

The Wonderful Dharma Flower Sutra

Chapter Fifteen, Welling up from the Earth

with commentary by Tripitaka Master Hua

Why are all **these disciples** of the Buddha like this? It is because they offer up their conduct in accord with the teaching (依教奉行). Whatever Shakyamuni Buddha taught them, they cultivated in that way. Therefore the Buddha says, "They **study and practice the Dharma of my Way**. Because they study and practice what I taught them to cultivate, the Way I told them to practice, and the **Dharmas** I taught them to cultivate, they are **vigorous always, day and night**." They cultivate vigor during the day and vigor at night. Day and night they are vigorous. Both their bodies and minds are vigorous. For instance, they sit in meditation regularly. They constantly bow to the Buddhas. They are always mindful of the Buddhas -- day and night, in the six periods of the day and night -- and their vigor means they are using the cultivation methods the Buddha taught them. At all times, they are cultivating. They are vigorous with regard to all aspects of the Buddhadharma.

For example: living beings with excessive greed may be greedy for beautiful forms, for wealth, for fame, for profit, and other such problematic things. Living being with excessive greed should contemplate impurity (多貪眾生不淨觀). They should cultivate the contemplation of impurity. Most people's biggest desire is for sex. That is why they should cultivate the contemplation of impurity. They should contemplate that no matter how handsome or beautiful a person is, it's just a stinking skin bag after all. It's just a bunch of bones carrying around a bunch of flesh. If you cut open the skin anywhere, blood will flow out. After a while it will form into pus. These stinking skin bags really have nothing about them that we should be greedy for or wish to become involved with. Besides that, the nine apertures are constantly excreting impurities (九孔常流不淨).

Living beings with excessive hatred should contemplate compassion (多瞋眾生慈悲觀). People who like to get angry should cultivate the contemplation of compassion. Compassion means not getting angry at anyone. You should look upon all living beings as your own sons and daughters. You give rise to compassion toward all living beings. Stupid living beings should cultivate the contemplation of causes and conditions. They should see them as false, see them as empty, and contemplate the Middle Way(假, 空, 中道).

Living beings with excessive stupidity should contemplate causes and conditions (多癡眾生因緣觀). Yesterday, a Dharma Master explained how Shariputra cultivated the contemplation of causes and conditions. He also said that living beings with excessive stupidity should cultivate the contemplation of causes and conditions. But now we must add one sentence: Shariputra was definitely not stupid. And so why did he cultivate the contemplation of causes and conditions? It is because this Dharma-door was very appropriate for him. And so although he was someone with wisdom, he also cultivated the contemplation of causes and conditions.

It's not a fixed principle that only stupid living beings can cultivate the contemplation of causes and conditions and that intelligent people cannot cultivate it. That's not the way it is. Nor is it the case that we say living beings with excessive greed should cultivate the contemplation of impurity, but that if a living being doesn't have excessive greed he cannot cultivate the contemplation of impurity. It's not like that. If you are not greedy, you can still cultivate the contemplation of impurity. It will work even better for you. Living beings who are stupid can cultivate the contemplation of causes and conditions

and become enlightened, and so if living beings who are intelligent cultivate the contemplation of causes and conditions, they can become enlightened even faster. Therefore there are no fixed Dharmas.

Living beings with excessive obstacles should cultivate the contemplation of mindfulness of the Buddha (多障眾生唵佛觀). If when you try to do things, you are obstructed, then recite the Buddha's name. When you recite the Buddha's name, you don't have to use any effort; there's no need to meditate or to contemplate empty, false, and the Middle Way. You don't need to do any of that. Just recite the Buddha's name: "NA MWO A MI TWO FWO." Just recite like that, and you will have success.

Living beings who are excessively scattered should cultivate the contemplation of counting the breath (多散眾生數息觀). In the contemplation of counting the breaths, you can:

- 1) count the (呼 hu) exhaled breaths; or
- 2) count the (吸 syi) inhaled breaths.

Either method will do. But if you count the exhaled breaths, then do not count the inhaled ones; and if you count the inhaled ones, do not count the exhaled ones. You count from one to ten, and then start over, going again from one to ten. That's called the contemplation of counting the breaths. If at night you cannot go to sleep and start having false thinking, that's a good time to cultivate the contemplation of counting the breaths.

