

The Flower Adornment Sutra

Chapter Forty "Universal Worthy's Conduct and Vows"

with commentary by Tripitaka Master Hua

SUTRA:

"MOREOVER, GOOD MAN, TO REPENT OF KARMIC OBSTACLES AND REFORM IS EXPLAINED LIKE THIS: THE BODHISATTVA REFLECTS, 'FROM BEGINNINGLESS KALPAS IN THE PAST, I HAVE CREATED ALL MEASURELESS AND BOUNDLESS EVIL KARMA WITH MY BODY, MOUTH, AND MIND, BECAUSE OF GREED, HATRED, AND STUPIDITY. IF THIS EVIL KARMA HAD A SUBSTANCE AND FORM, ALL OF EMPTY SPACE COULD NOT CONTAIN IT.

COMMENTARY:

After explaining the previous vow, to extensively cultivate the making of offerings, the Bodhisattva says, "MOREOVER, GOOD MAN." Now we want to understand the importance of repenting of our karmic obstacles and reforming. If you cultivate the giving of offerings but do not repent of and reform your karmic obstacles, there can be no real benefit. So Universal Worthy Bodhisattva says, TO REPENT OF KARMIC OBSTACLES AND REFORM IS EXPLAINED LIKE THIS. "Repentance" has been explained as contrition for previous offenses, to be sorry for offenses committed in the past. "Reform" means "to correct oneself so one does not make further mistakes."

In Buddhism we learn to "bow repentances." This means that we earnestly bow before the Buddhas repenting of our mistakes. In doing this, you must be extremely sincere and not be scattered, and then your repentance will be efficacious. When the Great Master Chih Che was alive, the *Shurangama Sutra* had not yet come from India to China, and so he bowed to the west and the name of the *Shurangama Sutra*. He bowed for eighteen years but still did not see the *Shurangama Sutra*. If we were to bow for something and we did not attain it, then before eighteen years, we would think, "Oh, my bowing is useless, I'm not going to bow any more."

For his entire life the Great Master Chih Che bowed to the *Dharma Flower Sutra*. Not only that, he wrote out Sutras, and he wrote out the entire Tripitaka time and time again. The Buddha images he painted and made from wood totalled over eighty thousand. And from morning to night he bowed repentances.

When the Great Master Chih Che was born, his mother saw a five-colored light in their home, and so he was named Chih Che, "the wise one." When he was in his early teens, he heard a Dharma Master reciting the Universal Door Chapter of the *Dharma Flower Sutra*, at which time he memorized the entire chapter just as if he had read it in a previous life. Later when he went to see the Great Master Nan Yao, the Great Master said, "Oh, you've

come. In the past we were part of the Vulture Peak Assembly and we heard the *Dharma Flower Sutra*. Do you remember that? Now our conditions have ripened, and we have come together again here."The Great Master Nan Yao then taught him the Peaceful Happy Conduct Chapter, and told him to recite and bow to the *Dharma Flower Sutra*. Master Chih Che bowed until he reached the Chapter on the Original Affairs of Medicine King Bodhisattva, when at once he became enlightened.

After his enlightenment, he told the Great Master Nan Yao about his experience:"I bowed to the Sutra and recited it until I got to the lines, 'This is called true vigor; this is a true Dharma offering.'Then I saw Shakyamuni Buddha at Vulture Peak still speaking the *Dharma Flower Sutra*. What is the meaning of this?"

The Great Master Nan Yao certified him, saying,"Only you could have this wonderful experience, and only I could recognize it. Therefore, it had to be you to attain this state, and it had to be me to understand it, to certify you. So now you have attained the initial expedient of the *Dharma Flower Samadhi*, the *I-hsuan* (一旋) Dharani,' the single-turning' Dharani."

After the Great Master certified him, Master Chih Che's wisdom and eloquence grew limitless. The Great Master Nan Yao said to him,"With your wisdom you can defeat thousands upon tens of thousands of common Dharma Masters in debate. None of them can equal you." After this the Great Master Chih Che's wisdom opened up completely, and then he applied himself even more vigorously in cultivating the *Dharma Flower Sutra*.

When it was time for him"to perfect the stillness," he had an attendant recite the *Dharma Flower Sutra* for him while he listened. After this was finished, he told the attendant to bring him some mouthwash. After he had rinsed his mouth, he spoke some verses, sat down, and "perfected the stillness."

