

# *Prologue to the Flower Adornment Sutra*

*by Tang dynasty National Master Ching Lyang*

*commentary by Tripitaka Master Hua*

## *The Fifth Door: The Progressive Depth of the Substance of the Teaching*

*continued from issue #205*

### *THE EIGHTH SUBSTANCE*

#### PROLOGUE:

THE EIGHTH IS THE NON-OBSTRUCTION OF PRINCIPLE AND SPECIFICS AS THE SUBSTANCE. THAT IS, ALTHOUGH ALL THE DHARMAS OF THE TEACHING IN THE ENTIRETY OF THEIR SUBSTANCE ARE THE TRUE, THAT IN NO WAY HINDERS THE SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TWELVE-FOLD TEACHING AND SO FORTH BEING CLEARLY APPARENT. AND ALTHOUGH IN THE ENTIRETY OF ITS SUBSTANCE TRUE THUSNESS IS ALL OF THEM, THAT IN NO WAY HINDERS ITS CLEAR SAMENESS OF A SINGLE FLAVOR. BECAUSE THUSNESS IS UNOBSTRUCTED, THE BUDDHA'S SOUND ALSO ACCORDS WITH THUSNESS WITHOUT OBSTRUCTION, FOR ALL ARE INTERACTIVE WITH THE WISDOM OF THUSNESS, AS WAS EXPLAINED EXTENSIVELY BEFORE IN *DOCTRINAL ANALYSIS*.

#### COMMENTARY:

Now in the discussion of the Shallowness and Depth of the Substance of the Teaching, we have reached THE EIGHTH, which IS THE NON-OBSTRUCTION OF PRINCIPLE AND SPECIFICS AS THE SUBSTANCE. As to principle and specifics not obstructing each other, from the point of view of people who have attachments, specifics are definitely specifics and principle is fixed as principle. Specifics and principle are differentiated very clearly, and specifics would never be mixed up with principle or principle with specifics. It's that way for people with attachments, but in the Dharma-doors of unobstructed interpenetration within the Buddhadharma, specifics do not rule out principle, nor does principle rule out specifics. It's not to say that specifics not interfering with principle means there are only specifics, or that principle not interfering with specifics means there is only principle. It's not that way. Although specifics and principle are not the same, they do not obstruct each other. Specifics do not cancel out principle, nor does principle cancel out specifics. Even though they are different, they are two and yet not two. Therefore, that is called the non-obstruction of principle and specifics as the substance.

What does that mean? It is referring to the basic substance of true thusness and how, ALTHOUGH ALL THE DHARMAS OF THE TEACHING IN THE ENTIRETY OF THEIR SUBSTANCE ARE THE TRUE.... They are true thusness. The dharmas of the Teaching include the Three Stores and the Twelve-fold Teaching.

#### The Three Stores

- 1) the Sutra Store;
- 2) the Vinaya Store;
- 3) the Shastra Store.

The Sutra Store discusses the study of samadhi, the Vinaya Store is concerned with the study of precepts, and the Shastra Store elucidates the study of wisdom. Thus the Three Stores comprise the Three Non-outflow Studies of precepts, samadhi, and wisdom. However, all the dharmas of the Teaching flow forth from true thusness. Nonetheless, true thusness and the twelve-fold teaching are mutually non-obstructive. Therefore the text says, THAT IN NO WAY HINDERS THE SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TWELVE-FOLD TEACHING AND SO FORTH BEING CLEARLY APPARENT. The Twelve-fold Teaching is also known as the Twelve Divisions of the Canon. Those twelve divisions do not mean the Buddha spoke twelve Sutras, but rather the twelve include all the Sutras spoken by the Buddha—the Three Stores and the Twelve Divisions. The Buddha spoke a great many Sutras. If you open up the Tripitaka, you will find they are as many as the great sea. Just *The Flower Adornment Sutra* alone is unfathomably profound and inexpressibly vast, and that is even more true of the Tripitaka as a whole. The contents of all those Sutras are analyzed into twelve divisions.

