

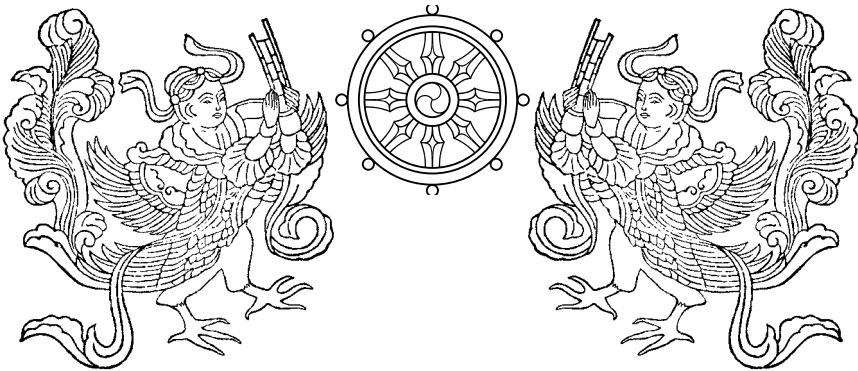
# THE FLOWER ADORNMENT SUTRA

*The Great Expansive  
Buddha's Flower Adornment Sutra*

An Annotated English Translation

WITH A COMMENTARIAL SYNOPSIS  
OF THE FLOWER ADORNMENT SUTRA

## VOLUME TWO



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infinitely expansive, and majestically grand multiverse of countless buddha worlds while explaining in great detail the cultivation of the bodhisattva path to buddhahood, most notably the ten highest levels of bodhisattva practice

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## CHAPTER 35

### The Qualities of the Light of the Tathāgata's Secondary Signs

At that time, the Bhagavat told Jewel Hand Bodhisattva:

O Son of the Buddha, the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the One of Right and Perfect Enlightenment, has a subsidiary sign known as “the king of perfect fulfillment.” From within this subsidiary sign there comes forth a great light known as “flourishing abundance” with a retinue consisting of seven hundred myriads of *asaṃkhyeyas* of light rays.

Son of the Buddha, when I was the bodhisattva abiding in the Tuṣita Heaven Palace, I emanated a great light known as “the king of light banners” that illuminated worlds as numerous as the atoms in ten buddha *kṣetras*. When the beings in the hells associated with those worlds encountered this light, their many sorts of sufferings ceased and they acquired ten kinds of pure eyes. So too did this occur with their ears, noses, tongues, bodies, and minds. They were all filled with joy and danced with celebratory delight. After their lives there came to an end, they were born in the Tuṣita Heaven. In that heaven, there was a drum called “delightful.” After they were born in that heaven, this drum emanated a voice which announced to them: “Sons of the Devas, because your minds were not neglectful, because you planted roots of goodness with the Tathāgata, because you drew near to good spiritual guides in the past, and because of the great awesome spiritual powers of Vairocana, when your lives there came to an end, you came to be born in this heaven.”

Sons of the Buddha, the thousand-spoked wheel emblem on the bottom of the bodhisattva's feet is known as “the king of universally illuminating light.” This has a subsidiary sign known as “the king of perfect fulfillment” which always emanates forty kinds of light among which one of those lights is known as “pure meritorious qualities.” It is able to illuminate worlds as numerous as the atoms in a *koṭī* of *nayutas* of buddha *kṣetras* and, adapting to all beings' many different kinds of karmic actions and many different sorts of aspirations, it enables them to become fully ripened. When beings undergoing the most extreme sufferings in the Avīci Hells encounter this light, once they all reach the end of their lives there, they are born in the Tuṣita Heaven. Having been reborn in this heaven, they then hear the sound of the celestial drum telling them: “Good

indeed. Good indeed. Sons of the Devas, Vairocana Bodhisattva has entered the stainless samādhi. You should go and bow in reverence to him.”

At that time, having heard this sound from the celestial drum encouraging and instructing them in this way, those devas’ sons all have this thought: “How strange and rare! Why does it emanate this sublime sound?”

