

The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra

with commentary by Tripitaka Master Hua

Chapter Twelve: Devadatta

continued from issue #191

The second is the Perfection of Morality. "Morality" is the stopping of evil and the prevention of offenses. It means to do no evil and offer up all good conduct. If you can do no evil and offer up all good conduct, you are truly holding the precepts. But you are deluded if you think, "My little faults aren't that important. I just make minor mistakes, anyway. They won't hurt my cultivation." You should know that a hair is very fine and tiny, but if a lot of them are put together, they can make a rope. You shouldn't think it doesn't matter if you don't correct your small imperfections. The smaller the fault is, the more important it is to change it.

"Does that mean the big ones don't count? I can just change the little ones?"

If you change your small faults, the big ones will naturally disappear. This is because your big faults result from all your small faults put together. A mountain doesn't just spring into being of itself; it is a collection of millions of tiny dust particles put together. Our faults work the same way.

Does offering up all good conduct mean that you only do good deeds on a large scale and ignore small good deeds? No. The great comes from the small, just like the distant comes from the nearby, and the deep comes from the shallow. If you do small good deeds, your big good deeds will naturally be accomplished. Doing many small good deeds just amounts to doing good on a large scale.

And so we say,

Do not think a good deed is small and thereby fail to do it.

Do not think an evil deed is small and go ahead and do it.

Those who hold the precepts, who do no evil and offer up all good conduct, gain ten advantages:

The Ten Advantages of the Perfection of Morality:

- 1. One will perfect All-Wisdom.* If one keeps the precepts well, one can gain All-Wisdom.
- 2. One will study after the manners of the Buddha.* The Buddha took the precepts as his teacher. The precepts are called "the Vajra Bright Jeweled Precepts". They are the original source of all the Buddhas. All the Buddhas arise from morality.

3. *Those with wisdom will not find fault with one.* Only stupid, senseless people will speak ill of one. If one keeps the precepts, wise people will have no cause to find fault with one. Stupid people might slander one, but that's just because they have right and wrong all mixed up. They take what's black as white. If one keeps the precepts, wise people will not only refuse to speak ill of one, but they will even praise one.

However, if you want people to praise you, you must not compete to be Number One. You can't take that position by force! If you do things so well that you are naturally Number One, that's one thing. But if you don't do the best, and yet you force yourself into the Number One position, then you have only gained a false position for yourself. That's useless. Movie kings and movie queens may occupy that position for a while, but they can't fool anybody. How do people turn out to be phony Hollywood kings and queens? It's because in former lives they didn't really do any work; they just sought to be royal. They got their wish, but only in the world of celluloid dreams--empty and false.

4. *One will not retreat from one's vows.* This is the most important. Perhaps you made the vow: "I will seek the Buddhadharma no matter how difficult things may be. Even if I face starvation or freezing to death, I will not retreat. If no one makes offerings to me, that's the very best thing!"

You should not be greedy for offerings. Don't drop hints to people, hoping that they will buy you things and then think, "I must have Way-virtue and be quite a cultivator. People are making offerings to me!" That's wrong! One should make the vow: "I will seek the Buddha-Way even if it means giving up my head, eyes, brains, marrow, my flesh, my hands, and my feet--my very life!" One should make vows never to retreat from the Bodhi mind, never to turn back. One should not be like Shariputra, who tried to practice the Bodhisattva Path, but quit when he realized he gave up the wrong eye! That's just retreating! In the Buddhadharma, the more difficult things become, the more determined one should be to go forward and not retreat. That's the proper attitude for a true seeker of the Buddha Way, but it's not easy! All of you Good and Wise Advisors! Seeking the Buddhadharma is the most difficult thing there is to do. It's not something one can accomplish in five "vigorous" minutes.

