

The Wonderful Dharma Flower Sutra

Chapter Fifteen, Welling up from the Earth

with commentary by Tripitaka Master Hua

SUTRA:

At that time, all the division-body Buddhas of Shakyamuni Buddha who had come from limitless thousands of myriads of millions of lands in other directions sat in lotus posture on lion thrones beneath jeweled trees in the eight directions. Each of the attendants of those Buddhas, seeing this great assembly of Bodhisattvas from the four directions of the three thousand great thousand worlds welling up out of the earth and dwelling in empty space, said to his respective Buddha, "World Honored One, where have all the limitless boundless, Asankhyeyas of Bodhisattvas in this great host come from?"

Each of those Buddhas then told his attendants, "All of you good men, just wait one moment! There is a Bodhisattva, Mahasattva, named Maitreya, upon whom Shakyamuni Buddha has bestowed a prediction that he shall be the next Buddha. He has already asked about this matter and the Buddha is about to answer him. For this reason you may all hear about it."

COMMENTARY:

In the previous verse section, Maitreya Bodhisattva expressed his doubts. Now, the attendants that the Shakyamuni Buddhas had brought with them, their disciples, having seen this rare occurrence of the arrival of so many great Bodhisattvas, had false thoughts and doubts, too: "Where did all these Bodhisattvas come from? Why have so many people come today? So many Bodhisattvas! Where could they have come from?"

At that time, Shakyamuni Buddha had sent Division-Body Buddhas to all the limitless lands, from limitless thousands of myriads of kotis of lands in other directions. All those Buddhas came to here. Beneath jeweled trees in the eight directions: they dwell in the eight directions -- east, south, west, north, southwest, southeast, northwest, and northeast. There are four directions proper and four intermediate directions. They **sat on lion thrones in lotus posture.** "Lotus posture" is most honored, most venerated in Buddhism. Those of you who study the Buddhadharma should first know how to sit in the lotus position.

Each of the attendants of those Buddhas were seeing the great assembly of Bodhisattvas. Every attendant looked at these great Bodhisattvas. **Of the three thousand great thousand worlds welling up out of the earth in the four directions,** in each of the cardinal directions, they issued forth from the ground and were **dwelling in empty space,** because the stupas of many Jeweled Buddha -- the Thus Come One Many

Jewels -- and Shakyamuni Buddha were both in empty space. Each attendant **said to his respective Buddha, "World Honored One."** The title World Honored One here does not refer to Shakyamuni Buddha, but to all of Shakyamuni Buddha's division-body World Honored Ones. There were **limitless, boundless Asankhyeyas of Bodhisattvas in this great host.** Asankhyeya means a limitless number. There were limitless, boundless numbers of limitlessly, boundlessly many Bodhisattvas. **"Where have they come from, this great assembly of great Bodhisattvas? How is it that we have never met them before? What place have all these great Bodhisattvas come from?"**

Each of those Buddhas then told his attendants.... All those division-body Buddhas of Shakyamuni Buddha told the disciples they had brought with them: **"All of you good men.** You youngsters! **Just wait a minute.** Don't make so much noise. You aren't the least bit composed." It's certain the Buddhas said, "Quiet! Don't make so much noise. Wait a minute. Don't be nervous. **There is a Bodhisattva, Mahasattva --** there's already a great Bodhisattva -- **by the name of Maitreya.** He is the one upon whom Shakyamuni Buddha has bestowed a prediction that he shall be the next Buddha. Maitreya Bodhisattva has been given a prediction and a name; he will follow Shakyamuni Buddha to become the next Buddha. After Shakyamuni Buddha enters Nirvana, then, in the future, within the Buddhadharma, Maitreya will be the next Buddha."

In the world, there are proponents of externalist ways who claim to be Maitreya Buddha. This one says, "I am Maitreya Buddha. I have come. Do you recognize me?"

Another says, "Actually, I am the real Maitreya Bodhisattva."

That's the way it goes. One transmits a Way and another one transmits another Way. Each transmits a different teaching. There's "receiving perfection" (收圓) and "reaping the fruition" (結果)—lots of kinds. In China alone, there are many phony Maitreya Bodhisattvas. They say they are Maitreya Bodhisattva, but actually it's too early for Maitreya Bodhisattva to come.

