

# *The Flower Adornment Sutra*

## *Chapter Forty "Universal Worthy's Conduct and Vows "*

*with Commentary by Tripitaka Master Hua*

Is this not wonderful? Before your body was just a speck of Mount Sumeru, and Mount Sumeru was the size of a dust mote in the Dharma Realm. But when you reach the point of the "true appearance which has no appearance," Mount Sumeru is contained within your Dharma body. You now contain everything; everything in the universe is contained within your nature, and you understand everything. The true mark of impartial bowing is an inconceivable state. If you can reach this state while bowing to the Buddha, can you then explain all of its wonderful aspects? No, they are ineffable.

This has been a simple explanation of the Seven Kinds of Bowing which describe the proper etiquette or propriety one should observe while bowing to the Triple Jewel. If you wish to discuss these in more detail, there are three hundred forms of propriety, and three thousand awesome departments. In China there is a book called THE BOOK OF RITES which describes propriety: how one should conduct oneself. It describes the proper etiquette for different situations; for example, it says everyone should take his proper position when sitting down. Adults should sit in the places for adults, and children should sit in their place. Men have a proper place, women have a proper place, and elder people have their proper place. No one can sit at random. I will give you a more specific example. THE BOOK OF RITES says, "Youths should sit in the corners." Children should not sit in the middle of a room but should sit in the corners.

In the past when I was a child, I talked a lot about propriety. What kind of propriety did I advocate? I liked people to respect me. When I was a child, we had an emperor in China and I wished to be an emperor; so under my system of propriety, all the children in the town, perhaps fifty or a hundred, had to follow my orders. I had them build a mound of dirt, upon which I sat and told all of them to bow to me. This was before I had reached the age of twelve, and strangely enough, these children were not opposed to bowing to me, but obediently listened to my orders.

When I was young I wanted people to bow to me, but after my twelfth birthday, I saw a dead child and realized that people die. After that I gave up this bad practice, and did not wish people to bow to me anymore; in fact, on the contrary, I wished to bow to others. Whom did I bow to first? My parents. In the morning I bowed to my parents three times, and in the evening I bowed to them again, bowing a total of six times per day. But then I thought, "My parents aren't the only people in the world. There is heaven and earth, and the emperor, and my teacher. At that time I did not know who my teacher would be, but I knew that I would meet him in the future, and so I wished to bow to him beforehand. Most people would think that all this bowing was really idiotic, but again I thought, "This world has sages so I will bow to them, and it has immortals so I will bow to them, too." Then I discovered that there are Buddhas in the world, so I bowed to them. I bowed to Bodhisattvas, Sound-Hearers, Those Enlightened by Conditions, and then I thought, "The world has many good people living in it," and so I bowed to the good people. And there are also kind people, so I bowed to the kind people because they do what is proper, and I wanted to include everyone in my thanks for their proper actions. For example, I would wonder why they did kind things like helping the poor, and so I thanked them on behalf of the poor people by bowing to them.

By this time, I was bowing quite a lot when I thought, "I bow to the kind people, but since evil people are pitiful, I should bow to the Buddha on their behalf and ask the Buddha to cause them to forsake

their offenses and do good instead of evil." So I bowed to the Buddha for all those in the world who have offenses, repenting to the Buddha on their behalf. Moreover, I repented to the Buddha for all those who were not filial to their parents, and bowed in repentance for all the evil people of the world because I felt I was the worst of them.

When all was said and done, I was bowing more than eight hundred thirty times and I will tell you, my practice was very unusual. I got up before anyone else, got dressed, and washed my face. I lit a stick of incense and went outside to bow. Regardless of whether or not it was windy, rainy, or snowing, I bowed outside. When it snowed, I placed my hands in the snow and bowed, not caring whether or not it was cold. I would bow more than eight hundred thirty times which would take about an hour and a half. I bowed before everyone woke up and again after everyone had gone to bed, practicing like this for many years. Later, when I cultivated filial practices by my mother's graveside, I decreased the bows to nine, because it used up too much time. This is how I bowed to the Buddha and practiced in my youth.