

The Flower Adornment Sutra

Chapter Forty "Universal Worthy's Conduct and Vows "

with Commentary by Tripitaka Master Hua

We just finished discussing the Three Cart Patriarch. Although he practiced for many years in previous lives, nevertheless in the life we have just discussed, he had become confused, and wanted a cart of wine, a cart of meat, and a cart of women. However, when he heard the sound of the bell and the drum, he woke up to the fact that in past lives he had been a cultivator of the Way, and so he was able to help Dharma Master Hsuan Chuang propagate the Buddhadharma.

A contemporary of Dharma Master K'uei Chi's was the eminent Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan, who specialized in cultivating the precepts. He was never careless in the Four Departments of walking, standing, sitting, and lying down; he practiced each of these with a determined, deliberate method:

"He walked like a zephyr," like a gentle breeze that blows so lightly that it does not create waves to disturb a body of water. If the wind is strong, the water will become choppy, but if the wind is light, the water remains smooth. That is how this Vinaya Master walked.

"He stood like a pine." When he stood up, he stood as straight as a pine tree.

"He sat like a bell." When he sat, his posture was upright and straight, just like a bell.

"He rested like a bow." When he reclined, his body formed the shape of an archer's bow.

In the Four Awesome Departments of walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, he maintained himself especially well. He did not casually talk with his mouth, or casually look at things with his eyes, nor did he casually listen to things with his ears. He did not look at improper sights, listen to improper sounds, speak improper words, or do improper deeds. He only spoke about matters based on true principle, and he only did things that were based on principle.

Because he held the precepts so sincerely and so well, the gods made offerings to him in response. He did not have to prepare his meals because a god called Lu Hsuan-ch'a offered him the one meal he took each day.

The Three Cart Patriarch, Dharma Master K'uei Chi, had eaten every different kind of food to be found in the human realm. He had eaten all the different kinds of meat when he was a layman, and after he left the home-life, he had eaten all the finest kinds of vegetarian food. After he had sampled all this, he gave rise to a thought of greed. "I have never tasted the food and drink of the gods. I think I'll go to his place to get a meal." Because he was a National Master and could do whatever he pleased, he decided to visit Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan, and so he went to visit him early one morning.

When he arrived, and Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan had received him, he said, "I've eaten everything except the food and drink of the gods. When the god brings you your food today, how about giving me some of it?"

Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan said, "All right. I'll give you a share. Wait here."

Dharma Master K'uei Chi waited until after noon, and still the god had not come. Not only did he not get to eat heavenly food that day, he did not even get any human food to eat. Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan did not have a kitchen, rice, noodles, oil, salt, or a vegetable; he did not have anything at all. He was completely without preparations because he himself only ate the food of the gods, and so Dharma Master K'uei Chi had nothing to eat but dirt. There was a lot of dirt there on Chung Nan Mountain. They might have eaten wild plants, but there were only the leaves of trees.

Then Dharma Master K'uei Chi became perturbed. "It looks to me like you are just a cheat. You claim that gods offer food to you, but we didn't get anything to eat today. I've come here, but I've not observed a single god bring you any food."

Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan did not reply, but only said, "If you say I'm a cheat, then I'm a cheat. If you say I'm a liar, then I'm a liar. I don't need to argue about it." Because he maintained the precepts, he did not like to speak much.

After a while, it got dark. It was twenty-five miles from the top of Chung Nan Mountain to the bottom, and it was impossible to travel the road at night. Once one descended the mountain, it was another twenty-five miles to Chang An, and so Dharma Master K'uei Chi had to spend the night.

As soon as he reclined on the bed, he fell asleep and began snoring through his nose like thunder. Basically, old cultivators who hold the precepts should not have false thoughts, but Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan had a false thought. "He's a National Master, but he's a National Master who hasn't cultivated in the least. He sleeps like that. He's just a great crude bumpkin."

