

VIMALAKIRTI'S DISCOURSE ON EMANCIPATION

TRANSLATED BY HOKEL IDUMI

CHAPTER VI.

MIRACLES

At that time Śāriputra not seeing any seat in the chamber, upon which they may sit, thought to himself thus: "Where can these assemblies of Bodhisattvas and disciples be seated?" Vimalakīrti, the wealthy householder, knowing his thought spoke to Śāriputra and said: "Why hast thou come here, is it to hear the Law or to search for seats?" Śāriputra replied: "I have come here to hear the Law and not to search for seats." Vimalakīrti spoke: "O Śāriputra, he who seeks the Law never spares either life or body; how much less should he think about seats. He who seeks the Law has no desire either for form or sensation or perception or conformation or consciousness; also he has no desire either for the twelve organs and objects of sense (*Āyatanas*) or eighteen elements (*Dhātus*); no desire even either for the world of Kāma or the world of Rūpa or the world of Arūpa. O Śāriputra, he who seeks the Law has neither attachment to the Buddha nor to the Law nor to the Order. He who seeks the law never seeks the contemplation of suffering, never seeks the attainment of the cessation of suffering, and never seeks the walking on the path of cessation. And why? The Law is far above mere talk. If I should say that I see suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path of cessation, it is mere talk and this is not seeking the Law.

"O Śāriputra, the Law is called complete annihilation; if either birth or death be realised it is either birth or death that is sought for and that is not the Law. The Law is that which knows no attachments; if there be attachments in the Law, Nirvāṇa itself is an attachment; this is not seeking the

Law. There is no tracing in the Law; if the Law be traced, that is tracing and not seeking the Law. There is neither taking nor giving in the Law; if there be either taking or giving in the Law, this is either taking or giving and not seeking the Law. There is no refuge in the Law; if there be any refuge in the Law, this is attachment to the refuge and not seeking the Law. The Law is formless; if there be recognition of form, this is seeking the form and not seeking the Law. The Law knows no abodes; if it knows an abode, this is abiding and not seeking the Law. The Law is impossible to be seen, heard, or known; if there be something to be seen, heard, or known, this is seeing or hearing or knowing, and not seeking the Law. The Law is uncreated; if it be created this is seeking the created and not seeking the Law. Therefore, O Śūriputra, he who seeks the Law should not seek any thing in the Law. When he had spoken these words, five hundred deities attained the pure eye of the Law in all things.

Then Vimalakīrti, the wealthy householder, asked Mañjuśrī :

“Thou hast been to countless asamkhyeya countries, even tens of thousands of millions; in what country is the lion-throne endowed with the most excellent qualities?” Mañjuśrī replied: “O Sir, after passing through countries equal in number to the sands of the river Gangā, there is in the eastern quarter a world named Sumerudhvaja, and there a Buddha called Sumerupradiparāja now dwells. His body is eighty thousand Yojanas in height, and his lion-throne is also eighty thousand Yojanas in height, the most excellent in adornment.” Then Vimalakīrti, the wealthy householder, manifested his supernatural power. And at that moment thirty-two thousand lion-thrones, high, broad, excellent, and pure were sent to him by the Buddha Sumerupradiparāja and were brought there into the chamber of Vimalakīrti. Neither all the Bodhisattvas nor the disciples nor Śakra nor Brahman nor the four guardian gods had seen the like before. That chamber now became so spacious that it contained all the thirty-two thousand lion-

thrones without difficulty. In the city of Vaiśālī or even in the Jambūdvīpa and in the four worlds there was nothing diminished, all being seen as it had been.

Then Vimalakīrti spoke to Mañjuśrī and said: "Take one of those lion-thrones together with all Bodhisattvas and excellent men, and sit on it, posing thyself as if thou wert the image of that [Tathāgata]." Then the bodies of those Bodhisattvas who possessed the supernatural power suddenly increased in size to the height of forty-two thousand Yojanas and seated themselves on those lion-thrones, but novices among the Bodhisattvas and the disciples could not ascend those thrones.

