

The Flower Adornment Sutra

with commentary by Tripitaka Master Hua

Chapter One: Wondrous Adornments of the World-Rulers Gathering of the Cloud-Like and Sea-Like Assemblies of Beings of Similar Births

continued from issue #182

SUTRA:

MOREOVER, THERE WERE A MEASURELESS NUMBER OF YAKSHA KINGS. SPECIFICALLY THEY WERE: VAISHRAVANA YAKSHA KING, AT EASE AND COMFORTABLE SOUND YAKSHA KING, STERNLY HOLDING STAVES AND RODS YAKSHA KING, GREAT WISDOM YAKSHA KING, FLAMING EYES RULER YAKSHA KING, VAJRA EYES YAKSHA KING, COURAGEOUS AND VALIANT ARMS YAKSHA KING, BRAVELY DEFEATING ENEMIES' GREAT ARMIES YAKSHA KING, WEALTH AND ABUNDANCE YAKSHA KING, AND POWER TO BE ABLE TO BREAK HIGH MOUNTAINS YAKSHA KING. THEY ACTED AS THE LEADERS TO A MEASURELESS NUMBER. ALL OF THEM DILIGENTLY GUARDED AND PROTECTED ALL LIVING BEINGS.

COMMENTARY:

MOREOVER, THERE WERE A MEASURELESS NUMBER OF YAKSHA KINGS. "Yaksha" is *yao cha* in the line of the Shurangama Mantra, *yao cha jya la he*, part of a section that names various ghosts.

*yao cha jye la he. la cha se jye la he.
bi li dwo jye la he. pi she je jye la he.
bu dwo jye la he. Jyou pan cha jye la he.*

Yakshas are "speedy ghosts," because their movement is extremely agile and swift. Their name also translates as "living misery" because their lives are filled with suffering. There are many kinds of yakshas, such as earth-traveling yakshas, space-traveling yakshas, and so forth.

As for space-traveling yakshas, they have wings and fly about in the air conjuring up thoughts of transformations. Sometimes they turn black, then red, at other times, blue or yellow. But no matter what color they take on there is always an eerie black light underneath it all and their light is not really very much like light. A yaksha may have a human body but a beast's head such as an ox head or a horse's head and so forth. In general, yakshas assume horrifying and grotesque shapes that scare you to death when you see them. And when you die of fright, they laugh and applaud and feel it's a lot of fun. This type of ghost is fond of giving people trouble.

Earth-born yakshas are even more horrifying. Their heads may emit green-colored flames which are several tens of feet tall. They are like blazing candles but with lots of flames instead of just one. Their eyes are often mismatched and grown in unusual places. Moreover, their eyes are of different shapes--they may be round, square, rectangular, triangular or oblong. On one face there may be a round eye and a crescent eye, so it is like the sun and moon. Could that be good-looking? One eye may grow from the crown of the head and the other on the chin. One nostril may face upwards while the other faces downwards. They may be like antennae on a snail, which the yakshas can extend or retract at will. As for their ears, one may grow in front and the other in back, or else their eyes and ears may have the same location. Their appearance is really ugly, but they like to be that way. When people see them, they are frightened to the point that they can't control themselves. Yakshas do not like to help others; they like to give others trouble.

Rakshasas are weird ghosts, too, and their name means "fearsome ghosts." Rakshasas are female ghosts that lure people into breaking the precepts, and in that way harm people's wisdom life. There are two kinds of rakshasas: rakshasas of love and rakshasas of views. For example, perhaps people started out planning to cultivate and have proper knowledge and views. But they are too deeply confused, engulfed by the water of love. They are so ensnared by love that in their first thought they may want to cultivate, but they simply can't manage to actually do it. In their second thought they want to get married. This tug-of-war goes on without end. One thought arises and the other thought is destroyed. Since such people are too strongly attached to love and emotion, they end up breaking the precepts. That is how rakshasas of love act upon and undermine cultivators who lack samadhi.

Rakshasas of views maintain deviant knowledge and views. They insist that things are right when they are clearly wrong, and they insist that there is no offense in breaking the precepts. They say, "What's an offense anyway? It's just a way of cheating people." They say that on purpose. They also won't admit to having broken precepts and say breaking precepts is a very ordinary matter. The *Shurangama Sutra* records Jeweled Lotus Fragrance Bhikshuni who advocated lust, saying that engaging in lust is not like killing and stealing, that it is free from offense retribution and hence permissible. As a result of that type of karma, she fell into the unintermittent hell. Her deviant views were as fierce as a rakshasa's. It is not easy to cross over such rakshasas and it's a terrible retribution to have to undergo.