When the Great Master was at T'ien T'ai Mountain, there were many fishermen in the area, and so he bought up all the land there for one hundred miles, and within this area, no one fished or killed animals. Further, all the local people took refuge with him. The Great Master Chih Che was inconceivable, and he specialized in bowing repentances

Most people who bring forth thoughts of repentance and reform are Bodhisattvas. Common people without good roots basically do not repent, how much the less reform. Like those who take refuge with the Triple Jewel, some like to recite Sutras and bow to the Buddhas, and some do not. Some start out with the idea that everyone should recite Sutras, and so everyone begins reciting. This just shows that they have not gotten rid of their karmic obstacles.

THE BODHISATTVA REFLECTS,"FROM BEGINNINGLESS KALPAS IN THE PAST,...""Beginningless" refers to past lives aeons, never a beginning. I HAVE CREATED ALL evil karma which is MEASURELESS AND BOUNDLESS. The evil things I have thought, said, and done are without measure and have no limit. WITH MY

BODY, MOUTH, AND MIND -- I have created karma of the body, mouth, and mind, these three kinds of karma — BECAUSE OF GREED, HATRED, AND STUPIDITY. IF THIS EVIL KARMA HAD A SUBSTANCE AND FORM, if it had a shape or appearance, ALL OF EMPTY SPACE COULD NOT CONTAIN IT; my karma would fill up empty space until it was overflowing. If these karmic obstacles all at once manifested an appearance, they would fill up empty space until it burst and was demolished.

SUTRA:

'I NOW COMPLETELY PURIFY THESE THREE KARMAS, ANY BEFORE THE ASSEMBLIES OF ALL BUDDHAS AND BOVHISATTVAS, THROUGHOUT THE DHARMA REALM IN LANDS AS MANY AS FINE MOTES OF DUST, I SINCERELY REPENT OF AND REFORM MY OFFENSES AND VOW NEVER TO CREATE THEM AGAIN. I WILL ALWAYS DWELL IN ALL MERIT AND VIRTUE OF THE PURE PRECEPTS.'

"SO IT IS THAT WHEN THE REALM OF EMPTY SPACE IS EXHAUSTED, THE REALM OF LIVING BEINGS IS EXHAUSTED, THE KARMA OF LIVING BEINGS IS EXHAUSTED, AND THE AFFLICTIONS OF LIVING BEINGS ARE EXHAUSTED, THEN MY REPENTANCE WILL BE EXHAUSTED. BUT JUST AS THE REALM OF EMPTY SPACE UP TO THE AFFLICTIONS OF LIVING BEINGS ARE ENDLESS, SO TOO MY REPENTANCE AND REFORM ARE ENDLESS. THEY CONTINUE IN THOUGHT AFTER THOUGHT WITHOUT CEASE. MY BODY, MOUTH, AND MIND NEVER WEARY OF THESE DEEDS."

COMMENTARY:

Although this Bodhisattva considers his karmic obstacles to be extremely many, he nonetheless thinks, "I will NOW COMPLETELY PURIFY THESE THREE KARMAS." He decides not to create any more karma with his body, mouth, or mind, but with his three karmas purified he thinks, "I will appear BEFORE THE ASSEMBLIES OF ALL BUDDHAS AND BODHISATTVAS, and will go THROUGHOUT THE DHARMA REALM IN LANDS AS MANY AS FINE MOTES OF DUST, and SINCERELY REPENT OF AND REFORM MY OFFENSES AND VOW NEVER TO CREATE THEM AGAIN." One should repent with an extremely sincere mind, and vow never to create these kinds of offenses again. The Bodhisattva further reflects, "I WILL ALWAYS DWELL IN ALL MERIT AND VIRTUE OF THE PURE PRECEPTS; I will dwell in all this merit and virtue, in the precept mark of merit and virtue that I receive."

SO IT IS THAT WHEN THE REALM OF EMPTY SPACE IS EXHAUSTED, when there is no more empty space, when there are no longer any living beings, even up to the point that THE KARMA OF LIVING BEINGS IS EXHAUSTED, AND THE AFFLICTIONS OF LIVING BEINGS ARE EXHAUSTED, THEN MY REPENTANCE WILL BE EXHAUSTED. At that time my vow to repent will be complete. BUT JUST AS THE REALM OF EMPTY SPACE is endless, living beings are endless, the karmic

obstacles UP TO THE AFFLICTIONS OF LIVING BEINGS ARE ENDLESS, SO TOO MY REPENTANCE AND REFORM ARE ENDLESS. It continues IN THOUGHT AFTER THOUGHT, in each thought, WITHOUT CEASE. It never ends. MY BODY, MOUTH, AND MIND NEVER WEARY OF THESE DEEDS." The more one bows repentances the better. One never retreats saying, "This is too much suffering; I'm really tired." The Bodhisattva never tires, but the more he bows, the more energy he has. The more he repents, the happier he gets. This is true repentance.

—to be continued

