

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 #183

Editor's note: The dragons are printed here out of their proper sequence. They belong between the yakshas and the kumbhandas and were mistakenly omitted from last issue (VBS #183, pg 6-9).

THE GREAT DRAGON KINGS

SUTRA:

MOREOVER, THERE WERE A MEASURELESS NUMBER OF GREAT DRAGON KINGS. SPECIFICALLY, THEY WERE: THE DRAGON KING VIRUPAKSHA, THE DRAGON KING SAGARA, THE DRAGON KING CLOUD SOUND WONDROUS BANNER, THE DRAGON KING FLAMING MOUTH SEA LIGHT, THE DRAGON KING UNIVERSALLY LOFTY CLOUD BANNER, THE DRAGON KING TAKSHAKA, THE DRAGON KING BOUNDLESS STRIDE, THE DRAGON KING PURE COLOR, THE DRAGON KING UNIVERSALLY COURSING IN GREAT SOUNDS, THE DRAGON KING FREE FROM HEATED AFFLICTIONS, WHO ACTED AS THE LEADERS OF A MEASURELESS NUMBER. THERE WAS NOT ONE OF THEM WHO DID NOT ENERGETICALLY ROUSE UP CLOUDS AND SPREAD RAIN TO CAUSE LIVING BEINGS TO BE RID OF THEIR HEATED AFFLICTIONS.

COMMENTARY:

MOREOVER, THERE WERE A MEASURELESS NUMBER OF GREAT DRAGON KINGS. These are great, not small dragons, yet as we know, dragons belong to the path of animals. They have spiritual powers and can make themselves either big or small at will. When they are big, they can fill up the entire sea; when they are small, they can hide away within a mote of dust. They can also appear or disappear at will. When they do not appear, you cannot see them. When they want to appear, they manifest. Since dragons have such talent and endless transformations, such great spiritual powers and tremendous majesty, they should be very happy. However, they are subject to four types of sufferings:

1) The suffering of being eaten by the golden winged bird: the garuda bird feasts on dragons. Even from a distance of 108,000 *li*, the golden-winged bird can spot the dragons in the sea that are about to die and then swoop down and gobble them up.

2) The suffering of mating: When dragons mate they have to transform themselves into snakes, and the trans-

formation causes them terrible pain.

3) The suffering of being bitten by tiny bugs underneath their scales: Hidden beneath the scales of dragons are myriads of little parasites that bite the dragons and drink their blood, causing an unbearable itch and making the dragons feel miserable.

4) The suffering of being scorched by hot sand: Because the dragons can't endure the pain of the gnawing of those tiny bugs in their scales, they come out of the water and lie out on in the sand and rub themselves on the sand, trying to relieve the itch. And yet, when the sun comes out, the sand becomes scorching hot and causes even more suffering for the dragons.

Dragons are found throughout the four kinds of births: womb, egg, moisture, and transformation born. As for transformation-born dragons, there are five kinds: elephant-transformed dragons, snake-transformed dragons, horse-transformed dragons, fish-transformed dragons, and toad-transformed dragons.

Elephant-transformed dragons have the Dragon King Good Dwelling as their leader. Snake-transformed dragons have the Dragon King Nanda as their ruler. Horse-transformed dragons have the Dragon King Anavatapta as their ruler. Fish-transformed dragons have Dragon King Varuna, while toad-transformed dragons have the Dragon King Manasvin as their ruler. Those five dragon kings represent the five types of transformation dragons.

Dragons have heavy hatred and huge tempers. They emit venom to harm others. In the past they diligently cultivated the Great Vehicle and obtained spiritual powers and yet, because they did not hold the precepts, in this life they fell into animal bodies. They were "quick with the Vehicle and slow with the precepts." They felt the precepts were "Small Vehicle" and not of any importance. The heavenly dragons have the job of standing at the heavenly palaces, of gathering the clouds and sending down rain, of regulating the waters and dams, and of protecting the Buddhadharma.

Often, the dragon kings who come to Dharma assemblies to listen to Sutra lectures are dragon kings who are manifestations of Bodhisattvas. They come to watch over the unruly dragons. The dragon kings do not allow the mischievous dragons to stir up trouble nor to break up dams so as to cause huge deluges to kill people. The dragon kings do not allow the dragons to emit venom to harm people.

SPECIFICALLY, THEY WERE: THE DRAGON KING VIRUPAKSHA. His name translates as "broad eyes." He is actually a god, one of the Four Heavenly Kings and he rules over the West. He specializes in watching over unruly dragons. The Heavenly King Virupaksha also rules over the putanas, who are "stinky and famished ghosts." This type of ghost emits a vile stench. When people who are not very strong or who are deficient in bright *yang* energies inhale that stench, they break out in a high fever and lapses into delirium, muttering to themselves. This is how the putanas, also called "fever ghosts," harm people.

THE DRAGON KING SAGARA. His name translates as "sea" because he is a sea dragon king and rules over all the dragons in the sea.

THE DRAGON KING CLOUD SOUND WONDROUS BANNER. The sounds he emits travel up into space and transform into wonderful cloudlike jeweled banners.

THE DRAGON KING FLAMING MOUTH SEA LIGHT. He sends out fiery blazes from his mouth, lighting up the sea.

THE DRAGON KING UNIVERSALLY LOFTY CLOUD BANNER. He everywhere transforms tall billowy clouds, their shapes like precious banners.

THE DRAGON KING TAKSHAKA. His name translates as "able to harm what can be harmed," because dragons are capable of harming living beings that can be harmed. When dragons get angry they can kill any living being who sees them. Their glance itself is poisonous and can be fatal to beings. Or they can send out venomous vapors--the poison of greed, hatred and stupidity fills them. This dragon's name also translates as "many tongues," probably because he likes to talk non-stop among the dragons, in dragon language. Talking, talking, too much talking.

THE DRAGON KING BOUNDLESS STRIDE. This dragon travels everywhere; there is no place which he cannot reach.

THE DRAGON KING PURE COLOR. His color and form is exceptionally pure, with no admixture.

THE DRAGON KING UNIVERSALLY COURSING IN GREAT SOUNDS. His voice is loud, and far-reaching, traveling to all of the four directions.

THE DRAGON KING FREE FROM HEATED AFFLICTIONS. Since this dragon has attained pure, cool dharmas, he is no longer heated by afflictions.

THEY ACTED AS THE LEADERS OF A MEASURELESS NUMBER. These ten are only the leaders of an infinite host of dragons. THERE WAS NOT ONE OF THEM WHO DID NOT ENERGETICALLY GATHER CLOUDS AND SPREAD RAIN TO CAUSE LIVING BEINGS TO BE RID OF THEIR HEATED AFFLICTIONS. These dragon kings all vigorously studied the Buddhadharma. Their job is to stir up clouds and send down rain. They are also responsible for making fog and mist that can cool living beings' heated afflictions. The ordinary flesh eyes of people cannot see it, but when there is fog around a mountain, it is being spit out by dragons. It can be a perfectly clear, sunny day, and all of a sudden there will be fog. It is the dragons making use of their spiritual powers. Those who open the Five Eyes, can see them. If dragons meet someone with Way-virtue, they will bow to that person. They may puff out some fog for fear they will be noticed. Dragons are magical creatures and can recognize those with Way-virtue. In fact, all the ghosts and spirits of that Eightfold Division will protect those with Way-virtue. They will do whatever you think you want done as soon as you have the thought.

translated, reviewed, and edited by the Buddhist Text Translation Society