

The Flower Adornment Sutra

Chapter Forty "Universal Worthy's Conduct and Vows"

with commentary by Tripitaka Master Hua

The Eighth Vow: To Always Study with the Buddhas

SUTRA:

"MOREOVER, GOOD MAN, TO ALWAYS STUDY WITH THE BUDDHAS IS EXPLAINED LIKE THIS: I WILL BE LIKE VAIROCHANA THUS COME ONE OF THIS SAHA WORLD, WHO, FROM THE TIME HE FIRST RESOLVED HIS MIND, NEVER RETREATED FROM VIGOR. HE GAVE UP INEFFABLY INEFFABLE NUMBERS OF BODIES AND LIVES. HE PEELED OFF HIS SKIN FOR PAPER, SPLIT HIS BONES TO FASHION BRUSHES, DREW BLOOD FOR INK, AND WROTE OUT SUTRAS STACKED AS HIGH AS MOUNT SUMERU. BECAUSE HE VALUED THE DHARMA, HE DID NOT CHERISH HIS OWN BODY OR LIFE.

COMMENTARY:

MOREOVER, GOOD MAN, Universal Worthy again called out to the Youth Good Wealth, what is the meaning of TO ALWAYS STUDY WITH THE BUDDHAS? IT IS EXPLAINED LIKE THIS. I will now explain it for you. It means to be like Vairochana, the Thus Come One of this Saha World. "To be like" means to follow the example and try to be the same as Vairochana Buddha.

Saha is Sanskrit. Its meaning is "bearable." This world is very difficult for all creatures to bear, yet they are still able to bear it. How is it that this world is so difficult for all living beings? In this world everything is suffering, and even the happiness in this world is not real happiness, but is the cause of suffering. All the dharmas in this world are defiled and without purity; the world is all bitter suffering.

How is happiness the cause of suffering? For example, most people like to wear new clothes, and putting on a new outfit is considered a happy event. But when you are not careful and spill soup on it, or get it dirty some other way, you get afflicted, and this is suffering.

People especially like wealth. Although you acquire many things during your lifetime, when you die, you cannot take them with you. Nevertheless, while you are alive, you keep track of every cent. When you are without money, you devise ways to get it, and after you have it, you are afraid you will lose it. If you do not have any wealth, you greedily long for it and this is suffering. After you get it and are afraid of losing it, this is also suffering. You are not aware of those mental and emotional states as suffering, however, because you are so busy worrying about obtaining and losing it. During your

life you have fears about not having wealth and fears about losing it, but when you die, you cannot take along one penny. You tell me, is this suffering or happiness?

Everyone in the world is fond of these two things, new clothes and wealth, and so these make good examples. But all the other kinds of happiness are causes for suffering, too. Because you have not yet awakened to this fact, you are able to bear this world, and so it is called the Saha World.

VAIROCHANA Buddha is the THUS COME ONE OF THIS SAHA WORLD WHO, FROM THE TIME HE FIRST RESOLVED HIS MIND, NEVER RETREATED FROM VIGOR. *Vairochana* is Sanskrit. It means "pervading everywhere." It refers to the Dharma body of the Buddha. Nishyanda Buddha's Dharma body is called Vairochana Buddha. When Shakyamuni Buddha first resolved to attain Bodhi, he met the ancient Shakya and made offerings to him, vowing to be just like him. He was a potter then and made bricks, tiles, tea cups, and so forth. When he saw the Shakya of old, he vowed never to retreat but to be vigorous in body and mind day in and day out, and at all times never be lax or lazy in his cultivation.

HE GAVE UP INEFFABLY INEFFABLE NUMBERS OF BODIES AND LIVES. For an ineffably ineffable number of lives, he renounced his body and life and gave them away. For example, before Shakyamuni became a Buddha, he met Burning Lamp Buddha and made an offering to him with his body. Burning Lamp Buddha was walking along the road when he came upon a large puddle of water. Shakyamuni, seeing an old Bhikshu coming, lay down in the water so that the old Bhikshu could walk across his body rather than get wet. This is what is meant by giving one's body, using one's body to help others.

