

The Flower Adornment Sutra

Chapter Forty, Universal Worthy's Conduct and Vows

with commentary by Tripitaka Master Hua

SUTRA:

**Before the lamps of the worlds of the ten directions,
Those who first accomplished Bodhi,
I now request and beseech them all
To turn the foremost, wondrous Dharma wheel.**

**If there are Buddhas who wish for Nirvana,
I request with deep sincerity
That they dwell in the world for as many kalpas as there are dust
motes in kshetras
To bring benefit and bliss to every being.**

**I worship those with blessings, praise them and make offerings;
I request that the Buddhas remain in the world and turn the Dharma
wheel;
The good roots gained from following and rejoicing in merit and
virtue, and from repentance and reform,
I transfer to living beings and the Buddha way.**

**I follow and rejoice in merit and virtue,
Repent of and reform my karmic faults,
Then transfer these good roots as well as blessings,
That living beings might soon reach Buddhahood.**

**I study with the Buddhas and practice
The perfect conduct of Universal worthy;
I make offerings to all the Thus Come Ones of the past
And to all present Buddhas throughout the ten directions.**

**All future teachers of gods and men
Whose aspirations to joy have been completed
I'll follow in study throughout the three periods of time
And quickly attain great Bodhi.**

COMMENTARY:

Before the lamps of the worlds of the ten directions. The ten directions include everything; they are the Dharma Realm, and the Dharma Realm is the ten directions. The "Lamps of the World" are the Buddhas, the shining lights in the world of darkness.

Before the Buddha came into this world, it was dark, and deviant teachers of other teachings and paths propounded their doctrines. Deviant teachers are those whose knowledge and views are improper. Unable to teach proper knowledge and views, they cause people to enter demonic states. Deviant knowledge and views are a shining light.

I have said this many times before:

The bewildered transmits his bewilderment,
Passing on his knowledge so that neither understands.
The teacher falls into the hells,
And the disciple follows, crashing his way in.

This is what happens when a deviant teacher speaks. In an improper teaching, the deviant teacher may tell you to take some drug in order to experience "the void," and after you have done it he will certify you, saying, "This is the void. You have experienced what the void is like. You are certified to a particular stage—you have reached the Fourth Dhyana." The Fourth Dhyana is nothing special, and neither are the First, Second, or the Third; they are very ordinary. But by taking this drug, this person has certainly not reached the Dhyanas. And yet the deviant teacher says, "You've obtained the void. You are the same as the Buddha. Being a Buddha is not much different from this." This is an example of how one causes people to have mistaken knowledge and views and to take the wrong road. This is called bewilderment.

When bewildered, you do not understand; you are mixed up. "Bewildered" means to be totally disoriented or confused so that you do not know anything. Confused teachers want others to study their confusion. This is the meaning of "The bewildered one transmits his bewilderment, passing on his knowledge so that neither understands." One person becomes confused; neither the teacher nor his disciple understands anything.

Why are they confused? If a confused person transmits his confusion to another person, they both become confused. This is a case of the blind leading the blind. Although the blind person feels he can see the way, in fact he cannot. He wishes to cheat people and mislead them just the same. This is the meaning of "passing on his knowledge so that neither understands."

Because the teacher is confused and does not understand how to cultivate, he falls into the hells. His disciple believes that his teacher certainly could not take a wrong road, so he follows obediently behind him until he reaches the door of the hells, which he finds has already closed. So he uses his fist to beat the door down.

After he breaks the door down, he sees his teacher, who says, "What are you doing here?"

The disciple responds, "You are my teacher, so when you left, I followed you. What is this place?"

The teacher answers, "I still don't know. I don't know which Buddhaland this is."

After a while, the hungry ghosts and yakshas come and say, "You weren't a good teacher. All you did was lie to your disciples and cheat people. So now you're off to the Hell of Ripping Tongues."

As for the disciple, he did not cheat people, but because he also did evil things, he now falls into a pan of oil to be fried for a while. The disciple screams, "Oh! This is really horrible. Since you cheated people, you must fall into the Hell of Ripping Tongues. You deserve this because you deceived people. I was stupid enough to study with you. I became confused, too, and created many offenses, so now I must be fried in this pan of oil. The pain is terrible!"

His teacher replied, "I don't have a mantra to recite now. I'm stuck. I can't save you because I can't save myself."

This teacher took along his confused disciple when he fell into hell to suffer. This is the meaning of "the bewildered transmitting his bewilderment." When a deviant teacher speaks, he causes people to go astray and fall into the hells. If we wish to study and cultivate the Way, we should be careful to follow the wise teachers, teachers with intelligence. The principles of wise teachers are always proper, and they will not lead people down deviant paths.

