

The Flower Adornment Sutra

Chapter Forty Universal Worthy's Conduct and Vows

with commentary by Tripitaka Master Hua

If you give rise to afflictions, your afflictions have not been eradicated. If there is production, there must be destruction. If there is destruction, there must be production. If, however, you are without production or destruction, then you will be without afflictions, and just that is to eradicate all afflictions.

There are many afflictions that could be discussed, but basically they are greed, hatred and stupidity, the basic afflictions. If you are without greed, hatred and stupidity, you have the power to eradicate all afflictions.

Instead of vowing to cut off afflictions, you could make another vow. What is it? I vow not to cut off my afflictions. If you do not cut them off, then what should you do with them? Put them to use. If you cut off your afflictions, you cut off Bodhi as well. So I do not teach you to cut off your afflictions. Afflictions are just Bodhi. What should you do if you do not cut them off? Change them. How do you change your afflictions? Transform them.

Everyone pay attention to this. Your transforming should be tireless. It is said,

From movement there is change,
And from change comes transformation.

Only by being the world's most sincere person can you effect a transformation. This is what is important. You want to change your afflictions into Bodhi, not cut them off. If you cut them off, then you cut off Bodhi. Why? Because afflictions are just Bodhi.

How can you transform your afflictions? Because scientific progress is now more widely understood, an analogy from chemistry will throw light on the matter. Afflictions are like ice, and Bodhi is like water. Leaving a chunk of ice inside a freezer is analogous to cutting off Bodhi; ice remains ice and there can be no Bodhi. But if you transform the ice with the light of the sun, it becomes water; this water is analogous to Bodhi. The principle that afflictions are Bodhi is just like this. If you transform your afflictions, they become the inherently existent Buddha nature. This is to realize Bodhi, to enlighten to the Way.

I have explained this very simple principle to you several times, but you have not paid close attention to it, so you are not able to use it. If you strike someone on the head with a chunk of ice the size of a tea cup, it can fracture his skull and kill him, quickly sending him off to see King Yama. This is what can be done with a piece of ice. But if you melt

the ice into water, you cannot harm him even if you throw a thousand teacupfuls onto his head. He will feel wet but will not be hurt. This analogy shows that if you use the Bodhi mind to teach and transform living beings, they will appreciate and accept it. But if you use afflictions to teach and transform them, they will not be happy and they will refuse to accept your teaching. They would rather die than accept your teaching. This is similar to the idea of water and ice.

We should transform our afflictions and not cut them off, because if we cut them off, then we will be without Bodhi as well. If you throw away the ice which can kill a person, then you will not have the water either. Where do afflictions come from? They come from Bodhi, just as ice comes from water. So it is said,

Ice is water and water is ice.

Afflictions are just Bodhi. If you can use them, they are Bodhi. But if you cannot, they are afflictions. When you can use them, it is inexpressibly wonderful. If you cannot use them, it is inexpressible suffering and totally useless. This is why I tell you not to cut off your afflictions, but to keep them.

The power to subdue all demons. "To subdue demons" means to prevent them from bothering you as you cultivate the Way. It means to transform them so that they become your Dharma protectors. There are many kinds of subduing. You can subdue them with your spiritual powers, subdue them with principle, or subdue them with your virtuous practices. You can subdue them with your samadhi power, subdue them with wisdom, or subdue them with the power of your discipline. There are many different ways to subdue the demons.

There is not just one kind of demon. There are heavenly demons, earthly demons, demons among people, weird demons, and terrifying ghosts. There are also the demons of states, sickness demons, and demons of your self-nature. External demons, heavenly demons, earthly demons, demons among people, ghostly demons, and *li mei* and *wang liang* demons are hard to subdue. But the demons of your self-nature are not easy to subdue either. They are always present in your mind, and they cause you to break the rules. The most difficult demons to subdue are the demons of your self-nature. If your precept-maintaining power is solid, if you have precept power which is proper, then when all the demon kings come to bother you, their demonic methods will not work, and they will not be able to move you. If you have samadhi power, you will also be able to subdue all demons. So it is said,

If a big mountain collapses in front of you, you are not afraid.
If a beautiful woman appears before you, you do not move.