After he had this false thought, he noticed some fleas on his body. Sometimes people who have left the home-life do not bathe very often, and their bodies become filthy and attract fleas. When a flea bit Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan, he took it off his body and placed it on the ground. After a while, another flea bit him, so he placed that flea on the ground as well. While Dharma Master K'uei Chi snored through the night, Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan tried to sit in meditation, but was unable to enter samadhi since he was troubled with false thoughts all night long.

In the morning, Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan could not take it any more, and he said, "You really don't sleep according to the regulations. Your snoring sounds just like thunder, and you kept me from entering samadhi all night long. I meditated but couldn't enter samadhi."

Dharma Master K'uei Chi replied, "You say I can't cultivate? You're really the one who can't cultivate." The two of them argued back and forth.

Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan said, "How do you know I can't cultivate?"

Dharma Master K'uei Chi replied, "You are an old cultivator who maintains the precepts and doesn't kill, but didn't you pick two fleas off your body last night? Well, when you threw them on the ground, you killed one of them and even though you put the second one down a little more softly, you still broke its leg. Both of these fleas went to King Yama and tattled on you. They said that the old cultivator who holds the precepts killed one of them and maimed the other. I had to go and make peace. I spoke on your behalf, saying that you were not aware of your offenses, and that the fleas should not seek revenge. Then King Yama released you from blame."

When Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan heard this he said, "Huh? I picked those fleas off very slowly last night, and no one knew it. How did you know? This is strange."

Dharma Master K'uei Chi was unhappy and said, "I'm leaving. No gods bring any food to you. You just cheat people." And he left.

After he had gone, the god Lu Hsuan-ch'a came at noon with food. Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan was very unhappy and said, "Why didn't you bring food yesterday? I went hungry, and furthermore, there was a special guest here for lunch. Why didn't you come?"

Lu Hsuan-ch'a said, "Dharma Master, please be compassionate and forgive me. Yesterday when I came with the offerings for you, there was a golden light for forty miles in every direction. I wanted to go into this light, but I couldn't open my eyes and couldn't tell north from south or east from west. I couldn't see anything except the golden light. Then I asked the local earth spirit (a spirit who has about as much authority as a constable). He told me that there was a golden body Bodhisattva here, so everywhere around there was a golden light. Therefore I couldn't come. Please forgive me."

When Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan heard this he said, "Dharma Master K'uei Chi is a flesh-body Bodhisattva? This is inconceivable. I said he couldn't cultivate and that he snored like thunder. He was just intentionally being that way, when in fact his state is much higher than mine. Gods can't even get close to him."

After that, Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan increased his cultivation, and Dharma Master K'uei Chi never again wished to eat the food of the gods. These two old cultivators are eminent Sangha members of that period.

I will always leave the home-life and cultivate pure precepts. I just discussed Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan and Patriarch K'uei Chi, two Bodhisattvas with whom most people cannot compare. As we now cultivate the conduct and power of the Ten Great Kings of Vows of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva, we should also vow to always leave the home-life.

In leaving the home-life, we leave the home of afflictions, the home of the Triple Realm, and the home of ignorance. What does it mean to leave the home of afflictions? Everyone has afflictions, but it is only when you can put them down and not give rise to them that you leave the home of afflictions. The Triple Realm includes the Desire Realm, the Form Realm, and the Formless Realm. If you can leave the home of the Triple Realm, then although you still live in the realm of desire, nevertheless, you will not have any sexual desire. Even though you have not reached the Form Realm, still you see that forms and appearances are empty, to the point that even the Formless Realm is empty. This is the meaning of leaving the home of the Triple Realm.

In leaving the home of ignorance, you break through ignorance that is the basis of afflictions. If you are able to eradicate ignorance, then the wisdom of the Enlightened Way of Bodhi will become perfected. This is the meaning of leaving the home of ignorance, the third of the three kinds of leaving home.