Maitreya Bodhisattva will come in the future. When will that be? I've talked about this before. The average human lifespan decreases by a year every hundred years. The average height decreases by an inch. When the lifespan has decreased to the point that people live an average of ten years, it will begin to increase again at the same rate: every hundred years adding one year to the average lifespan and adding one inch to the average height.

When the average lifespan drops to ten years, people will be about the height of dogs. They won't grow very tall, and they will die by the time they are ten years old. People's lifespans and heights will decrease each hundred years, but most people don't live to be a hundred, so we won't know how tall the people will be a hundred years from now. Also, you have to remember this is an average. It doesn't mean any certain person. You may want to argue that some people are taller than people used to be. But individuals don't count. We are referring to the average.

After the average human lifespan reaches ten years, it will begin to increase. Every hundred years, the lifespans will increase by one year, and the average height by one inch. It will increase again. When it has decreased to eighty thousand years, Maitreya Bodhisattva will come into the world. Therefore, these pretenders who say they are Maitreya Bodhisattva are mistaken. But you should also realize this: if you have conditions with Maitreya Bodhisattva, he can come now and teach and transform you—save you. There are no fixed Dharmas.

"He has already asked about this matter. Maitreya Bodhisattva has already asked about what's going on here. **And the Buddha is about to answer him.** Shakyamuni Buddha is just about ready to reply to his question. **For this reason, you may all hear about it.** Don't make noise. Be quiet. Listen. Since Maitreya Bodhisattva has already asked and Shakyamuni Buddha is going to answer his question, if you listen, you will all understand as well. Don't be nervous, youngsters."

SUTRA:

Shakyamuni Buddha then said to Maitreya Bodhisattva, "Good indeed, good indeed, Ajita, that you can inquire of the Buddha about such a great matter. You should all single-mindedly don the armor of vigor; put forth a firm resolve.

"The Thus Come One now wishes to disclose and proclaim the wisdom of all Buddhas' comfortable self-mastery and spiritual penetrations, the power of all Buddhas' lion-spirit, and the power of all Buddhas' awesome courage and mighty strength."

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to restate these principles, spoke verses:

Commentary:

Shakyamuni Buddha then spoke to Maitreya Bodhisattva, saying, "Good indeed, good indeed, Ajita, that you can inquire of the Buddha about such a great matter." The attendants that the Buddhas of the ten directions brought with them, those Bodhisattvas, also had doubts, and each went to ask the Buddha whom he accompanied. They asked, "Where have these great Bodhisattvas come from? Why don't we recognize them?"

And so each of the Buddhas told his attendants: "Don't be nervous. Listen. Just now, Maitreya Bodhisattva has already asked Shakyamuni World Honored One that question. Shakyamuni World Honored One is now going to answer. From their dialogue you will come to understand the causes and conditions."

"Then" refers to that time. **Shakyamuni Buddha, the World Honored One, spoke to Maitreya Bodhisattva, saying, "Maitreya Bodhisattva, good indeed, good indeed!"**

"Good indeed, good indeed" has two meanings. The first "good indeed" means that Maitreya Bodhisattva's question was excellent. Why? Because he understood the Buddha's mind. His question tallied above with all the Buddhas'minds (上契佛心 shang chi fwo syin). The second "good indeed" means that his question was again excellent in that it tallied below with everyone's thoughts (下契群念 sya chi chyun nyan). It tallied below with living beings thoughts—their minds. That's why "good indeed" was spoken twice.

Why is it said to be a "great matter" (大事)? Because it "discloses the traces in order to reveal the origin, (開跡顯本 kai ji syan ben) and discloses the near to reveal the far. (開近顯遠 kai jin syan ywan).

"Traces" are the imprints left by previous events (蹤跡 dzung ji). Revealing the origin means manifesting the way it basically was—manifesting the events of one's previous lives.

