

The Flower Adornment Sutra

Chapter Forty"Universal Worthy's Conduct and Vows"

with commentary by Tripitaka Master Hua

SUTRA:

**With a vast, great, supremely liberated mind.
I believe in all the Buddhas of the three periods of time:
With the strength of Samantabhadra's conduct and vows,
I make offerings to all Thus Come Ones everywhere.**

COMMENTARY:

This verse explains that the cultivation of making offerings is vast and great. Since the offerings are vast and great, the mind that is able to understand them must also be a **vast, great, supremely liberated mind.**"Although this mind cannot be understood by most," says Universal Worthy,"nevertheless, I understand it. The mind with which I make offerings is the Dharma Realm, and my offerings are Dharma Realm offerings. With a mind of the Dharma Realm I make offerings to the Buddhas of the Dharma Realm, and the Buddhas of the Dharma Realm enter this mind of the Dharma Realm." This describes the supremely liberated mind.

I believe in all Buddhas of the three periods of time. I believe with a true and inexhaustible mind. How profound is my mind of faith? Even when the obstructions of living beings are gone, when the afflictions of living beings are gone, when the realms of living beings are gone, and when the realm of empty space up to the limits of the Dharma Realm cease to exist, still my mind of faith will continue unending. This is to believe in all Buddhas of the three periods of time, that is, all Buddhas of the past, present, and future.

This belief is based on **the strength of Samantabhadra's conduct and vows.** Because I rely entirely on the strength of the practices cultivated and vows made by Universal Worthy Bodhisattva, I can make offerings on the scale of the Dharma Realm to the Buddhas of the Dharma Realm. **I make offerings** such as these **to all Thus Come Ones everywhere.**

SUTRA:

**For all the evil deeds I have done in the past
Created by my body, mouth, and mind.
From beginningless greed, anger, and delusion:
I now know shame and repent of them all.**

COMMENTARY:

This verse speaks of repenting of karmic obstructions and reforming. Why would you want to repent and reform? Through repentance, great offenses can become small ones. No matter what kind of offense karma you have, repentance is most important, because as soon as you repent and reform, your offense karma will be destroyed.

Confucius said,

Don't be afraid to correct your faults.
If you can correct your faults, they will cease to exist.
Inferior people say they have no faults,
But the superior person changes his faults.

If you fear correcting your faults, you will only create more faults, but if you can correct your faults, then they will cease to exist. If you hide your faults by covering them up, not wanting people to know about them, or if you covet them, then your faults will become greater. Most stupid people say that they have no faults. But the superior person wishes to change his faults, and sages decrease their faults; as for Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, they have no faults at all.

The text reads, **For all the evil deeds I have done in the past.** "Past" refers to everything that has come before the present time. In past lives for limitless kalpas up to the present time. In past lives for limitless kalpas up to the present, in each life, I have created evil karma. Why have I created evil karma? Because of boundless greed, hatred, and stupidity. How did I create all of this evil karma? It all stems **From beginningless greed, anger, and delusion.** For an uncountable number of kalpas up to the present, my mind has been filled with greed, anger, and stupidity. With a greedy mind, one never feels satisfied and one creates many offenses. If people do not get what they want, they give rise to afflictions and anger. Afflictions and anger arise because of delusion, because stupidity fills their minds. In the beginning there was a thought of greed, and the basis of greed is delusion and ignorance.

My evil acts were **created by body, mouth, and mind.** The killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct created by my body; the greed, hatred, and stupidity created by my mind; and the irresponsible speech, false speech, abusive speech, and gossip created by my mouth are the ten evil acts created by the body, mouth, and mind. I **now know shame and repent of them all.** When I realize my mistakes, I want to repent of and reform the ten evil acts and change myself.

Delusion is a kind of attachment. In everything the stupid, deluded person does, there is attachment. Those who are greedy for wealth have the attachment to wealth; those who are fond of sex have the attachment to sex; and those who like writing are attached to writing, even to writing poetry.

There once was a monk who was attached to writing poetry, and he befriended literary people. His attachment was so fierce that if an educated person who came to his place could write two poems, he would be allowed to stay and eat in his temple, but if a visitor could not write poetry, he was not only refused meals and lodging, but was not even allowed in the door.

Because of his attachment, this monk encountered a demonic obstruction. One day at dusk a person arrived at his temple gate. Because there was no other temple nearby, the traveller wanted to spend the night. The young novice who answered the door said, "If you wish to stay here, you'll have to meet certain requirements set forth by my teacher. You must write two poems and one song, or you may write an essay. Then you will be allowed to stay here. Can you write essays, poetry, and songs?"

The visitor answered, "I can write any of them," though he knew very well that he was illiterate. But it was already dark, and he needed a place to spend the night. He thought, "After I eat my fill, I'll worry about this writing business."

The young Shramanera went to his Master and said, "The person at the door says he can write poetry, essays, and songs."

"Let him in," his Master replied. So the Shramanera welcomed him in and cooked him a good dinner. The traveller probably had not eaten for several days, because he really ate his fill. He did not worry about writing poetry, or essays, but just set his mind to eating. After the meal, the little novice escorted him to his room and gave him a pot of tea. Then he locked the traveller's door from the outside. He was afraid the guest would run away, and he wanted to see his writing in the morning.

Because the traveller had eaten so much, he had to go to the toilet during the night. There was no toilet in his room, yet when he tried the door, he found it was locked from the outside. He had eaten so much that he had a pressing case of diarrhea. In this predicament he had no other alternative, so he used a flower pot as a toilet. He filled up one flower vase, and then another, and as this was still not sufficient, he drank the tea in the teapot and use it as a toilet too.

