

Prologue to the Flower Adornment Sutra

*by Tang dynasty National Master Ching Lyang
with commentary by Tripitaka Master Hua*

continued from issue #183

PROLOGUE:

MOREOVER, THAT CHAPTER MAKES CLEAR THAT EVEN THOSE WHO DO NOT BELIEVE AND SLANDER THE DHARMA ARE ABLE, DESPITE THAT, TO PLANT GOOD ROOTS. ALTHOUGH THEY FALL INTO THE EVIL PATHS FROM SLANDERING THE DHARMA, BECAUSE THEY HEAR IT PASS BY THEIR EARS, IN THE END THEY WILL WAKE UP. IT FURTHER SAYS THAT IT IS LIKE THE SUN WHICH ALSO BENEFITS THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN BLIND FROM BIRTH.

COMMENTARY:

MOREOVER, the section THAT discusses the benefits from seeing and hearing in the CHAPTER on Appearances, MAKES CLEAR THAT EVEN THOSE WHO are not Way-containing vessels because they lack faith, even though they DO NOT BELIEVE AND SLANDER THE DHARMA, ARE ABLE, DESPITE THAT, TO PLANT GOOD ROOTS. Is that wonderful or not? Even if you say, "I don't believe it," you'll still be able to plant good roots. So I'm not afraid of your skepticism. In fact, I often tell you that I am not trying to get you to believe; I just want you to listen. For, once you hear, it is like having eaten vajra; you have it in your belly, and it will never digest but will always remain. As it is said:

Passing by the ears but once,
It forms an everlasting seed of the Way.

A vajra seed is planted in the field of your eighth consciousness as soon as you hear the Dharma pass by your ears. The seed gets in there even if you don't believe, and there's no way you can destroy it. Thus good roots are planted even if you slander.

"Well," you may say, "then I'll go ahead and slander, and it will still be all right."

You shouldn't talk that way, because although good roots are planted even if you slander, it is only on a long-term scale, and those good roots may not come forth for one doesn't know how infinitely many asamkheya kalpas. It takes an awfully long time.

For example, in the *Dharma Flower Sutra*, when the Bhikshus of overweening pride slander and berate Ever-Not-Slighting Bodhisattva when he bows to them, all of those Bhikshus must fall to the hells as retribution. When that particular world is destroyed and disappears, they are transferred to the hells of another world, perhaps one in the East. When that world in the East is destroyed, they are transferred on to the hells in the West.

They make the rounds, experiencing the coming into being, dwelling, decay and disappearance of the worlds of the ten directions. It is only after all that long a time that they get to hear Ever-Not-Slighting Bodhisattva speak Dharma and teach and transform them. Only then are they able to bring forth the resolve for Bodhi and accomplish Buddhahood. See how long it takes? So don't think that just because even slanderers plant good roots that you should slander the Buddha.

There are many people who slander the Buddha, but just from saying that one word, "Buddha," they plant a vajra seed. It's only to be feared they won't even say the word "Buddha." That happened when Earth Store Bodhisattva wanted to save the great official in the Sung Dynasty named Chin Hwei. The Bodhisattva wrote out word "Buddha" and presented it to the official so he would read it aloud. All Chin Hwei had to do was say, "The character is pronounced 'fwo' (meaning 'Buddha')" and every offense he had committed would have been wiped away. Earth Store Bodhisattva was that compassionate. However, Chin Hwei's karmic offenses tied him up, and he couldn't get free, so he wouldn't pronounce the word. He said, "Of course I recognize that character. Not only can I read Chinese, I can read lots of languages. But I'm not going to say it for you in any language." He wouldn't say the word "Buddha," so his karmic offenses were not eradicated.

People who slander the Buddha do plant good roots, but we shouldn't be like them, for such slander is very dangerous. Although they plant good roots, they will only ripen in the remotely distant future, and in the meantime their retribution will entail a lot of suffering. **ALTHOUGH FROM SLANDERING the Buddha and THE DHARMA, THEY FALL INTO the three EVIL PATHS of hell-beings, hungry ghosts, and animals, nonetheless BECAUSE THEY HEAR IT PASS THEIR EARS, IN THE END THEY WILL WAKE UP.** If they hear it just once, they have an everlasting seed for cultivation of the Way. Eventually they will certainly bring forth the resolve for Bodhi when their cultivation is ripe.

The chapter on Appearances further gives another analogy to illustrate the same principle and **SAYS THAT IT IS LIKE THE SUN WHICH ALSO BENEFITS THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN BLIND FROM BIRTH.** Someone born blind who has never seen the sun will believe whatever others tell him about it. If they say the sun is red, he thinks it's red, but it seems just as plausible when people say it's white or blue. He himself doesn't know which way it is. He'll take it on faith if someone says it's round, but others may say it's square in shape or triangular and he'll believe it. Since he can't see it himself, he doesn't understand what the sun is like. Nevertheless, he still obtains its benefits, because the sun nurtures the myriad existing things. He eats the grains the sun helps to grow, and the sun shines on him in the daytime all the same. He doesn't have to see or know it to receive its benefits. This is parallel to not understanding the Buddhadharma but being permeated by it and so obtaining advantages from it anyway. The person blind from birth who is still aided by the sun is like people who don't believe in the Buddhadharma but still obtain advantages from it.