The Buddha also wants to disclose the near to reveal the far. In the past, this Dharma-door had never been spoken. This Dharma-door was not spoken during the Flower Adornment Period, nor was this Dharma-door spoken during the Agama Period. In the Vaipulya Period, this Dharma-door was not spoken, and in the Prajna Period, this Dharma-door was also not spoken. Only in the Lotus-Nirvana Period was this Dharma-door finally spoken. It's only now, in the Lotus-Nirvana Period, that the **Dharma Flower** is spoken. This is "disclosing the near to reveal the far," a subtle, wonderful, inconceivable Dharma-door. And, since it has never before been spoken out in such an open and obvious manner, this is a great matter. Furthermore, the "great matter" does not refer to the virtue of the nature (性德 syng de), but to the virtue of cultivation (修德 syiu de). The virtue of cultivation through which one attains the level of fruition is extremely profound and far-reaching. This is not referring to the principle of the equality of the virtue of the nature. Therefore, this matter (事) is a specific (事), not a principle (理). It is a great matter.

The Buddha therefore says, "Good indeed, good indeed, Ajita, that you have been able to ask the Buddha about this great matter."

"You should all single-mindedly..." The word "should" is an exhortation (誡), an admonishment. "Each of you in this great Assembly should be single-minded. Do not allow your minds to be scattered," he warns them. "If you want to listen to me explain this Dharma, you must be single-minded. **Don the armor of vigor.** Put on vigor as your armor. Vigor implies that one should not be lazy. This is a warning to you not to be lazy. Go forward with vigor. **Put forth a firm resolve,** which means do not retreat. You should bring forth a determined resolve not to retreat."

The Thus Come One's genuine wisdom was perfected long ago. Long, distant kalpas ago it was perfect. Since it was perfected so long ago, he is able to provisionally manifest to teach and transform living beings. For the sake of the real, he bestows the provisional. (為實施權 wei shr"tse"(shr)chwan). He uses provisional, clever expedient Dharma-doors

to teach and transform living beings. This work of teaching and transforming living beings, he has done in the past and he is doing in the present. And so it is said that his teaching reaches throughout the three periods of time, (化窮三世 hwa chyung san shr) and benefits creatures in the ten directions. (益物十方 yi wu shr fang). Thus the Buddha teaches and transforms those in the ten directions and three periods of time. This is a state that those below the level of a Bodhisattva of Equal Enlightenment can understand. Therefore it is said to be inconceivable.

The Buddha takes advantage of the Bodhisattva's question to exhort and warn the great assembly. He tells them what they should do and what they should refrain from doing: they should be single-minded and not let their minds be scattered; they should don the armor of vigor and not be lax; they should put forth a firm resolve and not retreat. He told the multitude in that Dharma Assembly that they should think in that way.

"The Thus Come One now wishes to disclose and proclaim the wisdom of all Buddhas." Shakyamuni Buddha said, "I, the Thus Come One, wish to disclose and proclaim the wisdom of all Buddhas."

What is the wisdom of all Buddhas? The Dharma Flower Sutra contains the wisdom of all Buddhas. It has the wisdom of accomplishing the Buddha Way. If you want to know the wisdom of all Buddhas, you should investigate the Dharma Flower Sutra. **"The power of all Buddhas' comfortable self-mastery and spiritual penetrations"**. He also wishes to disclose and proclaim, explain and reveal, the power of all Buddhas' self-mastery and spiritual penetrations. All Buddhas' comfortable self-mastery represents the virtue of true self (我德) —one of the Four Virtues of Nirvana. Spiritual penetrations represent the virtue of bliss (樂德) of that same list. **"The power of all Buddhas' lion sprint"**. The Thus Come One wants to proclaim and disclose all Buddhas' power of the lion sprint. "What is that power? Of the Four Virtues—eternity, bliss, true self, and purity—it represents the virtue of purity. The virtue of purity is the power of the lion's sprint, because the lion's-sprint can expel defilement. (獅子奮迅能除垢 shr dz fen syun neng chyü gou). Since it expels defilement, the lion's sprint is the virtue of purity. **"The power of all Buddhas' awesome courage and mighty strength"**, all Buddhas great power of awesome virtue and heroic courage....Shakyamuni Buddha also wants to proclaim and disclose all Buddhas' power of great awesome courage, and that represents the virtue of eternity(常德). Because the Four Virtues are perfected, all Buddhas are able in the past, present, and future to have power to benefit living beings. Power refers to beneficent strength. Great spiritual powers and comfortable self-mastery means having entered the "ultimate dwelling place of compassion." (究竟慈悲室 jou jing tse bei shr). The power of the lion-sprint means ascending to the "ultimate throne of the emptiness of dharmas." (究竟法空座 iyou jing fa kung dzwo). Awesome courage and mighty strength represents the "ultimate clothing of patience." (究竟忍辱衣 iyou jing nen ru yi). This is the same as "entering the Thus Come One's room, sitting on the Thus Come One's seat, and putting on the Thus Come One's clothes." (入如來室, 坐如來座, 著如來衣 ru ru lai shr, dzwo ru lai dzwo yau ru lai yi).