Start counting, and after a few exhalations, you'll be asleep. Or you can breathe in a few times, and you'll fall asleep. It's quite miraculous. As soon as you pay attention to your inbreaths, your false thoughts cease and then you can go to sleep very quickly. Why are you unable to fall asleep? It's because you are having false thinking. You think about this and think about that, and it prevents you from falling asleep. If you cultivate this contemplation regularly for a long time, very naturally you will have it in hand.

"They are vigorous day and night in **seeking the Buddha-way**. Because they want to seek the Buddha-way, **they dwell in empty space beneath this Saha world**. They are **solid and powerful in resolve and thought**. They are not lazy, nor do they retreat, nor are they scattered. They are singleminded in their cultivation. They don the armor of vigor and go forward to cultivate. They bring forth solid intent to cultivate and never retreat. They are not like we people who cultivate and use effort today and then tomorrow we stop applying effort. They are not like that. The only exception would be if they are not cultivating a Dharma. If they decide to cultivate a certain Dharma, they will never retreat. **They are ever diligent in seeking wisdom**. They are always eager to seek wisdom. **They speak various Wonderful Dharmas**. They speak all kinds of Wonderful Dharma for living beings, **with no fear in their minds**. They have no fear. In speaking the Dharma, they always send forth the lion's roar, and they have no fear."

SUTRA:

**In the City of Gaya,
Sitting beneath the Bodhi Tree,
I realized the most proper enlightenment
And turned the supreme Dharma wheel.
Only then did I teach and transform them,
Causing them to first bring forth their resolve
for the Way.
Now they all dwell in irreversibility,**

**And all shall become Buddhas.
I now speak the truth,
You should believe it with a single mind.
From remote time past to now,
I have taught and transformed these multitudes.**

COMMENTARY:

"In the city of Gaya...." Shakyamuni Buddha says, "When I was in the City of Gaya...." Gaya is Sanskrit. It translates as "Mountain city" (山城). "In a place outside of the city of Gaya, I was **sitting beneath the Bodhi Tree** in meditation.

When he first sat down to meditate, Shakyamuni Buddha made a vow. What was his vow? He said, "Once I sit down beneath this Bodhi Tree, if I do not become enlightened, I will sit here forever. I will not get up." He meant he would not go anywhere else. He would remain seated in meditation under the Bodhi Tree.

"I realized the most proper enlightenment. Beneath the Bodhi Tree, I sat seven times seven -- forty nine days." And on the night of the forty-ninth day, he saw a bright star in the sky and awakened to the Way. At night he saw a bright star and awakened to the Way (夜觀明星而悟道). At that moment, he became a Buddha. What does it mean to become a Buddha? When one becomes a Buddha, one is still the same as living beings. Buddhas are living beings; living beings are Buddhas. But Buddhas have already become Buddhas and living beings have not yet become Buddhas. Buddhas are living beings who have already become Buddhas and living beings are living beings who have not yet become Buddhas. When Shakyamuni Buddha saw that bright star and became enlightened, he sighed. Why? He said, "Strange, indeed! Strange, indeed! Strange, indeed!" He said it three times. It's said he sighed three times, saying, "Strange, indeed!" (三嘆奇哉) His meaning was: "It's very strange! Extremely strange! Really strange!" What was strange?

He said, "All living beings have the virtuous characteristics of the Thus Come Ones (一切眾生皆有如來智慧德相)." He said that the wisdom and virtuous characteristics that Buddhas have, all living beings have, too. They all have the seed of Buddhahood. They have the wisdom of a Buddha, the virtuous conduct of a Buddha, and the opportunity to become a Buddha. And so why haven't they become Buddhas? There's a problem. It is only because of false thinking and attachments that they have not yet been able to certify to and attain it (但以妄想執著未能證得).

Why haven't we become Buddhas? It's because we have false thinking. Why haven't we people become Buddhas? Because we have attachments. Because of false thinking and attachments, the living beings who should become Buddhas are obstructed. What obstructs them? False thinking and attachments. The obstructions hinder them, like when a person walking on a road comes upon a blockade and cannot go forward. An example would be the wall between East and West Germany, which kept the East Germans from being able to go to West Germany and the West Germans from being able to go to East Germany. So, too, we people who have not become Buddhas have a blockade hindering us. What is the blockade? False thinking and attachments. If you have false thinking and attachments, you cannot open the wisdom of the Buddhas. You have to let go of false thinking and attachments, and then you can become a Buddha.