We can see from this how all-encompassing Buddhism is. Not only are believers saved, but so are non-believers. Isn't that universal compassion? Believers and non-believers both are saved! There's no drawing of lines and saying, "If you don't believe in me you won't make it. Even if you do good deeds you will fall into hell if you don't believe. But if you do believe in me, even if you sin you will be reborn in heaven."

In Buddhism, you get saved whether you believe or not; it's just a question of how fast it will happen. If you don't believe now, you'll be saved in the future. If you do believe now, you'll be saved right away. There isn't any living being that falls outside of Buddhism. You're all within the Buddhadharma whether you believe it or not.

That is why the people who have taken refuge with the Triple Jewel can stay or leave as they please, and it doesn't make any difference. If you're here but don't have faith in the Dharma, then you are very far away. But if you are far away and yet believe, it is the same as being right here. This is the basic root and if you get at that root, everything else is a minor problem. Buddhism teaches that all living beings have the Buddha Nature. It is the same principle Dharma Master Dau Sheng declared when he said that icchantikas have the Buddha Nature. If you don't understand this point, then you don't understand the Buddhadharma, so you should pay careful attention here.

PROLOGUE:

ALSO, AS THE ANALOGY OF THE HIDDEN FLOWS TO THE GREAT SEA MAKES CLEAR, THERE ARE NONE WHO ARE NOT ENDOWED WITH THE THUS COME ONE'S WISDOM. MOREOVER, THE ANALOGY OF CRACKING OPEN MOTES OF DUST TO BRING FORTH THE SUTRA SCROLL SHOWS THAT IF FALSE THOUGHTS ARE DISPELLED, ALL SEE THE BUDDHA'S WISDOM.

COMMENTARY:

ALSO let us consider THE ANALOGY OF THE HIDDEN FLOWS TO THE GREAT SEA. Any water courses, whether large or small, all return to the great ocean; whether you believe in it or not, you will return to Buddhism. There is no pressure on you to believe; it is simply that you cannot run outside it. Since the Dharma Realm is within the Buddha Nature, where could you run to? You may want to run away, but just as in the analogy of all the flows of water that in the end flow into the sea, there is no way you can run outside the Buddhadharma. That analogy CLARIFIES THAT THERE ARE no living beings, bar NONE, WHO ARE NOT ENDOWED WITH THE virtuous characteristics of THE THUS COME ONE'S WISDOM. MOREOVER, THE ANALOGY OF CRACKING OPEN miniscule MOTES OF DUST TO BRING FORTH THE great SUTRA SCROLL SHOWS THAT IF living beings' FALSE THOUGHTS ARE totally DISPELLED, ALL of them are able to SEE THE BUDDHA'S WISDOM, which is just their inherent Buddha Nature.

PROLOGUE:

ALL OF THIS MAKES IT CLEAR THAT THOSE WITH AN INTRINSIC NATURE DWELL WITHIN THE BUDDHA NATURE, AND ARE THE VERY ONES FOR WHOM THIS TEACHING IS INTENDED. HOW MUCH THE MORE IS THAT THE CASE SINCE THE DHARMA NATURE IS PERFECTLY FUSED, WITH INTERTWINING PENETRATION OF STIMULUS AND RESPONSE, SO THAT THERE IS NOT A SINGLE DHARMA WHICH DOES NOT COVER THE POTENTIALS.

COMMENTARY:

ALL OF THIS discussion MAKES IT CLEAR THAT all living beings have the Buddha Nature, and since they are all beings WITH AN INTRINSIC NATURE, if they can DWELL WITHIN THE BUDDHA NATURE, that is, their inherent Buddha Nature which they possess from the start, then those living beings are THE VERY ONES FOR WHOM THIS TEACHING IS INTENDED.

HOW MUCH THE MORE IS THAT THE CASE SINCE all living beings have the Buddha Nature

and are capable of becoming Buddhas. SINCE THE DHARMA NATURE IS PERFECTLY FUSED in that way, WITH the INTERTWINING of response and the Way, there is PENETRATION OF STIMULUS AND RESPONSE, SO THAT THERE IS NOT A SINGLE DHARMA WHICH DOES NOT COVER THE POTENTIALS. There are not any potentials, any living beings, which are not covered by the Great Teaching of the *Flower Adornment*. It universally gathers in the flocks of potentials, and sentient and insentient beings alike, perfect the wisdom of all modes. Both the Great Vehicle and the Small Vehicle are taught by this Teaching, and in the future, sentient and insentient beings will identically achieve Buddhahood. The dull rocks that nodded their heads when the Venerable Sheng spoke Dharma were insentient beings, but as a response to his virtue in the Way, they could nod their heads. Since the Buddhadharmas is so immensely vast, there are no limits to those covered by the Teaching.

END OF THE FOURTH DOOR

