

The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra

with commentary by Tripitaka Master Hua

Chapter Eleven: Vision of the jeweled Stupa

SUTRA:

JUST THEN THE FOUR ASSEMBLIES SEEING THE GREAT JEWELLED STUPA STANDING IN SPACE AND HEARING THE SOUND FROM WITHIN IT, ALL GAINED DHARMA JOY AND MARVELED AT THIS UNPRECEDENTED OCCURENCE. THEY ROSE FROM THEIR SEATS, REVERENTLY PLACED THEIR PALMS TOGETHER, AND WITHDREW TO ONE SIDE.

COMMENTARY:

JUST THEN, right after the assembly heard the loud sound coming from the Jeweled Stupa, praising Shakyamuni Buddha, THE FOUR ASSEMBLIES rejoiced. The Four Assemblies refer to the Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, and Upasikas. "Bhikshu" has three meanings and so it is not translated from the Sanskrit. It means "seeker of alms," "frightener of Mara," and "destroyer of evil."

1. Seeker of alms. Above, a Bhikshu seeks the food of Dharma from all the Buddhas to nourish his Dharma-body. Below, he seeks food from living beings to nourish the life of his wisdom. He must seek alms from the rich and the poor equally. What benefits does seeking alms bring? It gives living beings a chance to plant blessings. Living beings make offerings to the Triple Jewel in order to attain blessings and virtue. Unless they make offerings to the Triple Jewel, their blessings thin out and day by day they accordingly undergo more suffering. Many people don't know enough to make offerings on their own, so the Bhikshus seek alms to make them aware of this practice. Seeking alms helps the Bhikshus to reduce their greed. It also helps lay-people to give rise to charitable hearts. When Bhikshus seek alms, they do so in succession from one house to the next; they can't pass by the poorer families and seek alms from the rich, hoping for better offerings. They must not discriminate in their alms rounds. They have to seek alms equally from all living beings so that all have an equal chance to plant blessings.

2. Frightener of Mara. When Bhikshus leave home, the heavenly demons are upset. This is like when you come here to study the Buddhadharma, the demon kings use all their tricks to get you to quit studying because they don't like it one bit. If you leave home, the demons are even more unhappy. When Bhikshus step up on the Precept Platform to receive the Precepts, the Three Masters and Seven Certifiers, representing the Buddhas of the ten directions and three periods of time in administering and certifying the Precepts, ask you, "Have you brought forth the Bodhi-mind?"

You say, "Yes."

Then they ask you, "Are you a great hero?"

You say, "Yes, I am." At that time, an earth traveling yaksha tells a space traveling yaksha, and the space

traveling yaksha flies up to the demon kings in the sixth desire heaven to inform them that among human beings, someone has left home to become a Bhikshu. When the demon king hears this, his palace quakes, like an earthquake, and the demon king is afraid. Thus, Bhikshus are called "frighteners of Mara."

3. Destroyer of evil. Bhikshus break through all the evils of afflictions. People are born with afflictions. At the very moment they are born, they lose their tempers, get mad, and cry. Bhikshus break through afflictions, and just that is Bodhi. They give rise to the Bodhi-mind. Since the word Bhikshu includes these three meanings, it is not translated but is left in the Sanskrit. A Bhikshuni is a woman who has left home and same three meanings apply. An Upasaka is a layman and an Upasika is a laywoman. The Sanskrit word Upasaka means "man who is close in work," as a layman works closely with the Triple Jewel. Upasika means "a woman who is close in work," working closely with the Triple Jewel. These are the Four Assemblies of disciples.

The Four Assemblies saw THE GREAT JEWELLED STUPA STANDING IN SPACE. Our stupas are on the ground. Why was this stupa in the air? What was it standing on? What was its foundation? How could it do this?

Well, what about the space satellites that orbit around and around? If people can invent these, how much the more so could they happen in the Buddhadharma. The Buddhadharma is much more subtle and wonderful than the dharmas of people. The Jeweled Stupa is sort of like a space station. There's nothing strange about the Jeweled Stupa in space, then. This represents that the Buddha dwells nowhere and has no attachments. How can one stand still in empty space? It can be done when one is without any attachments.