Then Vimalakīrti spoke to Śāriputra and said: "Take one of those lion-thrones." Śāriputra replied: "O sir, this seat is so high and broad that I can not ascend." Then Vimalakīrti said: "O Śāriputra, salute the Tathāgata Sumerupradīparāja that thou mayest ascend the throne." Then all the novices among the Bodhisattvas and the disciples saluted the Tathāgata Sumerupradīparāja and seated themselves on the lion-thrones.

Śāriputra spoke: "O sir, I have never seen before so small a chamber able to contain [so many] thrones, so high and so broad. And in the city of Vaiśālī or even in the villages and towns of the Jambūdvīpa and the four worlds and in the palaces of deities, kings of serpents and goblins, there is nothing diminished."

Vimalakīrti spoke: "O Śāriputra, there is an emancipation of all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas called the Inconceivable. If a Bodhisattva realises this emancipation, he can enclose within a mustard seed even Mount Sumeru so high and so broad, and thereby nothing is either increased or diminished. Mt Sumeru the king of the mountains remaining as it was, even the four guardian gods and the gods of the Trayastriṃśa [who live therein] recognise not and know not that they are enclosed therein. But only the being who is to be taught sees the fact that the Sumeru is contained in a mustard seed. This is called the doctrine of the Inconceivable Emancipation.

“Again, he can enclose the waters of the four great oceans within a single pore of the skin and there is no disturbance among the beings of the water whether fishes or turtles or great turtles or crocodiles, the nature of the great oceans remaining as it was; even those beings such as goblins and Asuras [who live therein] recognise not and know not that they are enclosed and never disturb the being in whom they are enclosed.

“Again, Śāriputra, a Bodhisattva who has realised the Inconceivable Emancipation cuts out the three great chiliocosms [from the universe] even as does the turner of porcelain, and holding them in the palm of his right hand, he casts them forth outside the worlds exceeding in number the sands of the river Ganga; but the beings contained therein recognise not and know not the place where they are cast; when he again restores them to their former place there is no consciousness either of going or of coming in those beings, the nature of the worlds remaining as it was.

“Again, Śāriputra, if there be any who ought to be taught and who wish to live long in this world, a Bodhisattva, prolonging seven days even to a kalpa, can make them believe those seven days to be a kalpa; or if there be any who is to be taught and who wish not to live long in this world, a Bodhisattva, reducing a kalpa to be but seven days, can make them believe a kalpa to be seven days.

“Again, Śāriputra, a Bodhisattva who has realised the Inconceivable Emancipation, can show to all beings all the adornments of the lands of Buddha concentrated in one country; or he can take all beings of the land of Buddha in the palm of his right hand, and not moving from his original abode, can fly through all the ten quarters showing to all beings all things.

“Again, Śāriputra, a Bodhisattva can manifest in a single pore of his skin all the instruments, with which all beings in all the ten quarters honour all the Buddhas; or he can mani-

est in a single pore of his skin all the lands in all the ten quarters, even the sun, moon, and stars.

“Again, Śāriputra, a Bodhisattva inhales from his mouth all the winds in all the ten quarters without injury to his body, whereby none of the trees outside him are destroyed.

“Again, when the worlds in all the ten quarters come to their end and begin to burn, he takes into his body all the fires; but the conflagration remains unchanged, nor does it do any harm to him.

“Again, in the nadir, passing through the countries equal in number to the sands of the river Gangā, he may take a Buddha-land [among them], and deposit it anywhere, at any height, passing through the countries equal in number to the sands of the river Gangā, as if he was lifting a leaf of the date with a needle, no disturbance being caused thereby in the land.

