

The Wonderful Dharma Flower Sutra

Chapter Fifteen, Welling up from the Earth

with commentary by Tripitaka Master Hua

A state comes up and whether it's pleasant or unpleasant, you should recognize it. Don't let it be that when you encounter a favorable state, it's as sweet as candy, but when you encounter an opposing state, it's as bitter as *hwang lyan*. If you feel that favorable states are sweet and opposing states are bitter, then you are being turned by states. If in both favorable and unfavorable circumstances you can remain unmoved so that even your mind does not move, then you can be said to have a bit of skill—*gung fu*.

What is a favorable state? Suppose someone praises you, saying, "He really cultivates. He works hard! He's vigorous day and night. He never quits." Hearing this you think, "That's great. This is as sweet as honey." Your heart rejoices, you feel great. Now, let's suppose someone slanders you: "He's terrible! He's lazy, gluttonous, and he doesn't cultivate at all. He says he's a cultivator, but he never cultivates." You react by thinking, "I don't want to hear this. How can he talk like that about me?" It's as bitter as *hwang lyan*. *Hwang lyan*, in case you don't know, is the bitterest of Chinese medicinal herbs. However, although it's bitter, if you have illnesses stemming from excessive fire and you take *hwang lyan*, it will get rid of your fire. It is an excellent medicinal herb, but it is very bitter.

You also have to consider where the state is coming from. For instance, if you are a cultivator, perhaps a left-home person, and you are scolded by your teacher, you think, "I won't argue or get angry or talk back. I'll just act like nothing is happening." That doesn't count as patience. Why? Because where disciples are concerned, they should bear what should be born and even bear the unbearable when it comes from their teacher. That can't be classed as the cultivation of patience.

On the other hand, if, as a teacher, you can bear up when your disciples scold you, that means you have a little skill. If the disciples scold the teacher, and the more he is scolded the happier he gets, then he has some skill. Or suppose you are scolded by a beggar, and you feel as though it didn't even happen, that can be counted as patience.

But if a policeman scolds you, even if he's being totally unreasonable, even if it's unbearable, you still have to bear it. For example, you are out on the street looking around as if you might be about to steal something, and a policeman comes up and says, "Hey! What are you up to? Are you a thief? I'm going to search you." You must be patient. Why? Because the policeman has authority and you don't have any authority. And so you have to endure his questions. That doesn't count as patience. If an inferior bullies you and you can bear it, you have patience. On this topic, I've thought of a story.

What Do You Think Happened?

Long ago, Shakyamuni Buddha and his disciples were walking on a road in a particularly barren place. For one hundred miles around, they hadn't run into a single person. The disciples asked the Buddha, "Why are there no people here?"

Shakyamuni Buddha sighed and said, "It's a very painful matter."

"What happened? Please tell us!" said the disciples.

Shakyamuni Buddha said, "Long ago, an old cultivator, who had tremendous virtue in the Way, lived here. He had been cultivating patience for one hundred years and he had never gotten angry. It so happened that the king of the country lost faith in his prime minister and dismissed him, even though the minister had done nothing to deserve it. The prime minister was still attached to his desire for power and leadership: "What am I going to do? How can I get my position as prime minister back? Oh, I have an old friend who practices patience. He's a Patient Immortal. He'll have a way! I'll go ask him." Thereupon he went to see the old cultivator who was his friend. He told him the emperor had dismissed him from his position as prime minister and asked if there was any method that would enable him to regain his position.

The Patient Immortal replied, "That's very easy. It's because at present your destiny is inauspicious. Now you can take that inauspicious energy—that energy that has caused your downfall—and pass it on to me. Then you will be able to be prime minister again."

"How can I pass it on to you?" he asked.

"There's a method we can use. Take a clod of earth and throw it at my head. That will suffice to pass your inauspicious energy on to me. Then you will be able to continue as prime minister."

The former prime minister did as he was advised, and sure enough, the very day he got back, the emperor called for him and said, "Before I dismissed you as prime minister, but that was a mistake. Will you come back now and continue on as my prime minister?"

Thus he was invited back and he thought, "Oh, that cultivator is really capable! He really can make things happen." Then he continued on as prime minister.

After a while the queen of the western palace was dismissed by the emperor. He removed her to the "cold palace," meaning she wouldn't have the opportunity to see the emperor anymore. The queen of the western palace thought, "Before, the prime minister was dismissed, and he's regained his post. He, no doubt, has a method. I'll ask him." And so she called for the prime minister and asked him, "How did you go about getting your position back?"

"It wasn't my own doing," he said. "I went to an old cultivator I know, and he told me that I had unlucky energy. He said I should transfer that energy to him and I would be back in office, so I did and here I am."

"Do you think he would help me?" she asked.

"I'll go ask him," said the prime minister. When he told the story to the old cultivator, the old cultivator said, "Fine, tell her to pour a cup of water over my head and her unlucky energy will be transferred to me. Then the king will want her back again."

The queen of the western palace followed the instructions to the letter, and the king took her out of the ice-house and invited her back. The Patient Immortal's method was most efficacious indeed!