Before the Buddha came into the world, there were only the bewildered teachers who transmitted their bewilderment. But when the Buddha came into the world, he was like a sun, like a shining lamp. The Buddha illuminated the world with his light, and so the text says, "The Lamps of the World of the ten directions."

Those who first accomplished Bodhi. Who first attained Bodhi? Everyone is the one who first accomplished Bodhi. What is "Bodhi"? You have heard Dharma Masters explain it as meaning "enlightened to the Way." What is enlightenment to the Way? When you become enlightened, you will not do any evil acts, but will only do all kinds of good deeds. This is enlightenment, enlightenment to the Way. If you only know how to do evil and do not do good, you are also enlightened to a way, but it is an evil way. To understand how to do good deeds and not do evil ones is to be enlightened to the Way, to the proper Way.

Enlightening to the Way is a gradual progression. "Gradual progression" means going step by step so that you improve yourself more and more. Bodhi is like this: you improve yourself step by step, so that you gradually rise to eminence, going from a common person to a Buddha. If you do the opposite, however, and descend step by step, it means that you have enlightened to an evil way. To gradually rise to eminence means to have enlightened to a good way. So a superior person does good, while the inferior person

does evil. The inferior person hurries off to do evil, while the superior person hurries off to do good.

"Those who first accomplished Bodhi" are those who first attained Buddhahood. How did one become the first to attain Buddhahood? We know that reciting Sutras is cultivation, that reciting mantras is cultivation, and that practicing the Bodhisattva path of the Six Paramitas and the Ten Thousand Practices is also cultivating. But before the first Buddha, no one knew about the Six Paramitas and the Ten Thousand Practices, or how to cultivate. They did not know about pure thoughts or thoughts of enlightenment. So how did the first Buddha know how to become a Buddha?

It is said that if you can recite the Shurangama Mantra from memory, then for seven lives you can be as rich as a great oil baron. When some people hear this, they would even risk their lives to learn how to recite the Shurangama Mantra from memory, in order to be as rich as John D. Rockefeller. Some people recite the Shurangama Mantra just to seek these blessings, but they are making a mistake. It is true that if you can recite the Shurangama Mantra from memory, then at the very least, for seven lives you can have as much money as the great oil barons. The reason we recite, however, is not to acquire wealth, but rather to become Buddhas. If you can memorize the Shurangama Mantra, then you can obtain Bodhi and gradually rise to eminence so that with each step you improve yourself. If you do not wish to become a Buddha, then you can have the blessings and eminence among people.

The transcendental attainment of Bodhi is real blessings and eminence. Only if you have good roots will you be able to memorize the Shurangama and the Great Compassion Mantras. Without good roots, you will not even be able to hear the names of the Great Compassion and Shurangama Mantras, how much the less memorize them. Figure it out. How many people have ever heard of the Shurangama Mantra? How many fewer people have ever recited it? How many people have heard of the Great Compassion Mantra, and how many fewer people have ever recited it? Today I see there are some people teaching others how to recite the Shurangama Mantra. This is the best class. You should teach all those who wish to study it so that they are able to recite this mantra from memory. Explain this principle to everyone: If you can memorize the Great Compassion Mantra and the Shurangama Mantra, the result will be inconceivable. Not only can you be an oil baron, you can also become the ruler of a country. This is most inconceivable.

We recite mantras and Sutras to accomplish Bodhi. What Sutras and mantras did the one who first attained Bodhi recite? The one who first accomplished Buddhahood, an immeasurable number of kalpas ago, at the time when this world began to develop, was already a Buddha, so he did not need to recite anything. Because he was already a Buddha, you can not say that he was the first one to accomplish Buddhahood. Have I not said before that whoever accomplishes his karma in the Way is the one who first accomplishes Bodhi? Take God as an example. According to the principles of Buddhism, God is transformed from the Buddha; therefore he is called God.

I now request and beseech them all, all the Buddhas of the three periods of time and those who first accomplished Bodhi, **to turn the foremost, wondrous Dharma wheel**. There is nothing higher than the inconceivable, wondrous Dharma wheel. To lecture Sutras is to turn the Dharma wheel; to teach the Dharma is to turn the Dharma wheel; to recite Sutras is to turn the Dharma wheel; to hold mantras is to turn the Dharma wheel; to have Sutras printed is to turn the Dharma wheel; and even to operate a printing press to print Dharma is to turn the Dharma wheel. It is true. When you turn a printing press it prints, but if you do not turn it, it does not print. Is this not wonderful? This is a manifestation of turning the wondrous Dharma wheel, a visible analogy for turning the Dharma wheel.

In actuality, however, the wondrous Dharma wheel cannot be seen, nor can you conceive of it. The wondrous Dharma wheel is beyond words and exceeds the scope of the mind. Your mind cannot follow its purport.

You wish to speak about it, but it is inexpressible;
You wish to conceive of it, but it cannot be done.