In the present passage of text, ten yaksha leaders are named. The kings are actually manifestations of Bodhisattvas. They rule over yakshas who eat people and also watch over the rakshasas of love and views and stop them from harming other people's wisdom life.

SPECIFICALLY THEY WERE: VAISHRAVANA YAKSHA KING. He is one of the Four Heavenly Kings. Yakshas come under the jurisdiction of the Heavenly King of the North, Vaishravana, "Much Heard of," who is himself a god, not a yaksha. Of the Four Heavenly Kings, this king's reputation for blessings and virtue spread to the four directions. He rules over two divisions of ghosts and spirits: Yakshas (male ghosts) and Rakshasas (female ghosts) King Vaishravana is able to rule over the unruly yakshas and stop them from stirring up disasters and trouble for humankind. He gets them to cultivate when they do not want to. He is a transformation body of a Bodhisattva as are the other kings.

The Four Heavenly Kings are:

- 1) Dhritarashtra, who rules over the East. His name means "the king who upholds his country."

- 2) Virudhaka, who rules over the South. His name means "deva of increase and growth."
- 3) Virupaksha, who rules over the West. His name means "broad eyes."
- 4) Vaishravana, who rules over the North. His name means "Much heard of."

AT EASE AND COMFORTABLE SOUND YAKSHA KING. His sounds are very free and comfortable. He can make any type of sound at all, including sounding like any kind of music.

STERNLY UPHOLDING STAVES AND RODS YAKSHA KING. He has a very dignified manner as he upholds staves and rods.

GREAT WISDOM YAKSHA KING. Because he has great wisdom, he is able to contemplate the false thoughts of yakshas and rakshasas who are intent on harming people so he can stop their actions. He knows whether their thoughts are of cultivating or not and so the yakshas all behave and don't dare stir up false thinking. That means they cultivate.

FLAMING EYES RULER YAKSHA KING. His eyes emit a fiery blaze of light, causing the yakshas and rakshasas to be extremely careful.

VAJRA EYES YAKSHA KING. His eyes are like vajra and they emit a resplendent light.

COURAGEOUS AND VALIANT ARMS YAKSHA KING. His arms are particularly powerful, and so he is casually able to move mountains and turn over seas, displacing them as he pleases.

BRAVELY DEFEATING ENEMIES' GREAT ARMY YAKSHA KING. Not only is this yaksha brave, but he also has military acumen and is a brilliant strategist. He can counter many demonic troops. Because he knows his own troops and the enemies' strengths and weaknesses, he is victorious in every battle. This particular yaksha king is able to watch over putanas. Putanas are fever ghosts. Sometimes people get sick and run a very high temperature. It can be very fierce. Such fevers are caused by putanas, but he keeps them in line.

WEALTH AND ABUNDANCE YAKSHA KING. He has a great deal of money and watches over the wealthy ghosts, not the poor ones. Since they pay tribute to him, he is a millionaire, possessed of much wealth and many provisions.

POWER TO BREAK HIGH MOUNTAINS YAKSHA KING. He has such prowess that he can split a mountain in half with a single blow of his fist so that the top of the mountain topples into the sea. THEY ACTED AS THE LEADERS OF A MEASURELESS NUMBER. These ten yaksha kings represent an infinite number of yakshas. ALL OF THEM DILIGENTLY GUARDED AND PROTECTED ALL LIVING BEINGS. But these kings of yakshas do not give living beings trouble. They guard living beings so they are secure and at peace. Actually, these yaksha kings are transformational appearances of Bodhisattvas. Therefore, they are not the same as ordinary yakshas.

VII) KUMBHANDA KINGS

MOREOVER, THERE WERE A MEASURELESS NUMBER OF KUMBHANDA KINGS. SPECIFICALLY THEY WERE: THE KUMBHANDA KING INCREASING AND GROWING, THE KUMBHANDA KING DRAGON RULER, THE KUMBHANDA KING BANNER OF WHOLESOME ADORNMENT, THE KUMBHANDA KING CONDUCT OF UNIVERSALLY BENEFITTING, THE KUMBHANDA KING TERRIFYING, THE KUMBHANDA KING UPRIGHT ADORNMENT OF BEAUTIFUL EYES, THE KUMBHANDA KING WISDOM LIKE A HIGH PEAK, THE KUMBHANDA KING COURAGEOUS ARMS, THE KUMBHANDA KING EYES LIKE FLOWERS OF BOUNDLESS PURITY, AND THE KUMBHANDA KING ASURA EYES AND VISAGE VAST AS HEAVEN. THEY ACTED AS THE LEADERS OF A MEASURELESS NUMBER. THEY ALL DILIGENTLY CULTIVATED THE DHARMA DOOR OF NON-OBSTRUCTION AND EMITTED GREAT LIGHT.

COMMENTARY:

MOREOVER THERE WERE A MEASURELESS NUMBER OF KUMBHANDA KINGS. Of the Four Heavenly Kings, the Heavenly King of the south is called Virudhaka, "Increasing and Growing," because he is able to cause his own and others' good roots to increase and grow. He rules over two divisions of ghosts and spirits: the kumbhandas or nightmare ghosts (*yen*), and bewitching ghosts (*mei*),

Kumbhanda is a Sanskrit word, and translated it means "winter melon ghost" because this kind of ghost is shaped like a winter melon. It doesn't have a head but just four limbs. It is also called a "barrel-shaped ghost" because it is like a huge wine vat in having a small mouth and a large belly. This type of ghost specializes in harming others. Everywhere it seeks out those who are deficient in bright, *yang* energy and who are heavy with dark and shadowy *yin* energy. Then it takes advantage of them and harms them. It will avoid living beings who have a lot of vibrant, sunny energy, and seeks out those who are deficient in that kind of energy.

Nightmare ghosts (*yen*) harm people in their sleep. They sit on the person and prevent the person from moving or even speaking. The person's body becomes immobilized while this type of ghost is squashing him. People whose energy is deficient or whose constitution is weak are particularly susceptible to this.

Mei ghosts have their own way of being ferocious and their own tricks. They belong to the category of spiritual "essences," such as fox, weasel, or python spirits. Their specialty is robbing people of their precious energy and essence to sustain themselves. If their victim is male, then they transform themselves into beautiful women to seduce him. If their victim is female, they transform themselves into handsome men to seduce her. In short, they use beautiful form to lure their victims into losing their original purity. Cultivators of the Way need to be on the lookout for ghosts of this type. If you are not careful, they will come and undermine your Way-karma.

In the Avatamsaka Assembly there were a measureless number of kumbhanda kings. SPECIFICALLY

THEY WERE: 1) THE KUMBHANDA KING INCREASING AND GROWING. This kumbhanda king is one of the Four Heavenly Kings, and he presides over the South. He governs the kumbhanda or nightmare ghosts, along with the bewitching ghosts. Those two kinds of ghosts gang together to wreak havoc, but this kumbhanda king influences them to increase their good roots and make them grow. 2) THE KUMBHANDA KING BANNER OF WHOLESOME ADORNMENT. He is skilled at adorning precious banners. 3) THE KUMBHANDA KING CONDUCT OF UNIVERSALLY BENEFITTING. He can benefit living beings everywhere. Usually kumbhandas harm beings, but this king benefits them, for he is a Bodhisattva appearing by transformation in the realm of kumbhandas. 4) THE KUMBHANDA KING TERRIFYING: Since this kumbhanda king has a grotesque face, he instills fear in the hearts of all who see him. He even frightens other kumbhandas. 5) THE KUMBHANDA KING UPRIGHT ADORNMENT OF BEAUTIFUL EYES. He has beautiful eyes that are very bright and clear. His other features are attractive, too. 6) THE KUMBHANDA KING WISDOM LIKE A HIGH PEAK. His wisdom is lofty, like the summit of a high mountain. 7) THE KUMBHANDA KING COURAGEOUS ARMS. He has strong, stout arms, is valiant and robust, and undaunted by any weapons. 8) THE KUMBHANDA KING EYES LIKE FLOWERS OF BOUNDLESS PURITY. His eyes are like pure lotuses, without any defilement, and emit pure, bright light. 9) AND THE KUMBHANDA KING ASURA EYES AND VISAGE VAST AS HEAVEN. This kumbhanda king has a huge face and angry, glaring eyes. He looks just like an asura about to get mad--hence his name.

THEY ACTED AS THE LEADERS OF A MEASURELESS NUMBER. The ten kumbhanda kings just named are the leaders of an infinite number of kumbhanda ghosts. THEY ALL DILIGENTLY CULTIVATED THE DHARMA DOOR OF NON-OBSTRUCTION--the Dharma door of having no impediments whatsoever—AND EMITTED GREAT LIGHT. Before, they were immersed in darkness, but now, having studied the Dharma door of non-obstruction, they start to release bright light.

