

# *The Flower Adornment Sutra*

## *Chapter Forty"Universal Worthy's Conduct and Vows"*

*with commentary by Tripitaka Master Hua*

### **SUTRA:**

**In all lands of the ten directions,  
Vast, great, pure, and wonderfully adorned,  
All Tathagatas sit beneath royal Bodhi Trees,  
While assemblies circumambulate them.**

**I vow that every being in all directions  
Will be peaceful, happy, and without worry.  
May they obtain the proper Dharma's profound aid,  
And may all their afflictions be wiped away without exception.**

### **COMMENTARY:**

**In all lands of the ten directions:** "all" includes the ten directions of the Dharma Realm—north, south, east, and west, northeast, southeast, northwest, southwest, above, and below, and all the lands and countries and all the Buddha countries there, which are **vast, great, pure, and wonderfully adorned**. Because the entire great expanse of the ten directions of the Dharma Realm is meant, the line of text says, "vast, great, and pure." Pure means without the slightest bit of defilement. "Wonderfully adorned" means that the ten directions of the Dharma Realm are adorned by subtle, inconceivable adornment.

**All Tathagatas sit beneath royal Bodhi Trees.** In every one of the lands of the ten directions, each Buddha accomplishes the Way beneath the King of Trees, the Bodhi Tree, **while assemblies circumambulate them**. All the assemblies throughout the Dharma Realm—the sea-like assemblies of Bodhisattvas, the sea-like assemblies of Sound Hearers, the sea-like assemblies of Those Enlightened to Conditions, the sea-like assemblies of Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, and Upasikas, the sea-like assemblies of gods, dragons, and the rest of the Eightfold Division—circumambulate all the Buddhas as they sit beneath the Bodhi Trees throughout all worlds.

**I vow that every being in all directions will be peaceful, happy, and without worry.** I will dedicate myself to others and vow that all living beings in all the worlds throughout the ten directions will never be worried, grieved, or disturbed. **May they instead obtain the proper Dharma's profound aid** and be happy. I vow that they will all obtain the extremely profound wondrous Dharma of Prajna and its benefits, so that **all their afflictions will be wiped away without exception**, so that not the slightest bit remains. To destroy all afflictions without exception means that not even a hairsbreadth of afflictions remains.

Speaking about wiping away all afflictions is very easy, but doing it is very difficult. You might say that you have rid yourself of afflictions, but still your afflictions return. You might wish to cut off your afflictions, but still you cannot. Who knows for how many great eons you have had intimate conditions with your afflictions? Therefore, although you may want to leave them, you cannot. Why not? Because you have no wisdom; because you have stupidity. Only people with wisdom can destroy all their afflictions without exception.

Listening to the Sutras and hearing the Dharma, we study our originally existent wisdom. Although we call it "studying our originally existent wisdom," we still do not acquire this wisdom by hearing the Dharma. This wisdom is something we already have, but because we have not used it for a long time, we have forgotten it. Now, by hearing the Sutras and listening to the Dharma, our extremely profound originally existent Prajna wisdom is uncovered, and when our wisdom arises, afflictions and stupidity disappear. If you do not go along with stupidity and afflictions, they will not have any place to dwell.

Where do afflictions and ignorance dwell? They dwell only in darkness. If you have light, they cannot remain, and they will run off and disappear. What is light? Light is wisdom. What is darkness? Darkness is ignorance. If you have no ignorance, you will have no afflictions, and you will give rise to the light of real wisdom. Why do people become afflicted? Because they do not understand. If they understood, they would not have any afflictions.

#### **SUTRA:**

**When I cultivate towards Bodhi,  
I will gain the knowledge of past lives in all destinies.  
I will always leave the home-life and cultivate pure precepts.  
Without outflows, never broken, and without stain.**

#### **COMMENTARY:**

**When I cultivate towards Bodhi.** If you want wisdom, you must cultivate; if you do not cultivate, you will not have wisdom. People who are intelligent have cultivated the Way. Perhaps in past lives they read many Sutras, or perhaps they cultivated ascetic practices for a long time. Because of causes like these, they are intelligent in the present life. The ascetic practices spoken of are not the ascetic practices of sleeping, eating, and being lazy. Take someone who is lazy: it certainly involves a lot of suffering and it is not an easy life. You must have some samadhi to be able to do nothing. If you do not have any samadhi, and you still want to be lazy, you will not feel comfortable when you are sitting still, and you will not feel free and at ease when you are standing.