“Again, Śāriputra, a Bodhisattva who has realised the Inconceivable Emancipation makes himself visible by his supernatural power, as a Buddha body, or a Pratyeka-Buddha body, or a Śrāvaka body, or Śakra body, or a Brahman body, or a Sahāmpati body, or a sacred Cakravartin body; again he can produce all the sounds, from the highest to the lowest through all the middle grades, which can be produced in all the worlds of the ten quarters, and he turning them even into the voice of a Buddha, can produce the sounds of impermanency, pain, emptiness, and selflessness in which all the teachings proclaimed by all the Buddhas in the ten quarters can universally be heard. O Śāriputra, I have preached in outline the power of the Inconceivable Emancipation of a Bodhisattva; if it is preached in detail, we can never come to an end even when the present kalpa expires.”

At that time Mahākāśyapa having learned what the Inconceivable Emancipation is, praised it saying that he had never heard the like before, and spoke to Śāriputra and said: “Just as a blind man can not see all the coloured figures

which may be presented before him, so all the Śrāvakas may listen to discourses on Inconceivable Emancipation yet they are incapable of comprehending them. But what wise men hearing this would not cherish the thought of supreme enlightenment? How is it that we have cut down the root [of Bodhi] so that we are rotten seeds in the Mahāyāna? All the Śrāvakas listening to the discourses on the Inconceivable Emancipation, should wail so loudly that the three great chiliocosms would be shaken, while all the Bodhisattvas would rejoicingly and reverentially accept this doctrine. If a Bodhisattva understands and believes in the doctrine of the Inconceivable Emancipation, no Evil Ones are unable to do anything with him." When Mahākāśyapa had spoken these words thirty-two thousand deities all cherished the thought of supreme enlightenment.

Then Vimalakīrti spoke to Mahākāśyapa and said: "O sir, many of the Evil Ones living in the countless asaṃkhyeya worlds in the ten quarters, are such Bodhisattvas as have realised the Inconceivable Emancipation; they manifest themselves as the Evil Ones in order to preach and convert all beings through the necessary means.

"Again, Mahākāśyapa, those countless Bodhisattvas in the ten quarters may be demanded by some one of their hands, legs, ears, nose, eyes, brains, heads, blood, flesh, skin, bones, villages, towns, wives, children, male and female slaves, elephants, horses, vehicles, gold, silver, beryl, precious shells, agate, coral, amber, pearl, mother of pearl, clothes, beverages, and food; but these ones who make such demands upon the Bodhisattvas are, in many cases, such Bodhisattvas as have realised the Inconceivable Emancipation and manifest themselves as such in order to make their minds firm through their Upāyas. And why? Such Bodhisattvas as have realised the Inconceivable Emancipation are possessors of mighty powers, and of set purpose, oppress beings bringing with such calamities. Those who are powerless and inferior can never threaten Bodhisattvas in such a manner; just as an ass can never resist the kick of an

elephant. This is called the way of wisdom and the necessary "means of a Bodhisattva who has realised the Inconceivable Emancipation."

CHAPTER VII

ON BEINGS

Then Mañjuśrī asked Vimalakīrti: "How should a Bodhisattva regard all beings?" Vimalakīrti replied and said: "A Bodhisattva should regard all beings as a magician regards his magical creations created by himself; he should regard them as a wise man regards the moon in water, as his own reflections in a mirror, and again as a mirage in the summer season, as the echo of a calling voice, as clouds in the sky, as foams in the stream, as bubbles on the surface of water, as the solidity of the plantain tree, as the durability of lightning, as a fifth Element, as a sixth Skandha, as a seventh Consciousness, as a thirteenth Āyatana, as a nineteenth Dhātu. And again a Bodhisattva should regard all beings as forms in the Formless World (*arūpa-dhātu*), as a sprout of burnt seed, as egoism held by the Śrota-āpanna sages, as a rebirth of the Anāgāmin sages, as the three passions entertained by Arhat sages, as a feeling of greed and anger and idea of violating rules in the mind of a Bodhisattva after attaining to the state of Acquiescence, as residual impressions in a Buddha, as colours seen by the blind, as the breathings of one who has entered the meditation of complete annihilation, as the traces of birds in the sky, as the conception of a barren woman, as passions felt by magically created person, as dream visions after awaking, as the rebirth of one who has entered Nirvāṇa, as smokeless fire."

