream about actually happen to me the next day!" you say.

That's a special magical occurrence, not something you can do consciously, however. Perhaps the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are helping you by giving you a glimpse into the future. That doesn't count as being your own wisdom.

So think about it; if you can't remember what happened yesterday and you don't know what's happening tomorrow, how can you possibly expect to remember what you did in past lives or to know what you will do in future lives? You will be even more unclear about that! What is more, we are as if in a dream and things are indistinct. Human life is like a dream. If you can wake up to the fact that you are dreaming, then there's some hope for you. Don't insist on thinking, "This is all true. I eat and then I'm no longer hungry. This is truly wonderful." If you think in this way, then you won't ever discover that which is truly wonderful. If you feel that transcendental dharmas are wonderful, you won't feel that mundane dharmas are wonderful. It just depends on which one you pick--the worldly or the transcendental.

*translated and reviewed by members of the Buddhist Text Translation Society  
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