At this time, that celestial drum tells these devas’ sons:

This sound that I have sent forth is produced by the power of all sorts of roots of goodness. Sons of the Devas, just as when I refer to “I,” it is done without attaching to any self and without attaching to anything belonging to a self, so too it is with all buddhas, for when they refer to themselves as buddhas, this is done without any attachment to the existence of any self and without any attachment to anything belonging to a self.

Sons of the Devas, just as the sound that I emanate does not come from the east and does not come from the southerly, westerly, or northerly directions, the four midpoints, the zenith, or the nadir, so too it is with the karmic reward of realizing buddhahood, for it, too, does not come from any of the ten directions.

Sons of the Devas, this is just as when you previously dwelt in the hells, those hells as well as those bodies of yours did not come from any of the ten directions, but rather came from your own evil karmic deeds arising from inverted views and entangling bonds of delusion which caused rebirth into hell-realm bodies. These [hell-realm bodies] had no [other] originating basis and had no place from which they came.

Sons of the Devas, it is due to the power of Vairocana Bodhisattva’s awesome virtue that he emanates great light even as this light does not come forth from any of the ten directions. Sons of the Devas, so too it is with the sound of my celestial drum. It does not come forth from any of the ten directions. It is only because of the power of roots of goodness associated with samādhi and because of the power of awesome virtue associated with the *prajñāpāramitā* that it emanates a pure sound such as this and manifests different sorts of sovereign powers such as these.

Sons of the Devas, this is just as in the case of the many different kinds of pleasing things within the supremely marvelous palace of the Trāyastriṃśa Heaven on Sumeru, king of the mountains. These pleasing things that are present there did not come there from any of the ten directions. So too it is with the sound of my celestial drum which is also not something that has come here from any of the ten directions.

Sons of the Devas, this is just as when, as I expound on the Dharma for beings as numerous as the atoms that would result from grinding to atoms a *koṭī* of *nayutas* of buddha *kṣetras*, speaking to them in accordance with what pleases them and thereby causing them to experience great joyous delight, doing so without growing weary, without shrinking from this, without becoming arrogant, and without becoming neglectful. So too it was, Sons of the Devas, with Vairocana Bodhisattva as he dwelt in the samādhi of stainless purity and, from a single subsidiary sign in his right palm, emanated a single ray of light that manifested countless sovereign spiritual powers which not even any *śrāvaka*-disciple or *pratyekabuddha* could ever know of, how much the less any other type of being.

Sons of the Devas, you should go to see that bodhisattva and draw near to him and make offerings to him. Do not indulge in any further desire-based attachment to any of the pleasurable objects of the five desires. Attachment to the pleasures of the five desires is an obstacle to the development of all roots of goodness. Sons of the Devas, just as the fires at the end of the kalpa burn up even Mount Sumeru, causing it to entirely disappear, leaving no residue that one can find, so too it is with the mind entangled in desire, for it prevents one from ever being able to bring forth any intention to abide in mindfulness of the Buddha.

Sons of the Devas, you should all know to recognize kindnesses and repay kindness. Sons of the Devas, wherever there are beings who do not know to repay kindnesses, they are more likely to meet an untimely death and be reborn in the hells. Sons of the Devas, you were all previously abiding in the hell realms, but then were able to encounter that light that illuminated your bodies, allowing you to relinquish that circumstance and take rebirth here. It would only be fitting if you were to now swiftly perform dedications to increase your roots of goodness.

Sons of the Devas, just as I, as a celestial drum, am neither male nor female, and yet I am able to bring forth countless and boundlessly many inconceivable phenomena, so too it is with you devas' sons and devas' daughters, for you are neither male nor female, and yet you are still able to enjoy the use of all sorts of different supremely marvelous palaces, parks, and groves. Just as my celestial drum is neither produced nor destroyed, so too it is with forms, feelings, perceptions, karmic formative factors, and consciousness, for they too are neither produced nor destroyed. If you are all able to awaken to and understand this, you should realize that you can then enter the samādhi with the seal of independence.

