

The Flower Adornment Sutra

Chapter Forty Universal Worthy's Conduct and Vows

with commentary by Tripitaka Master Hua

Sutra:

***I will wholly purify Samantabhadra's conduct,
And the great vows of Manjusri as well.
All their deeds I will fulfill, leaving nothing undone.
Till the ends of the future, I'll never tire.
Infinite and measureless is my cultivation;
Boundless merit and virtue I obtain.
Amid Limitless Practices I will dwell in peace,
And penetrate the strength of spiritual powers.***

Commentary:

I will wholly purify Samantabhadra's conduct. This is spoken by one who cultivates the practices of Universal Worthy, and who says, "When cultivating the practices of Universal Worthy, I universally purify them, which means that I fully perfect his practices and vows, ***and the great vows of Manjusri as well.***" Manjusri is called "wonderfully virtuous," and "wonderfully auspicious." Not only should one purify the practices of Universal Worthy, but one should also fully perfect all great vows of Manjusri Bodhisattva.

All their deeds I will fulfill, leaving nothing undone. I will be the same as Universal Worthy and Manjusri Bodhisattvas in their cultivation of practices and vows, and in their accomplishment of merit, virtue, and deeds. ***Till the ends of the future I'll never tire.*** I'll cultivate the great kings of vows of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva for inexhaustible kalpas in the future, never growing weary. There never will be a time when I will grow tired or become lazy.

Infinite and measureless is my cultivation. The doors of conduct which I practice are immeasurable and boundless in number. ***Boundless merit and virtue I obtain.*** Because the doors of practice I cultivate are immeasurable, the merit and virtue I obtain is also infinite and boundless.

Amid limitless practices I will dwell in peace. I peacefully dwell in and remain unmoving in immeasurable methods of practice and immeasurable Dharma doors. I constantly study all methods and conduct ***and penetrate the strength of spiritual powers.*** I understand and penetrate the strength of all spiritual powers.

Sutra:

*Manjusri has wisdom, courageous and brave;
Samantabhadra's conduct and wisdom are the same.
I now transfer all good roots
In order to follow them in practice and in study.
In the three periods of time, all Buddhas praise
Such vows as these, lofty and great.
I now transfer all good roots, wishing to perfect
The supreme practices of Samantabhadra.
I vow that when my life approaches its end,
All obstructions will be swept away;
I will see Amita Buddha,
And be born in his Land of Ultimate Bliss and Peace.*

Commentary:

Manjusri has wisdom, courageous and brave. Manjusri Bodhisattva has the greatest wisdom and the most authority. In the past he was Shakyamuni Buddha's teacher and in this present life, he has propagated, taught and spread the Buddhadharma. His wisdom is brave and courageous. Courageous and brave wisdom is great wisdom.

Manjusri Bodhisattva lives on Wu Tai Mountain in China. This mountain has five peaks: a central peak, the eastern peak, the western peak, the southern peak and the northern peak, so it is called Wu Tai, "Five Peaked Mountain." It is a very cold place and even in the summer there is snow on its peaks. Manjusri Bodhisattva has established a Bodhimanda there.

Samantabhadra's conduct and wisdom are the same. Universal Worthy Bodhisattva's wisdom, vows and cultivation are especially courageous and brave.

I now transfer all good roots. Now I dedicate all the good roots I have gained from cultivating the ten great Kings of Vows. Why do I transfer them? *In order to follow them in practice and in study.* I transfer them because I wish to follow Manjusri Bodhisattva's practices and studies. I wish to go along forever with Universal Worthy Bodhisattva's vows and constantly cultivate and study the Buddhadharma.

In the three periods of time, all Buddhas praise—these two Bodhisattvas have been praised by all the Buddhas of the past, present and future. All Buddhas of the three periods of time together have praised Manjusri Bodhisattva and Universal Worthy Bodhisattva, praised *such vows as these, lofty and great.* The supreme vows referred to here are the ten great Kings of Vows. *I now transfer all good roots*—now I transfer all of my good roots, *wishing to perfect the supreme practices of Samantabhadra.* I do so to perfect the ten great Kings of Vows of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva.

I vow that when my life approaches its end: when my life ends, I wish that ***all obstructions will be swept away***, that I will have exhausted all my obstructions. All obstructions include the obstructions of retribution, of karma and of afflictions. I vow that these three obstructions will be eradicated, so that at the end of my life I will not need to undergo the suffering of karma; so that I will not receive the retribution of a future life; and so that I will be without afflictions; and so that my ignorance will be cut off. I vow that I will exhaust all obstructions in this way.

I will see Amita Buddha. I will go off to see Amita Buddha of the Land of Ultimate Bliss. Amita is a Sanskrit word that means "limitless life" and also "limitless light." Because Amita Buddha's life is limitless, he is called the Buddha of Limitless Life. This Buddha is the lord of the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss. He not only has affinities with the living beings of the Saha World, but with living beings of the lands of the ten directions, in this land, and in that land, in this world, and in that world: he has conditions with living beings of all Buddha lands.

Why does Amita Buddha have conditions with living beings? In the past when he was cultivating as a Bhikshu on the causal ground, he made vows:

When I become a Buddha, my land will be the Land of Ultimate Bliss. None of the other worlds of the ten directions will be as blissful as my land. No worlds will be as blissful as my world. If living beings of the ten directions wish to be born in my country, all they must do is hold my name. They should recite my Buddha-name, and I will accept them to become Buddhas. If they do not become Buddhas, I will not become a Buddha. I will not certify to enlightenment.

Amita Buddha made forty-eight vows like this to cross over living beings. Therefore, any living being of the ten directions who sincerely recites the name of Amita Buddha can be born in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

Ultimately, the merit from the ten great Kings of Vows of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva are dedicated to the Land of Ultimate Bliss, as one makes a vow to be born there. The Land of Ultimate Bliss belongs to Amita Buddha and according to the Secret School classification, his is the Lotus Flower Division in the West.

Akshobhya Buddha is the host of the Vajra Division in the East. The Vajra Division specializes in cultivating the Vajra Unmoving Dharma. The essence of the Vajra Dharma is subduing and hooking. How can you hook a demon? The one who practices this dharma, the Vajra Master, is analogous to a constable who issues a summons requiring a person to appear somewhere. This is a hooking dharma. When the Vajra Master takes on the appearance of a Vajra and all the ghosts and demons are frightened, he has made use of a subduing dharma. This is characteristic of the eastern direction.

What dharma does Amita Buddha cultivate? The attraction dharma. He uses the power of kindness and compassion to draw all living beings to his land. After he subdues you he says, "After this you cannot again behave recklessly. You must follow the rules. But you

can go wherever you wish." The attraction dharma of the Pure Land consists of Amita Buddha's vows to accept you into the Land of Ultimate Bliss to cultivate with him. Of the two Buddhas, Amita and Akshobhya, one uses kindness and compassion to teach living beings, and the other uses awesome virtue to subdue living beings. One subdues, and the other attracts. These two Buddhas teach and transform living beings in the Saha World, but they do so in different ways. Still, they both have the strongest conditions with living beings.

And be born in his Land of Ultimate Bliss and Peace. I will go to the Pure Land and see Amita Buddha. I will be born in the peaceful and happy land.

Sutra:

***When reborn in the Western Land,
I will perfect and completely fulfill
Without exception these great vows,
To delight and benefit all beings.
The Assembly of Amita Buddha is completely pure;***

***When, from a matchless lotus I am born,
I'll behold the Tathagata's measureless light as he appears before me
To bestow a prediction of Bodhi.
Receiving a prediction from the Thus Come One,
I'll transform countless kotis of bodies
And with wisdom power vast and great pervade ten directions
To benefit the realms of living beings.***

Commentary:

When reborn in the Western Land. If you can recite the name of Amita Buddha, he will receive you by means of his vow power into the Land of Ultimate Bliss. The one who cultivates the ten great kings of vows Universal Worthy Bodhisattva says, When I am reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, ***I will perfect and completely fulfill without exception these great vows.*** I will perfect my vows to cultivate the ten great kings of vows. I will completely cultivate and fully perfect all these dharma doors, all practices, and all vows with not one left out. "Without exception" means he will not omit anything, but will fully perfect all his vows ***to delight and benefit all beings.*** When my skill and the wonderful function of all spiritual penetrations have been fully perfected, I will go to the worlds of the ten directions to delight and benefit all the realms of living beings. I want to bring all living beings across to become Buddhas. Why? I have obtained peace and happiness, and so I want all living beings to obtain peace and happiness as well; therefore, I will benefit and delight the realms of all living beings.

The Assembly of Amita Buddha is completely pure. The Sea-like Lotus Pool Assembly of great Bodhisattvas in Amita Buddha's Land of Ultimate Bliss is totally pure. ***When from a matchless lotus I am born:*** at that time I will be born from a wonderful lotus

flower of the superior grade, appear in a body and see the Buddha. So it is said, "When the flower opens, I will see the Buddha." *I'll behold the Tathagata's measureless light as he appears before me.* I will see in person Limitless Light Buddha of the Land of Ultimate Bliss, who is also called Limitless Life Buddha, and he will *bestow a prediction of Bodhi.* When I see Amita Buddha in person, he will immediately bestow a prediction upon me, give me the name I will use when I am enlightened, and tell me when I will become a Buddha.

Receiving a prediction from the Thus Come One. After I have received the prediction that Amita Buddha has bestowed upon me, *I'll transform countless kotis of bodies.* I will then be able to create numberless transformation bodies, billions of transformation bodies *and with wisdom power vast and great, pervade ten directions.* At that time my wisdom will be far-reaching and equivalent to that of the Buddha. It will pervade all places throughout the ten directions *to benefit the realms of living beings.* Of what use is so much wisdom? What can be done with it? I can take all living beings across and cause them all to perfect the Buddha Way.

Sutra:

*Realms of worlds and empty space might reach an end,
And beings' karma and afflictions be extinguished;
But they will never be exhausted,
Neither will any of my vows.
With myriads of jewels in boundless lands in all directions,
I make decorations and offerings to the Thus Come Ones.
For eons as many as the motes of dust in lands, I bring
The foremost peace and joy to gods and humans.
Yet, if one believes in these Kings of Vows Supreme,
As they pass by the ear but a single time;
And if in search of Bodhi one thirstily craves these vows,
The merit and virtue gained will that surpass.*

Commentary:

Realms of worlds and empty space might reach an end, and beings' karma and afflictions be extinguished. Empty space is basically endless, as are world systems, living beings, the karma of living beings and the afflictions of living beings. They are all endless and inexhaustible. But even if they could be exhausted, nevertheless my vows still could not be exhausted.

In fact, none of these are ever exhausted. Worlds are subject to production, stasis, decay, and emptiness. Not only are worlds subject to production, stasis, decay and emptiness, all conditioned things go through this cycle. The stage of emptiness is indeed exhausted and the time of decay does come to an end, but only as parts of a cycle. Since this cycle continually repeats itself, each part of it repeats itself and thus never ends. We people grow for twenty-years and then live in a period of stasis for twenty years, meaning that

we are somewhat stationary in our life cycles. After this period of about twenty years, one enters the change or decay cycle. This means there is a transformation, a continual change without rest as one begins to age. After this change there comes extinction, which does not last for just one day but takes place over a period of twenty years. The complete cycle of a human lifespan lasts eighty years. This growth, stasis, change and extinction is the same as production, stasis, decay and emptiness.

One increase and one decrease is called a kalpa. Increase refers to that part of the cycle when people's lifespans increase and reach 84,000 years. In every one hundred years the average height increases by one inch and the average lifespan increases by one year. The period of increase is followed by a period of decrease in which, similarly, there is a decrease of one inch in height and of one year in the lifespan every one hundred years. Our present kalpa declined until the time of Shakyamuni Buddha, when the average lifespan was eighty years. The decrease has continued, and today the average lifespan is around sixty years worldwide.

Now, people say that some people live for ninety or one hundred years. That is correct, but some people only live to be ten years old and others just live to be twenty. Sixty years refers to the average lifespan. Some people live a little longer, and some live for a little less time, but the worldwide average lifespan is around sixty years.

When the average lifespan reaches thirty years, a plague will come which will be fatal for anyone who contracts it because there will be no medicine to cure it. Eighty per cent of the population of the entire world will die of this plague. Only people living in the mountains, in the countryside, or in distant places where the disease cannot reach will survive. When the average lifespan reaches about twenty-five years, the disaster of fire will erupt. At that time, seven suns, instead of the one we have now, will blaze down from space.

How will seven suns be able to appear? They will appear as retribution brought about by the power of living beings' karma. Now we are beginning to explore empty space, and this exploration will turn to exploitation as we plunder the resources of other worlds. Without any reason, we humans do not stay where we belong, but we feel that we must go to other worlds and ravage other people's possessions. As we continue to exploit space, we will decimate the moon and it is then that seven suns will appear in the sky. At that time, the whole world will become a volcano and all the rivers, lakes and seas will dry up. There will not be any oceans because this world will be destroyed and burned dry up to the first Dhyana Heaven. This disaster of fire will be the first of the three great disasters which appear at the end of a kalpa.

When the average lifespan is twenty years, the second disaster, that of water, will strike. After the disaster of fire, when everything is burned and there is nothing left, in the midst of that nothing will appear something, as water comes forth from no water. There will be a transformation in space, a vast amount of water will flow forth and this world will become a vast ocean, a world of water. First it will become a world of molten fire and then it will become a world of water. The disaster of water will flood everything up to the

second Dhyana Heaven, so that even the gods in the second Dhyana Heaven will drown. At this time, the human race will be nearly extinct.

After the water disaster, when the average lifespan is between fifteen and twenty years, the third disaster, that of wind, will occur. It will be even fiercer than the disasters of fire and water. It will blow all the way to the third Dhyana Heaven. The six desire heavens, too, will be blown to bits.

It is said that in all six desire heavens there are the five marks of decay. The six desire heavens are:

1. The heaven of the Four Kings
2. The heaven of the Thirty-Three
3. The Suyama Heaven
4. The Tushita Heaven
5. The Bliss from Transformation Heaven
6. The Comfort from Others' Transformation Heaven.

In each of these six desire heavens, the five marks of decay afflict the gods just before they die.

What are the five marks of decay?

1. Gods wear a flower crown; at the end of their lives, the flowers wilt and dry out.
2. The clothing of the gods is always very clean. When the five marks of decay manifest, their clothing gets soiled.
3. Gods do not perspire, even when it is hot. When the five marks of decay manifest, their armpits begin to perspire. Once Vimalakirti told some cultivators with perfumed bodies, "Don't emit perfumed fragrances. If you do, living beings will become attached when they smell you, and they will become greedy for your fragrance. So don't emit such fragrances."
4. The bodies of the gods are always fragrant. Not just one god is fragrant; all of them are. When the five marks of decay manifest, they lose their fragrance, and their bodies begin to give off a foul odor. This stench is the fourth mark of decay.
5. Gods can always sit in dhyana samadhi. They are not like people, who resemble monkeys: "If we don't go to one place, then we will go to another; if we don't do one thing, then we have to do another." Gods, on the contrary, always sit in meditation and possess dhyana samadhi. Moreover, they do not speak very much, unlike people, who cannot get everything said in a day and continue to talk ceaselessly through the night. When the five marks of decay manifest, the gods cannot sit still and when they try to meditate, they are always moving in one direction or another. Unable to

sit still, they get confused and when they get confused, they fall. This is when gods die.

So gods, at the end of their lives, manifest the five marks of decay and thus there is the saying, "In the six desire heavens, there are the five marks of decay." When the wind disaster reaches the third Dhyana, all of the desire heavens are destroyed. Even if you have cultivated to the third Dhyana Heaven and are reborn there, the disaster of wind will blow you away when it strikes.

It is said that "Those who cultivate to Neither Thought Nor No Thought are not as fortunate as those who go to the West." After someone is born in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss, he can return to this world if he wants, to teach and transform living beings. Therefore, birth in the Western Land is a better state than birth in the Heaven of Neither Thought Nor No Thought.

After the wind disaster, there will be few people left alive. Those who are alive at that time will mature very quickly. When the average lifespan is ten years, there will be another fierce epidemic and many people will die. After this is over, the period of increase will begin. Every one-hundred years the average height will increase by one inch, and the average lifespan will increase by one year. This rate of increase will continue until the average lifespan is 84,000 years.

A cycle of increase and decrease is called one kalpa. One thousand of these kalpas is called a small kalpa. Twenty small kalpas constitute one middle-sized kalpa, and four middle-sized kalpas equal one large kalpa. When a world completes the final stage of extinction, it remains empty for a time and then it begins to grow. This period of growth lasts for twenty small kalpas. One thousand kalpas make up one small kalpa, and twenty small kalpas make up a middle-sized kalpa. There is growth for twenty small kalpas and stasis for twenty small kalpas, decay for twenty small kalpas and emptiness for twenty small kalpas.

Growth, stasis, decay and emptiness make up one cycle of a world system. After a world is empty, it will again grow and after that, there will again be stasis, again decay and again emptiness. There will be growth, stasis, decay, emptiness; growth, stasis, decay, emptiness; growth, stasis, decay and emptiness. Our world system is constantly subject to growth, stasis, decay and emptiness without end, just as people are born and die, are born and die, are born and die again and again.

This process continues endlessly because living beings are inexhaustible, and the afflictions of living beings are inexhaustible. Yet if it could be the case that any of these were exhaustible, my vows would nonetheless still be inexhaustible. ***But they will never be exhausted.*** There will never be a time when any of them can be exhausted. ***Neither will any of my vows.*** My vow power can never be exhausted.

With myriads of jewels in boundless lands in all directions, I make decorations and offerings to the Thus Come Ones. Throughout all the boundless Buddha lands of the

worlds of the ten directions, with all the myriad jewels of the worlds of the ten directions, I adorn and make offerings to all Thus Come Ones, thus generating the kind of merit and virtue that is the most supreme.

For eons as many as motes of dust in lands, I bring the foremost peace and joy to gods and humans. I bring the most superior happiness to gods in the heavens and people in the world. I make offerings for as many kalpas as there are dust motes in all the lands throughout the ten directions.

Yet, if one believes in these Kings of Vows Supreme—if there is a person who can hear of the supreme and wonderful practices of these ten great kings of vows of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva, ***as they pass by the ear but a single time; and if in search of Bodhi one thirstily craves these vows***—if one sincerely and earnestly seeks wonderful superior Bodhi and craves these vows, just like a thirsty person craving a drink of water—then ***the merit and virtue gained will that surpass***. If his mind has the thought to seek Bodhi and craves these ten vows, then his merit and virtue will surpass the merit of one who makes offerings of jewels as numerous as dust motes to Thus Come Ones and adorns all their lands. The merit and virtue of one who earnestly wishes to practice the ten kings of vows and sincerely seeks Bodhi, surpasses the merit and virtue of those who offer jewels to all the Thus Come Ones in the ten directions.