In China, not everyone who leaves the home-life is able to cultivate. Upon seeing that a sickly child will certainly die, it is customary for the parents to take him to a monastery to have him leave the home-life as a novice. It is often the case that as soon as the sickly child leaves the home-life his illness is cured, and he does not die. He leaves the home-life to avoid death. Although this kind of person has good roots, he may still be confused and not know how to cultivate. He has forgotten how he obtained his good roots, and so it is not for sure that he will be able to cultivate. These people usually go to the monastery to leave home when they are very young.

Then there are those who leave the home-life because they have had a difficult life. They may come from a very poor household, and they leave home because they have heard that one gets food, clothing, and shelter when one leaves the home-life. These people leave the home-life for food and clothing.

Others decide to leave the home-life and become monks because they are old and have no one to take care of them. They then take young disciples who will be filial to them, because the rule for disciples is that they should be filial to their teacher. For example, they should offer whatever they eat to their teacher first, and no matter what the circumstances, they must always be respectful to their teacher. Some old people who do not have any sons or daughters leave the home-life so they can take a young disciple who will take care of them. This kind of person leaves the home-life so that he will be taken care of in his old age, and it is not for sure that he will be able to cultivate.

Some people are forced to leave home due to circumstances; the Patriarch K'uei Chi is an example of such a case. Circumstances compelled him to leave the home-life, and then he was able to cultivate.

In China there is a law which permits a person to leave home in order to avoid prosecution, even if he is a murderer, an arsonist, or a bandit, and so there are people who leave the home-life to avoid being punished for breaking the law. It is also not certain that these criminals can cultivate.

There is one kind of person, however, who can cultivate. Who? These are the people who resolve their minds on Bodhi because of the great problem of birth and death. So there are many reasons for leaving home, and you cannot say, "Oh! How can this person leave the home-life? This person has such a big temper and so many afflictions." Those who leave the home-life do so for many different reasons. Now the text reads, "I will always leave the home-life and cultivate pure precepts. I have always cultivated and maintained the pure Vinaya."

Without outflows, never broken, and without stain. I cultivate and maintain the pure treasury of the precepts which are just like precious pearls, and I have never broken them. I will always be without outflows, which means that I will never be deficient in my precepts.

SUTRA:

**Be they gods, dragons, yakshas, or kumbhandas,
Up to humans, non-humans, and the rest.
In the many languages of all such living beings.
With every sound I will speak the Dharma.**

COMMENTARY:

Be they gods, dragons, yakshas, or kumbhandas. Now we are discussing gods, dragons, yakshas, kumbhandas, and all the other ghosts. How do dragons get to be what they are? In the past they cultivated the Dharma of the Great Vehicle and were extremely vigorous, but at the same time they neglected the precepts, feeling that precepts were very ordinary and unimportant. Because of this, they were reborn as dragons. Dragons are beings with spiritual penetrations, but they are animals because in the past when they were humans they neglected the precepts. In spite of all their miraculous powers, dragons are still animals.

The list of gods, dragons and yakshas also includes asuras, kinnaras, mahoragas, garudas, and so forth. Kumbhandas are wider than they are tall. No more than three feet high, they are at least five feet across. They do not have heads or feet, and are shaped like wooden barrels, or sometimes like a winter melon, from which another name is derived. This ghost waits for people to go to sleep, and then he causes them to have nightmares in which they can open their eyes and see things, but they cannot speak or move. Totally petrified, such a person may want to move, but he cannot, and although he tries to speak he cannot make a sound. This ghost can really cause harm, and some people are smothered to death by the fierce kumbhanda. In this Sutra however, the kumbhanda is not so evil. The Ten Great Kings of Vows of Universal Worthy reform him so that he becomes a Dharma protector. **Up to humans, non-**

humans, and the rest, in the many languages of all such living beings: in the languages of all the different kinds of living beings, whether they are gods, asuras, humans, or non-humans, **with every sound I will speak the Dharma.** I will use all the various languages to speak Dharma for all living beings. When I meet a living being, I will speak to him in his language.