The Twelve Divisions of the Canon have been discussed already, but some people may have forgotten what they are, and others may not remember them very clearly. There are also people who have never heard about them. If children miss hearing about them, they may have another chance to hear them in the future; but old people must not fail to listen to them. That is because their days are numbered, so they should listen to the Sutras. Young people have their whole lives ahead of them, and even more need to listen to lectures on the Sutras. Middle-aged people do not have all that much time left either. It will pass in the blink of an eye. And so they, too, should listen to Sutra lectures. Listening to lectures on the Sutras is studying the Buddhadharma. Why should one do that? It's because it can enable one to recognize one's original face, understand things you didn't understand before, and know things that were unknown to you. For that reason, studying the Buddhadharma is useful for the old, the middle-aged, and the young.

The first division of the Canon is that of Prose, referring to the continuous lines of unbroken text in the Sutras, which follow upon one another like a cord. One of the meanings of the word Sutra is "inked cord," and that refers to the prose. The second is Repeating Verses. After a section of prose, verses are used to repeat what was said so that people can remember and understand the principles more easily. The third is Predictions, that is, the bestowal of predictions for the future. The Buddha bestows predictions on individual Arhats who have not yet become Buddhas, saying, "At such-and-such a time you are due to accomplish Buddhahood. Your name as a Buddha will be such and such, and your country will have such-and-such a name." The fourth division is that of Solitarily Arising Verses. Such verses are not connected with the prose that comes either before or after them. They arise alone. The fifth division is what is Self-spoken Without Request. For the Buddha to speak the Dharma, the Buddha's disciples must request it. Why is that?

Dharma does not arise on its own.  
Upon encountering states, it comes forth.

There must be a particular state for a particular Dharma to be spoken.

The Way is not practiced in vain.  
When conditions are met with, there is a response.

If there are the appropriate causes and conditions, there will be the corresponding response--an intertwining of the paths of evocation and response. The Sutras were spoken by the Buddha when disciples requested them. However, there is one Sutra which no one requested, since no one understood its doctrine, so no one could request it. Such a Sutra is one that is self-spoken without request.

The sixth division is Causes and Conditions, which gives all the various circumstances. The seventh division is Analogies. In cases where, if the Dharma were simply spoken as it is, no one would

understand it, the Buddha uses analogies to elucidate it. The eighth division is Past Lives' Deeds, which describes events from previous lifetimes. The ninth division is Deeds of the Present Life, in which the Buddha discusses the events in his current lifetime. The tenth division is that of Expansions, and the eleventh division is the Hitherto Unknown. The twelfth division is Explanations. Those twelve are known as the Twelve Divisions of the Canon and the Twelve-fold Teaching. The twelve are the categories of the Great Vehicle, for the Hinayana has a Nine-fold Teaching, the Great Vehicle adding three more categories.

Those twelve divisions are the specific characteristics--everyone can see them. They have an appearance to them, and so they are called the specific characteristics. Fundamentally, the Twelve-fold Teaching flows forth from true thusness, yet its specific characteristics are clearly apparent. They are very evident. True thusness is a principle, and the Twelve-fold Teaching is the specifics. Therefore the substance is that of principle and specifics being non-obstructive. The specifics do not obstruct the principle, and the principle does not obstruct the specifics. Principle and specifics have free-and-easy interpenetration without obstruction.

AND ALTHOUGH IN THE ENTIRETY OF ITS SUBSTANCE, TRUE THUSNESS IS ALL OF THEM.... The entire substance of True Thusness is all specifics. True Thusness is a principle, and the principle in its totality is the specifics. Consequently, although there are all the specifics, THAT still IN NO WAY HINDERS ITS CLEAR SAMENESS OF A SINGLE FLAVOR. The single flavor is True Thusness, and it is liberation--the single flavor of liberation, the free-and-easy liberation of True Thusness. The clarity of sameness is like that of water without a trace of defilement. Looking into the water, one can see from the surface clear to the bottom. That it is the same refers to how living beings don't have less true thusness, nor Buddhas more of it. It is equal and the same for everyone. However, this is talking about the principle, and how the principle does not obstruct the specifics and the specifics do not obstruct the principle. It's absolutely not the case that the principle is outside the specifics, or the specifics outside the principle. They are one. Therefore, the text says, "That in no way hinders its clear sameness of a single flavor."

