

Flower Adornment Sutra

with commentary of TRIPITAKA MASTER HUA

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TEXT:

THE WONDROUS ADORNMENTS OF WORLD RULERS, CHAPTER ONE

COMMENTARY:

"World" refers to this world. WORLD RULERS means the lords of this world. Ultimately this means the Buddhas, for they are the lords of the world as well as world-transcending lords. In general, "World Rulers" refers to the sovereigns and kings of countries, such as gold wheel-turning kings, silver wheel-turning kings, iron wheel-turning kings, and bronze wheel-turning kings. These are world rulers and their domain does not exceed the mundane realm.

WONDROUS means sublime, that which cannot be thought of by the mind, that which cannot be described with words. ADORNMENTS means enhancements. But these adornments are not ordinary decorations that most people can see. This Chapter describes the subtly wonderful, inconceivable states of adornment of both worldly and world-transcending lords and how they adorn countries and Buddhaholds. Since this chapter is the first of the forty chapters in this, the T'ang version of the *Flower Adornment Sutra* in eighty rolls, it is called CHAPTER ONE, "The Wondrous Adornments of World Rulers."

TEXT:

THUS I HAVE HEARD.

COMMENTARY:

THUS I HAVE HEARD are four very important words. All Buddhist Sutras begin with these words. These words serve six purposes. 1. To distinguish Buddhist Sutras from the writings of other religions. Writings of externalist ways begin with either the word "0" or the word "A." "0" means "existence", and "A" means "non-existence." That's the extent of their theories. The Buddhadharma is neither existent nor non-existent, it doesn't fall into either the extreme of emptiness or the extreme of existence. It expounds the Middle Way. Therefore Buddhist Sutras begin with the words "Thus I have heard."

"Thus" expresses the credibility of the Dharma. It means Dharma which is "thus" is the right Dharma, whereas dharma which is not "thus" is not the right dharma. Dharma which is "thus" reveals the ultimate meaning of the Middle Way.

"I have heard" refers to the reception of the Dharma, meaning Ananda himself had personally heard and received this Dharma.

2. To put an end to debate and contention. "Contention" means debating, fighting. There is a verse that says:

Contention is thoughts of victory and defeat
And as such is in contradiction to the Way.
Giving rise to the four-mark mind (marks of self, others, living beings,
and life-spans)
How can samadhi be obtained?

All living beings like to vie with one another to be number one. If in the assembly, left-home people of various levels of precept age vie with one another to be number one, If in the assembly, left-home people of various levels of precept age vie with one another for power and authority, that's also part of contention. However, in the case of "thus I have heard" there can be no such contention because it states clearly that Ananda is repeating what he heard from the Buddha. Thus, these four words naturally put to rest any debate or striving.

3. To eliminate additions and subtractions: After the phrase "thus I have heard," the Sutra goes on to stipulate where and when the Buddha was, how many people were in the assembly and so forth. This states definitively how circumstances were so that people can't alter the facts at a later date. Ananda reiterated the teaching and narrated the circumstances and they were settled at that. So by means of these four words of introduction disciples were able to compile the Sutra Store without fighting.

4. To put to rest the assembly's doubts. Ananda was the youngest member of the assembly. His Way-virtue wasn't sufficient to move people. However, the Buddha's Dharma treasury was entrusted to him, so when Ananda ascended the Dharma seat, the assembly gave rise to three kinds of doubts.

a. First, some thought, "Shakyamuni Buddha hasn't entered Nirvana after all. He's come back to speak Dharma for us! That was because Ananda possessed thirty of the thirty-two marks of a Buddha. He looked almost exactly like the Buddha, except that he was a little shorter. So when the assembly saw Ananda's adorned appearance they had this doubt.

b. Second, some disciples thought, "This must be a Buddha from another direction."

c. Third, some people thought Ananda himself had suddenly become a Buddha.

But when Ananda announced, "Thus I have heard" it dispelled these three kinds of doubts in the hearts of the great Arhats.

5. To bring about the arising of faith. The Dharma that is "thus" is believable, whereas Dharma which is not "thus" is not credible. The verification that the Dharma is "thus" by means of these four words causes the assembly to bring forth faith and to receive and accept this Proper Dharma.

6. To accord with the Buddhas of the three periods of time. All Buddhas begin their sutras with those four words and Shakyamuni Buddha complies with the tradition.

Those are the six purposes for using the words "Thus I have heard" to begin sutras.

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