At that time, Shakyamuni, the World Honored One, wishing to restate these principles in detail, spoke verses saying: He used the language of verse to reiterate his meaning.

SUTRA:

**You should be vigorous and of one mind.
For I wish to speak about this matter.
Hold no doubts or regrets--
The wisdom of the Buddhas is inconceivable.
Bring forth, now, the power of faith.
And abide in patience and goodness,
For the Dharma which from of old has never been heard,
You are now about to hear.
I am comforting you now,
So have no doubt or fear.
The Buddhas never speak falsely.
And their wisdom cannot be measured.
That foremost Dharma they have gained.
Is extremely profound, beyond discerning.
As such, it should now be explained,
And you should single-mindedly listen.**

COMMENTARY:

You should be vigorous and of one mind, Shakyamuni Buddha said. "You in this great assembly and all the Great Bodhisattvas who have come from the ten directions, as well as Maitreya Bodhisattva, should be vigorous and single-minded. You should don the armor of vigor. Don't be lax. Don't be lazy. Be of one mind. Become single-minded. Don't let your minds become scattered while you are listening to the Lotus Dharma I am about to explain for you. **For now I wish to speak about this matter**. Now I want to tell you about the causes and conditions of the great matter for which I appeared in the world. I want to tell you clearly about this matter. **Hold no doubts or regrets**. Don't give rise to doubts or fail to believe me. **The wisdom of the Buddhas is inconceivable**. The Buddhas said, "The wisdom of the Buddhas of ten directions and of mine, Shakyamuni Buddha's, is inconceivable. You ordinary people cannot comprehend it. You cannot understand the wisdom of the Buddhas. **Bring forth, now, the power of faith**. All of you in the Great Assembly should get hold of the strength of your faith **and abide in patience and goodness**. You should concentrate on the paramita of patience and do the good deeds born of patience. Set your minds on patience.

The Dharma which from of old has never been heard: you have never heard this Dharma before. It's only now that you will hear this wonderful Dharma. **You are now about to hear it**. Earlier I spoke expedient, provisional Dharma-doors. I did not speak actual Dharma for you to hear. Now I want to speak the inconceivable, wonderful Dharma for you. You will all be able to hear it. **I am comforting you now**. I want to

comfort all of you; you should become single-minded and vigorous. Bring forth a firm resolve to listen to this Dharma. So **have no doubt or fear**. You should not have doubts. You should not become frightened. **The Buddhas never speak falsely**. The Dharma that the Buddhas speak is true, actual and not false. Now is the time to open out the provisional and reveal the actual, to disclose the near and reveal the far. I'm going to speak the inconceivable, wonderful Dharma for you to hear. The Buddhas never say anything that isn't so. You should bring forth faith.

"Their wisdom cannot be measured. Buddhas speak true and actual words and the Buddhas' wisdom is unreckonable. There is no way to say how much wisdom a Buddha has. **That foremost Dharma they have gained.** The Buddhas have obtained the Number One, wonderful Dharma. The Wonderful Dharma for accomplishing Buddhahood **is extremely profound, beyond discerning. It is especially deep, utterly profound.** Beyond discerning, there is no way to distinguish how deep it is. **As such, it should now be explained,** this inconceivable, wonderful Dharma cannot be discriminated. This is the time to explain it. **And you should single-mindedly listen.** All of you in the Great Assembly, including all of you Bodhisattvas, should become single-minded and listen to this wonderful Dharma.