

The Wonderful Dharma Flower Sutra

Chapter Sixteen, The Thus Come One's Lifespan

with commentary by Tripitaka Master Hua

We have already discussed the meaning of the two Buddhas. There are also three Buddhas, Thus Come Ones, also called Three Bodies of a Thus Come One. The Three Buddhas are: the Buddhas of the past, the Buddhas of the present, and the Buddhas of the future. The past refers to those who have already become Buddhas; the present refers to those who are about to become Buddhas now; the future refers to those who have not yet become Buddhas. And so, even those who have not yet become Buddhas are counted here as Buddhas.

The three bodies of a Thus Come One are: the Pure Dharma Body; the Perfect Reward Body; and the millions of transformation Buddha pervades all places. There is no place he is and no place he is not. There is no place where he exists and yet there is no place that he doesn't exist. Well, ultimately does he exist or doesn't he? He both exists and does not exist.

You say, "The Pure Dharma Body Vairochana Buddha, I know must certainly not exist in unclean places. That's because he's pure. Impure places definitely wouldn't house his Dharma Body."

That's not the way it is. Purity and impurity are discriminations made on the part of people. From the point of view of a Buddha, impurity is also pure. Purity is even more pure. Don't you remember in the *Dharma Flower Sutra*, when there were three transformations of heaven and earth (三變土天). That's an example of purifying the impure places. To repeat, the first is the pure Dharma Body, Vairochana Buddha.

The Perfect Reward Body, Nishyanda Buddha. Translated, Nishyanda means "pure and full" (淨滿). This body is also pure. As Shakyamuni Buddha was speaking the *Great Means Expansive Buddha Flower Adornment Sutra*, he manifested the ten-thousand-foot Nishyanda Buddha-body. But those of the Two Vehicles could not see him nor hear him. Those of the Two Vehicles saw the Buddha as a six-foot-tall Bhikshu. But the Great Knights of the Dharma Body (法身大士), the Great Bodhisattvas, saw Shakyamuni Buddha as the ten-thousand-foot-tall Nishyanda Buddha, speaking the *Flower Adornment Sutra*. That is why it is said,

They had eyes but could not see Nishyanda Buddha.
(有眼不見盧舍那)

Those of the Two Vehicles have eyes, all right; some may have even opened the

Heavenly Eye. But they still could not see the ten-thousand-foot-tall-body of Nishyanda Buddha.

They had ears but could not hear the Perfect, Sudden Teaching.
(有耳不聞圓頓教)

They had ears, but couldn't hear Shakyamuni Buddha speaking the Flower Adornment Sutra.

Once one of my disciples asked me, "Those of the Two Vehicles cannot see the ten-thousand-foot body of Nishyanda Buddha. We aren't even up to the level of the Two Vehicles; we haven't become enlightened or reached the state of those of the Two Vehicles. How is it we are able to read the *Flower Adornment Sutra*?"

That question has much principle. Those of the Two Vehicles' conditions had not yet become mature. That is why they were unable to see and hear the Great Vehicle Buddhadharma. They could neither see nor hear how the *Flower Adornment Sutra* was spoken.

Five hundred years after Shakyamuni Buddha entered Nirvana, Dragon Tree(龍樹) Bodhisattva had learned all the languages of the world. He had mastered them all. And he had already read all the books in the world. Thereupon he went to the Dragon Palace, where he secured the Flower Adornment Sutra, and took it back with him. To get to the Dragon Palace, he certainly did not ride in a submarine. He went by way of the state of a sage certified to the fruition. Although he was submerged in the water, the water did not drown him. When a certified sage enters into the water, the waters will naturally part, opening a path for him, and will not drown him. The state of a certified sage is just that wonderful; it's even more dependable than using a submarine.

When he got to the Dragon Palace, he read the Flower Adornment Sutra, and committed it to memory. That was how he brought it back to the world. And so now we are able to see the Flower Adornment Sutra, because our conditions have become mature. Thus, the Reward-body Thus Come One spoke the Flower Adornment Sutra.

There are also millions of transformation-body Shakyamuni Buddhas. Transformation-bodies are sometimes called Response-bodies. To review:

The Two Bodies are—

- 1) the true body, that is, the Dharma Body, and
- 2) the Reward Body.

The Three Bodies are—

- 1) the Dharma Body;

- 2) the Reward Body, and
- 3) the transformation bodies.

Someone who heard me say that Dragon Tree Bodhisattva went to the Dragon Palace to get the Flower Adornment Sutra had this thought, "I can't believe something like that really happened. How could a person, without the use of a submarine, go to the Dragon Palace?"

A child of three has no way to know the state of a child of thirteen. A thirteen-year-old child can't know the state of a young adult of twenty-three. A young person of twenty-three can't know the state of a mature person of forty-three. A forty-three-year-old mature individual can't know the state of a person of eighty.

Therefore since you don't have the requisite level of scholarship, and you do not have this kind of wisdom, of course you will not be able to believe an event like this. Not only do you not believe; many, many children cannot believe the things that adults do. And while you are still at the stage of disbelief, I have no way to make you believe. You are still too young.

Children don't realize they are children. Once they grow up, they think back, "Oh, that time of life I really had a lot of fun. How could I have put mud in my mouth and eaten it?" And yet they know they certainly must have done that when they were children. That's because young children put whatever they find into their mouths first. It doesn't matter to them what it is. They pay no attention to whether it is clean or unclean. Children only know how to eat, aside from that they understand very little principle.

If you want to understand, you should investigate the Buddhadharma. After you understand the Buddhadharma, you will come to understand what you now don't understand. Without my telling you, you will understand. Before you have at least investigated the Buddhadharma, you have no basis for belief or disbelief. If you believe, I gain no advantage from it. If you don't believe, I don't suffer any disadvantage. I am propagating the Buddhadharma and you want to investigate the Buddhadharma. We set aside some time to investigate it together. Investigating it to the point of understanding, there is no need for belief or disbelief.

When you grow up, you don't have the same kind of thinking you had as a child.

"Who are you talking to?" someone wonders.

If you think it's being said to you, then it's being said to you. If it didn't even occur to you to wonder who it's being spoken for, then it's being spoken for someone other than you. That other person has nothing to do with you, so you don't need to protest, "I'm not a child."

You are an adult. Adult shouldn't lack understanding of the things they ought to understand.