



## **The Parable of the Medicinal Herbs Chapter Five**

At that time the World Honored One told Mahakashyapa and all the great disciples, "Good indeed! Good indeed! Kashyapa has well spoken of the Thus Come One's real and true merit and virtue. It is just as he said. Furthermore, the Thus Come One has limitless, boundless Asankheyas of merit and virtue. If you were to speak of it throughout limitless millions of aeons, you could not finish.

"Kashyapa, you should know that the Thus Come One is the king of all the Dharmas. Nothing that he teaches is false. He extensively proclaims all Dharmas by means of wisdom and expedients, and whatever Dharmas he speaks all lead to the ground of all wisdom.

"The Thus Come One contemplates and knows the tendencies of all Dharmas. He also knows the depths of the mental processes of all living beings, having penetrated them without obstruction. Furthermore, he has ultimate and clear understanding of all Dharmas, and he instructs living beings in all-wisdom.

"Kashyapa, consider the world of three thousand great thousand worlds and the grasses, trees, forests, as well as the medicinal herbs, in their many varieties, with their different names and colors which the mountains, streams, valleys and flatlands produce. A thick cloud spreads out, covering the three thousand great thousand worlds, raining on them equally everywhere at the same time, its moisture reaching every part. The grasses, trees, forests and medicinal herbs - those of small roots, small stalks, small branches and small leaves, those of medium-sized roots, medium-sized stalks, medium-sized branches, medium-sized leaves or those of large roots, large stalks, large branches, and large leaves, and also all the trees, whether great or small, according to their size, small, medium, or large, all receive a portion of it. From the rain of the one cloud each according to its nature grows, blossoms, and

bears fruit.

Although they grow from the same ground and are moistened by the same rain, still, all the grasses and trees are different.

"Kashyapa, you should know that the Thus Come One is also like this. He manifests in the world like a great cloud rising; with his great sound he covers the world with its gods, humans, and Asuras, just like that great cloud covers the three thousand great thousand lands. In the midst of the great assembly he announces, "I am the Thus Come One, one worthy of offerings, one of proper and universal knowledge, one whose understanding and conduct are complete, well gone one who understands the world, an unsurpassed lord, a taming and regulating hero, teacher of gods and humans, the Buddha, the World Honored One. Those who have not yet been crossed over, I cross over. Those who have not yet been liberated, I liberate. Those who have not yet been put at rest, I put at rest. Those who have not yet attained Nirvana, I cause to attain Nirvana. I know things as they really are, both in the present and in the future. I am the all-knowing one, the all-seeing one, the one who knows the Way, the one who opens the Way, the one who proclaims the Way. The entire assembly of gods, humans and Asuras, all should come here to listen to the Dharma."

Then, countless thousands of myriads of millions of kinds of living beings came before the Buddha to hear the Dharma.

Then, the Thus Come One, contemplating the sharpness and dullness of the faculties of these living beings, their vigor or laxness, according to their capacity, spoke the Dharma for their sakes in limitless varieties, causing them all to rejoice and quickly attain good benefit. After having heard this Dharma, all of these living beings presently are at ease; in the future, they will be born in a good place. By means of the Way, they will enjoy happiness and also be able to hear the Dharma. Having heard the Dharma, they will separate from all coverings and obstructions. Within all the Dharmas, according to their powers, they will gradually gain entry to the Way.

Just as that great cloud rains down on all the grasses, trees, forests, and medicinal herbs and each, according to its nature, fully receives the moisture and grows.

So, too, the Thus Come One speaks of a Dharma having one mark and one taste, that is to say: the mark of liberation, the mark of extinction, culminating in the wisdom of all modes.

Those living beings who, hearing the Thus Come One's Dharma, uphold read, recite and cultivate it as taught will not themselves be aware of the merit and virtue they obtain.

