



harma Flower Sutra

with commentary of Tripitaka Master Hua

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SUTRA:

IT IS AS IF, FOR EXAMPLE, THERE IS A ROAD, FIVE HUNDRED YOJANAS LONG, STEEP, DANGEROUS AND BAD, AN UNINHABITED AND TERRIFYING PLACE. A LARGE GROUP OF PEOPLE WISH TO TRAVEL THIS ROAD TO REACH A CACHE OF PRECIOUS JEWELS. AMONG THEM, THERE IS A GUIDE, INTELLIGENT, WISE AND CLEAR-HEADED, WHO KNOWS THE ROAD WELL, BOTH ITS PASSABLE AND IMPASSABLE FEATURES...

COMMENTARY:

It is as if, for example, there is a road. **Shakyamuni Buddha says, "I will set up an analogy for you as to why one first teaches people expedient Dharmas and the doctrines of the Two Vehicles."** Five hundred yojanas long, steep, dangerous, and bad. **There were thieves on the road, wolves and tigers; it was dangerous.** An uninhabited and terrifying place. **Such a long ways, and not a person in sight! Really scary! And suppose** a large group of people wish to travel this road to reach a cache of precious jewels. **The cache of precious jewels represents the highest fruition, that is, Buddhahood.** Among them there is a guide, intelligent, wise, and clear-headed. **He is intelligent and smart. He knows the way.** He knows the road well, both its passable and impassable features. **He knows which ways you can walk and which ways are blocked.**

SUTRA:

AND WHO WISHES TO LEAD THE GROUP THROUGH THIS HARDSHIP.

COMMENTARY:

And who wishes to lead the group through this hardship. **This represents the Buddha teaching those with whom he has affinities but who have not yet attained liberation. Their past affinities remain and so they are led by the guide.**

SUTRA:

MIDWAY, THE GROUP HE IS LEADING GROWS WEARY AND WISHES TO TURN BACK: THEY SAY TO THE GUIDE, "WE ARE EXHAUSTED AND AFRAID. WE CANNOT GO FORWARD. IT'S TOO FAR. WE WANT TO TURN BACK NOW."

COMMENTARY:

Midway, the group he is leading grows weary and wishes to turn back. **The group refers to those of the Two Vehicles. The midway point refers to their lesser "Nirvana." Although they were taught by the Buddha, they are afraid of the Great Vehicle and prefer the smaller vehicle. They are weary and wish to turn back.** They say to the guide, **to the Buddha, "We are exhausted and afraid, we are extremely tired. We cannot go forward. It's too far. We want to turn back now. We don't want to go forward; we want to turn back."**

SUTRA:

THEIR LEADER, WHO HAS MANY EXPEDIENTS, HAS THIS THOUGHT, "HOW PITIFUL THEY ARE. HOW CAN THEY RENOUNCE THE GREAT AND PRECIOUS TREASURE AND WISH TO TURN BACK?" HAVING HAD THIS THOUGHT, THROUGH THE POWER OF HIS EXPEDIENT DEVICES, HE TRANSFORMS A CITY IN THE CENTER OF THE DANGEROUS ROAD, THREE HUNDRED YOJANAS IN EXTENT, AND SAYS TO THEM, "DON'T BE AFRAID. DO NOT TURN BACK; STAY HERE NOW IN THIS GREAT CITY I HAVE CREATED JUST FOR YOU. IF YOU GO INTO THIS CITY, YOU WILL BE HAPPY AND AT PEACE. IF YOU THEN WISH TO PROCEED TO THE JEWEL CACHE, YOU MAY DO SO."