5. *One will dwell securely in proper conduct.* One will peacefully practice proper, not deviant, conduct. Proper conduct means benefitting others. It does not refer to benefitting oneself. If you are "climbing on conditions," you do not have proper conduct. If you do not "climb on conditions," your conduct is proper.
6. *One will cast aside birth and death.* One should not hold on to birth and death, thinking, "My life is so valuable. I have to make nice offerings to my body--give it good food, vitamins, minerals, and so forth, to make it really strong." It may get stronger, but the stronger one's body gets, the weaker one's wisdom becomes. What is the use of having a strong body when one's wisdom is weak? We must cast aside birth and death altogether. We should not hold on to physical life at the expense of our wisdom life. Look upon birth and death as unimportant, and have the attitude, "If I live, I live; if I die, I die," and at the same time, cherish the firm resolve to cultivate. We should not misconstrue the meaning and think, "If birth and death are

no problem, then I'll just keep getting born and dying." That's not what I mean. You must see birth and death as unimportant and yet still cultivate to end birth and death.

7. *One will long for and delight in Nirvana.* One thinks, "What I delight in most is Nirvana, in the Dharma of transcending birth and death." Through holding the precepts one obtains Nirvana.
8. *One will obtain an unfettered mind.* One may have much wisdom and have brought forth a formidable resolve for Bodhi, but then one gets tied up by greed, hatred, stupidity, pride, and doubt, to say nothing of the view of a body, one-sided views, views of unprincipled morality, views of grasping at opinions, and deviant views. These are Ten Fetters which bind up one's mind so that wisdom cannot come forth. Obtaining an unfettered mind means gaining liberation.
9. *One obtains superior samadhi.* This is not the samadhi of ordinary people. This samadhi power is very solid! Nothing can disturb it--nothing! It's an inconceivable kind of superior concentration.
10. *One will not lack the wealth of faith.* To have faith is to have wealth. People without faith are poor. If you do not believe the Dharma Master when he lectures on the Dharma, then you won't be able to bring forth the Bodhi mind. If you can't bring forth the Bodhi mind, you are poor. Through the practice of morality, you will gain the riches of faith.

This has been a general explanation. If we were to go into detail, a great deal more could be said.

The next Paramita is patience. It is definitely not easy to be patient. The Jungwen (Chinese) word for patience (忍) has a knife blade on the top (刃) and a heart on the bottom (心). Using patience is like having a knife stuck into your heart. It's difficult to bear; it really hurts. If you can bear what is difficult to bear, you can make it through the gate of patience, which means you can achieve paramita, for paramita just means "getting through it." Paramita, a Sanskrit word, literally means "gone to the other shore." You go from the shore of birth and death through the massive flow of afflictions to the other shore, which is Nirvana. I have written a verse about patience, which describes it pretty well. If you can remember this verse, it will be of great benefit.

Patience is a priceless gem that few know how to mine.
But if you can master it, everything works out fine!

"Priceless" doesn't mean it's worthless! It means you can't put a price on it. One, two, three million--it's still not enough. It's invaluable. Most people will claim that they are very patient, but that's when everything is going their way. Once something happens that they do not want to put up with, they usually blow their tops! You may decide to cultivate patience, and strangely enough, someone will show up to test you by slugging you a good one, or trying to knock a few of your teeth out, and then kicking you around for a while. It might feel like that knife is being stuck in your heart, but if you can be patient and act as though nothing is going on, then you can

make it through the gate. If you can't take it, then you have to keep on trying. Patience is not easy, I repeat. Most people don't know how to be patient. If you can, then everything will work out fine. It's just because you can't be patient with things that everything gets messed up.

Maitreya Bodhisattva spoke this verse about patience, which also comes in handy:

The Old Fool wears tattered clothes, and fills his belly with tasteless food,
Mends his clothes to keep away the cold, and lets all things take their course.
If someone scolds the Old Fool, the Old Fool just says, "Fine."
If someone hits the Old Fool, he just lies down to sleep.
Spit in his face, and he just lets it dry.
"That way I save my strength and give you no affliction."
This kind of Paramita is the jewel in the wonderful.
Knowing this news, how can you worry about not attaining the Way?