The most difficult thing for a person to resist is sexual desire. Whether you are a man or a woman, it is difficult to remain calm when the demon of sexual desire comes. The sex demon may send a common person to trouble you, or it may send a transformation body to do its work, or it may vex you in your dreams. You may not move when it sends

transformation bodies or people, but when it comes to bother you in dreams to steal your jewels, it is very difficult not to move. In a dream the demon of sexual desire may come as a real beauty to seduce you. If you do not have any samadhi power, you will be disturbed by it.

If you are a man, the sexual desire demon will appear as a woman. If you are a woman, it will appear as a man. When it manifests as a man, it will either appear as a very handsome man or as the person the woman most likes. At this point, if a woman's samadhi power is insufficient, she will be turned by this demonic state. If you have samadhi, you will not be moved by demonic states.

To sum it up, there are many kinds of demons, and there are many different ways to subdue them. If you have wisdom, you can subdue demons, but you must have the jeweled wisdom sword. If you have this sword, you can defeat any demon, no matter what kind it is. Only people who are stupid, without wisdom, are moved by demons.

To further explain the meaning of "demon": it refers to the Sanskrit term *Mara*, which means "murderer." Demons specialize in disturbing people who cultivate the Way. If you wish to cultivate the Way, demons will want to disturb your karma in the Way. So we must talk about the power to subdue all demons. If you recite Sutras correctly, you can also subdue demons. If you bow to Sutras to the point that you have a response, you can also subdue all demons. Because there are many kinds of demon kings, there are many methods to subdue them. The important question is whether you can use these methods.

The Shurangama Mantra is made up of five assemblies, and these five assemblies correspond to five divisions. The middle division is the Buddha Division. The eastern division is the Vajra Division. The southern division is the Jeweled Birth Division. The western division is called the Lotus Division. The northern division is called the Accomplishment Division. In the Buddha Division, in the center, Vairochana Buddha is the host, as is Shakyamuni Buddha. In the Vajra Division in the east, Akshobya Buddha is the host. Ratnasambhava Buddha is the host Buddha for the southern division. Amita Buddha is the host for the western Lotus Flower Division. Amoghasiddhi is the host for the Accomplishment Division in the north, which is also called the Karma Division.

The five directions with their divisions have five kinds of dharmas.

The first is the *dharma for stopping all catastrophes*. The second is called the *dharma for increasing and benefitting*. When you recite the mantra, it will help to increase your Way-mind and to increase your wisdom, so that everything that happens to you will be beneficial.

The third is the *dharma for subduing*. This refers to using the spiritual powers that come from mantras to subdue yourself so that you act in accord with the regulations, are very obedient, and will not break the rules.

The fourth is called the *hooking dharma*. What is the hooking dharma? If a demon is a thousand miles away from you, ten thousand miles away, a million miles away, or a billion miles away, even to the point that it is in another world, you can hook him in so that he must come to wherever you are if you recite this mantra.

The fifth is the *dharma of accomplishment*. No matter what you do, you will complete your task if you recite this mantra. The Shurangama Mantra possesses these five kinds of powers; it is an especially wonderful and inconceivable state.

The power to perfect Universal Worthy's conduct. Universal Worthy Bodhisattva's practices are the greatest, and his cultivation power is foremost. Mount Omei in Szechwan, China, is the holy place of this Bodhisattva. It is one of the four famous mountains in China. Most cultivators wish to make a pilgrimage there to bow. Mount Omei is constantly bathed in golden light; it is very high and difficult to climb. Nevertheless, many people come from afar, traversing mountains and rivers, to bow to Universal Worthy Bodhisattva.

