

The Flower Adornment Sutra

Chapter Forty "Universal Worthy's Conduct and Vows "

with commentary by Tripitaka Master Hua

SUTRA:

**I will cultivate the pure paramitas with vigor,
And never leave the Bodhi mind behind.
I will banish all obstructions and defilements
And fulfill all the wondrous practices.**

COMMENTARY:

I will cultivate the pure paramitas with vigor. To cultivate "with vigor" means not to be lazy, and to be unafraid of suffering or fatigue. To be always vigorous is to cultivate the pure paramitas with diligence. Paramita is a Sanskrit word that means "to reach the other shore." One cultivates from this shore of birth and death to the other shore of Nirvana.

And never leave the Bodhi mind behind. Life after life I will never forget or lose the Bodhi mind. What is the Bodhi mind? It is the resolve to diligently seek for the Buddha Way. You do not want to forget or lose this mind. Life after life do not forget your intentions and resolve.

I will banish all obstructions and defilements. I will destroy all of the obstructions, the obstructions of reward, karma, and afflictions. When you are afflicted, it is as if you are defiled or filthy. "All" means there are no afflictions remaining. He will **fulfill all the wondrous practices.** To meditate and put an end to birth and death is a wondrous practice. When you accomplish what you practice, it is wondrous. If you accomplish what is inconceivable, what is beyond the realm of human conception, then you obtain what cannot be conceived of. This is wondrous; there is no way to think about it. The inconceivable is also called wondrous; for not only can you not speak of it, your mind cannot conceive of it. These methods of practice, subtle, wondrous, and inconceivable, involve investigating Ch'an and getting enlightened. If you can get enlightened, then you can fulfill all the wondrous practices.

SUTRA:

**From all delusions, karma, and demon-states,
Amid all worldly paths, I will be freed.**

COMMENTARY:

From all delusions, karma, and demon-states: What are "delusions" and "karma"? Delusion is confusion and also a 'doubting state of mind. There are three kinds delusions: view delusions, the delusions of thoughts, and the delusions like dust and sand. View delusions are coarse delusions, the delusions of thought are fine delusions, and the delusions like dust and sand are the delusions of ignorance.

What are view delusions? "When you encounter a state, you give rise to thoughts of greed and love." Thoughts of love breed confusion, and when your confusion enlarges, you become deranged and lack understanding.

What is the delusion of thought? "Because you do not understand certain principles, you give rise to improper discriminating thoughts." This is delusion of thought.

The delusions like dust and sand are extremely many, as numerous as all the motes of dust, or as many as the sands in the Ganges River. The ignorance we have in our minds was originally very little, but it has increased to a great amount. For this reason, it is said to be like dust and sand: one's ignorance equals the dust motes in the world and the sands in the Ganges River. For example, if you are idle and encounter a state, you give rise to thoughts of greed and love. Although these are considered the delusions of views, basically they stem from ignorance. Why do you give rise to thoughts of greed and love? Where do these thoughts come from? If you seek for their source, you will find ignorance. Ignorance, therefore, is the source of birth and death. We have not ended our birth and death because ignorance obstructs us.

There are eighty-eight kinds of delusions of views. When one has been certified to the First Stage of Arhatship, one has cut off the eighty-eight view delusions. When one has been certified to the Second Stage of Arhatship, one has cut off the eighty-one thought delusions. When one is certified to the Third stage of Arhatship, one cuts off the delusions like dust and sand. When one is certified to the fourth Stage of Arhatship, one destroys ignorance, and therefore one's Dharma Nature manifests.

Although a fourth stage Arhat has destroyed ignorance, he has not done so completely. Even the Bodhisattva of Equal Enlightenment has a minute amount of ignorance which he has not yet destroyed. If one can destroy the final minute amount of ignorance, one will then be certified to Wonderful Enlightenment, the Wonderful Enlightenment of the Buddha. But because one still has a very small amount of ignorance which one has not destroyed, one is still a Bodhisattva.

"Karma" refers to the good and evil karma that you create. There is a saying, "None of the karma created throughout a million kalpas is ever forgotten." There is no way that the karma which you have created can be lost. If you do good, then you have good karma; if you do bad, then you have bad karma. Karma is always with you. And so the rest of the verse says, "When the conditions come together, you must undergo your just reward."

When the conditions come together, when the time is right, you must undergo the retribution. Undergoing your just reward means that you must undergo what is coming to you. If you have planted good causes, you will receive a good reward, but if you have planted bad causes, you will get a bad reward. If you do wholesome deeds, you will get good in return, but if you do evil, you will get evil in return. Therefore it is said:

None of the karma created throughout a million
kalpas is ever forgotten.

When the conditions come together, you must
undergo your just reward.