Most of us would think that Shakyamuni's actions were stupid. Could he not have used sticks and boards rather than his body to provide a way for the old Bhikshu to cross the water? That is pretty smart, but Shakyamuni Buddha did not think of such an ingenious method. If he had, then it is not certain that Burning Lamp Buddha would have given him a prediction of Buddhahood, because he would still have held a concern for himself. He would have had an attachment to his body. Lying in the water showed that he was without a notion of a self, that he only wished to help and benefit other beings. He practiced the Bodhisattva path, and paying no attention to himself, he was able to lie down in the water to help an old Bhikshu walk across the ditch.

Shakyamuni was a practicing ascetic at that time, but even though ascetics do not cut their hair or their beards, they are not hippies; so do not think that Shakyamuni was a hippie. I once saw an article written by a Chinese person who said that Confucius was a hippie. This is total rubbish and only amounts to confusing the false with the true, and spreading false stories.

When Burning Lamp Buddha saw that this Bhikshu was so sincere that he was able to lie down on the road to serve as a bridge across the mud, he made a prediction for Shakyamuni, saying, "In the future you will become a Buddha. You are able to cultivate

the Bodhisattva path in this manner; I do too. Thus it is, thus it is. In the future you will be a Buddha named Shakyamuni."

This is how Shakyamuni Buddha practiced on the causal ground, offering up his body and life as gifts. He did this in each life for immeasurable aeons past, continuing until the present, perfecting the Bodhisattva path.

Vairochana Buddha is the pure, all-pervasive Dharma body Buddha. Vairochana means "pervading everywhere." The Buddhas' Dharma body is both non-existent and not non-existent because there is nowhere that it exists and nowhere that it does not exist.

What does it mean to say that there is nowhere that the Dharma body Buddha exists? If we say that there is nowhere that it does not exist, then it is everywhere. But, why are we unable to see it? Since we are not able to see it, does this mean that it doesn't exist?

Whether we see it or not, it still exists. Because it pervades all places, it is said that there is no place where it does exist, and there is no place where it does not exist. It fills up the entire universe to the ends of the Dharma Realm.

Someone may ask, "You say that it extends everywhere; does this include filthy places like toilets?" Not only does it exist in toilets, but it exists in places that are even more filthy. The Buddha's Dharma body exhausts empty space to the limits of the Dharma Realm. The Buddhas' Dharma body is neither defiled nor pure, neither produced nor destroyed, and neither increasing nor decreasing. Shakyamuni Buddha gave up his body and life in cultivating the Bodhisattva path to seek the unsurpassed path of the Buddhas' Dharma body.

HE PEELED OFF HIS SKIN FOR PAPER. He stripped skin from his body to use as paper. He SPLIT HIS BONES TO FASHION BRUSHES, and DREW BLOOD FOR INK. Shakyamuni Buddha used his bones for pens, his blood for ink, and his skin for paper AND WROTE OUT SUTRAS STACKED AS HIGH AS MOUNT SUMERU. He used his skin for paper, his bones for brushes, and his blood for ink to write out Sutras.

Why didn't Shakyamuni go buy some paper, brushes, and ink to write out Sutras? The principle here is the same as the one that applied when Shakyamuni Buddha used his body to make a bridge across the mud. You could explain this by saying that there was no paper in India at that time when the Sutras were compiled, so Shakyamuni Buddha could not obtain any paper. What did they use in its place? They wrote out the Sutras on palm leaves. If one were to lay out the leaves upon which the *Dharma Flower Sutra* was written, they would stretch for about two and a half miles.