Mañjuśrī then asked: "When a Bodhisattva regards [all beings thus], how can he practise mercy?" Vimalakīrti replied: "Having thus regarded all beings a Bodhisattva should think this: 'I should now preach this Law [for the sake of all beings]; this is true mercy. Practice the mercy of complete

annihilation as there is no birth. Practice the mercy of no-heat as there is no passion. Practice the mercy of equity as the past, present, and future are the same. Practice the mercy of non-resistance as there is nothing produced. Practice the mercy of non-duality things as within and without do not coalesce. Practice the mercy of indestructibility as all things are ultimately extinguished. Practice the mercy of solidity as the mind is never destroyed. Practice the mercy of purity as the nature of things is pure. Practice the mercy of infinity as [individual works] are like the sky. Practice the mercy of the Arhat as he slays passions which are enemies. Practice the mercy of the Bodhisattva as he bestows peace on all beings. Practice the mercy of the Tathāgata as he attains to the nature of suchness. Practice the mercy of the Buddha as he enlightens all beings. Practice the mercy of spontaneity as it is to be attained without effort. Practice the mercy of Bodhi as [all things] are equal and of one taste. Practice the mercy of peerlessness as all desires are exterminated. Practice the mercy of great compassion as it leads all beings to the Mahāyāna. Practice the mercy of indefatigability as it makes one contemplate the emptiness and the selflessness of things. Practice the mercy of law-charity as nothing should be grudged. Practice the mercy of Morality as it effects the conversion. Practice the mercy of Patience as it protects himself and others. Practice the mercy of Diligence as it protects all beings. Practice the mercy of Meditation as he enjoys no sensuous pleasure. Practice the mercy of Wisdom as he knows what the proper time is. Practice the mercy of the Necessary Means as he manifests himself in all things. Practice the mercy of non-concealment as his straight mind is pure. Practice the mercy of profound mind as he is free from mixed deeds. Practice the mercy of non-deception as he is free from falsity. Practice the mercy of peacefulness as he helps us to obtain the happiness of Buddha. Thus is shown the mercy of a Bodhisattva.”

Mañjusrī again asked: "What is compassion?" Vimalakīrti replied: "When a Bodhisattva shares with all beings whatever merits he has acquired by his doings—this is called compassion. [Mañjusrī again asked:] "What is joy?" [Vimalakīrti] replied: "When others are benefited, a Bodhisattva rejoices in it showing no reluctance whatever." "What is indifference?" He replied: "Whatever happiness and bliss that may accrue from his deeds he has no desire to appropriate [to himself]."

Again Mañjusrī asked: "In what should a Bodhisattva who fears mortal existence find his refuge?" Vimalakīrti replied: "A Bodhisattva who is in fear of mortal existence should rely upon the power of the merits of Tathāgata." Mañjusrī again asked: "If he wish to rely upon the power of the merits of Tathāgata, what should he abide in?" He replied: "A Bodhisattva who relies upon the power of the merits of Tathāgata should abide in saving all beings." Again he asked: "If he wish to save all beings, what should he remove?" He replied: "A Bodhisattva who wishes to save all beings should remove his passions." Again he asked: "If he wish to remove his passions, what should he practise?" He replied: "He should practise the right thought." Again he asked: "How should he practice the right thought?" He replied: "He should realise that there is neither birth nor death." Again he asked: "What is that which has no birth and what is that which has no death?" He replied: "The evil is never born and the good never dies." Again he asked: "What is the root of the good and the evil?" He replied: "The body is the root of both." Again he asked: "What is the root of the body?" He replied: "Desire is the root." Again he asked: "What is the root of desire?" "False judgment is the root." "What is the root of false judgment?" "Erroneous perception is the root." "What is the root of erroneous perception?" "No-abiding is the root." "What is the root of no-abiding?" "As to no-abiding,

it has no root. O Mañjuśrī, all things come from the root of no-abiding."