Soon the country went to war. Every time they engaged in battle, they lost. The king said to his first wife and to the prime minister, "We are losing every battle. What are we going to do?"

The prime minister said, "I know what we'll do. I have an old friend who is a cultivator. We call him the Patient Immortal. He has a number of dharma tricks. He'll know what to do."

Hearing of this situation, the Patient Immortal said, "I live in this country, I should help out. The country is losing its battles. Very well, we are going to take the unlucky energy of the country and transfer it to me." Then he told the king, "Get a huge pot of stinking, dirty water to represent the unlucky affairs of the entire country and pour it on me."

This left the old cultivator smelling pretty bad, but nonetheless the king began to win all his battles and eventually won the war. The king said, "That old cultivator has tremendous Way-virtue."

Once that announcement was made in the palace, the whole country knew about it, and soon people were lined up for miles, waiting to spit, throw dirt, or otherwise transfer their messes to the old cultivator. They all expected him to be patient, didn't they? He should have just let the spit dry, shouldn't he? Day after day, first ten people, then hundreds, then thousands, tens of thousands, and finally the entire populace converged on the Patient Immortal.

The Patient Immortal simply couldn't respond to them all properly, so up popped a false thought: "I can't stand it. Why don't all these people drop dead!" What do you think happened? They all did! That was how great his spiritual powers were. As soon as he produced the angry thought of wishing them all dead, they all dropped dead on the spot. So now, for several hundred miles around, there are no people in this area.

It is not easy to be patient. But although it's not easy, we are still going to cultivate patience. Instead of speaking of it as difficult, let's think of it as easy. But whatever you do, don't get angry and think, "I wish they would all drop dead!"

Patient under insult, they are ***resolute in their thoughts***. Their patience is decisive. They definitely won't vacillate. ***They are upright and proper, possessing awesome virtue.***

Their physiognomy is upright and their awesomeness is magnificent. *Praised by the Buddhas of the ten directions*, these great Bodhisattvas are *skilled in their ability to distinguish and explain*. They are well able to delineate and describe all dharmas.

They take no delight in being with the multitudes. They don't like living in noisy places. They like still and quiet places. They prefer the mountains, but most of all, they *always prefer dhyana concentration*. What makes them happiest is dwelling in dhyana samadhi. They cultivate the samadhi of Chan meditation. *Because they are seeking the Buddha-Way, they have been dwelling in empty space below*. Because they want to cultivate the Buddha's unsurpassed Bodhi Way, they are living in the empty space in the nadir. In the empty space there, no one bothers them. Probably people didn't fly planes into that area or send rockets there. Therefore in that empty space, they are very much at ease, tranquil and pure.

Sutra:

*Hearing this from the Buddha,
We had no doubts about this matter,
But hope that the Buddha will, for those of the future,
Use explanations to cause them to understand.
For if they were to give rise to doubts
And fail to believe this Sutra,
They would thereupon fall into the evil paths.
Thus we have asked for this present explanation
Of these limitless Bodhisattvas and
How, in such a short space of time,
You have taught and transformed them,
Causing them to bring forth the resolve
And to dwell on the Ground of No Retreat.*

Commentary:

Hearing this from the Buddha, we had no doubts about this matter. Maitreya Bodhisattva says, "All of us here in this Dharma Assembly, we Bodhisattvas-Mahasattvas, have personally heard the Buddha speak the Dharma of the Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra. We have personally seen all the limitless great Bodhisattvas well up out of the earth, and so *we had no doubts about this matter*. We heard Shakyamuni Buddha say that he personally taught and transformed these Bodhisattvas, and we knew it was really true, not made up. There was nothing to doubt in that analogy.

But we hope that the Buddha will, for those of the future, speak. We do not doubt this, but living beings of the future, Bodhisattvas of initial resolve, whose roots of faith are not solid, and whose good roots are not deep and thick, might fail to believe this. We now wish that the Buddha would explain this matter so that those of the future who have first brought forth the resolve will not doubt it.

Use explanations to cause them to understand. Explain this principle to enable the Bodhisattvas of initial resolve to understand and be clear. *For if they were to give rise to doubts and fail to believe this Sutra*—if they don't understand and no one makes them aware, no one clarifies their thinking—if they were to fail to believe and were to have doubts, *they would thereupon fall into the evil paths.* If they don't believe in the Dharma Flower Sutra, in the future they will fall into the three evil paths—the hells, the animal realm, or the realm of hungry ghosts. *Thus we have asked for this present explanation.* We want Shakyamuni Buddha to bring forth great kindness and compassion and for the sake of living beings of the future, speak of these causes and conditions. Tell the reason why *these limitless Bodhisattvas* have *in such a short space of time* been *taught and transformed* by you. How did the Buddha manage to teach all these Bodhisattvas in such a short space of time? How was he able to cause *them to bring forth the Bodhi resolve and to dwell on the Ground of No Retreat?* By now, they have all obtained the three kinds of irreversibility:

1. Irreversible thought
2. Irreversible practice, and
3. Irreversible position.