You wish to speak but there are no words to explain it, and you wish to think about it, but it is beyond the mind. This is to really turn the wondrous, inconceivable Dharma wheel.

For example, you now say you have not seen a single Buddha in this world. First of all, this is because you have not been to very many places. You might reply that you have been all over the globe, but you did not see a single Buddha turning the Dharma wheel. You may have travelled all around the world, but have you been into space? If you want to see the Buddhas turning the Dharma wheel, then go into space, because there are Buddhas turning the Dharma wheel there. We now have rocket ships which can go to the moon, but it is not certain that the astronauts will be able to see them. If they do not see them, does this mean that they do not exist? No. What you cannot see is much more than what you can see. It is not necessary for you to see the wondrous Dharma wheel being turned. In the heavens there are Buddhas turning the Dharma wheel, and yet you cannot see them; but even though you do not see them, you cannot say that they do not exist.

The wondrous Dharma wheel is being turned everywhere. If you understand, then everything is the turning of the wondrous Dharma wheel, but if you do not understand, then you cannot recognize the turning of the wondrous Dharma wheel. If you are enlightened, you can see that the myriad phenomena of the world--the world of primary retribution, and the world of dependent retribution--are all turning the Dharma wheel. So it is said,

On the tip of a hair, the Buddha manifests lands of the jeweled king
And turns the Dharma wheel while sitting in a dust mote.

When one person heard my explanation about God he thought he agreed with me. He said, "What you say is correct. God is the Buddha, and Buddha is God. The names are

different, but they are basically the same, just as one person can have more than one name. Isn't this what you mean?"

No. When I spoke of God, it was meant as an analogy. It is not that God is the Buddha and the Buddha is God. If you do not think that you are so smart that you have become enlightened, I will explain the difference between God and the Buddha for you.

God lives in a heaven and rules over it; he is the Lord of this heaven, the Heaven of the Thirty-three, also known as the Trayastrimsha Heaven. In the Shurangama Mantra, he is referred to as yin two la ye (Indra) in line twenty-nine, which reads Na mwo yin two la ye. This line means "to take refuge with God."

In the past, God was a woman who saw a Buddha image in a temple. The temple was in ruins, and so the Buddha image was exposed to the elements without a roof over its head or walls to protect it, much like a hobo without any place to live, sitting out in the open amidst some temple ruins and meditating. When this woman saw the Buddha image exposed to the wind and rain, she decided to rebuild the temple. Because she was so poor, she could not do so by herself, and so she got thirty-two other women together to help her. They finished the temple. When their lives came to an end, they were all reborn in a heaven. The woman became the Lord of this heaven, and that is how God came to be. The Buddha on the other hand has no beginning and no end. So when I spoke before about God, I was referring to him metaphorically.

In Christianity it is said that God created everything, that he created all creatures. Who created God?

"No one. He created himself," is the answer given.

If God created himself, why is it that we cannot create in the same way?

"Because you must wait for God to do the creating," is the reply. This is a very stupid notion which merely shows a total lack of wisdom. Christians also say that only God can be God, and that no other being can become God. God then is a solitary God; he is the only one who can be God, so he is a loner. People like to have friends, but since no one else can become God, he becomes a very special, particular thing. I feel that no one would want to be like this God. It is not very interesting.

In Buddhism, God is a Dharma protector. He does not sit when he is before the Buddha, but stands. He has a status similar to that of Wei T'o and Ch'ieh Lan Bodhisattvas. Why is it that God does not admit that the Buddha is superior to him? Because he is selfish, like the mayor of a country village, or like a constable. Constables are found in the country, not the city. Since none of the country people have seen the sights of the city, the constable can tell them, "I'm the most important person in the world. You should follow what I say, and everything will be all right." The country people are totally naive, having always been in the country, and so they believe the constable. They think he is the greatest and highest person.

The God of Christianity is like this: "Only I am honored. I am the greatest." But if you want to examine and frankly, openly discuss the principle of God's greatness, you find that there are questions you are not supposed to ask.

If you do ask, you quickly get the reply, "You can't ask this. To do so is an offense. You have committed an offense against God." This policy keeps people ignorant. "If you don't understand, don't ask; because if you ask, you break the law." This is a policy used to deceive people, to prevent people from knowing. God does not teach others to study the Buddhadharma for the same reason that the constable does not tell the country people about his superiors in the city. "Don't study the Buddhadharma, because if you do, and you become a Buddha, you'll be higher than me." So do not think that you have become enlightened to the principle I just spoke about, because that kind of an enlightenment is false. God is not the Buddha. If you think that God is the Buddha, and the Buddha is God, you have had a false enlightenment, not a true one.

