

The Flower Adornment Sutra

Chapter Forty "Universal Worthy's Conduct and Vows"

with commentary by Tripitaka Master Hua

SUTRA:

At that time, Universal Worthy Bodhisattva, Mahasattva, wishing to restate his meaning, contemplated everywhere in the ten directions and spoke verses:

COMMENTARY:

At that time, Universal Worthy Bodhisattva, this Mahasattva, this great Bodhisattva, wishing to restate his meaning, contemplated everywhere in the ten directions and spoke verses. He wished to explain his meaning again in different words, a little more clearly, and so he took a look at the basic natures and causes and conditions of living beings everywhere and spoke verses. Look how compassionate Universal Worthy Bodhisattva is towards us. Because he is afraid that we might not understand the meanings of the Sutra, he explains the meaning again in verse.

SUTRA:

**Before the lions among men throughout the worlds of the ten directions,
In the past, in the present, and also in the future:
With body, mouth, and mind entirely pure,
I bow before them all, omitting none.**

**With the awesome spiritual power of Samantabhadra's vows.
I appear at the same time before every Thus Come One
And in transformed bodies as many as motes of dust in lands.
Bow to Buddhas as many as motes of dust in lands.**

**In every mote of dust are Buddhas as many as motes of dust,
Each dwelling amid a host of Bodhisattvas.
Throughout motes of dust in endless Dharma Realms it is the same:
I deeply believe they all are filled with Buddhas.**

**With seas of each and every sound I everywhere let fall
Words and phrases, wonderful and endless.
Which now and through all the kalpas of the future,
Praise the wide, deep sea of the Buddhas' merit and virtue.**

COMMENTARY:

The first vow of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva (Samantabhadra Bodhisattva) is to worship and respect all Buddhas, and the second is to praise the Thus Come Ones. This

section of text discusses these two vows. **Before the lions among men throughout the worlds of the ten directions:** "throughout" means that everything is included. North, south, east, west, northeast, southeast, northwest, southwest, and above and below make up the ten directions.

Monasteries and temples are called places where members of the Sangha from the ten directions can live—"the dwelling places of the ten directions." How can Sangha members come from above and below? Among the Sangha, there are many worthy sages who have been certified to the First, Second, Third, or Fourth Stages of Arhatship, or to the stages of the Bodhisattva path. Sages who have certified to these stages can come from above and below. The Buddhas also live throughout the ten directions.

Places where those of the ten directions constantly dwell contain Sangha members from many different directions. Among one hundred monks, one true cultivator can certainly be found, and there is certainly one Arhat among one thousand monks. But it is difficult to recognize which one it is, so in the large monasteries, when the Dharma Masters go to the dining hall to eat, it is not certain, but probable, that amongst a few hundred or a thousand monks there are certainly three Arhats.

Although Arhats do not want you to recognize them, nonetheless, they act differently in many ways. They may manifest a body of great virtue:"Their awesomeness causes others to be afraid,/And their comportment demands respect."Or they may appear to be very stupid and filthy, so that one look at them is enough.

These are Arhats. When you are face to face with them, you cannot recognize them, but if afterwards you think,"Oh! that one was an Arhat," you will not be able to find him again. If you look for an Arhat a second time, you will not be able to find him. Bodhisattvas are also like this, and so it is said,"Face to face with Kuan Shih Yin, one does not recognize him."

Long ago, on T'ien T'ai Mountain in China, a magistrate of a prefecture, much like a governor of today, visited Kuo Ch'ing Monastery and talked with the Abbot. He said,"In the past, Bodhisattvas and Arhats often appeared and lived among the people. But now, although there are many monks, I have not seen a single Arhat or Bodhisattva."

The Abbot, whose name was Feng Kan, replied,"Oh, so you wish to see Bodhisattvas and Arhats? That's very simple. Back in the kitchen here at Kuo Ch'ing Monastery, the one who cooks is Manjushri Bodhisattva, and the one who boils the water is Universal Worthy Bodhisattva."