Having heard these sounds, those devas' sons attained what was unprecedented for them, whereupon they all transformationally created a myriad flower clouds, a myriad incense clouds, a myriad music clouds, a myriad banner clouds, a myriad canopy clouds, and a myriad clouds of singing praises, and, having transformationally created these, they all went together to the palace in which Vairocana Bodhisattva dwelt, and, having pressed their palms together respectfully, they stood off to one side wishing thus to be granted an audience with him. However they remained unable to see him. At that time, there was a devas' son who said, "Vairocana Bodhisattva has already disappeared from this place and descended to take rebirth among humans in the household of the Pure Rice King in which, residing within a sandalwood tower, he now abides in the womb of Lady Māyā."

At that time, those devas' sons used their heavenly eyes to see the body of that bodhisattva abiding in the human realm in the household of the Pure Rice King where he was being served and given offerings by the Brahma heaven devas and desire realm devas. That congregation of devas' sons then all had this thought, "So long as we have not gone to see the Bodhisattva and pay our respects, if we were to remain here and indulge so much as an instant of fond attachment for this heavenly palace, then that would be unacceptable."

At that time, every one of those devas' sons wished to descend to Jambudvīpa together with their retainers consisting of ten *nayutas* of retainers. The celestial drum then emanated a voice which told them:

Sons of the Devas, it is not the case that this bodhisattva-mahāsattva reached the end of his life here and then took rebirth in that place. Rather, it is solely because of his spiritual superknowledges that, adapting to what is appropriate for the minds of beings, he has caused them to see this.

Sons of the Devas, just as, even though I am now invisible, I am still able to emanate this voice, so too it is with the bodhisattva-mahāsattva who has entered the samādhi of stainless purity. Even though he is invisible, he is still able to manifest taking birth in place after place, having abandoned all discriminations, having done away with arrogance, and having become free of any defiled attachments.

Sons of the Devas, you should all bring forth the resolve to attain *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*, purify your minds, abide in the fine awesome deportment, repent of and rid yourselves of all karmic obstacles, all affliction obstacles, all retribution obstacles, and

all obstacles arising from views. Using bodies as numerous as all beings throughout the Dharma realm, using heads as numerous as all beings throughout the Dharma realm, using tongues as numerous as all beings throughout the Dharma realm, and using good physical actions, good verbal actions, and good mental actions as numerous as all beings throughout the Dharma realm, you should repent of and rid yourselves of all obstacles and faults.

At that time, having heard these words, all those devas' sons experienced what was unprecedented for them. With minds filled with great joyous delight, they then asked [the celestial drum], "How then is it that the bodhisattva-mahāsattva repents of and rids himself of all faults?"

At that time, relying on the power of the bodhisattva's samādhi and roots of goodness, that celestial drum emanated a voice with which he told them:

Sons of the Devas, the bodhisattva realizes that karma does not come from the east and does not come from the south, the west, the north, the four midpoints, the zenith, or the nadir, and yet it all joins in accumulating and remaining in the mind. It arises solely from the inverted views and it has no place in which it dwells. It is in this way that the bodhisattva has a definite and clear perception of this which is free of any doubts.

Sons of the Devas, just as I, as a celestial drum, speak of karmic deeds, speak of karmic retributions, speak of actions, speak of the moral precepts, speak of joyousness, speak of peace, and speak of the samādhis, in this same way, the buddhas and bodhisattvas speak of a self, speak of possessions of a self, speak of beings, and speak of greed, hatred, delusion, and the many different kinds of karmic deeds, doing so even as, in truth, there is no self nor are there any possessions of a self and all karmic deeds that are done as well as the karmic rewards and retributions in the six destinies of rebirth are all such that, even if one were to search for them throughout the ten directions, none of them would be apprehensible.

Sons of the Devas, just as my voice is neither produced nor destroyed, and yet those devas who have done evil deeds will still hear no other sounds, but rather will only hear this sound that awakens them to the prospect of the hells, so too it is with all karmic deeds, for, even though they are neither produced nor destroyed, they still correspond to whatever one has cultivated and accumulated and hence they then result in experiencing their corresponding retributions.

Sons of the Devas, sounds such as those emanating from my celestial drum, even in countless kalpas, can never come to an end and remain uninterrupted, even as, whether it be their coming or going, none of them are apprehensible at all. Sons of the Devas, if they were to have any coming or going, then that would involve either nihilism or eternalism. All buddhas never speak of the existence of any dharma of nihilism or eternalism except as an expedient to assist the ripening of beings.

