

The Dharma Flower Sutra

with commentary by Tripitaka Master Hua

continued from issue #183

SUTRA:

THE BUDDHA TOLD THE BODHISATTVA MAHASATTVA GREAT DELIGHT IN SPEAKING, "THE BUDDHA MANY JEWELS HAS MADE THIS PROFOUND AND SOLEMN VOW: 'WHEN MY JEWELLED STUPA MANIFESTS IN THE PRESENCE OF ANY BUDDHA IN ORDER TO HEAR HIM SPEAK THE DHARMA FLOWER SUTRA, IF THERE IS ANYONE WHO WISHES ME TO SHOW MY BODY TO THE FOUR ASSEMBLIES, THEN THE DIVISION BODY BUDDHAS OF THAT BUDDHA WHO ARE SPEAKING DHARMA IN THE WORLDS OF THE TEN DIRECTIONS, MUST ALL RETURN AND GATHER TOGETHER IN THAT ONE PLACE. AFTERWARD, MY BODY WILL APPEAR.'

"GREAT DELIGHT IN SPEAKING, MY DIVISION BODY BUDDHAS WHO ARE SPEAKING DHARMA IN THE WORLDS OF THE TEN DIRECTIONS SHOULD NOW GATHER TOGETHER HERE."

COMMENTARY:

THE BUDDHA, Shakyamuni, TOLD THE BODHISATTVA MAHASATTVA GREAT DELIGHT IN SPEAKING, "THE BUDDHA MANY JEWELS HAS MADE THIS PROFOUND VOW." You want to see the Buddha Many Jewels, but there is a condition. In a life long ago, before he became a Buddha, he made a very solemn and wonderful vow. He said, "WHEN MY JEWELLED STUPA MANIFESTS IN THE PRESENCE OF ANY BUDDHA IN ORDER TO HEAR HIM SPEAK *THE DHARMA FLOWER SUTRA*, IF THERE IS ANYONE WHO WISHES ME TO SHOW MY BODY TO THE FOUR ASSEMBLIES, if there are those who wish to see me, THEN THE DIVISION BODY BUDDHAS OF THAT BUDDHA WHO ARE SPEAKING DHARMA IN THE WORLDS OF THE TEN DIRECTIONS, MUST ALL RETURN AND GATHER TOGETHER IN THAT PLACE." The Buddha speaking *The Dharma Flower Sutra* has division bodies who are in the ten directions speaking Dharma, too. Division bodies are transformation bodies. Shakyamuni Buddha has hundreds of thousands of myriads of kotis of transformation bodies. Not only does Shakyamuni Buddha have them, but all the Buddhas have them. There are division-body Buddhas speaking Dharma in the ten directions to teach and transform living beings.

"They must all return and gather together in that place." That's the condition in Many Jewels Buddha's vow. All the transformation-body Buddhas returning to Shakyamuni Buddha represents the ten thousand returning to the one root. The root can transform into a myriad transformations and the myriads all return to the one root. One Buddha can manifest limitless transformation Buddhas all of whom return to the one Buddha. How could ordinary people possibly understand such a state? That's why this Sutra is called *The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra*. In it are things wonderful beyond conception.

"AFTERWARD, MY BODY WILL APPEAR, when all those Buddhas are gathered in one place, then I will manifest. GREAT DELIGHT IN SPEAKING, MY DIVISION BODY BUDDHAS WHO ARE SPEAKING DHARMA IN THE WORLDS OF THE TEN DIRECTIONS SHOULD NOW GATHER TOGETHER HERE."

SUTRA:

GREAT DELIGHT IN SPEAKING SAID TO THE BUDDHA, "WORLD HONORED ONE, WE ALSO WISH TO SEE THE DIVISION BODIES OF THE WORLD HONORED ONE SO THAT WE MAY BOW TO THEM, AND MAKE OFFERINGS."

COMMENTARY:

When the Bodhisattva Great Delight in Speaking heard about the inconceivable vows made by the Buddha Many Jewels in the past, GREAT DELIGHT IN SPEAKING SAID TO THE BUDDHA, "WORLD HONORED ONE, WE, the gods and humans here along with the great Bodhisattvas and the Four-Fold Assembly of disciples, not only wish to see the body of Many Jewels Buddha, but ALSO WISH TO SEE THE DIVISION BODIES OF THE WORLD HONORED ONE, Shakyamuni Buddha. Since they are all getting together, we would like to see them SO THAT WE MAY BOW TO THEM AND MAKE OFFERINGS."

