

The Wonderful Dharma Flower Sutra

Chapter Fifteen, Welling up from the Earth

with commentary by Tripitaka Master Hua

SUTRA:

Because of the Buddha's spiritual power, all in the great assembly were caused to say it had been as if half a day long.

COMMENTARY:

Because of the Buddha's spiritual power, the strength of his spiritual penetrations, **all in the great assembly were caused to say it had been as if half a day long.** Although it seemed like half a day, more than fifty small aeons had passed. Although it had been fifty small aeons, it seemed like half a day's time. Most people had that impression.

SUTRA:

At that time, the four assemblies were also able, because of the Buddha's spiritual power, to see all the Bodhisattvas completely filling the empty space of limitless hundreds of thousands of myriads of millions of lands.

COMMENTARY:

At that time, the four assemblies of Bhikshu Sanghans, the Bhikshunis, the Upasakas and Upasikas, **were also able, because of the Buddha's spiritual power, to see all the Bodhisattvas completely filling the empty space.** How many were there? They filled up **limitless hundreds of thousands of myriads of lands.** How many Bodhisattvas were there all together? No one could know.

Speaking about the relativity of time, a day and a night in the Heaven of the Four Kings, the heaven we can see above us, is equal to fifty years in the human realm. The gods there live for five hundred years, so you can figure out how much time that is in human terms.

In the Heaven of the Thirty-three, a day and a night is one hundred human years, and the gods live for a thousand years.

When the Buddha was in the world, a believer in an externalist way once challenged Mahakatyayana, saying, "I don't believe in rebirth. If it's true that there is rebirth, then why hasn't anyone who has died ever sent a message back to tell us about it?"

Mahakatyayana said, "Let's take the example of a prisoner who has been put in jail. Is he free to send a letter home?"

"No," said the non-believer.

"People in hell are even less free to communicate," said Mahakatyayana.

"Well, what about the people in heaven? They're free," said the non-believer.

The Venerable One answered him saying, "One day and night in the heavens equals fifty years on earth. Two days equal a hundred years in the human realm. Once they arrive there, first they would want to rest. The second day they would want to get settled in, unpack their bags, make the bed, and rearrange the furniture. By the third day in heaven, they might think to send you a letter, but you would already be dead. Because if he came back three days later, a hundred and fifty years in the human realm would have passed. How would you be able to see him?"

The externalist had no answer.

Therefore, time in the heavens and time on earth are experienced differently. A day and a night on earth is equal to five hundred years in the hells. You should not be attached to time. Time is basically empty. People create their concept of time, but time itself does not exist. Its very substance is empty. Since it has no self-nature, no substance of its own, why be attached to there definitely being a certainty about time?

SUTRA:

Among the multitude of Bodhisattvas were four leaders. The first was named Superior Practice, the second was named Boundless Practice. The third was named Pure Practice, and the fourth was named Secure Practice. These four Bodhisattvas, among the assembly, were the foremost leaders: The spokesmen and guides. Before the great multitudes, they joined their palms together, contemplated Shakyamuni Buddha, made deep bows from the waist and said, "World Honored One, are you in good health and free from worry? Are you peaceful and happy in your practice? Are those who should be crossed over receptive to the teaching? They do not cause the World Honored One weariness, do they?"

The four great Bodhisattvas then spoke verses, saying:

**Is the World Honored One happy and at peace,
Free from worry and disease?
In teaching and transforming beings,
Is he free from weariness?
And further, do living beings
Receive transformation easily?
They do not cause the World Honored One
To become fatigued, do they?**

COMMENTARY:

Among the multitudes, the limitless, boundless, uncountable great **Bodhisattvas**, Mahasattvas filling up the empty space in hundreds of thousands of myriads of millions of lands, **were four** leaders. They were guides and models for living beings, and the other Bodhisattvas. The other Bodhisattvas studied from them: they were the senior-seated Bodhisattvas. **The first was named Superior Practice**. His cultivation, his practice, was the very highest. None were more lofty than he. **The second was named Boundless Practice**. The entrances into practice that he cultivated had no limit, no end. **The third was named Pure Practice**. The meaning of his name is that he became a Bodhisattva by cultivating pure practices. **And the fourth Bodhisattva leader was named Secure Practice**. He was able to peacefully and happily establish his entrance into practice. **These four Bodhisattvas**, these leaders **among the assembly** in the empty space of limitless hundreds of thousands of myriads of millions of lands, among all those Bodhisattvas, **were the foremost leaders**. They were senior-seated Bodhisattvas. The leaders of the Great Assembly: **The spokesmen and guides** were singing praises. They were the leaders; in doing everything, they were the leaders before the great multitudes, the four Bodhisattva leaders **joined their palms together, contemplated Shakyamuni Buddha, made deep bows from the waist, and said:** They asked after the Buddha's welfare, "**World Honored One, are you in good health?** Probably, World Honored One, you haven't been sick and there's nothing troubling you, is there? **Are you peaceful and happy in your practice?** In the four modes of peaceful and happy conduct--body, mouth, mind, and vows--are you well-established? **Are those who should be crossed over receptive to the teaching?** Are they easy to teach and transform?**They do not cause the World Honored One weariness, do they?** They don't present obstacles, do they?"

With living beings easy to teach, the World Honored One will certainly be happy. He won't grow sick and tired from teaching them."