AND they were HEARING THE SOUND FROM WITHIN IT. When they heard the wonderful, mighty voice coming from the Stupa, ALL GAINED DHARMA JOY. They were so happy, they forgot about their troubles, AND MARVELED AT THIS UNPRECEDENTED OCCURENCE. No wonder you asked how the Stupa could stand in empty space. Even those of the Four-fold Assembly who saw it with their own eyes thought that it was strange. They marveled at how a jeweled stupa could be standing in empty space. THEY ROSE FROM THEIR SEATS, REVERENTLY PLACED THEIR PALMS TOGETHER AND WITHDREW TO ONE SIDE. Because their minds were filled with awe and wonder, their bodies expressed reverence by withdrawing to one side. They stood up and withdrew because they did not understand it. They marveled at it, and wanted Shakyamuni Buddha to answer their question about it.

SUTRA:

JUST THEN A BODHISATTVA MAHASATTVA BY THE NAME OF GREAT DELIGHT IN SPEAKING, KNOWING THE DOUBTS IN THE MINDS OF ALL THE GODS, HUMANS, AND ASURAS AND OTHERS FROM ALL THE WORLDS, SPOKE TO THE BUDDHA SAYING, "WORLD HONORED ONE, BY MEANS OF WHAT CAUSES AND CONDITIONS HAS THIS JEWELLED STUPA WELLED UP OUT OF THE EARTH AND PRODUCED THIS LOUD SOUND?"

COMMENTARY:

JUST THEN A BODHISATTVA MAHASATTVA spoke up. "Bodhi" means enlightenment. "Sattva" means a sentient being. A Bodhisattva enlightens all sentient beings; and a Bodhisattva is an

enlightened being. A "Mahasattva" is a Great Bodhisattva. Bodhisattvas think only to benefit others and they pay no attention to whether or not they themselves receive any benefits. They teach, transform, and rescue all living beings, causing all living beings to leave suffering and attain bliss. Great Bodhisattvas resolve to give up their very lives for living beings. In past lives, when Shakyamuni Buddha was practicing the Bodhisattva Path, he gave up his life over one thousand times to teach living beings. If living beings failed to respond to his teaching, he would even give up his life if necessary to save them. The Bodhisattva Path is not at all that easy to practice. You all remember the story about Shariputra who tried to practice the Bodhisattva Path, don't you? He heard the Buddha praising the Bodhisattva Path as the highest path and so he thought he would try it out. He was the most intelligent of all the Buddha's disciples and he had the best memory. However, it proved to be too much for him. When you practice the Bodhisattva Path, take care not to be like Shariputra!

This Bodhisattva in the Assembly was one BY THE NAME OF GREAT DELIGHT IN SPEAKING. KNOWING THE DOUBTS IN THE MINDS OF ALL THE GODS, HUMANS, AND ASURAS AND OTHERS FROM ALL THE WORLDS, he SPOKE TO THE BUDDHA SAYING, "WORLD HONORED ONE, BY MEANS OF WHAT CAUSES AND CONDITIONS HAS THIS JEWELLED STUPA WELLED UP OUT OF THE EARTH AND PRODUCED THIS LOUD SOUND? It went straight up into the air and a wonderful sound came forth from it. Why? Please, Teacher, be compassionate and tell us. We all have doubts about this matter." This was his request.

SUTRA:

THEN THE BUDDHA TOLD THE BODHISATTVA GREAT DELIGHT IN SPEAKING, "WITHIN THIS JEWELLED STUPA IS THE COMPLETE BODY OF THE THUS COME ONE. LONG AGO, LIMITLESS THOUSANDS OF MYRIADS OF KOTIS OF ASAMKHYEYA WORLDS TO THE EAST, IN A LAND CALLED JEWELLED PURITY, THERE WAS A BUDDHA BY THE NAME OF MANY JEWELS. WHEN THIS BUDDHA WAS PRACTICING THE BODHISATTVA PATH, HE MADE A GREAT VOW SAYING, 'AFTER I HAVE BECOME A BUDDHA AND PASSED INTO TRANQUILITY, IN ANY OF THE TEN DIRECTION LANDS WHERE THE DHARMA FLOWER SUTRA IS BEING SPOKEN, MY STUPA SHALL WELL UP AND APPEAR THERE, THAT I MAY HEAR THE SUTRA AND CERTIFY IT, PRAISING IT, SAYING, GOOD INDEED! GOOD INDEED!'"