What is meant by "bow?" It means to make obeisance to the Buddha. Some people say, "Buddha images are made of wood, clay, gold, silver, bronze, or iron, and it is superstitious to bow to them. Since people made them in the first place, what good does it do to bow to them? What use is it? It's just superstition."

There are many good reasons we bow. We bow to the Buddhas first of all to help get rid of our arrogance. Second, it causes us to give rise to a yielding and gentle mind, so that we aren't tough and stubborn. Third, it makes us reverent.

The Buddha became a Buddha and people bow to him. Before he became a Buddha, he bowed to other Buddhas. Shakyamuni Buddha in a previous life was a Bodhisattva called "Never-Slighting" and whenever he saw someone he would bow to them and say, "I dare not slight you because you will, in the future, become a Buddha." Since he bowed so reverently to others, Shakyamuni Buddha realized Buddhahood. Many people reverently bow to him. If you want to become a Buddha, then you should bow to Buddhas. It is said,

To bow once to the Buddha
Eradicates offenses like Ganges' sands.

Bowing eradicates your karmic offenses from limitless aeons past, the heavy offenses of birth and death. Also, when you bow to the Buddhas, you are bowing to the Buddha of your own nature. In the future, when you become a Buddha you realize the Buddhahood of your own nature.

"We wish to make offerings to those Buddhas," making offerings to the Triple Jewel: the Buddha, the

Dharma, and the Sangha. This is a very important thing to do.

One might think, "Why should one make offerings to the Triple Jewel? Wouldn't it be better if the Triple Jewel made offerings to me?"

You might think you were getting a bargain, but you would really take a loss in the end. The reason why some people have such poor luck is because in the past they didn't make offerings to the Triple Jewel. The reason why some people are always short of money--so they can't buy nice clothes or a decent place to live is because they didn't make offerings to the Triple Jewel. As a consequence, day by day, their blessings grow thinner.

If you make offerings to the Triple Jewel, your blessings will grow day by day. The Triple Jewel is the field of goodness and blessings for living beings. There's a saying that goes:

Although a clay dragon can't bring rain,
If you want rain, you must seek it from a clay dragon.
Although the Common Sangha can't bring blessings,
If you seek blessings, you must seek them from the Common Sangha.

In Jung Gwo, when they need rain, the people go to a Dragon King Temple and seek from the clay dragons. Usually it works! Probably you don't have this in the West. You may think, "It would have rained anyway!" But do you know for sure? Just how do you know it doesn't work? Your skepticism involves just as much guesswork as others' belief, you know. The ordinary members of the Sangha, that is, those who have not certified to the fruition, can't bring blessings. However, if you are seeking blessings, you must seek them from the Common Sangha. People who have abundant blessings in this life have gained them because in the past they made offerings to the Triple Jewel. People are poor because they did not make offerings to the Triple Jewel.

"I'm not so sure I believe this," you say.

Okay, but next life you'll still be poor! It's your choice.

SUTRA:

AT THAT TIME, THE BUDDHA EMITTED A RAY OF LIGHT FROM HIS WHITE HAIR-MARK IN WHICH COULD BE SEEN BUDDHAS IN LANDS TO THE EAST EQUAL IN NUMBER TO THE GRAINS OF SAND IN FIVE HUNDRED MYRIADS OF KOTIS OF NAYUTAS OF GANGES RIVERS. ALL THOSE BUDDHALANDS HAD CRYSTAL FOR SOIL, AND WERE ADORNED WITH JEWELLED TREES AND JEWELLED GARMENTS. COUNTLESS THOUSANDS OF MYRIADS OF KOTIS OF BODHISATTVAS FILLED THEM. THEY WERE COVERED WITH JEWELLED CANOPIES AND JEWELLED NETS. THE BUDDHAS IN THOSE LANDS WITH A GREAT AND WONDERFUL SOUND, WERE SPEAKING THE DHARMA. ALSO SEEN WERE LIMITLESS THOUSANDS OF MYRIADS OF KOTIS OF BODHISATTVAS FILLING THOSE LANDS SPEAKING THE DHARMA FOR THE MULTITUDES. THUS IS WAS ALSO IN THE SOUTH, WEST, NORTH, THE FOUR INTERMEDIATE

DIRECTIONS, AS WELL AS UP AND DOWNWARD WHEREVER THE LIGHT OF THE WHITE HAIR-MARK SHONE.

