

THE POWER OF REPENTANCE AND REFORM

Reported by V.B.S staff

*Because our Way karma is not solid, we rise and fall;
Within the four seas we find no peaceful country;
Throughout the nine states there's no paradise wherein to entrust our
sorrows.*

Hu Ta Chuan put it well in his long poem FANTASIA. From beginningless time living beings have engaged in lust, jealousy, mutual harming, thieving and deviant views. And because they lack resolve for the Way, they are borne along by the raging torrent of desire and snagged by the net of karma.

When a delegation from SABA, DRBU went to South East Asia in December of 1981 on a lecture tour, thousands of devotees in Malaysia, Singapore, and Hong Kong came and sought audience with the Venerable Abbot. Most of these people were ridden with weird diseases that defied standard cures or remedies. Hence they came to repent and to ask for relief from their heavy karmic obstructions.

In Asia a certain laywoman came often to draw near to the delegation. She was from an affluent family, but her good fortune was marred by the fact that in recent years she had developed a cyst in her uterus. The doctors diagnosed it as non-malignant; nonetheless, the cyst continued to grow until her uterus swelled to three time its normal size. Rather than facing an operation which seemed imminent, she brought forth true faith and in May, 1982 came to The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas and asked the Venerable Abbot for help.

Whenever living being contract illnesses such as cancer, malignant cysts, carbuncles and the like, those are the times when their karmic obstacles come to collect on loans long overdue. The location of the illness is often directly related to the karma that brought it on in the first place. Since the cyst developed in the uterus, by deduction it follows that the deeds that contributed to the abnormality had to do with that part of the body. In investigating her past conditions, it was discovered that in her past life, as a dowager of a wealthy gentry family, this woman had, out of jealousy and scheming, oppressed younger women in the family into aborting during their pregnancies. Thus many young lives were robbed of a chance to be born. These babies died in their mother's wombs, but their ghosts clamored for repayment. Of all poisons, the poison of hatred and jealousy is the most lethal. For this reason the Bodhisattvas regard hatred as they would a snake, scorpion, or wild beast, and will avoid it all cost. The AVATAMSAKA SUTRA puts it well:

They enter into the net of thirsty love, and course in the dense forest of flattery and deceit, unable to extricate themselves. Their minds are conjoined with stinginess and jealousy, which they never abandon. They constantly create the causal conditions for undergoing birth in the destinies. With greed, hatred, and stupidity, they accumulate all kinds of karma, which day and night increases and grows. With the wind of resentment they fan the fire of mind-consciousness, whose blaze never ceases. All of the karma they create is conjoined with inversion...

What does the Bodhisattva do at this point?

He immediately brings forth wisdom of great compassion and makes the following reflections: "All these living beings I should rescue and save and set in the place of ultimate peace and joy." Therefore, he immediately brings forth bright wisdom of great kindness.

-FIRST GROUND OF HAPPINESS,
AVATAMSAKA SUTRA-

The Abbot instructed the laywoman with gentle but profound truths: "The cyst came about as a result of evil karma created in the past. Now, as conditions ripen, a host of deviant influences have converged, materializing as a cyst. You should know that diseases such as cancer are irrefutable evidence of the workings of cause and effect! Modern medicine uses the most progressive surgery to counter cancer and tumors, and it is true that karmic obstacles are somewhat intimidated by sharp surgical instruments, radiotherapy, laser beams and the like, and so they are forced to retreat temporarily. However, tumors arise from malignancy of the mind, and modern medicine has yet to address the source of the illness the mind. The method which they presently adopt is "healing the symptoms, but not the root," and that is why people experience relapses even after they have successful operations. It's just their karmic obstacles flaring up again. So it is said:

*Blessings and disasters have no gate of entry; only people bring them on.
The retribution of good and evil, follow you like a shadow.*

Our karma trails us successively over many lifetimes. We can only evade it for a while, and then eventually we have to pay up. And so those of ancient times also said:

*Good and bad eventually bring about their just rewards;
It's only a matter of time."*

When the laywoman heard those meaningful instructions, she awoke as if from a bad dream. Kneeling before the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, she shook her head in disbelief at the cruel ways in which she had wronged other living beings, and sighed in deep remorse. And yet, now that she has brought forth true faith and wished to change, it's not too late. As it is said in the MEDICINE MASTER REPENTANCE:

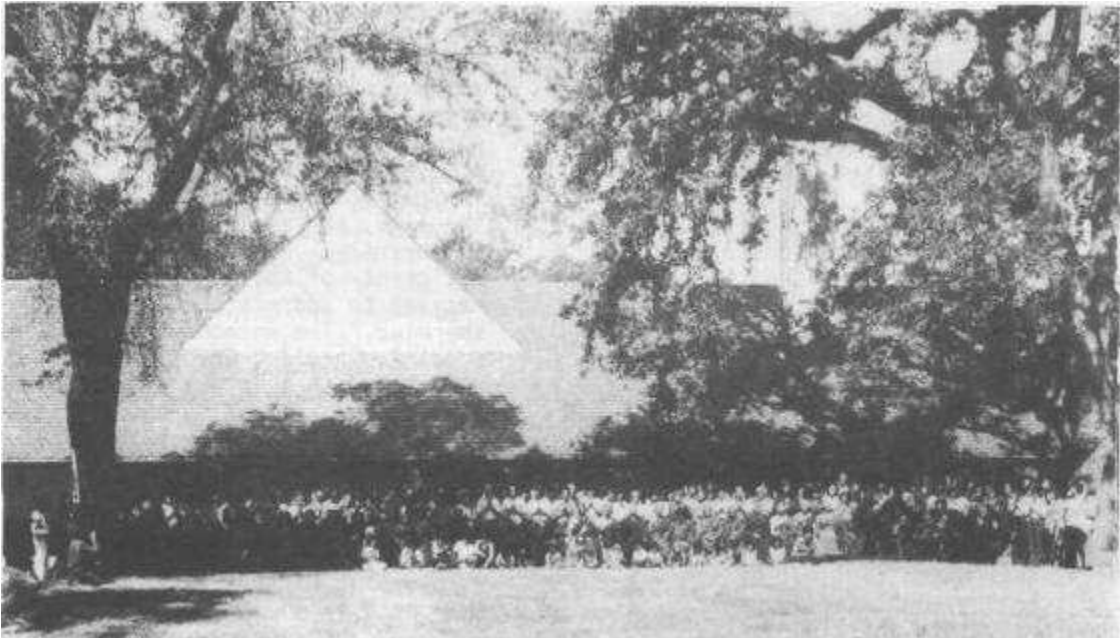
The sickness of all living beings are one identical illusory sickness; the medicine of the Tathagatas are one identical illusory medicine.

The Buddhadharma is the magical herb that heals all maladies. Upon contemplating the very nature of offenses as being empty, what trace of any illness remains? Surely, completely cleansing the mind is the true remedy. It is genuine repentance and reform. At this point the laywoman brought forth a sincere Bodhi resolve.

The Bodhi resolve is like agata medicine, in that it enables one to be peaceful, secure and free from illness. The Bodhi resolve is like a drug that detoxifies all poisons, in that it can chase away the poisons of greed and love.

AVATAMSAKA SUTRA
Entering the Dharma
Realm Chapter #39

No matter how grave the original offense may be, if one can only bring forth a sense of shame and remorse and sincerely cultivate meritorious acts, then it's never too late to make amendments. This is just a case of rectifying the score: if we generate enough good, then our bank accounts of merit and virtue won't be in the red. The workings of this simple formula were most evident throughout the Abbot's travels in Asia. Hundreds upon hundreds of people came asking for aid. Those who were truly earnest, who understood the principle behind creating meritorious acts to atone for their offenses, and who actively planted blessings in the Triple Jewel, invariably recovered from their mishaps. Even if they didn't get a personal audience with the Abbot, their strange sicknesses would abate as if by some magical transformation. And yet among those who came to seek help, some were pushy and aggressive, not really willing to reform and change. For such individuals no cure could be effective, for it was they themselves who lacked the requisite purity of faith.



KUAN SHIH YIN BODHISATTVA DHARMA ASSEMBLY

The Abbot started to cross over the many living beings which at that point were occupying the soul of the laywoman. Many indeed were ghosts and dark spirits that blocked out the brightness of her nature. As she knelt before the Abbot, her manifold karmic obstacles appeared. Amongst them were goblins, sinister ghosts and spirits, who also prostrated themselves before the Abbot and asked to be crossed over. The laywoman broke out in convulsion from time to time; this was when deviant forces were being cast out. Not only did goblins and strange essences infest her self-nature, but the creatures whose flesh she ate, even in this very life, were limitless and boundless as well. In the past she had feasted on sharks fin soup, tortoises, chicken, duck, pork, mutton and a variety of sea delicacies, all of which made "imprints" on her spirit. They have all been lying in wait, seething in resentment. No wonder the ancients put it this way:

*For thousands of years, the meat stew in the bowl
Has brewed up a resentment that is deep as the sea and very hard to level
If you wish to know why there are wars in the world,
Just listen to the piteous cries from the slaughterhouse at midnight.*

When the Abbot was intent upon crossing over these weird creatures and debtors, several "infantile" ghosts--the unborn babies who she had caused to be deprived of life--were also spirited off to the West. The Abbot rubbed the laywoman on the crown of her head. From his fingers he sent forth auspicious light rays of the five hues. The light was gentle and soothing, instantaneously neutralizing the poisons that had accumulated over many aeons of killing.

Moreover, he released a light of kindness called Peace and Security. This light shines upon all those who are ill, Causing them to cast out their misery, And to obtain the medicine of proper samadhi.

AVATAMSAKA SUTRA
Worthy Leader
Chapter #12

At this time Kuan Yin Bodhisattva appeared, and with her pure flask sprinkled sweet dew over the laywoman. With many expedient and skillful means the Abbot continued to exhort the woman to change her ways. From now on she had to give up all thoughts of jealousy, hatred and harming, instead she should cultivate the Samadhi of Kindness and Compassion.

*All living beings make distinctions between self and others and mutually destroy each other. Their fighting and enmity rage without cease. I should cause them to dwell in unsurpassed great kindness.
The common, and stupid with deviant wisdom,
Who do not properly understand,
Constantly cling to their hatred and do much arguing and fighting.
In their state of greedy seeking, they know no satiation:*

*I should cause them to eradicate all of the three poisons.
Fettered and covered by the great darkness of stupidity,
They enter paths of great danger, and nets of deviant views.
In the cage of birth and death, by hatred they're detained:
I should cause them to disperse the demonic thieves.*

AVATAMSAKA SUTRA
*Leaving Filth,
Second Ground
Chapter #26*

As the Abbot continued to lend his aid, the laywoman started to relax and reported that she felt an uplifting coolness and lightness.

After that session, she stayed at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas for about a week, everyday bowing repentances and letting the holy air of the City to heal her. She vowed to become vegetarian for life, and to exhaust her efforts in supporting the Orthodox Dharma as it takes roots in the west. A week later the Abbot returned to the City. He observed that the laywoman's illness had completely subsided. She was overjoyed, and bowed many times before the Buddhas and before she set out to return to her homeland. By means of unconditional faith and compliance with the advisors' teachings, she gained a new lease on life.

*On seeing living beings enter the nets of demons,
Forever oppressed by birth, old age and death,
He effects their liberation and consoles them:
This is how the courageous hero abides.
He observes that beings are afflicted with the sickness of infantile
delusions,
And extensively gives rise to a mind of compassion and sympathy.
With the medicine of wisdom he completely eradicates them.
This is where the great physician king abides.*

AVATAMSAKA SUTRA
*Entering the Dharma Realm
Chapter #39*

"The sea of suffering is
deep and wide,
But a turn of the head
is the other side."