At that time there was in the chamber of Vimalakirti a heavenly maiden who, having beheld those great persons and heard the Law preached, manifested herself there. She now, scattered heavenly flowers upon all the Bodhisattvas and great disciples. When the flowers touched those Bodhisattvas they fell from them, but when they touched any one of those disciples they clung to him and did not fall. All the disciples strove to remove the flowers with their supernatural power but in vain.

Then the heavenly maiden asked Śāriputra: "Why art thou striving to remove the flowers?" He replied: "These flowers are unlawful; therefore I must remove them."

The heavenly maiden said: "Thou shouldst not deem these flowers unlawful. And why? These flowers discriminate not between one thing and another; it is thou thyself that does cherish the thought of discrimination. So far as the Law of Buddha is concerned, if any mendicant has discrimination in his mind he is said to be unlawful; if there be no discrimination nothing is unlawful; Behold those Bodhisattvas to whom the flowers never cling, because they have exterminated all thoughts of discrimination. Just as when a man has fear in his mind evil spirits take the opportunity to enter into him, even so since these disciples cherish fear of mortal existence, things such as form, sound, odour, flavour, and touch take the opportunity to tempt them. With those who are far above fear, the passions of the five senses can do nothing with them. If passion remains the flowers cling; when passion is extinguished the flowers can no longer cling."

Śāriputra asked: "How long hast thou remained here in this chamber?" She replied: "I have remained here in this chamber since thy liberation." Śāriputra asked again: "How long hast thou remained here?" She asked: "How long is it since thy liberation?" Śāriputra remaining silent replied not.

The heavenly maiden asked again: "Why art thou silent in spite of being the most venerable and intelligent?" Śāriputra said: "Liberation is beyond words. Therefore I know not what to say. The heavenly maiden said: "All words and letters are aspects of liberation. And why? Liberation is neither within nor in the midst; letters are also neither within nor without nor in the midst. Therefore O Śāriputra, it is impossible to speak of liberation separated from letters. And why? All things are aspects of liberation." Śāriputra asked: "Is it not liberation to be free from passion, anger and ignorance?" The heavenly maiden said: "Buddha calls it liberation to be free from passion, anger, and ignorance, only for the sake of beings who are self-assertive. To those who are not self-assertive Buddha declares that the nature of passion, anger, and ignorance is liberation itself."

Śāriputra said: "O maiden, rightly said! rightly said! What has made thee so eloquent?" She replied: "I have obtained nothing; and I have attained to nothing. Therefore am I so eloquent. And why? If one thinks that he has either obtained or attained to something, then he is said to be self-assertive in the Law of Buddha."

Śāriputra said: "Which of the three vehicles dost thou desire?" She replied: "I become a Śrāvaka when I lead beings by the teaching of Śrāvakas; I become a Pratyeka-Buddha when I lead beings by the doctrine of causation; I become the great vehicle when I lead beings by the doctrine of great compassion. O Śāriputra, just as a man having entered a forest of Campaka blossoms he smells only the odour of these blossoms and nothing else even so one having entered this chamber inhales only the odour of the virtues of Buddha, and is no longer desirous of the odour of other virtues either of Śrāvakas or Pratyeka-Buddhas. O Śāriputra, any [beings], either Śakra, or Brahman, or the four guardian gods, or deities, or serpents, or goblins, all entering this chamber, hear only this excellent man preaching the law; and when they go out,

they all cherish the thought of supreme enlightenment, finding pleasure in the odour of the virtues of Buddha. O Śāriputra, I have stayed here in this chamber for twelve years and have never heard the doctrine either of the Śrāvaka or the Pratyeka-Buddha, hearing only the law of the Bodhisattva which has been taught by all Buddhas, and is unfathomable, full of great mercy and compassion.