How did Shakyamuni Buddha become a Buddha? He put down his false thinking and attachments. In the beginning, he was in the Royal Palace with many pleasures. In the future he would have been the Emperor. He would have been a Wheel Turning Sage King. But he put all that down. He didn't want to be Emperor. He didn't want to be a Wheel-turning King. He renounced his lovely wife. He looked

upon birth, old age, sickness and death as too much trouble, and so he resolved to leave the home-life, cultivate the Way, and end birth and death. Because he had cast out his attachments and false thinking, when he sat under the Bodhi Tree for forty-nine days, he became enlightened. We people don't have that much endurance and patience. We aren't that constant in our practice.

I often tell you about being firm, sincere, and constant, but you haven't been able to do so yet. Without a constant mind, you have not been able to put down your attachments and false thinking. Therefore we haven't yet become Buddhas. Do you want to become a Buddha? If you do, then quickly put down your false thinking and attachments, and you will do fine.

I realized the most proper enlightenment. The Buddha, beneath the Bodhi Tree, certified to Unsurpassed, Proper and Equal, Right Enlightenment. There is nothing higher than this Proper and Equal Right Enlightenment. This is a Buddha's fruition. Having enlightened and become a Buddha, one is certified as attaining the fruition of Buddhahood. And then he **turned the supreme Dharma Wheel.** In the beginning he turned the Dharma-wheel of the Four Truths; later he turned the Dharma-wheel of the Twelve Causes and Conditions. After that, he turned the Dharma-wheel of the Six Paramitas and the myriad practices.

At the very beginning, he turned the Great Dharma-wheel of the Flower Adornment. When he saw that ordinary people could not accept this great Dharma, he turned the Dharma-wheel of the Agamas. Then he turned the Dharma-wheel of the Vaipulya. Then he turned the Dharma-wheel of Prajna. At the very last, he finally turned the Dharma-wheel of the Dharma Flower. The wonderful Dharma wheel -- the wheel of the Wonderful Dharma, the Dharma Flower, is the basic aim of the Buddha. His original intent was to speak the Dharma Flower. But, upon seeing that living beings' faculties were not mature enough -- that it wasn't time yet -- he first turned the Agama, Vaipulya, and Prajna Dharmas, and after that he turned the Dharma Flower. When he spoke the Dharma Flower, the time was right. The time had come. Therefore he turned the unsurpassed Dharma-wheel.

"Only then did I teach and transform them. At that time, I taught and transformed all the Great Bodhisattvas, **causing them to first bring forth their resolve for the Way.** I enabled them to bring forth the Unsurpassed Bodhi Way-mind. **Now they all dwell in irreversibility.** These limitless, limitless, limitless Bodhisattvas all abide at the level of irreversibility. They are irreversible in position, in mindfulness, and in practice (位不退, 念不退, 行不退). They abide in those three kinds of irreversibility. **And all shall become Buddhas.**

"I now speak the truth, the Dharma I taught you before was expedient. It was spoken to prepare you for the full truth I am now speaking to you. **You should believe it with a single mind.** You should turn your minds to become one in order to accept this true Dharma. **From remote time past to now, / I have taught and transformed these multitudes.** It's not just now, in this life, in this Saha world, that I have become a Buddha. Limitless eons ago I became a Buddha."

The Buddha is said to be "not born and yet born, not extinct and yet extinct." Although he was not born, he manifested birth. Basically, he did not become extinct, but appeared to enter Nirvana. In the Brahma Net Sutra, the Buddha says, "I have come to this Saha world eight thousand times." If you obtain the Way eye—the penetration of the Heavenly Eye—and take a look into how many times Shakyamuni Buddha has come into this Saha world, you will see that it's not just eight thousand times. It's not even eighty thousand times, or eight hundred thousand times, but limitless, countless times. So the Buddha is telling the real truth here.

"These limitless, countless great Bodhisattvas filling up the empty space of three thousand great thousand worlds are all those whom I taught when I was on the causal ground during my former lives

as a Buddha. You asked under which Buddha they resolved to cultivate the Way, who taught them, and by what methods. They cultivated the Dharma-door of the Dharma Flower. They recited the Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra. I am telling you now that I taught, transformed, and brought to accomplishment this great assembly."