The magistrate asked,"What are their names?"

"One is Han Shan and the other is Shih Te," replied the Abbot.

"I'm going to see them," the official replied quickly.

"Okay," said the Abbot. "If you want to see them, then go ahead."

The magistrate went to the kitchen looking for Manjushri and Universal Worthy. He asked, "Who are Han Shan and Shih Te?"

A monk there pointed and said, "Those two." When the magistrate looked, he saw two filthy and scraggly monks who had not shaved their heads. With their long hair, they looked much like present-day hippies. The only difference is that hippies have a blackness about them and are followed by demonic ghosts, whereas the bodies of these two emitted a golden light.

If you had the penetration of the Heavenly Eye, you would see that hippies have much black energy about them and are followed by demonic ghosts. Without the Heavenly Eye, of course, you would not know about this, but there is one test you can perform. If hippies have demonic ghosts with them, they will smell; their stench will be very strong. They themselves are not aware of this, but if you are not a hippie, you will be able to detect the strong smell.

The magistrate bowed to Han Shan and Shih Te. Although they were disheveled and unkempt, he believed the Abbot, and he was sure that they were Manjushri Bodhisattva and Universal Worthy Bodhisattva. When he bowed, Han Shan and Shih Te demanded, "What are you doing? What are you bowing to us for?"

The magistrate replied, "The Abbot told me that you are the Bodhisattvas Manjushri and Universal Worthy. Please be compassionate and take me across." When they heard this they shouted and laughed, "Feng Kan talks too much; he's an old blabbermouth!"

Then they started backing up, and as they retreated, the magistrate advanced forward. The two backed up towards a cliff called Moon Light, which had a steep stone face. When they reached the cliff, a door opened up and they disappeared into it. The magistrate rushed to enter with them, but the door closed before he could do so.

Just before they disappeared, the magistrate said, "Be compassionate and take across this disciple."

Han Shan and Shih Te replied, "You don't bow to Amita Buddha; what are you seeking us for?"

The magistrate asked, "Who is Amita Buddha?"

Han Shan and Shih Te answered, "The Abbot Feng Kan is a transformation of Amita Buddha, and he has come into this world to teach and transform living beings. You didn't bow to him, so what are you coming after us for?"

As soon as the magistrate heard this he thought, "Oh, the Abbot is a transformation body of Amita Buddha." He could not get into the stone wall; the door that had opened for Han

Shan and Shih Te had closed again. So he went back to see the Abbot, to bow to him and ask to be taken across. But when he arrived back at the Abbot's quarters, it was too late; he found that the Abbot had also perfected the stillness and had gone off to rebirth, and there was nothing he could do. He said, "I didn't recognize what was right before me. Manjushri Bodhisattva has run off, Universal Worthy is gone, and Amita Buddha has perfected the stillness." After the magistrate recovered from his grief and disappointment, he worked hard in his cultivation and did a good job.

In all worlds throughout the ten directions, **in the past, in the present, and also in the future**, before the Lions among men, says Universal Worthy Bodhisattva, **with** the purest and most sincere karma of **body, mouth, and mind**, **I bow** in worship **before them all, omitting none**. I bow to all the Buddhas of the ten directions and the three periods of time.

With the awesome spiritual power of Samantabhadra's vows: The cultivator can contemplate that his strength is not sufficient to worship all the Buddhas everywhere in the ten directions and the three periods of time, but "because I cultivate the awesome strength of Universal Worthy's conduct and vows, he aids me. It is from the awesome spiritual strength derived from Universal Worthy's vows and conduct that I **appear at the same time before every Thus Come One**. So now, when I bow to one Buddha, I bow to all Buddhas. I am able to appear everywhere before all Thus Come Ones and bow to them. One of my bodies manifests bodies as numerous as the dust motes in all the Buddhahands, **and in transformed bodies as many as motes of dust in lands, I bow to Buddhas as many as motes of dust in lands.**"