What is the reason? Only the Thus Come One knows the kinds, the marks, the substances, and the natures of these living beings, what they are recollecting, what

they are thinking, and what they are cultivating; how they are recollecting, how they are thinking, and how they are cultivating; by means of what Dharma they cultivate; and by means of what Dharma they obtain what Dharma. Living beings dwell on a variety of levels. Only the Thus Come One sees them as they really are, clearly and without obstruction. Just as those grasses, trees, and forests and all the medicinal herbs do not know themselves whether their natures are superior, middle, or inferior.

The Thus Come One knows the Dharma of one mark, of one flavor, that is to say: the mark of liberation, the mark of separation, the mark of extinction, the mark of ultimate Nirvana which is constantly still and extinct and which in the end returns to emptiness.

Already understanding this the Buddha contemplates the desires in the minds of living beings and protects them. For this reason he does not immediately speak of the wisdom of all modes.

Kashyapa, you are all very rare in your ability to know that the Thus Come One speaks the Dharma as it is appropriate, and in your ability to believe and accept it. Why is this? All the Buddhas, the World Honored Ones speak an appropriate Dharma which is difficult to understand, difficult to know.

At that time the World Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning spoke verses, saying:

Destroyer of existence, the Dharma King  
Manifests within the world;  
According to living beings' desires,  
He teaches the Dharma in various ways.  
The Thus Come One, out of veneration  
For this wisdom, deep and far-reaching,  
Has long remained silent on this important matter.  
Being in no hurry to set it forth.  
Those with wisdom, if they heard it,  
Would be able to believe and understand it,  
But those lacking wisdom would doubt it  
And thereby lose it for a long time  
for this reason, Kashyapa,  
It is spoken in accord with their powers  
Employing various conditions  
To lead them to the right view.

Kashyapa, you should know  
It is like a great cloud  
Rising above the world  
And covering all

A wisdom cloud filled with moisture  
illuminated with lightening flashes  
And vibrating with thunderous roars  
It brings delight to all,  
Obscuring the light of the sun,  
Refreshing the earth  
The cloud lowers and expands  
As if one could reach out and touch it.  
It rains equally everywhere  
Falling alike in the four directions  
Pouring without measure  
saturating all the land.

In the mountains, streams and steep valleys,  
In deep recesses, there grow  
Grasses, trees, and herbs,  
And trees, both great and small,  
The grains, shoots, and plants,  
The sugar-cane and the grape vine;  
All are nourished by the rain,  
And none fail to be enriched.  
The parched ground is soaked,  
The herbs and trees together flourish.  
Issuing from that cloud  
Water of a single flavor  
Moistens grasses, trees and forests  
Each according to its measure  
All of the trees,  
Great, medium and small,  
According to their size  
Can grow and develop.  
When reached by that single rain  
The roots, stalks, branches, and leaves,  
Flowers and fruits with luster and color,  
All are fresh and shining.

According to their substance and marks,  
And natures, either great or small  
They alike receive moisture  
And each one flourishes.

The Buddha, in the same way  
Manifests within the world  
Just like a great cloud  
Covering over everything.  
Having come into the world

For the sake of living beings,  
He discriminates and expounds  
The reality of all Dharmas.  
The Great Sage, the World Honored One,  
In the midst of the multitudes  
Of gods and humans  
Proclaims these words saying:  
"I am the Thus Come One  
The doubly complete honored one.  
I appear within the world  
Like a great cloud  
Moistening all  
The dried-out living beings,  
So they all leave suffering  
And gain peace and bliss  
Worldly joy  
And the joy of Nirvana.  
All gods and humans assembled here  
Listen singlemindedly and well.  
You should all come here  
To behold the Unsurpassed Honored One,  
I am the World Honored One,  
The one beyond compare.  
To bring peace and ease to living beings  
I manifest within the world  
And for the sake of the assembly speak  
The sweet dew of pure Dharma  
The Dharma of a single flavor,  
That of liberation and Nirvana.  
using a single, wondrous sound  
I proclaim this principle  
Constantly creating the causes and conditions  
For the Great Vehicle.