COMMENTARY:

Their leader, who has many expedients, has this thought, "How pitiful they are. How can they renounce the great and precious treasure and wish to turn back?" **How can they let go of the great jewel of the Buddha fruit and return?** Having had this thought, through the power of his expedient devices he transforms a city in the center of the dangerous road three hundred yojanas in extent. **The dangerous road is the five paths of rebirth, the five destinies: Humans, gods, hungry ghosts, animals, and hell beings. Asuras are included in each of the other five. If you don't become a cow, you become a horse; if you don't become a horse, you become a person, or a ghost, or you fall into the hells—IT'S EXTREMELY DANGEROUS!!** The fact that the city is three hundred yojanas in extent represents that one has arrived outside of the three realms to the land where the sages and common dwell together. He expediently sets up a city; this is the "Nirvana" of the lesser schools. And says to them, "Do not be afraid. Do not turn back; stay here now in this great city I have created just for you. **I have transformed it just for you, the position of the Two Vehicles. They are not ultimately real however. Even though the Arhats say they have done what they had to do and will undergo not further becoming, still, their position is not ultimate. If you go into this city, you will be happy and at peace. You will quickly attain serenity and great peace there.** If you then wish to proceed to the jewel cache--if having attained Arhatship you wish to go ahead and cultivate for Buddhahood you can attain the Buddha fruit--you may do so."

SUTRA:

THEN THE EXHAUSTED GROUP REJOICED GREATLY, HAVING GAINED WHAT THEY HAD NEVER HAD. "WE HAVE NOW ESCAPED THIS BAD ROAD AND GAINED HAPPINESS AND PEACE." THEN THE GROUP WENT FORWARD AND ENTERED THE TRANSFORMED CITY; THINKING THAT THEY HAD ALREADY BEEN SAVED, THEY FELT HAPPY AND AT PEACE.

COMMENTARY:

Then the exhausted group rejoiced greatly, having gained what they had never had. **They were extremely tired when all of sudden a city appeared where they could stop and rest. After cultivating for a while one may feel very tired. Now, hearing about the rest stop, their minds were filled with joy. They had never seen such a fine city before. The city represents the fruit of the Sound Hearers.** We have now escaped this bad road, we have escaped the paths of the gods, humans, animals, hell-beings, and hungry ghosts--the five evil paths in the Three Realms-- and gained happiness and peace. Then the group went forward and entered the transformed city; thinking that they had already been saved, they felt happy and at peace. **They felt they had reached a very high level.**

SUTRA:

AT THAT TIME, THE GUIDE, KNOWING THAT THEY WERE RESTED AND NO LONGER WEARY, MADE THE CITY DISAPPEAR, SAYING TO THEM, "ALL OF YOU, COME, LET US GO. THE JEWEL CACHE IS NEAR. THE GREAT CITY WAS MERELY SOMETHING I CREATED FROM TRANSFORMATION TO GIVE YOU A REST."

COMMENTARY:

At that time, the guide, **the Buddha**, knowing that they were rested and no longer weary--**they'd had their rest and were full of energy again--** made the city disappear, saying to them, "All of you, come, let us go. The jewel cache is near. **We are right near it.**" **Those of the Sound Hearers who have certified to the Fourth Fruition of Arhatship should go ahead and cultivate the Great Vehicle.**

SUTRA:

BHIKSHUS, THE THUS COME IS ALSO LIKE THIS. HE NOW ACTS AS A GREAT GUIDE FOR ALL OF YOU. HE KNOWS THAT LIVING BEINGS SHOULD LEAVE AND CROSS OVER THE EVIL ROAD OF THE TORMENTS OF BIRTH AND DEATH WHICH IS SO STEEP, DIFFICULT AND LONG.

COMMENTARY:

"Bhikshus," said Shakyamuni Buddha addressing the four-fold assembly, "The Thus Come One, **the Buddha**, is also like this, **like the principle I spoke above**. He now acts as a great guide for all of you. **I am acting as a great leader for all of you, teaching and transforming you**. He knows that living beings should leave and cross over the evil road of the torments of birth and death; **If you are alive, you will have afflictions, troubles**, which is so steep, difficult and long." **It's a long and hard road. One should get rid of afflictions and cross over birth and death.**