There are many ways to cultivate Bodhi. Some practice Ch'an meditation, some cultivate the practice of giving, some cultivate the precepts, some cultivate patience, some cultivate vigor, and some cultivate prajna wisdom. All these practices are different, but they all lead to samadhi and wisdom.

Explaining this brings to mind a matter of public record that I will tell you about. These circumstances arose over ten thousand years ago and involved an old cultivator. Can we know what took place over ten thousand years ago? Of course we can. Archeologists know things that happened tens of thousands of years ago, and furthermore, there are Buddhists with the Five Eyes and the Six Spiritual Penetrations who know what took place millions of years ago.

The old cultivator who is the subject of this public record cultivated the Way by practicing meditation. When he first began meditating, his legs hurt quite a lot. When his legs hurt so much that he could not take the pain, he fought with it. "You don't like to hurt? Well, I like to hurt." He battled with the pain in his legs. When his legs screamed, "I can't take it," he replied, "You can't take it? That's your problem. I'm not paying any attention to you." And he continued to meditate.

In the very beginning he withstood the pain for half an hour before he moved his legs and rested. Then he began sitting for an hour, then an hour and a half, and then two hours, always increasing the length of his meditation periods. Finally he could sit for days, months, and even a few years, and in the end he finally defeated the pain in his legs. After his victory, he never wanted to get up, and so he sat for a few decades before he stuck out his legs. After he had rested a bit, he decided to meditate until Shakyamuni Buddha came into the world and to help him spread the Buddhadharma. Having made this decision, he pulled up his legs and entered meditative samadhi again to wait.

When Shakyamuni Buddha came into the world, he saw that this old cultivator liked to meditate and never get up, and so he did not disturb him. It was just as if the old cultivator were in a long sleep that had lasted several millennia. He slept until his clothes were in rags and his body was covered with inches of dust. Many generations of birds built nests in his hair. Although he was a person, he was more like a mud statue. It is not known exactly how many years he sat.

In the T'ang Dynasty, Dharma Master, Hsuan Chuang made a pilgrimage to India to find Sutras. The Chinese have a saying, "Hsuan Chuang of the T'ang Dynasty went to the West to get the Sutras." During his travels he happened upon this old cultivator, whose clothes were in tatters and who was covered with inches of dust. His head, face, and body were under an incredible amount of dirt.

Dharma Master Hsuan Chuang took out a small hand bell and rang it in front of his face. "Ding!" The old cultivator said, "Mmmmmm," and woke up from his sleep. "What are you doing?" he said.

Dharma Master Hsuan Chuang retorted: "What are you doing?"

The old cultivator said, "I'm waiting for Shakyamuni Buddha to come into the world to spread the Buddhadharma. I will help him."

Dharma Master Hsuan Chuang said, "You've slept too long. You've slept for several thousand years. In fact, more than a thousand years have passed since Shakyamuni Buddha entered Nirvana. It's been a long time, and you're still sitting there not knowing what has happened. You didn't even know that Shakyamuni Buddha entered the world."

The old cultivator said, "No problem. I'll just meditate until the White Yang Buddha appears in the world. I'll wait for Maitreya Bodhisattva to come, and then I will help him teach and transform living beings."

Having said as much, he prepared to sink into samadhi again. He had already begun his contemplation and was about to enter samadhi when Master Hsuan Chuang called to him, "Oh, elder fellow meditator [sometimes in China, people who have left the home life will address one another in a familiar way by referring to one another as 'elder fellow meditator'], don't enter samadhi again. Although Shakyamuni Buddha has entered Nirvana, his Dharma still exists in the world. You can help me spread the Buddhadharma."

The old cultivator said, "Help you spread the Dharma? Who are you, anyway?" Dharma Master Hsuan Chuang said, "I'm from the land of T'ang, and my name is Hsuan Chuang. I'm on my way to India to collect the Buddha's Dharma jewels, and when I return to China, I will need someone to help me translate and spread the Dharma. You've been meditating for so many years and doing nothing; it's too pitiful. Why don't you help me spread the Buddhadharma?"

The old cultivator said, "I can help you?"

Dharma Master Hsuan Chuang said, "Yes, but now you'll have to change. You can't use the body you are in now. I don't think it could even stand up. You've been sitting for so long that your legs have probably fused together and won't want to separate. So you'll have to change your house. Move to a new house."