Why do pilgrims wish to bow to him? Universal Worthy made a vow that those who traveled to Mount Omei would receive his help in completing their karma in the Way. Because of this, many cultivators of the Way go to this mountain and make the difficult ascent.

It is not easy to perfect the practices of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva. For example, each of the Ten Kings of Vows discussed above must be cultivated until they are perfect, to the point that even if empty space, living beings, the karma of living beings, and the afflictions of living beings are all exhausted and cease to be, these vows will continue to exist nonetheless, and one will continue to cultivate in accord with them. This is what it means to perfect the practices of Universal Worthy.

The sea of lands I everywhere adorn and purify. I am able universally to adorn and purify the sea of all Buddhalands, ***and I liberate the sea of all living beings.*** We living beings all have our attachments, and so we have not obtained liberation. Without liberation, we are prevented from obtaining true freedom.

Once a Bhikshu went to a wise teacher and requested instruction. He put on his robe and sash, knelt down, put his palms together, and asked, "In what way can one obtain liberation?"

The wise teacher said only one sentence in reply: "Who has bound you up?"

The Bhikshu thought, "No one has bound me up. I have bound myself." With that one sentence from a wise teacher, he suddenly became enlightened and obtained liberation.

It is easy to liberate one living being or two living beings, but to liberate a sea of living beings is very difficult. If you can do it, though, it is not difficult. And so the text says, "I liberate the sea of all living beings."

With skill I make distinctions in the sea of all dharmas. All dharmas "include the Three Treasuries and Twelve Divisions. The Three Treasuries are the Treasury of Sutras, the Treasury of the Shastras, or discourses, and the Treasury of the Vinaya. All the Sutras, all the Shastras, and all the precepts and disciplines—the Vinaya—make up the Three Treasuries.

The Twelve Divisions are:

1. prose
2. reiterative verses
3. predictions
4. interjections
5. spontaneous speaking (unrequested)
6. causes and conditions
7. analogies
8. past lives' deeds
9. deeds of this life
10. expansions (*Vaipulya*)
11. the hitherto unknown
12. explanations

Prose refers to the prose sections of the Sutras, and reiterative verses are the verse sections which restate the meaning of the prose. Interjected verses do not repeat the meaning of the prose that precedes them. An example of an interjection is this verse from the Vajra Prajna Paramita Sutra:

*All conditioned dharmas
Are like dreams, illusions, bubbles, shadows,
Like dew drops and a lightning flash.
Contemplate them thus.*

Spontaneous speaking (unrequested) means that the Buddha spoke a Dharma even though no one requested it. For example, the Amitabha Sutra was lectured without being requested. Causes and conditions explain the different causes and conditions in the Sutras. Analogies, as in the Analogies Chapter of the Dharma Flower Lotus Sutra, are used to explain the Dharma. Past lives' deeds may be about the past lives of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas or Arhats.

These Twelve Divisions of the Sutras and the Three Treasuries comprise all Dharmas. The Twelve Divisions are further divided into the Great Vehicle and the Small Vehicle, the Bodhisattva Vehicle, the Vehicle of Those Enlightened to Conditions, the Vehicle of the Sound Hearers, and the Buddha Vehicle. The Buddhadharma is divided into many parts and if you are not aware of them, you will not know which practice door is the most suitable in your cultivation. So the text says, "With skill I make distinctions in the sea of all dharmas." The Buddhadharma is just like a great sea. If you can discriminate the True Mark of all dharmas, then you can cultivate in accord with the Dharma, ***and enter deeply***

into the wisdom sea. You should be able to deeply enter the sea of wisdom. If you can make distinctions in the sea of all dharmas, if you can deeply enter all dharmas, you can obtain immeasurable and boundless wisdom, which is just like entering a great and infinite Sea.