If there are Buddhas who wish for Nirvana, I request with deep sincerity: Some people do not want to reach Nirvana. They say, "Nirvana is death. Buddhism calls death Nirvana." In fact, Nirvana means "not produced and not destroyed"; it is the eternal, still, bright, pure land. It is neither produced nor destroyed, neither increasing nor decreasing, neither defiled nor pure. It is the place where all Buddhas dwell.

The world we now live in is called "the land where common people and sages dwell together," because in this world there are common people, sages, Buddhas, and Bodhisattvas, Sound Hearers and Those Enlightened to Conditions all living together.

The place where those of the Two Vehicles dwell is called "the expedient land for those with more to learn." Why is it called expedient? Because although that place is nice to live in, it is still not ultimate Nirvana. It is partial and incomplete.

Bodhisattvas dwell in "the land adorned with real rewards." Bodhisattvas play about with spiritual penetrations, purify their Buddhalands, and teach and transform living beings in lands adorned with real rewards.

The place where Buddhas dwell is called "the eternal, still, bright, pure land."

If you study the Buddhadharma, you should know what these four lands are. For example, a certain person said that he had already become a Buddha, so I asked him, "In what land do you live?" He could not answer. He basically did not have any place, so what kind of Buddha did he become? He became a Buddha that does not even know where he dwells. He goes around saying everyone is a Buddha, but if you ask him what land he lives in, he cannot open his mouth. He does not have anything to say.

"Who gave you your prediction? What is your Buddha name?" He cannot answer these questions either. This proves that he is a phony, falsely representing himself as a Buddha.

For example, to say that a ghost is a Buddha is false and a misrepresentation. To sell people the highest grade of eating apples when they are really just common cooking apples is also called false representation or mislabeling. When you become a Buddha, you should know your land and your name. Shariputra had studied with Shakyamuni Buddha for over forty years. Then the Buddha gave him a prediction of Buddhahood, saying that he would be called Flower Light Buddha. If you say you are a Buddha, then what is your Buddha name? If you do not know, then you are not a Buddha; you are just falsely representing yourself as a Buddha. There are all kinds of phonies in this world, even phony Buddhas.

When all Buddhas have taken across the living beings whom they should take across, when they have taught and transformed for measureless numbers of kalpas, "transforming those with whom they have affinities, "then they wish to enter Nirvana. But if the Buddhas enter Nirvana, they will go to the eternal, still, light, bright, pure land, so Universal Worthy Bodhisattva says, "If there are Buddhas wishing for Nirvana, I request that they not enter Nirvana, but take more living beings across, and **dwell in the world for as many kalpas as there are dust motes in kshetras**. I request that they dwell in the world for kalpas as numerous as dust motes in Buddhalands, **to bring benefit and bliss to every being**.

I worship those with blessings, praise them and make offerings. This line refers to the vows to worship and respect all Buddhas and to praise the Thus Come Ones; it speaks of worship and praise. It also refers to the vow to vastly cultivate making offerings. "Blessings" refers to making offerings to those with blessings. Some texts read, "To make offerings to Buddhas," but the meaning is the same. Making offerings to Buddhas is the same as giving offerings to those with blessings, because the Buddhas have perfected blessings and wisdom. They are the doubly perfect ones, perfect in blessings and wisdom.

I request that the Buddhas remain in the world and turn the Dharma wheel. With a sincere mind, relying on the vow power of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva's Ten Great Kings of Vows, I request that the Buddhas remain long in the world and constantly turn the wondrous Dharma wheel.

The good roots gained from following and rejoicing in merit and virtue and from repentance and reform I transfer to living beings and the Buddha Way. Merit and virtue come forth from following and rejoicing and from repenting and reforming. Because you repent and reform, your offense-karma is lessened, and, as a result, your good roots increase. But as the text says, I will not hoard my good roots for myself, but dedicate them to all living beings of the Dharma Realm. All my merit and virtue belong to living beings of the Dharma Realm and I will stand in for living beings of the Dharma Realm and take on the burden of their offenses. This is called undergoing suffering on behalf of living beings. Therefore the text says that I dedicate all my merit and virtue to living beings and the Buddha Way, so that living beings might soon reach Buddhahood.

I study with the Buddhas and practice the perfect conduct of Universal Worthy. I wish always to study with the Buddhas, to eternally study the Buddha Way with all

Buddhas, and I will cultivate and study Universal Worthy Bodhisattva's fully perfected powers and practices. **I make offerings to all the Thus Come Ones of the past.** I make offerings to all the Buddhas of the past and to all present Buddhas throughout the ten directions.

All future teachers of gods and men. The future teachers of gods and men are the Buddhas, **whose aspirations to joy have been completed;** that is, who have fully perfected their wishes and hopes. **I'll follow in study throughout the three periods of time.** I wish to study the Buddhadharma with all Buddhas, **and quickly attain Great Bodhi.** That way I'll swiftly attain the Way of Great Enlightenment.