COMMENTARY:

THEN THE BUDDHA TOLD THE BODHISATTVA GREAT DELIGHT IN SPEAKING, "Since you asked, I will tell you. WITHIN THIS JEWELLED STUPA IS THE COMPLETE BODY OF THE THUS COME ONE. Which Thus Come One? LONG AGO, LIMITLESS THOUSANDS OF MYRIADS OF KOTIS OF ASAIMKHYEYA WORLDS TO THE EAST, IN A LAND CALLED JEWELLED PURITY, THERE WAS A BUDDHA BY THE NAME OF MANY JEWELS. WHEN THIS BUDDHA WAS PRACTICING THE BODHISATTVA PATH, before he became a Buddha, HE MADE A GREAT VOW." Those who practice the Bodhisattva Path should make vows.

"SAYING, 'AFTER I HAVE BECOME A BUDDHA AND PASSED INTO TRANQUILITY, entered Nirvana, IN ANY OF THE TEN DIRECTION LANDS WHERE *THE DHARMA FLOWER*

SUTRA IS BEING SPOKEN." He, too, uses the word "I" but his "I" is not a selfish one. "*MY STUPA SHALL WELL UP AND APPEAR THERE.*" *The Dharma Flower Sutra* was Many Jewels Buddha's favorite Sutra. He felt it was the most wonderful and inconceivable of all Sutras and so he wanted to make a wonderful vow regarding it. He said, "After I go to Nirvana, and people make me a stupa, my Stupa shall appear there, where the Sutra is being spoken *THAT I MAY HEAR THE SUTRA AND CERTIFY IT, PRAISING IT, SAYING, GOOD INDEED! GOOD INDEED!* Someone's lecturing *The Lotus Sutra* here. Very good. I can hear it again." That was his wonderful vow. Shakyamuni Buddha is speaking about the vow that Buddha made limitless, uncountable aeons ago. And at the same time Many Jewels Buddha is manifesting and exclaiming, "Good indeed! Good indeed! Here is another *Dharma Flower Sutra* Assembly!"

SUTRA:

"AFTER THAT BUDDHA HAD REALIZED THE WAY, WHEN HE WAS ABOUT TO ENTER INTO TRANQUILITY, IN THE GREAT ASSEMBLY OF GODS AND HUMANS HE SPOKE TO THE BHIKSHUS SAYING, 'AFTER MY TRANQUILITY, THOSE WHO WISH TO MAKE OFFERINGS TO MY COMPLETE BODY SHOULD BUILD A LARGE STUPA."

COMMENTARY:

"Because of the vow he had made when practicing the Bodhisattva Path, later AFTER THAT BUDDHA, Many Jewels, HAD REALIZED THE WAY, WHEN HE WAS ABOUT TO ENTER INTO TRANQUILITY--Nirvana, IN THE GREAT ASSEMBLY OF GODS AND HUMANS HE SPOKE TO THE BHIKSHUS SAYING." Here the word "Bhikshus" includes all members of the Four-fold Assembly. Some many think that after Many Jewels became a Buddha he himself didn't speak the Dharma, but instead he made a vow to protect the Buddhas who did speak *The Dharma Flower Sutra*. But that explanation is not necessarily correct because here the text refers to "Bhikshus," and those Bhikshus are ones he crossed over by speaking the Dharma to them. When he was about to enter Nirvana he told them, "AFTER MY TRANQUILITY, THOSE WHO WISH TO MAKE OFFERINGS TO MY COMPLETE BODY SHOULD BUILD A LARGE STUPA. Using seven gems, one should make a big stupa."

SUTRA:

"BY THE POWER OF HIS SPIRITUAL PENETRATIONS AND HIS VOW, THROUGHOUT THE TEN DIRECTION WORLDS WHEREVER ANYONE SPEAKS THE DHARMA FLOWER SUTRA, THAT BUDDHA'S JEWELLED STUPA CONTAINING HIS COMPLETE BODY WELLS UP FROM THE EARTH BEFORE THE ONE SPEAKING AND EXPRESSES PRAISE BY SAYING, 'GOOD INDEED! GOOD INDEED!'"