In the morning the novice unlocked the door and gave the guest some breakfast. "Did you write any poems last night?" he asked.

The guest replied, "I tso two shih ('I wrote two poems, or, 'I went to the toilet twice').* They are in the flower pots." The novice thought that, since he had written two poems, he was free to leave, and so he opened the gate and let the visitor out.

After the traveller had departed, the novice's teacher asked, "Did the person that came yesterday tso shih? The young novice replied, "Yes, and he put them in each of the flower pots." The monk said, "Bring them here so I can see them."

The novice went to the room in which the traveller had spent the night. When he reached into one of the flower pots he pulled out a handful of excrement. Then he reached into the other flower pot, and again pulled out a handful of excrement. And then he thought to use the tea in the teapot to wash it off, but instead he poured some more excrement on himself. Just then he heard the old monk call out for him to bring the shih. so the novice came into the room and showed him the two shou shih.

After this, the old monk felt differently about poetry. Because the visitor had filled up two flower pots with his diarrhea, the old monk was able to get rid of his attachment, and afterwards, he did not require people to write poetry to stay at his temple.

* In Chinese, the characters for "writing poetry," tso-shih (作詩), have the same sound as "going to the toilet," tso-shih (作屎), and the characters for "poem," i-shou-shih (一首詩), sound the same as "a handful of excrement," i-shou shih (一手屎). Therefore the question, "Did you write any poems?" sounds like, "Did you go to the toilet?"

SUTRA:

**I rejoice in the merit and virtue
Of all beings in the ten directions,
The learners and those past study in the Two Vehicles,
And all Thus Come Ones and Bodhisattvas.**

COMMENTARY:

These verses discuss Universal Worthy's vow to follow along with and **rejoice in the merit and virtue of all beings in the ten directions**. Everyone knows what the ten directions are, but you might not understand what living beings are. Living beings are born from a combination of numerous conditions. For example, being a person is not easy. To be a person you have to do what people do, to follow the path of people. You have to speak the way people do and act the way people act, and then you can be a person. If you imitate ghosts, you will be a ghost in the future.

Living beings are born from the unification of numerous conditions, but they are also created by the thoughts in their minds. If you cultivate the Buddha's path and become a Buddha, it is because you gave rise to the thought of becoming a Buddha in your mind. If you wish to cultivate the Bodhisattva's path and benefit people, to benefit yourself and others, and to enlighten yourself and others, then you can become a Bodhisattva. If you wish to cultivate the Sound Hearer's Vehicle to attain the fruit of Arhatship, then practice the Sound Hearer Vehicle. If you wish to cultivate the Vehicle of the Condition-Enlightened Ones and attain their positions, then you can certify to their position. If you wish to be born in the heavens, then follow the five precepts and do the ten good deeds. If

you wish to be a person, then you must hold the five precepts, which prohibit killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and taking intoxicants.

If you want to be an asura, then fight with people every day and get angry. If you want to be an animal, then do stupid things, and always be greedy. If you want to become a hungry ghost, then do dark secretive things, things which you do not want people to see. If you wish to fall into the hells, create more offenses; then you can go to the hells.

Everything is made from the mind alone. This Sutra says:

If one wishes to understand
The Buddhas of the three periods of time,
One should contemplate the nature of the Dharma Realm:
Everything is made from the mind alone.

Basically there are no heavenly palaces, no hells, no Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and no people. There is nothing at all. Why do they exist? Our thoughts created them. From our thoughts we create the Ten Dharma Realms and all the myriad kinds of things in the world. So it is said,

If you have no mind and no thoughts,
You have boundless blessings;
If you are selfish and have desire,
You thereby create offenses.

Living beings all have the Buddha Nature, and yet living beings are without the nature of the Buddha. How can that be? You could say that if you do not have it, but if you do cultivate, you do have it. This is to say, if you do not cultivate, then even though you do have the Buddha Nature, it is as if you do not. You can say that whether you cultivate or not, your Buddha Nature still exists, but you can also say that whether you cultivate or not, you do not have a Buddha Nature. How is this? Do not be attached. If you have an attachment and say, "I have a Buddha Nature," then you have an attachment. If you are without attachments, having the Buddha Nature is like not having it, and not having it is like having it. So whether you cultivate or not, it does not exist. Do not be attached.

The monk's story is a funny way of speaking about it in order to break people's attachments. If you are without attachments, you can become a Buddha. Why is it that we have not become Buddhas? Because we have attachments. Therefore, we should get rid of our attachments, and then we can become Buddhas.

The text says, "I rejoice in the merit and virtue of all beings in the ten directions," **The learners and those past study in the Two Vehicles.** The "Two Vehicles" are Sound Hearers and Those Enlightened to Conditions. "Learners" comprise the first three states of Arhatship. These are called the positions requiring further study. The fourth-stage Arhat is the position "past study," where no further study is needed.

I follow along with and rejoice in the merit and virtue of the Sound Hearers and Those Enlightened to Conditions, of those with and without further study, as well as in the merit and virtue of **all Thus Come Ones and Bodhisattvas**. I follow along with and rejoice in even as little as a dust mote's worth of merit and virtue that is as great as Mount Sumeru. It is not the case that if the merit and virtue is small, I will not follow along with and rejoice in it, but if it is great, I will. Whether the merit and virtue is great or small, I will follow along with and rejoice in it. There is a saying,

Don't feel that you can do evil just because it is slight;
And don't neglect doing a good deed just because it is small.

Do not think that just because an evil act seems insignificant it is permissible to do it, or, on the other hand, that a good deed is too insignificant to be done. You should know that every mountain is made of motes of dust. Although one dust-mote is small, they become a mountain if you gather together enough of them. One good act is not much by itself, but if you do many of them, they become measureless and boundless.