When Shakyamuni Buddha was practicing the Bodhisattva path and seeking the Buddhadharma, science had not progressed much and there was no such thing as paper as we know it, and certainly no such thing as a paper company. So paper could not be purchased anywhere. Unlike today, when paper is easily obtainable and books can be printed easily, things were not so convenient then. There was nowhere to buy paper,

brushes, or ink. So he used his skin for paper, his bones for brushes, and his blood for ink to write out the Sutras.

In China, bamboo was used to write on before paper was invented. Bamboo was split and tied together to make writing tablets. In the past, the *Book of History*, the *Book of Poetry*, and the *Book of Changes*, and all the other ancient classics were written out on bamboo. So do not think that paper, brushes, and ink have always existed.

Besides the lack of a place to buy these things, there was another reason for him to use his skin, bones, and blood to write out Sutras. He had forgotten himself for the sake of the Dharma and did not fear suffering. For the sake of the Dharma he feared nothing and renounced his blood, bones, and skin to write out Sutras. Because he had such dedication, you can say he gave up his body in search of the Buddhadharma. He used his skin, bones, and blood to write out a stack of Sutras as high as Mount Sumeru.

BECAUSE HE VALUED THE DHARMA, HE DID NOT CHERISH HIS OWN BODY OR LIFE. In Hong Kong now, there is a monk named Shou Yeh. Some years ago at Wu T'ai Mountain, he built a small hut, and was the Abbot both there and at Bodhi Temple in Shanghai. Later he went to Vietnam and built a very large temple, but when the Vietnam war started, he returned to Hong Kong. He used his blood, obtained by cutting his tongue and body, to write out the *Flower Adornment Sutra* in Chinese characters two inches high. You can say that his state is inconceivable. He specialized in reciting the *Flower Adornment Sutra*, bowing to the *Flower Adornment Sutra*, and practicing the Flower Adornment Bodhimanda. This is a state of a Bodhisattva. The Buddha did not even cherish his own body and life.

SUTRA:

HOW MUCH THE LESS DID HE CRAVE A KING'S THRONE, CITIES, TOWNS, PALACES, GARDENS, GROVES, OR ANY MATERIAL THINGS AT ALL. HE EXERTED HIMSELF TO THE EXTREME IN THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF DIFFICULT ASCETIC PRACTICES.

COMMENTARY:

In his past lives, Shakyamuni Buddha practiced different kinds of difficult ascetic practices and brought forth a great resolve to attain Bodhi for the sake of bringing benefit to all living beings. Therefore he cherished neither his body nor life, and he did not protect them, HOW MUCH THE LESS DID HE CRAVE A KING'S THRONE. He did not cherish either his body or his life, and so how much less did he wish to become a king. If Shakyamuni Buddha had not left the home-life, he would have been a Wheel-turning Sage King.

There are four kinds of Wheel-turning Sage Kings: the Gold Wheel King, the Silver Wheel King, the Copper Wheel King, and the Iron Wheel King. The Gold Wheel King rules over all Four Continents: Purvavideha in the East, Jambudvipa in the South,

Aparagodaniya in the West, and Uttarakuru in the North. The Silver wheel King rules over all but the northern continent Uttarakuru. The Copper Wheel King watches over two continents, and the Iron Wheel King takes care of one continent. Shakyamuni Buddha passed up the throne of a king to leave the home-life and cultivate.

An emperor is a most respected person. Honored as the "Son of Heaven" in China, his wealth and blessings were as vast as four seas. Shakyamuni gave up all of this to leave the home-life and attain the Way. He renounced his country, his CITIES, his wife and child, all his TOWNS, all his valuable GARDENS and GROVES. He did not crave ANY MATERIAL THINGS AT ALL and gave up everything he possessed.

HE EXERTED HIMSELF TO THE EXTREME IN THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF DIFFICULT ASCETIC PRACTICES, and was able to bear what is most difficult to bear. He renounced a king's throne for the opportunity to leave the home-life; and the ascetic practices which Shakyamuni Buddha cultivated in this life and in previous lives were very austere. Can most people do this?