"GREAT DELIGHT IN SPEAKING! BECAUSE HE HAS HEARD THE DHARMA FLOWER SUTRA BEING SPOKEN, THE STUPA OF THE THUS COME ONE MANY JEWELS HAS NOW WELLED UP OUT OF THE EARTH WITH THESE WORDS OF PRAISE, 'GOOD INDEED! GOOD INDEED!'"

COMMENTARY:

"BY THE POWER OF HIS SPIRITUAL PENETRATIONS AND HIS VOW, THROUGHOUT THE TEN DIRECTION WORLDS WHEREVER ANYONE SPEAKS *THE DHARMA FLOWER SUTRA*, THAT BUDDHA'S JEWELLED STUPA CONTAINING HIS COMPLETE BODY WELLS UP FROM THE EARTH BEFORE THE ONE SPEAKING." Having given instructions to his disciples to build him a jeweled stupa, he then uses his inconceivable spiritual penetrations and his inconceivable vows. The "ten direction worlds" include the four cardinal points, the intermediary points, the zenith and nadir. In each of the ten direction worlds, however, there are hundreds of thousands of myriads of worlds, too. In each of those limitless, limitless worlds he will appear--it doesn't matter where--whenever a Buddha appears and is speaking *The Dharma Flower Sutra*. "Even though he entered Nirvana so long ago, the entire body of Many Jewels Thus Come One still manifests in the Stupa AND EXPRESSES PRAISE of any Buddha who is speaking *The Dharma Flower Sutra*, BY SAYING, 'GOOD INDEED! GOOD INDEED! I have now once again met with a World Honored One who is speaking *The Dharma Flower Sutra*.'

"GREAT DELIGHT IN SPEAKING! I will tell you, BECAUSE HE HAS HEARD *THE DHARMA FLOWER SUTRA* BEING SPOKEN, THE STUPA OF THE THUS COME ONE MANY JEWELS HAS NOW WELLED UP OUT OF THE EARTH. He wants to come and listen to it WITH THESE WORDS OF PRAISE, 'GOOD INDEED! GOOD INDEED! Very good! Living beings have another opportunity to hear *The Dharma Flower Sutra*.'" He says, "Good indeed!" twice, and that's the big sound from inside the Stupa.

SUTRA:

JUST THEN, THE BODHISATTVA GREAT DELIGHT IN SPEAKING, BY MEANS OF THE SPIRITUAL POWER OF THE THUS COME ONE, SPOKE TO THE BUDDHA SAYING, "WORLD HONORED ONE, WE ALL WISH TO SEE THIS BUDDHA'S BODY."

COMMENTARY:

JUST THEN, THE BODHISATTVA GREAT DELIGHT IN SPEAKING, BY MEANS OF THE SPIRITUAL POWER OF THE THUS COME ONE, SPOKE TO THE BUDDHA. The Bodhisattva asks the Buddha, but why does the text say "by means of the spiritual power of the Thus Come One?" Why isn't it by means of his own power? It is because, in this Dharma Assembly, all the states that appear are manifestations of the Buddha's awesome spiritual power. Even this Bodhisattva's questions about the doctrine come about through the aid of the Buddha's spiritual power, lending him the wisdom so that he can ask these questions. He spoke SAYING, "WORLD HONORED ONE, Shakyamuni Buddha, WE ALL WISH TO SEE THIS BUDDHA'S BODY." The Bodhisattva Great Delight in Speaking had heard the great sounds of praise for Shakyamuni Buddha that were coming from the Stupa, but he hadn't seen the Buddha inside the Stupa. He could only hear him. He hadn't seen that Buddha's Thirty-two Marks and Eighty Subtle Characteristics and so he wanted very much to pay homage to the Buddha. Actually, it was the Buddha's spiritual power that caused him to ask. His question was asked on behalf of all; they all were filled with wonder, "Such a great sound out of that Stupa! Is there a public address system in it? Is there a radio in it? Is there really a Buddha in there?"

We want to see that Buddha! Is that Buddha a special type of Buddha?" The gods were filled with doubts, and they didn't know for sure if there really was a Buddha in there. The Bodhisattva Great Delight in Speaking, spoke up because he wanted Shakyamuni Buddha to know what they were wishing.

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