The cultivator said, "Where should I go?"

Dharma Master Hsuan Chuang replied, "Move to Ch'ang An, the capital of China, and go to the palace with the yellow tile roof. When I come back from India, I will come and get you."

The cultivator said, "Okay, I guess I can do that. I believe what you say, and I'll help you spread the Dharma." Then he went off to Ch'ang An to be reborn.

Although Dharma Master Hsuan Chuang had told him to be reborn in the house with the yellow tile roof, the old cultivator forgot, or got lost, and ended up at the house with the green tile roof, the home of the Minister of War. He became the son of the Minister of War's elder brother.

When Dharma Master Hsuan Chuang left Ch'ang An, the Emperor T'ai Tsung had asked him, "When will you return? Write me a letter when you are about to return, and I will greet you."

Dharma Master Hsuan Chuang replied, "The branches of this pine tree [indicating a large pine tree beside the Imperial Palace door] are now pointing west. When they point east, I will return."

During the next fourteen years, Emperor T'ai Tsung often looked at the pine to see if the branches had turned to face east. One day it happened. Is it not strange that a tree could do this? Emperor T'ai Tsung said, "Dharma Master Hsuan Chuang is coming back today. Let's quickly go outside the city to welcome him. When he left, he said that the branches on this pine would point to the east when he was about to return, and today they are pointing to the east." So everyone went to the outskirts of the city to welcome Dharma Master Hsuan Chuang and escort him home.

When Dharma Master Hsuan Chuang saw the Emperor, he was extremely happy, and said, "I congratulate the Emperor."

The Emperor retorted, "Why are you congratulating me? Nothing special has happened."

"The year I left, you should have had a prince born into your family."

"No, no prince has been born. You've been gone a long time, but I still haven't had a son."

When Dharma Master Hsuan Chuang heard this he thought, "Strange, I told the old cultivator to be born as a prince. How is it that he never came? Tonight I will look into this and see what happened to him."

Emperor T'ai Tsung did not know what he was talking about. Dharma Master Hsuan Chuang had spoken words that were incomprehensible to the Emperor, so he did not pay much attention. That night, Dharma Master Hsuan Chuang meditated and contemplated the causes and conditions surrounding the old cultivator's rebirth. As soon as he began his investigation, he saw that the old cultivator had run off to the household of the War Minister, Yu Chih-kung, and that he was now a young boy of fourteen. He had grown very big and never behaved properly. Previously the old cultivator had always strictly adhered to the principles of wholesome conduct, but after he was born into the household of Yu Chih-kung, he became very unruly. He ate meat, drank liquor, and played around with women. He could and would do anything because Yu Chih-kung's house had power, money, servants, and status; so no matter what he did, no one dared reprimand him.

The next day Dharma Master Hsuan Chuang told Emperor T'ai Tsung, "Yesterday I congratulated you for the birth of a new prince, when in fact the old cultivator who was supposed to be reborn as your son went astray. Although I told him to be born as your son, he went to the household of Yu Chih-kung. To correct his mistake, you should issue

an edict commanding him to leave the home-life. This is important, because previously he made an agreement with me to come here and help me spread the Buddhadharma."

The Emperor agreed and issued an imperial edict requiring Yu Chih-kung's nephew to leave the home-life. When Yu Chih-kung received this order, he said to his nephew, "The Emperor wants you to leave the home-life."

"That's senseless," the boy replied. "How can the Emperor tell me to leave the home-life? I haven't finished playing. How can I leave the home-life?"

Yu Chih-kung said, "It is not right to refuse. If you don't leave home when the Emperor tells you to do so, you will lose your head. You must obey the Emperor's orders."

"Well, if that's the case, I'll go see the Emperor myself and reason with him," replied the nephew.

Dharma Master Hsuan Chuang knew in advance that the boy would not want to leave the home-life, and he had already told the Emperor, "Tomorrow, when Yu Chih-kung's nephew comes, he will try to reason with you, and when that fails, he will give you his conditions for leaving home. Whatever his conditions are, agree to them. Whatever he wants is okay."

The Emperor replied, "All right. I will take care of this tomorrow."

The next day, Yu Chih-kung went to see the Emperor and said, "My nephew, whom you have ordered to leave the home-life, would like to have an audience to discuss this." The Emperor consented, and so the War Minister brought his nephew to see the Emperor.

The Emperor said, "I believe in the Buddhadharma, and I feel that leaving the home-life is the best thing one can do. Therefore, I wish you to leave the home-life and spread the Buddhadharma."