I contemplate all  
Everywhere as equal,  
Without "this" or "that"  
And without thoughts of love or hate.  
I have no greed or attachment,  
And no limitations or obstacles.  
Constantly for everyone,  
I speak the Dharma, equally,  
Speaking for a single person,  
As I would for the multitudes.  
I constantly expound and proclaim the Dharma  
And have no other work.

Coming, going, sitting and standing  
I never grow weary,  
Filling the entire world,  
Like the moisture of the universal rain.

For the noble, the lowly, the superior and inferior;  
Those who keep break them,  
Those with perfect awesome manner  
And those not perfect,  
Those with right views and those with deviant views  
The sharp rooted, the dull rooted  
I send down equally the Dharma rain  
And never grow weary.

All living beings  
Who hear my Dharma  
Receive it according to their power  
And dwell on various levels.  
They may dwell among humans or gods,  
Or Wheel Turning Sage Kings,  
Shakra or Brahma Kings:  
These are the small herbs.  
Those who know the non-outflow Dharma,  
Those who can attain Nirvana,  
Giving rise to Six Spiritual Penetrations  
And attaining the Three Clarities,  
Dwelling alone in mountain groves  
Ever practicing Ch'an Samadhi  
Attaining certification to condition-enlightenment:  
Those are the middle-sized herbs.  
Those who seek the place of the World Honored One.  
Saying, "We will become Buddhas."  
Vigorously practicing concentration,  
These are the superior herbs.  
Further, those disciples of the Buddha  
Who turn their minds to the Buddha Way  
Always practising compassion  
Knowing they will become Buddhas,  
For sure, without doubt:  
These are called the small trees.  
Those who dwell in spiritual penetrations,  
Turning the irreversible wheel,  
Saving limitless hundreds of thousands  
Of millions of living beings -  
Such Bodhisattvas as these  
Are called great trees.

The Buddha speaks equally,  
Like the rain of a single flavor.  
According to living beings' natures  
They receive it differently,  
Just as those herbs and trees  
Each receives a different measure.  
The Buddha uses this analogy  
To instruct expediently.  
With various phrases, he  
Expounds and proclaims a single Dharma which  
In the Buddha's wisdom is  
Like a drop within the sea.

I send down the rain of Dharma  
Filling all the world  
The Dharma of one taste is  
Cultivated according to their power  
Just like those forest groves  
All the herbs and trees  
According to their size  
Grow and flourish well.  
The Dharma of all the Buddhas  
Is always of a single taste  
It causes all the world  
To attain perfection.  
Through its gradual cultivation  
All attain the fruits of the Way.  
The Sound Hearers, those enlightened to conditions  
Dwelling in mountain groves  
Living in their final bodies  
Hearing the Dharma gain the fruit;  
They are called the herbs.  
And each one does grow.  
If there are Bodhisattvas,  
Whose wisdom is firm and solid,  
Who thoroughly comprehend the Three Realms  
And seek the supreme vehicle;  
They are called small trees,  
And each one does grow.  
Further, those who dwell in Ch'an  
Attaining spiritual powers,  
Who hear the Dharma of emptiness  
And rejoice within their minds,  
Emitting countless lights  
Crossing over all beings;  
They are called the large trees,

And each one does grow.

In this way, Kashyapa,  
The Dharma spoken by the Buddha  
Is like that great cloud.  
With rain of a single flavor,  
It moistens all the people and flowers,  
So each one bears fruit.  
Kashyapa, you should know  
That by using causes and conditions  
And various analogies  
I demonstrate and reveal the Buddha Path.  
These are my expedients  
And other Buddhas are also thus.  
Now, for your sakes,  
I speak of this true matter:  
All of you Sound Hearers,  
None of you have reached extinction.  
What you now are walking  
That is the Bodhisattva Path.  
Gradually, gradually, cultivate and study,  
And you'll all accomplish Buddhahood.