Sons of the Devas, just as this sound of mine adapts to the minds of beings in countless worlds and enables them all, as fitting, to be able to hear it, so too it is with all buddhas who, adapting to the minds of beings, thereby enable them all to succeed in seeing them.

Sons of the Devas, it is as if there were a crystal mirror known as “able to illuminate” that, immaculately clean and possessed of penetrating clarity in its reflections, was precisely equal in size to ten worlds and was such that the reflections of all the countless and boundlessly many lands with all their mountains, rivers, and beings, and even their hells, animals, and hungry ghosts were all revealed there within it. Sons of the Devas, what do you think? Can one or can one not say of those reflected images that they come and enter the mirror and then depart from the mirror?

They replied, “No, one could not.”

Sons of the Devas, so too it is with all karmic deeds. Although they are able to produce all kinds of karmic rewards and retributions, they have no place from whence they come and no place to which they go. Sons of the Devas, it is as if there were a master conjurer who used illusions to deceive people’s vision. One should realize that all karmic deeds are just the same as this. If one knows them in this way, then this constitutes [the means of] genuine repentance by which all the evils of one’s karmic offenses can be purified.

When he taught this Dharma, a number of Tuṣita Heaven devas’ sons equal to the atoms in a hundred thousand *koṭīs* of *nayutas* of buddha *kṣetras* gained the unproduced-dharmas patience, incalculably and inconceivably many *asaṃkhyeyas* of Six Desire Heaven devas’ sons resolved to attain *anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi*, and all the female devas in the six desire heavens relinquished the female body and resolved to attain unsurpassed bodhi.

At that time, due to having reached the ten grounds by hearing the teaching of Samantabhadra’s vast dedications, due to acquiring *samādhis* adorned with powers, and due to repenting and ridding themselves of all their heavy karmic obstacles by engaging in the three kinds of pure karmic actions as numerous as all beings, all those



devas immediately saw seven-jeweled lotus flowers as numerous as the atoms in a hundred thousand *koṭīs* of *nayutas* of buddha *kṣetras*. Atop every one of those flowers, there was a bodhisattva seated in the lotus posture emanating a great light. Every one of the subsidiary signs of those bodhisattvas emanated light rays as numerous as all beings and, within those light rays, there were buddhas as numerous as all beings who were seated in the lotus posture, speaking the Dharma for beings in ways adapted to the minds of those beings, and yet they still had not yet manifested even a small amount of the powers of the samādhi of stainless purity.

At that time, issuing from every one of their hair pores, those devas' sons also transformationally created clouds of many different kinds of supremely fine flowers as numerous as beings which they then presented as offerings to Vairocana Tathāgata, doing so by taking them up and scattering them down over the Buddha, where all those flowers then remained suspended in the air above the Buddha's body. All their clouds of fragrance then everywhere rained down their fragrances across a number of worlds as numerous as the atoms in countless buddha *kṣetras*. Wherever any being's body received this fragrance, his body felt peace and happiness comparable to that of a bhikshu who, on entering the fourth *dhyāna*, then experiences the complete melting away of all of his karmic obstacles.

As for all those who heard this teaching, each of those beings possessed five hundred inwardly related afflictions and five hundred outwardly related afflictions related to their forms, sounds, smells, tastes and touchables. In the case of those more extensively courting in desire, they had twenty-one thousand. In the case of those more extensively courting in hatred, they had twenty-one thousand. In the case of those more extensively courting in delusion, they had twenty-one thousand. In the case of those courting equally in all of them, they also had twenty-one thousand. Whenever any of these beings smelled this fragrance, they completely realized the inherent unreality of all of these. Once they realized this in this way, they then created fragrance banner clouds and spontaneously radiant pure roots of goodness. Whenever any beings saw their canopy clouds, they thereby planted roots of goodness equal to those of pure gold net wheel-turning kings as numerous as the sands in the Ganges River.

Sons of the Buddha, when a bodhisattva dwells in the position of this wheel-turning king, he teaches being in worlds as numerous as the atoms in a hundred thousand *koṭīs* of *nayutas* of buddha *kṣetras*.