After much discussion the boy said, "There are three things that I cannot do without. If you can agree to three conditions, I will leave the home-life. But if you can't agree with me, then even if you kill me, I won't leave home."

Now look at this! He was not even concerned about his life and death! Emperor T'ai Tsung said, "What are your conditions?"

He replied, "What I like most is drinking wine. Those who leave the home-life take a precept against it, but since I am being forced, I must have this condition fulfilled. I want to be able to drink. After I leave home, no matter where I go, I must be followed by a cart full of wine."

The Emperor said, "I permit your first condition. What is the second?"

"My second condition concerns meat, which I like to eat very much. Those who leave the home-life are vegetarians, but I cannot be a vegetarian. I must eat meat. I can't do without it, even for a day. So I must be followed by a cart of meat wherever I go."

The Emperor said, "This is also permissible. It's but a small matter and creates no problems. Do you have any more conditions?"

"Yes, I still have one condition."

"What is it?" asked the Emperor.

"Although monks don't have wives, and stay far away from the opposite sex, a cart full of women is nevertheless one of my conditions also, because I still cannot do without them. Wherever I go, a cart full of beautiful women must follow me. I absolutely must have these three carts with me: a cart of wine, a cart of meat, and a cart full of beautiful women. If you agree to my three conditions, then I will obey your order to leave the home-life; but if you don't agree to even one of these conditions, then I won't leave home."

The Emperor thought this over. "He's really depraved, but Dharma Master Hsuan Chuang told me to agree to any of his conditions." Then he said, "Agreed. You may have your cart full of beautiful women if that is what you want. If this is the way you wish to leave the home-life, so be it. Now that I've agreed to your conditions, will you leave home?"

The nephew of Yu Chih-kung thought, "I'm getting everything I want, so why not?" And so he said, "Okay, I'll leave the home-life now."

Although his requests were granted, he was still a bit unhappy when he left home, though it was a very exciting event with a lot happening. His ordination was held at Ta Hsing Shan Monastery, built by Dharma Master Hsuan Chuang. Three miles separated the front gate and the abbot's room, and the Monastery could house tens of thousands of people. Since Yu Chih-kung's nephew was leaving home by imperial decree, they rang the bell and beat the drum, which is done whenever there are special events in monasteries. This serves to summon all the Dharma protectors and good spirits to come to serve as guardians. Whenever there is a Dharma assembly, you should ring the bell and beat the drum, not only to notify people, but to notify all the Dharma protectors as well.

When the bell and drum were struck at Ta Hsing Shan Monastery, one person rang the huge bell, and one person beat the huge drum: bong dong, bong dong. When he reached the Monastery, the nephew of Yu Chih-kung heard these sounds and suddenly he was enlightened. "Oh! Before I was an old cultivator!" Then he waved his hand and said, "I don't want these three carts. Send them back. I already have enough. I don't want them." He sent the beautiful women away, sent back the wine, and sent back the meat, and entered Ta Hsing Shan Monastery to leave the home-life. His name was Dharma Master K'uei Chi. And because of the circumstances surrounding his leaving home, he is also known as the Three Cart Patriarch.

In the T'ang Dynasty, Dharma Master K'uei Chi greatly influenced the spread of the Buddhadharma. He taught Consciousness Only. Because of his extreme intelligence, he could remember every Sutra he'd heard. Once a Sutra had passed by his eyes, he never forgot it. This record explains the causes and conditions which led him to cultivate the Way.

Now back to the Sutra.

"When I cultivate towards Bodhi," seeking the enlightened Way of Bodhi and cultivating the Way, **I will gain the knowledge of past lives in all destinies.** Even within the four evil destinies—the paths of the asuras, of the animals, of the hungry ghosts, and of the hells—no matter what destiny it is, I will know my past lives, by perfecting this spiritual penetration.

We should not think that it is easy to leave the home-life

Don't say that leaving the home-life is an easy thing to do.

It comes about because of planting seeds of Bodhi in past lives.

When some people go to take the Bhikshu precepts at Pao Hua Mountain, they can go no farther when they reach a certain cave. A demonic obstacle may arise, causing them to die on the spot. Others have no trouble taking the Shramanera precepts, but when they get ready to take the Bhikshu precepts, they go crazy and cannot be ordained. There are many people with this problem, which stems from insufficient virtuous conduct.