I will now give you an example of how causes and conditions are at work. There was once a man who acquired great wealth as a rice merchant. In China, rice is sold by the pound. The wealthy man added water to his rice to increase its weight and size. To one hundred pounds of rice, he added ten to twenty pounds of water. The rice looked larger and weighed more, but when it dried out, it was not so large. He made a lot of money doing business like this.

He also cheated people selling liquor in the same way. He thought, "If a person drinks liquor, I should make money off of him. If he has the money to buy a drink, there's no reason why I shouldn't get a little more of it. If he doesn't have money, of course, then he can't buy it." At that time there was a distilled liquor called kao-lianq. To every bottle of this liquor he added two ounces of water, and because each bottle had that much less liquor, he made a lot of money.

This wealthy man had three sons. Because he loved wealth, he named his eldest son Gold and his second son Silver. His third son, he named Karmic Obstructions. It is not known how great his fortune was; it was too great to calculate.

When he became old, he contracted a fatal illness. He tried to find a doctor to cure him, but the doctors all threw up their hands and said it was hopeless. One said, "If you have good things to eat, you should eat them now, because your time is near."

The man thought, "I have so much money, it seems pointless to die like this. I'll have a talk with my favorite son and ask him to die with me."

He called his eldest son Gold to him and said, "Do you know that for my entire life I have loved you the most?"

His son said, "I know. You've been very good to me. As my father you have given me much money, and I will inherit all of your wealth. I know you've been good to me."

His father said, "I'm about to die, but I love you and can't bear to separate from you. Will you die with me?"

His eldest son said, "Your illness has driven you mad. How can I die with you? Perhaps you are joking. Please don't joke like this. You must be telling a really big joke."

His father said, "I'm serious. I'm not joking. Now, can you die with me?" The eldest son said, "No. I have a wife and children. If I die, what will become of them?"

His father said, "I've loved you so much, and yet when I ask you to die with me, you don't dare to do so. Well, if you won't come along, quickly go and fetch Silver for me."

Then he talked with Silver. "I have treated your elder brother better than you, but I've discovered that he isn't the least bit filial towards me. I feel that you are my one true filial son, and that you will listen to my instructions and request. I'm about to die. Can you die with me?"

Silver replied, "If Gold won't die with you, how could I possibly do it? If you are going to die, then hurry up and die, but I won't die with you." Then he spat on the ground and said, "Father, you are senile. You have truly lost control. I'm still young. I don't feel that I've lived long enough, and you ask me to die with you. You are totally unreasonable. To have old people like you living in the world is a big waste." Not only would his son not die with his father, but he scolded him as well.

The wealthy man said, "If you won't die with me, I'll talk to my youngest son Karmic Obstructions." And he called for his third son.

"Karmic Obstructions, I'm about to die. Can you accompany me in death?" Karmic Obstructions replied, "Of course. I'd be most happy to do this. I'll accompany you and follow you wherever you go."

Then the wealthy man thought, "He's really not too bad. At least I have one son who will be buried with me." Then he felt very satisfied.

But what happened when Karmic Obstructions went with his father to see King Yama? King Yama asked the man, "When you were alive, did you add water to your rice and liquor before selling them?"

The wealthy man replied, "Never. I would never do such a dishonest thing." When Karmic Obstructions heard his father's reply, he said, "Yes, you did. Every time you sold rice or wine, I saw you add water to them. You are not taking responsibility for your actions when you say you didn't do this."

His son had gone along to testify as a witness to all the bad things his father had done. His father had no grounds for appeal, and as a result, he fell into the hells.

He said to his son, "You came along to testify against me, to say that I committed offenses, not to say that I did virtuous deeds. What kind of a son are you? If I had known you were going to be like this, I would never have asked you to accompany me. It would have been a lot better if you had never come. Now I've ended up in the hells. Even though I don't have a defense lawyer, I can speak for myself, and if you hadn't come along, King Yama wouldn't have known the difference. But you testified against me." Then the wealthy man was filled with regret. There is a saying,

In the future nothing will come along with you.
Neither Gold nor Silver will be willing to go.
Only your karma will follow you.

He could not take anything. Gold and Silver were unwilling to go, and only Karmic Obstructions went along with the once very wealthy man.

When King Yama is deciding your fate,
Karma tells it like it is.

When King Yama asks you what you did during your life, your karmic obstructions will tell the truth. Karmic obstructions are very fierce. They are the result of the things that you do. If you do good, then you have good karma, but if you do evil, then you have evil karma. The good that you do is called good karma, and the evil is called evil karma. It is bad karma that constitutes your karmic obstructions.

Explaining this reminds me of another short story. It occurred when I was very young, while I was still a Shramanera. At Chinese New Year, people always write matched couplets on red paper and hang them on either side of the main entrance of their residence. We also did this at the Monastery. Someone might write, "May everything be auspicious in accord with your wishes." It was always some form of an auspicious verse.