The four great Bodhisattvas then spoke verses, in praise of Shakyamuni Buddha and to ask after him, **saying: Is the World Honored One happy and at peace? You are very content and tranquil, free from worry and disease are you not? Certainly you have no sickness and no affliction. In teaching and transforming beings, is he free from weariness?** Certainly, the Buddha is not tired. **And further, do living beings receive transformation easily?** It is not too difficult, is it? **They do not cause the World Honored One to become fatigued, do they?** Since they easily accept the teaching and transforming, the World Honored One will not feel tired. Right?"

SUTRA:

The World Honored One then, in the midst of the great host of Bodhisattvas, said this:"So it is, so it is, good men. **The Thus Come One is peaceful and happy, free from disease and worry. All the living beings are easy to transform and cross over, and they do not cause me weariness. Why is this? These living beings have, lifetime after lifetime, always received my transforming influence, and they have also paid reverence to and venerated the Buddhas of the past, thereby planting the roots of goodness. All these living beings, from the time they first saw me and heard my teaching, immediately believed and accepted it and entered into the Thus Come**

One's wisdom. Those who cast aside their former cultivation and study of the Small Vehicle I now lead to hear this Sutra and enter into the Buddha's wisdom."

COMMENTARY:

The World Honored One, then: Then is when the four guiding masters had finished speaking their verse on behalf of all the Great Bodhisattvas. **In the midst of the great host of Bodhisattvas,** the Buddha **said this:** This narrative sentence was added by the Venerable Ananda when he compiled the Sutras: Then the World Honored One Shakyamuni, in the midst of Bodhisattvas who completely filled the empty space in limitless hundreds of thousands of millions of lands, such a great assembly as that, spoke. What did he say? He said, "**So it is, so it is, good men.** You asked how I'm doing, and it's just as you stated. I am just fine. Good men, I, **the Thus Come One,** am **Peaceful and happy, free from disease.** I'm in good health **and** don't have cause to **worry.** I have no afflictions. **All the living beings are easy to transform and cross over.** They are all very obedient, **and they do not cause me weariness.** Therefore, I don't feel tired. I am not at all displeased. **Why is this? All these living beings have, lifetime after lifetime, always received my transforming influence.** They have throughout life after life, in time after time, been receiving my teaching. They have obtained my transforming instructions. **And they have also paid reverence to and venerated the Buddhas of the past.** Not only have they been taught by me, but they have in the presence of countless Buddhas of the past, been reverent, respectful, and have praised them. They have **thereby planted the roots of goodness,** planting many, many good roots, limitlessly, boundlessly many good roots. **All these living beings** that I have been transforming at present, **from the time they first saw me**—they beheld my physical being **and heard my teaching:** the Store House Teaching, the Connecting Teaching, and the Special Teaching—**immediately believed and accepted it.** Their faith was instantly born. Some certified to the fruition of Arhatship; others were certified to the fruition of Those Enlightened by Conditions. Still others were certified to the stages of Bodhisattvahood, **and thus entered into the Thus Come One's wisdom,** passing through the Ten Dwellings, the Ten Practices, the Ten Transferences, the Ten Grounds, and on to the level of Equal Enlightenment. Having traversed forty-one levels all together, they became Great Masters of the Dharma-body(法身大士). Finally, they entered the Buddha's wisdom and obtained the fruition of Wonderful Enlightenment.

As to those who cast aside their previous cultivation and study of the Small Vehicle-- the people who previously studied the Small Vehicle are not counted in this number--**I now lead to hear this Sutra.** I want them to now listen to this **Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra,** to cause them to turn from the small and go toward the Great; to bring forth the resolve of a Bodhisattva, cultivate the Bodhisattva Way **and enter the Buddha's wisdom.**

SUTRA:

At that time, the Great Bodhisattvas spoke these verses:

**Good indeed, good indeed,
Great Hero, World Honored One,
That all the living beings are easy to transform and save,
That they can ask about the Buddha's deep wisdom.
And, having heard it, believe and practice it.
We all rejoice accordingly.**

COMMENTARY:

At that time, after Shakyamuni Buddha finished speaking, **the Great Bodhisattvas spoke these verses** to praise Shakyamuni Buddha: **Good indeed, good indeed**. That is very good, very good, **Great Hero, World Honored One**. The Buddha is the Great Hero who has transcended the world. He is heroic both in and beyond the world. **All the living beings** who should be taught and transformed **are easy to transform and save**. They very easily accept the Buddha's teaching and transforming. **They can ask about the Buddha's deep wisdom, and, having heard it, believe and practice it**. After they listen, they believe, accept, and respectfully offer up their conduct. They practice according to the Dharma. **We all rejoice accordingly**. All of us, the Great Bodhisattvas, rejoice in this merit and virtue and wish to respectfully offer up our conduct and to rely upon the Buddha's teaching in our cultivation as well.

SUTRA:

The Buddha then praised the leaders of all those Great Bodhisattvas: "Good indeed, good indeed, that you have brought forth a heart of rejoicing in accord with the Thus Come One.

COMMENTARY:

Then means at the time when all of the Great Bodhisattvas had finished praising Shakyamuni Buddha in verses. The Bodhisattvas praised the Buddha, and now the Buddha praises the Bodhisattvas. **The World Honored One praised the leaders of those Great Bodhisattvas**. They mutually praised each other. **"Good indeed, good indeed**. You Great Bodhisattvas are really good. You are the best Bodhisattvas. **You** with regard to the **Thus Come One** can, before him, bring **forth a heart of rejoicing in accord**. You have resolved to rejoice in the joy of and to praise **The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra** spoken by the Buddha. You have been able to come to this Dharma Assembly to listen to the Dharma.