BECAUSE True THUSNESS IS UNOBSTRUCTED, THE BUDDHA'S SOUND ALSO ACCORDS WITH THUSNESS WITHOUT OBSTRUCTION. The sound spoken by the Buddha is also spoken in accord with True Thusness, and is unobstructed, too. In what way is it unobstructed?

The Buddha speaks the Dharma with a single sound.  
Living beings each understand it according to their kind.

When the Buddha speaks the Dharma, every single one of the great Bodhisattvas within the Dharma assembly feels, "Ah, Shakyamuni Buddha right now is speaking Dharma for me." Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva hears the Buddha speaking the Dharma for Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva. Maitreya Bodhisattva is not jealous, for he feels the Buddha is speaking the Dharma right before him, for Maitreya Bodhisattva. Manjushri Bodhisattva, Universal Worthy Bodhisattva, Earth Store Bodhisattva, and every single one of the great Bodhisattvas of the sea-vast Lotus Pool Assembly each feels that the Buddha is speaking the Dharma directly to him. Bodhisattvas have that impression, and so do the Arhats. Every Arhat feels, "Ah, now Shakyamuni Buddha is speaking that Dharma for me."

Now, during our Sutra lectures, if a certain fault is mentioned, anyone who has that particular fault thinks, "Oh, that's being said for me." It's the same, and one can infer the larger picture from a small example. Right now it's not the case that each living being understands it according to the kind of living being it is, but the average person understands it according to the kind of person he or she is. As soon as Chinese people, Americans, Japanese, or people of any other nationality hear it, if it's translated intelligibly, they all understand it. When the Buddha spoke the Dharma at that time, every single type of living being felt the Buddha was speaking the Dharma directly for him. That was true not only of the

living beings present in the Dharma assembly, but even true of other countries. All the living beings within them experienced Shakyamuni Buddha manifesting a body and speaking the Dharma for them. Even all the horses, cows, sheep, chickens, dogs, and pigs understood what the Buddha said, and felt, "The Buddha is speaking the Dharma for me." For that reason, it is said that the Buddha speaks the Dharma with a single sound. The living beings each understand it according to their kind. Therefore, because the sound of the Buddha's voice is spoken from True Thusness, it is unobstructed, too.

Someone may object, "There's no evidence to substantiate a claim that, when the Buddha spoke the Dharma in a given Dharma assembly, all the people in other lands heard it, too. I don't believe it."

Wait until you believe it, and then you will believe it. For the present, of course you don't believe it, since you don't have that kind of knowledge. You don't have the knowledge a Buddha has, and so there is no way for you to believe it. FOR ALL ARE INTERACTIVE WITH THE WISDOM OF THUSNESS. Why is it that living beings can each understand the Dharma spoken by the Buddha according to their own kind? The Buddha, based upon the principle of thusness, speaks the Dharma of thusness, and living beings use the wisdom of thusness to listen to the Dharma of thusness. Therefore, the principle of thusness meshes with the wisdom of thusness, and using the wisdom of thusness, the principle of thusness is spoken. That is what's known as interaction, AS WAS EXPLAINED EXTENSIVELY BEFORE IN the Third Door, that of *THE DOCTRINAL ANALYSIS*. It was set forth in great detail there.

Contemplating from the point of view of the state of non-obstruction of specifics and principle, people who believe in the Buddha are Buddhists, and people who don't believe in the Buddha are not outside the scope of Buddhism. Therefore, whether you believe or not, you are within the realm of Buddhism. In that respect, the Buddhadharma is both vast and great, and very fine and subtle. No living being whatsoever can get outside of Buddhism. It doesn't matter whether you believe or not. Wouldn't you say that was great? It's not like some religions which say, "If you believe in me, you are an adherent of my religion, but if you don't believe in me, you don't belong to my religion." It's all the same, whether you believe or disbelieve.

*END OF THE EIGHTH SUBSTANCE*