At that time I wrote "Wisdom like the sea" very quickly with force. When a fellow Dharma brother, who was also a Shramanera, saw these four words, he really liked them, and recited, "Wisdom like the sea, wisdom like the sea, wisdom like the sea," over and over again. When I had heard him do this one time too many, it really irritated me, and so I said, "The power of your karma is like the sea."

When he heard this he really got upset. He was angry enough to hit me. He said, "Why do you say the power of my karma is like the sea? How can you say the power of my karma is like the sea?" He acted as if he were going to hit me. I replied, "Don't get upset. You will certainly like what I have to say, and

you'll agree with me. When I said that the power of your karma is like the sea, you shouldn't have gotten mad; you should have thanked me."

He retorted, "Ha! That's really senseless. You say the power of my karma is like the sea, and I should thank you? You don't make any sense."

I said, "Listen to the rest of the explanation."

He said, "What have you got to explain?"

I said, "What do you think karma is?"

He said, "Karma is what people do."

I said, "There is good karma and bad karma. I meant the power of your good karma is like the sea. How do you feel now?" He just gazed off into emptiness and had nothing to say. I continued, "I neither spoke of your good karma nor your bad karma. Why did you get angry? My meaning is that your good karma is like the sea. Now what do you think?"

He said, "Oh, no problem. I'm sorry." He apologized, admitted he was wrong, and repented. Look how wonderful this is! Just one word makes the difference. By adding the word "good," suddenly his great anger vanished. Don't you think this is strange? This is called the wonderful Dharma. Being off by one word, not clearly saying the word "good," caused him to get angry. But when I added that word, he became happy. If you are off by one word, you can cause people to become happy or to get angry.

I told him, "Since I've said this to you, you should invite me to lunch." He said, "Okay, okay," and he asked me to lunch. Look at this. The minds of living beings are very strange. With one word, they can go from one extreme to the other. The power of karma is just like this.

There is another story that comes from my Shramanera days. One day I was carrying a roll of paper, and I met a person who liked to know about other people's business.

He asked me, "What is it you have there? What are you carrying?"

I replied, "This is a bill of sale. I have just sold you."

He got mad. Because he liked to get angry, I would do something occasionally that would stir him up. This time I told him that I had sold him, and that this was the bill of sale.

He got mad. "How can you sell me? Huh? How can you sell me? What authority do you have to sell me?"

I said, "Of course I have the authority to sell you. And since I've sold you, you should be happy, because I couldn't sell you if you didn't like it. But I have special authority to sell you."

He got even angrier. "What kind of special authority?" He was really upset.

I told him, "If there is someone who wants to buy you, you should certainly be happy when I sell you."

He said, "That doesn't make any sense. If you sold me to someone, how could I possibly be happy about it? Explain yourself."

I said, "I'll explain it to you. I sold you to Shakyamuni Buddha, to always be a monk."

He was dumbstruck. His eyes froze and he stared at me without moving.

I said, "Is this agreeable to you? Are you happy?"

He replied, "That's fine. You can do that."

This is what happened to me when I was very young. At that time I was full of mischief.

Look into this. The situation here is the same as in the previous story. Even though I sold him he was happy. This is also the wonderful Dharma, so do not take it as just a joke.

I have explained "delusion" and "karma" in general, and now I will discuss "demon-states." If you do not cultivate the Way, demons will not come after you. But if you do cultivate, then demons will find you. Why? Demons are just like bandits. Bandits do not rob poor people, because they know that poor people have nothing worth stealing. When you do not cultivate the Way, you are like a poor person, but to cultivate the Way is like getting rich. If you are rich, then day and night the bandits will wait for the opportunity to rob you. Thus there are demons when you cultivate the Way. It is said,

Demons polish the True Way;
With the True Way, demons come.
The more they polish, the brighter you become;
The brighter you become, the more you should be
 polished,
Polished like the autumn moon
Which shines on the hordes of demons in space.
Illuminated, the demonic hordes disperse,
And the original Buddha appears.

This verse says that demons polish a person who cultivates the True Way. If you have even the slightest bit of sincerity and honesty, demons will come to polish and test you. Therefore, the next line says that with the True Way, demons come. If you truly cultivate, then there will be demons. The more you are polished, the brighter your light becomes; the brighter you become, the more you should be polished. The demons test you again and again until your light shines like the autumn moon, the full, bright, harvest moon. This light then illuminates all of the hordes of demons in space. The moon hangs in space and reveals the hordes of demons. If you have true and actual wisdom, you can illuminate the hordes of demons. You will recognize all of them. And when a demon comes, you will recognize it. When the demonic hordes are illuminated, they disperse. Illuminating the demonic hordes refers to the light of your wisdom which illuminates the demons so they all run away. Then the original Buddha appears—the original Buddha comes forth.