The old monk wears old, ragged clothes and eats unseasoned food. It doesn't taste like much, but it fills him. When his clothes wear out, he just patches them up and lets all things take their course. Nothing presents a problem. This is what's meant by "everything's okay." Sometimes it's not easy to be like that. Sometimes things just don't seem to work out for us. For Maitreya Bodhisattva, things always work out. If someone scolds him, he just says, "Great, keep on scolding me!" If someone hits him, he just lies down as if he were asleep. If you spit in his face, he doesn't even bother to wipe it off. That way he saves the energy it would take to wipe it off. People then think, "It's useless to try to fight with someone like this," and they don't give rise to afflictions. If you can cultivate this Paramita, it is the most wonderful of perfections. Knowing this, how can you fail to realize the Way? Don't worry about not becoming a Buddha. You most certainly will. All you have to do is cultivate patience. It will surely take you to the other shore. Someone is thinking, "That will never work in our society. We have to go out and compete. We fight for everything we get. The Old Fool is useless!"

Perhaps you can't use him, but I will. Or maybe I won't use him, but I'll tell my disciples to use him!

The Ten Advantages of the Perfection of Patience

Patience is not easy to perfect! In this world, the harder something is to do, the more worth it has. If something isn't difficult, it isn't valuable. Therefore, even though it is hard to cultivate patience, it brings great benefits and its value is extremely great.

If on the cause ground one cultivates patience, in the future the benefits one will obtain can be generally listed as follows:

1. *Fire will not burn one.* Why? Because there is no fire inside. If there is no fire within, then fire from outside has no way to harm you. If you have fire inside, you will get burned. It is also said that if one has problems inside, one will attract sickness from outside. If one catches cold, it's often because inside there has been much false thinking going on. If you practice

patience and have gotten rid of your fiery temper, then fire from the outside can't burn you. If your nature is like ashes, then fires from outside can't set you aflame.

2. *Knives cannot harm one.* If you cultivate patience, and within there are no "knives and guns," that is, no thoughts of harming others, then the external knives and guns can't harm you. It is said:

If inside the house there is a superior person, superior people will come to visit.
If inside the house there are petty people, petty people will stop by.

That is genuine philosophy!

3. *Poison cannot harm one.* If you have cultivated patience to perfection, then as the Great Master Yung-Chia said in his "Song of Enlightenment,"

If one meets with knives, it's no problem.
Or is given poison, it's no cause for alarm.

Even if one is poisoned, one won't die. Patriarch Bodhidharma was poisoned six times by jealous rivals, but did not die because for limitless kalpas he had been perfecting patience and had attained that Paramita. The Paramita acted as an antidote to the poison.

4. *Water will not drown one.* If you cultivate patience to perfection, you will never drown.
5. *Non-humans will protect one.* "Non-humans" refer to the gods and dragons and the rest of the eight-fold division of ghosts and spirits. They will all protect you and watch over your Way-place.
6. *One will have a beautiful appearance.* If you cultivate patience, you will have a pleasing appearance. You will be liked by all who see you, and you'll never make anyone afraid of you. People will respect and cherish you, will always want to be around you, and will never desert you. "Beautiful" here refers to the physical manifestation of purity of thought. It is not the kind of beauty associated with glamour and sex appeal. Your appearance will inspire reverence; it won't cause people to become emotionally infatuated or have impure thoughts.
7. *The evil paths will be closed to one.* You will not fall into any of the three evil paths: the hells, the animal realm, and the realm of the hungry ghosts.
8. *One will gain birth in the Brahma Heaven.* If you cultivate patience, you can be reborn in the pure heavens of Brahma.
9. *One will be peaceful by day and night.* In the six periods of the day and night, you will be happy and serene. During the day, you won't worry about how you are going to get your work done, and then in the evening wonder if you are going to lose your job the next day and starve

to death. Most people have much worry. If you cultivate patience, you won't have such afflictions. You will always be happy and peaceful, and free of worries.

10. One will always feel happy. You will always be in good spirits, very happy. This happiness is not based on anything external; rather it comes from within the self-nature and is not forced.

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