Sons of the Buddha, this circumstance is analogous to that of Lunar Wisdom Tathāgata in the Bright Mirror World who always has bhikshus, bhikshunis, *upāsakas*, *upāsikās*, and others from countless other worlds who transformationally manifest bodies in his presence, thereby coming to listen to his expounding on the Dharma, whereupon he then extensively discourses for their benefit on the events of his former lifetimes, never having so much as a single mind-moment in which his teaching is interrupted. In any instance where there is a being who so much as hears this buddha's name, he most certainly will then succeed in being reborn in that buddha's land.

So too it is in the case of a bodhisattva who comes to abide in the position of a pure gold net wheel-turning king. If one only briefly encounters a ray of his light, one thereby definitely becomes bound to attain the position of a bodhisattva on the tenth bodhisattva ground due to the power of having previously cultivated roots of goodness.

Sons of the Buddha, this is just as when one reaches the first *dhyāna*, even though one has not come to the end of this lifetime, he still sees all the palaces where the Brahma Heaven devas dwell and becomes able to enjoy the happiness of those who dwell in the Brahma World. When one reaches the other *dhyānas*, one's experiences are all of this same sort.

The bodhisattva-mahāsattva who abides in the position of a pure gold net wheel-turning king emanates pure light from his *maṇi* jewel topknot. If there are any beings who encounter this light, they all become bound to reach the station of the tenth bodhisattva ground, to completely develop the light of measureless wisdom, to acquire the ten kinds of pure eye faculty, and so forth, including their becoming bound to acquire the ten kinds of pure mind faculty, bound to completely fulfill countless extremely deep samādhis, and bound to perfect a pure fleshly eye of this same kind.

Sons of the Buddha, suppose that there was a person who ground into atoms a *koṭī* of *nayutas* of buddha *kṣetras* and then also ground to atoms yet another buddha *kṣetra* for each one of those resulting atoms and then took all of those atoms, placed them in his left hand, and then set out in an easterly direction, whereupon, only after passing beyond just such a number of worlds as all of those atoms would he then and only then set down a single one of those atoms, continuing to travel farther on to the east to the point where he finally used up all of these atoms, after which he then did this very same thing as he traveled off to the south, the west, the north,

the four midpoints, the zenith, and the nadir. Suppose then that one formed together into one single buddha land all those worlds of the ten directions that he had thereby passed, whether or not they were worlds in which he had set down one of those atoms. Jewel Hand, what do you think? Would the measureless vastness of a buddha land such as this be conceivable, or not?

He replied, “No, it would not be. A buddha land such as this would be so measurelessly vast, rare, and especially extraordinary as to be completely inconceivable. If there were to be any being at all who might hear this analogy and be able to develop resolute faith in it, one should realize that they themselves would be even more rare and especially extraordinary than this.”

The Buddha then said to Jewel Hand:

So it is. So it is. It is precisely as you say. If there were any son or daughter of good family who, hearing this analogy, was then able to believe in it, I would transmit to them their prediction prophesying that they would definitely be bound to realize *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi* and they would definitely be bound to realize the unsurpassable wisdom of the Tathāgata.

Jewel Hand, suppose that there was a person who ground to atoms a number of such vast buddha lands as this which were as numerous as the atoms in a thousand *koṭīs* of buddha *kṣetras* and, in accordance with this previously described analogy, he then took these atoms and set every one of them down until they were all gone, and so forth until we come once again to his putting so very many worlds together to form a single buddha world which he then yet again ground to atoms, continuing on sequentially in this way until he had passed through eighty such repeating cycles in this manner. The bodhisattva with the pure fleshly eye acquired as a karmic reward is able in but a single mind-moment to clearly see all the atoms resulting from grinding up all these vast buddha lands. He is also able to see a number of buddhas equal to the atoms contained in a hundred *koṭīs* of such vast buddha *kṣetras*, seeing them just as clearly as when that crystal mirror with its immaculate radiance illuminates a number of worlds equal to the atoms contained in ten buddha *kṣetras*.

Jewel Hand, all circumstances such as these are brought to perfect development through the extremely deep *samādhi*, merit, and roots of goodness of a pure gold net wheel-turning king.

### The End of Chapter Thirty-Five