Sutra:

*I can purify the ocean of all practices,
Perfect and complete a sea of vows.
I draw near to a sea of Buddhas and make offerings,
And cultivate without fatigue for a sea of time.*

*To all Tathagatas of the three periods of time,
With Bodhi, conduct and vows most supreme,
I completely offer up my perfect cultivation;
With Samantabhadra's practices, I awaken to Bodhi.*

*Each Tathagata has an elder disciple
Named Universal Worthy, Honored One.
I now transfer all good roots, and I vow
To perform deeds of wisdom identical to his.*

Commentary:

I can purify the ocean of all practices. All the methods of cultivation are like a great sea. When I cultivate the Way, I should be concentrated and unscattered, and I should single-mindedly cultivate the pure practices, the doors into the Dharma. I cannot have the least bit of defilement in the midst of the pure methods of practice. Therefore, the text reads, "I can purify the ocean of all practices."

I will *perfect and complete a sea of vows.* To cultivate, it is necessary to make vows. After making vows, you must fulfill them. I make all kinds of vows and fulfill all kinds of vows. When I cultivate the Ten Kings of Vows of Universal Worthy, I must have vow power that equals that of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva. In this way, I perfect and complete vows which are as many as a great sea is vast.

I draw near to a sea of Buddhas and make offerings. All the Buddhas of the ten directions are immeasurable and boundless, just like a great sea. I wish to draw near to this sea of Buddhas and make offerings to them, *and* I wish to *cultivate without fatigue for a sea of time.* I cannot become fatigued in my cultivation. Passing through immeasurable kalpas, I will never tire or become lazy but will be continuously vigorous. Although the length of time of a kalpa is as long as a great sea is big, I certainly will never give in to fatigue.

To all Tathagatas of the three periods of time—to all the Buddhas of the ten directions and the three periods of time, *with Bodhi, conduct and vows most supreme,* the most

supreme, subtle and wonderful Way of enlightenment—***I completely offer up my perfect cultivation.*** All the Buddhas of the ten directions cultivate the most supreme Bodhi and all conduct and vows, and at the same time I make offerings to them and fully perfect cultivation which is identical to theirs. In this way, ***with Samantabhadra's practices, I awaken to Bodhi.*** When I cultivate the practices and vows of Universal Worthy's great kings of vows, I am enlightened to Bodhi, to the Way of enlightenment.

Each Tathagata has an elder disciple. Each of the Buddhas, Thus Come Ones of the ten directions, has a great disciple whose ***name is Universal Worthy, Honored One. I now transfer all good roots.*** Now I dedicate all good roots that I obtain through cultivation to Universal Worthy Bodhisattva and his ten great kings of vows. ***And I vow to perform deeds of wisdom identical to his.*** I vow that my wisdom and doors of practice will be identical to those of each and every Universal Worthy Bodhisattva.

Sutra:

***I vow that my body, mouth and mind will be forever pure,
And that all practices and Buddhalands will be also.
I vow in every way to be identical to the wisdom of Universal Worthy.***

Commentary:

I vow that my body, mouth and mind will be forever pure. I will not kill, steal or commit sexual misconduct with my body; my mouth will not create the evil karmas of irresponsible speech, false speech, abusive speech or divisive speech; and my mind will not create the evil karmas of greed, anger and stupidity. My three karmas of body, mouth and mind will always be pure.

I vow that all practices and Buddhalands will be also. The practices I cultivate will be pure, and all Buddhalands will also be pure. ***I vow in every way to be identical to the wisdom of Universal Worthy.*** I vow that in everything I do, I will be the same as Universal Worthy Bodhisattva, identical to his great wisdom. I vow to study him, to cultivate his practices, to cultivate his Dharma of the ten great kings of vows, and to perfect the inconceivable spiritual penetrations and wonderful function of his wisdom. In every way I wish to be the same as Universal Worthy Bodhisattva.

***Truly recognize your own faults,
And don't discuss the faults of others.
Other's faults are just yours own —
Being one with everyone is called great compassion***