COMMENTARY:

Not only did the Bodhisattva Great Delight in Speaking want to see Many Jewels Buddha, but he wanted to see all the transformations of Shakyamuni Buddha. AT THAT TIME, THE BUDDHA, Shakyamuni, EMITTED A RAY OF LIGHT FROM HIS WHITE HAIR-MARK. The "white hair-mark" is located between the Buddha's eyebrows, and it emitted a light that was quite subtle, but extremely brilliant. IN the light COULD BE SEEN BUDDHAS IN LANDS TO THE EAST EQUAL IN NUMBER TO THE GRAINS OF SAND IN FIVE HUNDRED MYRIADS OF KOTIS OF NAYUTAS OF GANGES RIVERS. It didn't shine into just one or two lands, but into limitless, uncountable, nayutas of worlds.

ALL THOSE BUDDHALANDS HAD CRYSTAL FOR SOIL. "Crystal" represents the light of wisdom. AND those lands WERE ADORNED WITH JEWELLED TREES AND JEWELLED GARMENTS. "Jeweled trees" make living beings feel refreshed and shaded with protection. "Jeweled garments" represent patience and compliance. COUNTLESS THOUSANDS OF MYRIADS OF KOTIS OF BODHISATTVAS FILLED THEM. Bodhisattvas are those who give rise to the Bodhi-mind in every thought. THEY WERE COVERED WITH JEWELLED CANOPIES AND JEWELLED NETS. The "nets" represent the cultivation of the Precepts. THE BUDDHAS IN THOSE LANDS WITH A GREAT AND WONDERFUL SOUND WERE SPEAKING THE DHARMA. ALSO SEEN WERE LIMITLESS THOUSANDS OF MYRIADS OF KOTIS OF BODHISATTVAS FILLING THOSE LANDS SPEAKING THE DHARMA FOR THE MULTITUDES. THUS IT WAS ALSO IN THE SOUTH, WEST, NORTH, THE FOUR INTERMEDIATE DIRECTIONS, AS WELL AS UP AND DOWNWARD, WHEREVER THE LIGHT OF THE WHITE HAIR-MARK SHONE.

SUTRA:

AT THAT TIME ALL THE BUDDHAS OF THE TEN DIRECTIONS ADDRESSED THE HOST OF BODHISATTVAS, SAYING, "GOOD MEN! WE SHOULD NOW GO TO THE SAHA WORLD, TO JOIN SHAKYAMUNI BUDDHA AND TO MAKE OFFERINGS TO THE STUPA OF THE THUS COME ONE MANY JEWELS."

COMMENTARY:

AT THAT TIME, ALL THE BUDDHAS OF THE TEN DIRECTIONS ADDRESSED THE HOST OF BODHISATTVAS, SAYING, "GOOD MEN! WE SHOULD NOW GO TO THE SAHA WORLD TO JOIN SHAKYAMUNI BUDDHA AND TO MAKE OFFERINGS TO THE STUPA OF THE THUS COME ONE MANY JEWELS." "Saha" is a Sanskrit word which means "able to be endured." Living beings are able to endure the sufferings of the Saha world. There are a great many kinds of suffering in this world. There are Three Sufferings, and Eight Sufferings, and all the limitless sufferings.

The Three Sufferings

1) The suffering within suffering. This is suffering on top of suffering. For example, someone is poor and has no clothes to wear and lives in an old shack. Then a rainstorm comes up and blows his house away! He may have been suffering before, but now he is suffering even more. He lacks the three most basic necessities of life: clothing, food, and shelter.

2) The suffering of decay. Suppose someone is very well off; he has plenty of clothes and food, and he lives in a big, fine place. But then his house and all his valuable possessions burn up. That's the suffering of decay.

"Well, I'm not poor and I'm not rich either. So I don't suffer, then do I?" you ask.

Even if you don't have the suffering of poverty or the suffering of decay, there is still the third kind of suffering:

The suffering of process. This is the suffering of the life process as one goes from childhood to middle age, to old age, and then to death. In every thought there is change, and you are not in control of it at all. Your fate controls you. It makes the child grow up and get old, and then die. You must obey fate's commands to the letter. You may not obey your teacher, but you are unable to avoid obeying the demands of your life process. Your teacher tells you not to smoke or drink or take drugs, but you go off and do it in secret. However, when King Yama tells you it's time to die, you are going to have to be very compliant and die. That's the suffering of process. If dying was just a matter of taking your last breath and leaving, it wouldn't be that bad. Most people, however, get sick first, then they die, and that is very uncomfortable. Again, if it was just a matter of being sick for a few days, that would be tolerable, but some people get paralyzed--half of them dies first. Half of them refuses to listen to orders. They can't sit up or turn over or walk. How much pain do you think that is?