When bowing to one Buddha, one bows to immeasurable Buddhas; bowing to immeasurable Buddhas is the same as bowing to one Buddha. This same process takes place in the Unspaced Hells, but the one concerns hells, and the other concerns cultivating the Dharma. When cultivating the "contemplation of the Dharma Realm," one bows to all Buddhas everywhere. When you bow in one place, you are simultaneously bowing before all the Buddhas of the ten directions and the three periods of time. In the Unspaced Hells, one undergoes suffering in this way, but this is not the Unspaced Hells, but the uninterrupted Dharma Realm. The Dharma Realm is uninterrupted; it is not that the Avici Hell is uninterrupted.

In every mote of dust are Buddhas as many as motes of dust. In each dust-mote there are Buddhas as many as there are motes of dust in all lands, **each dwelling amid a host of Bodhisattvas**. Each dwells in the midst of an assembly of Arhats, Bodhisattvas, Sound Hearers, Those Enlightened to Conditions, Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, and all living beings. **Throughout motes of dust in endless Dharma Realms it is the same.** The dust motes in each of the inexhaustible Dharma Realms are also inexhaustible, and **I deeply believe they all are filled with Buddhas**. I deeply believe all Buddhas completely fill up worlds as numerous as all the fine motes of dust in the inexhaustible Dharma Realms.

With seas of each and every sound I everywhere let fall words and phrases, wonderful and endless. Each of my bodies brings forth a sea of sounds to praise the

Buddhas. My bodies universally emit an inexhaustible number of subtle and wonderful sounds and praises, **which now and through all the kalpas of the future, praise the wide, deep sea of the Buddhas' merit and virtue.** Exhausting all the kalpas of the future, my voices praise the Buddhas' extremely deep merit and virtue, which is measureless and boundless like a great sea.

SUTRA:

**Flower garlands supreme and wonderful,
Music, perfumes, parasols, and canopies,
And other decorations rich and rare
I offer up to every Thus Come One.**

**Fine clothing, superior incense,
Powdered and burning incense, lamps and candles.
Each one heaped as high as a wonderfully high mountain,
I offer completely to all Tathagatas.**

COMMENTARY:

We just discussed the vow to praise the Thus Come Ones, and now we will explain the third vow, to extensively cultivate the making of offerings. **Flower garlands supreme and wonderful.** When making offerings to the Buddhas, you should use the very best things. You should not offer to the Buddhas the things that you plan to throw away, but you should use many superior offerings, the very best, the most wonderful objects. When offering flowers, use all the kinds of wonderful flowers. "Garlands" are wreaths made up of flowers strung together. **Music, perfumes, parasols, and canopies.** You may also use all kinds of songs, hymns, and other kinds of music to praise the Buddhas. "Perfumes" include waters, oils, and balms that are rubbed onto things so that they smell very fragrant. These too, can be offered to the Buddhas. "Canopies" are like beautifully adorned umbrellas with tassels. These jeweled coverings can be seen if you open your Heavenly Eye, for there are many of them suspended in space. Bodhisattvas make offerings like these to all the Buddhas, along with **other decorations rich and rare.** All kinds of adorned objects **I offer up to every Thus Come One,** universally making offerings to all Thus Come Ones as many as there are motes of dust.

Fine clothing, superior incense: I also offer the finest clothing and incense to the Buddhas. **Powdered and burning incense, lamps and candles** include incenses which are burned, like sandalwood, and the oil lamps which are offered before the Buddhas.

Each one heaped as high as a wonderfully high mountain. I make these offerings using the Dharma Realm contemplation. When I offer these adornments, I contemplate their being equal in size to Mount Sumeru, or as voluminous as the waters of the great sea.

All these gifts **I offer completely to all Tathagatas.** I offer all these precious objects to all Buddhas, all the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions.