

Bodhi Stand



UPASIKA BINA TENG (KUO WEI)

All living beings are swallowed up in the great torrent's waves. They enter the flow of desire, the flow of existence, the flow of ignorance, and the flow of views. They revolve in the whirlpool of birth and death. They toss and turn in the river of love. They are carried away by the galloping flow and have no leisure to contemplate. They flow after awakenings to desire, awakenings to hatred, awakenings to harming, and do not give them up. In the midst of that they are seized by the rakshasas of the view of a body. They are on the point of eternal entry into the dense forest of love and desire. They bring forth deep defiled attachment towards what they greedily love. They dwell in the fertile plain of pride.

*FLOWER ADORNMENT SUTRA
Ten Grounds Chapter 26
Second Ground, "Leaving Filth"*

"Part of my life is very much as the Sutra describes," Upasika Bina Teng recalls, 'a dense forest' choked full of love, desire, and pride. The corruption wore on my spirit like rust overwhelming a piece of iron. It drew me away from the parts of myself that I had respect for. The more I tried to be the person that everybody liked, the more I sold myself short and ended up losing all sense of self-esteem. It wasn't until I encountered the Buddhadharmā about three years ago that I saw a road out of that thick, dark forest."

Since Bina's home was just a stone's throw away from the Buddhist Lecture Hall, a Way-place established by the Venerable Abbot during his sojourn in Happy Valley, Hong Kong, she got into the habit of going on the first and the fifteenth of each lunar month to bow repentances, chant the Buddha's name and the Great Compassion Mantra and eat pure vegetarian food. The serenity of the Dharma ceremonies soothed her screaming mind. In December, 1981, a delegation from Dharma Realm Buddhist University of the Sino-American Buddhist Association, under the guidance of the Venerable Abbot, stopped over in Hong Kong on their tour of Southeast Asia. Bina and over two hundred other people took refuge. Although that was the first time Bina laid eyes on the Venerable Abbot, he did not seem unfamiliar to her at all. In fact, she had dreamed about the Abbot, long before that, just as many of his other disciples do long before they actually meet their teacher. Immediately she felt a deep affinity that went back many lives. During the delegation's short stay in Hong Kong, every time Bina saw her teacher, tears would well up uncontrollably from her eyes. She felt like a prodigal child who had run away from home and after being tossed around and abused, had now finally come back to the protective folds of her compassionate father.

"Why is it that you seem so familiar to me? It seems as if I have known you for so long!" she asked her teacher amidst sobs.

The Venerable Abbot smiled, "Last life you were a cultivator. But in an unheeded moment you gave rise to a single false thought of envy toward some members of the laity. You thought, 'Oh, how easy they have it! They can worship the Buddha and still enjoy a family life and worldly bliss.' So this time around you got a taste of that, but it seems you have discovered early that it is not all you had thought it would be."

The Abbot went on to explain further, "All it takes is for left-home people to strike up a single false thought of desire or defilement or envy towards the laity. Perhaps they wish that they themselves could be a high government official, or a rich man or the wife of a rich man, or any other such random thought. What do you know? In their next life they get exactly what they were false thinking about, except that behind the 'pay off' are invariably hidden many brambles and thorns. Because some left-home people were not satisfied with being in Buddhist circles, this life they are reborn in families that believe in heterodox faiths, or they are forced to always be in the company of those who harbor deviant views and knowledge. Because this is a karmic net of their own making, they get stuck in it and can't pull themselves out. And so, even when they encounter the Buddhadharmā this life, either they can't stave off their own doubts and fears, or they run into tremendous opposition from their kin to the point that the snares and traps become suffocating. As it is said, 'When the cause ground is not true, the result will be crooked.'

Such people should not blame heaven or complain about other folks. They should learn to shoulder their own debts, settle their own scores, and pay up."

Then the Abbot went on to say, "The very best thing for people to do in the world is to cultivate the pure path; the very worst is to get entangled in relationships of love and desire. But people are strange. Nine hundred ninety-nine out of a thousand will turn their backs on purity and walk down the path of defilement, even when they know full well that they're going to get burned and scarred. Because of unclean false thinking they become hopelessly involved and entangled in relationships with others. These people they involve themselves with then become reborn as their close family kin. Mutual antagonism and vilification continue for life after life. It's not always this way with families, but if you carefully observe how people get bunched together due to their myriad affinities, you will see that their relationships are almost always a mixture of good and bad, pure and profane."

From beginningless time onward, we and all living beings have mutually been one another's father, mother, older brother, younger brother, older sister, younger sister, son, and daughter. But because we are filled with greed, hatred, and stupidity, arrogance and deceptiveness, and all sorts of other afflictions, we have also mutually hurt one another and reciprocally exploited one another. We have lusted, raped, injured, and killed. There is no evil we have not committed. It is this way for all beings. Based on their afflictions they double their manifold evils. For this reason among everyone there is no mutual respect, no mutual veneration, no mutual compliance, no mutual humility, no mutual guidance, and no mutual regard. Rather, there is a furthering of killing and harming, so that everyone becomes vengeful enemies.

*FLOWER ADORNMENT SUTRA
Ten Treasuries, Chapter 22
The Third Treasury of Shame*

In August, 1982, despite much opposition and hardship, Bina managed to visit the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas for two weeks. She came during a Kuan Yin Recitation Session. The serene contentment and self-sufficiency of the Sangha community deeply moved her; it was so peaceful, not full of strife and resentment like most of her associations in the world were. Bina further relates, "There is another part of my life which, though not always apparent, runs like a golden thread that connects all the most meaningful events that have happened to me. They form the missing link to my true identity. First of all, I have deep affinities with Kuan Yin Bodhisattva. In times of trouble the Bodhisattva has time and again appeared in my dreams and pulled me out of the mire."

Towards the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas she also feels profound ties: "After taking refuge with the Venerable Abbot last December, my thoughts often went to the City. Although I had never been to that place, nonetheless in my meditation and dreams, visions of grassy meadows and blue skies recurred again and again. I could almost smell

the sweet air and hear the chants in my ears. One night I saw myself in a Buddhahall, bowing before the different Buddha images and then to the Venerable Abbot."

When Bina arrived at the City this August, she was taken to the Buddhahall to bow. To her amazement, it was exactly the same Buddhahall that she had seen in her dream; every trace, down to the most subtle detail, was the same. It was like coming home again.

He recollects how in past lives he was impure in both body and mind, and immediately resolves to singlemindedly regulate and purify himself. He recollects how in past lives he created manifold, bad karma and immediately resolves to guard against it and cut it off...Moreover, he recollects how in past lives he underwent rebirth in the five destinies, which did not bring a single bit of benefit for himself or others. And thereupon he resolves to benefit living beings with his body, to bring to success all Buddhadharma, and to serve all Good Knowing Advisors. Upon making this reflection, he gives rise to great happiness.

*FLOWER ADORNMENT SUTRA, CHAPTER 39
ENTERING THE DHARMA REALM*