The Eight Sufferings

1) The suffering of birth. Obviously, everyone gets born. But you forget how painful it is. When a child is born it undergoes a lot of suffering, and so it cries. It is said that birth is as painful as ripping the shell off of a live turtle.

2) The suffering of old age. One's eyes go bad, one loses one's hearing. Someone says, "Would you like a cookie?"

You say, "No thanks, I don't want any tea."

Someone says, "Would you like some tea?"

You say, "I'm full!" Old age brings many frustrations.



The SahāWorld

Someone says, "How are your children?"

You say, "My husband died long ago." You see their lips moving, but you get the message wrong. If that wasn't bad enough, your teeth start hurting and fall out, and then nothing tastes good when you eat it.

- 3) The suffering of sickness. Before you die, you get sick.
- 4) The suffering of death. Death is as painful as skinning a live cow!
- 5) The suffering of being separates from what one loves. It is very painful when someone you love leaves you, or you must leave them because of some circumstance.
- 6) The suffering of being near those you hate. It is often the case that you have to be around people you don't like. It may even be that the less you like them, the closer they try to get! You may move somewhere else hoping to get away from such a person, only to meet someone just like him or worse in the new place you go!

7) The suffering of not getting what one wants. You may wish for wealth, fame, or profit and not get them. In general, not getting what you want is suffering.

8) The suffering of the raging blaze of the five skandhas. Form, feeling, thinking, impulses, and consciousness are like a raging fire. They turn you upside down.

Actually, there are limitless kinds of suffering, but there is no way you could speak of them all. Beings in this Saha world must undergo these sufferings. That is why it is called "able to be endured." Basically, it's unbearable, but beings somehow get through it.

Why did Shakyamuni Buddha leave the home-life to cultivate the Way? It was because he saw all the sufferings in the world. Sufferings are endless. Seeing the sufferings of birth, sickness, old age and death, he decided to find a way to end suffering. That is why he left the home-life, cultivated, and realized Buddhahood. When he became a Buddha, he truly put suffering to an end and gained true happiness.

Dhyana Master Bau-jr of the Liang Dynasty understood cause and effect well. one night a monk in a monastery heard the sound of a child crying. He went outside and saw a child in a bird's nest. The monk took the child from the nest and kept it. The two bird-parents couldn't get the child back. The child grew up to look like a person, but he had bird claws instead of hands! That child was Dhyana Master Bau-jr. As a child, Master Bau-jr worked hard at his cultivation. If children meditate, lead pure lives, and cultivate, it is very easy for them to get enlightened. Because Dhyana Master Bau-jr was diligent, he got the Five Eyes and Six Spiritual Penetrations and became a well-respected high monk. At the time of the Emperor Wu of Lyang, when there were important family occasions, people would ask monks to recite the Sutras. Someone asked Dhyana Master Bau-jr to recite at a wedding. He took one look at the gathering and said:

Strange, strange, strange, indeed!
The grandson marries the grandmother.
The son beats a drum made from his father's skin.
The daughter eats her mother's flesh.
Pigs and sheep are sitting on the couch,
And the six kinds of relatives are cooking in the pot.
Everyone offers congratulations, but I see it as true suffering.

How could a grandmother marry a grandchild? Before she died, the grandmother had held her little grandson's hand and said, "All my affairs are taken care of and all my children have settled down. But who will take care of my little grandson? I can't put him down." With this one thought, she died and went to see King Yama.

King Yama said, "Such emotions! Okay, you can go back and be your grandson's wife! Help him take care of things." She was reborn as a little girl, grew up, and married him. Take a look at the wheel of rebirth. The grandson marries his grandmother!

Then the Dhyana Master took a look in the kitchen and saw a little girl sampling some pickled pig's feet. Dhyana Master Bau-jr could see that the pig had been her mother in a former life.

In the band was a drummer beating upon the skill of an animal that had, in a former life, been his own father.

When Dhyana Master Bau-jr looked at the sofa, he saw people that had in former lives been pigs and sheep and were now the relatives who had come to congratulate the happy couple. The present set of relatives were at one time animals that had been eaten and now returned. The relatives in former lives had been reborn as animals and were being stewed in the pot.

What do you think? Is it suffering? If you understand that it is suffering, then you should hurry up and cultivate. If you don't think it's suffering, then just turn around a few more times on the wheel of rebirth, and we'll talk about it more later.

(*The Dhyana Master's full name is Jr Gung Bau Jr)

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