VII) GANDHARVA KINGS

MOREOVER THERE WERE A MEASURELESS NUMBER OF GANDHARVA KINGS. SPECIFICALLY THEY WERE: THE GANDHARVA KING WHO MAINTAINS COUNTRIES, THE GANDHARVA KING TREE LIGHT, THE GANDHARVA KING PURE EYES, THE GANDHARVA KING FLORAL CROWN, THE GANDHARVA KING UNIVERSAL SOUND, THE GANDHARVA KING HAPPILY MOVING WONDROUS EYES, THE GANDHARVA KING LION BANNER OF WONDERFUL SOUNDS, THE GANDHARVA KING UNIVERSALLY EMITTING JEWELLED BRILLIANCE, THE GANDHARVA KING BANNER OF VAJRA TREES' BLOSSOMS, AND THE GANDHARVA KING DELIGHTING IN UNIVERSALLY MANIFESTING ADORNMENTS. THEY ACTED AS THE LEADERS OF A MEASURELESS NUMBER. THEY ALL BROUGHT FORTH DEEP FAITH IN AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE GREAT DHARMA, REJOICING IN IT, REVERING IT, AND DILIGENTLY CULTIVATING IT WITHOUT WEARINESS.

COMMENTARY:

MOREOVER THERE WERE A MEASURELESS NUMBER OF GANDHARVA KINGS. Gandharvas are music spirits. They are called "incense sniffers." They take incense as their food, and their bodies give off fragrance. When it's mealtime, they go to the homes where the food smells best, and

start playing music and singing. The householders become delighted and make offerings of vegetarian food to the gandharvas. The gandharvas inhale the aroma of the food, are filled, and then depart. Their name also means "musical spirits," since they are the musicians who entertain Lord Shakra with music. Gandharvas know all the songs, and can pick up any musical instrument and play it.

Gandharvas wear octagonal crowns on their heads. Their hair and beards shine with a glow. Their bodies are a fiery red, and they resemble magnificent bull kings. In their left hands they carry reeds, flutes and pipes. In their right hands they wield jeweled swords. All in all, they are very awesome and impressive looking.

Now in the Avatamsaka Assembly there are many gandharva kings. SPECIFICALLY THEY WERE: 1) THE GANDHARVA KING WHO MAINTAINS COUNTRIES. He is also one of the Four Heavenly Kings and rules over the East. His name in Sanskrit is Dhritarashtra. He supports and protects countries and sees to it that all living beings in them live in peace and harmony. He presides over two divisions of ghosts and spirits: the gandharvas or musical spirits, and the pishachas which are ghosts that devour essence and energy.

Pishacha ghosts are very terrible. They specialize in devouring the energy and essence of people and plants. If cultivators do not do their best to cut off desire, they easily fall prey to pishachas. When you have cultivated to the point of having no more outflows, these ghosts will have no way to get at you. However, if you haven't reached that level, such ghosts can come to seduce you and make you outflow. It is to their benefit but is disastrous for you. So, watch out! Do not be tricked into taking a loss with respect to your Way-karma.

2) THE GANDHARVA KING TREE LIGHT. The light he sends out is as full and widespread as an immense tree. 3) THE GANDHARVA KING PURE EYES. He has especially bright and clear eyes. 4) THE GANDHARVA KING FLORAL CROWN. The crown he wears is made of beautiful flowers, and is very refined and fragrant. 5) THE GANDHARVA KING UNIVERSAL SOUND. The music he plays pervades all places. Beings everywhere throughout the whole world can hear his wonderful sounds. 6) THE GANDHARVA KING HAPPILY MOVING WONDROUS EYES. This spirit likes rock-and-roll music. That, combined with his moving, his dancing and his singing, makes his music popular with a large number of people. Moreover, he has extremely attractive eyes. 7) THE GANDHARVA KING LION BANNER WONDERFUL SOUNDS. The music and lyrics he composes are extremely pleasing to the ear. When he sings, his voice is as magnificent as a lion-banner. 8) THE GANDHARVA KING UNIVERSALLY EMITTING JEWELLED BRILLIANCE. He emits rays of the seven gems. 9) THE GANDHARVA KING BANNER OF VAJRA TREES' BLOSSOMS. He is like a banner fashioned from the flowers of the vajra tree. Not only is the banner bright and fragrant, it is also very adorned. AND 10) THE GANDHARVA KING UNIVERSALLY MANIFESTING ADORNMENTS. The music he plays brings about an adorned and decorous atmosphere which inspires reverence in the listeners.

THEY ACTED AS THE LEADERS OF A MEASURELESS NUMBER. Ten are mentioned here, but the gandharva multitudes are actually countless. THEY ALL BROUGHT FORTH DEEP FAITH IN AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE GREAT DHARMA. They have brought forth unwavering belief and understanding with regard to the Great Vehicle Dharma, REJOICING IN IT and REVERING IT. They take deep delight in the Great Vehicle Dharma AND venerate it, DILIGENTLY CULTIVATING IT

WITHOUT WEARINESS.

We have finished a discussion of the Eightfold division of ghosts and spirits. Next we will go on to name the various multitudes of gods from the desire and form realms, of which there are twelve assemblies.

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