“O Śāriputra, there are in this chamber ever manifested the eight unobtainable things which have never existed before. What are they? This chamber is ever illumined with golden light both by day and night, the light neither of the sun nor the moon being regarded as bright; this is the first of those things which are unobtainable and have never existed before. He who enters this chamber never suffers from passion; this is the second of those things which are unobtainable and have never existed before. This chamber is ever frequented by such beings as Śakra Brahman and Bodhisattvas of different regions; this is the third of those things, which are unobtainable and have never existed before. There in this chamber is always proclaimed the Law of the six Pāramitās which enables one to the state of infallibility; this is the fourth of those things which are unobtainable and have never existed before. There is in this chamber excellent music ever performed by heavenly beings, countless sounds of converting doctrines being sent forth from the strings; this is the fifth of those things which are unobtainable and have never existed before. There are in this chamber four great stores full of treasures which are never exhausted, however liberally they are given away to the poor and needy; this is the sixth of those things which are unobtainable and never existed before. There in this chamber all the Buddhas of all the ten quarters led by Śākyamuni, Amitābha, Akshobhya, Ratnaśrī, Ratnatejas, Ratnacandra, Ratnavyūha, Durdharsha, Simhaghosha and Sarvārthasiddha, at any moment this excellent man wills, come to expound the mine of the Law which is the secret essence of all the Buddhas;

and they return when their task is done; this is the seventh of those things which are unobtainable and have never existed before. There in this chamber all the magnificent heavenly palaces and all the pure lands of all the Buddhas are manifested; this is the eighth of those things which are unobtainable and have never existed before.

“O Śāriputra, there are ever manifested in this chamber these eight unobtainable things which have never existed before. Who witnessing these miraculous phenomena finds pleasure in the Law of Śrāvakas?”

Śāriputra asked “Why dost thou not change thy form of womanhood?” The heavenly maiden replied: “During these past twelve years I have seen no womanly form; into what form shall I change? When a magician produces an apparition of a woman, if some one should ask him: ‘Why dost thou not change this womanly form?’ would such a question be right?” Śāriputra replied: “Nay, the creation of a magician has no fixed form; what is there that is to be changed here?” She then said: “Even so, all things have no fixed form; why dost thou dare to ask me to change my woman-form?”

At that moment the heavenly maiden through her supernatural power, transformed Śāriputra into a form like unto herself, and she manifested herself as Śāriputra and asked him: “Why dost thou not change thy form of womanhood?” Then Śāriputra in the form of the heavenly maiden replied: “I know not what to change, being transformed into the form of a woman.” She said: “O Śāriputra, if thou couldst change this thy form of woman then all women could be changed; just as thou appearest in the form of a woman without being a woman, even so all women only appear to be women; though they appear to be so yet they are not. Therefore Buddha has spoken, ‘all things are neither male nor female.’” As soon as the heavenly maiden withdrew her supernatural power the form of Śāriputra became as before. She asked Śāriputra: “Now where is thy form of woman?” Śāriputra replied:

“The form of woman is neither existing nor not existing.” She said: “Even so, all things are neither existing nor not existing. This is what is taught by Buddha, that [things] are neither existing nor not existing.”

Śāriputra asked the heavenly maiden: “In what place wilt thou be reborn after thou goest from hence?” The heavenly maiden replied: “I follow the way of birth as taught by Buddha.” Śāriputra said: “The way of birth as taught by Buddha is never to quit the world.” The heavenly maiden said: “Even so, all beings are never annihilated.”

Śāriputra asked: “When wilt thou attain to supreme enlightenment?” She replied: “When thou becomest again an ignorant man, then shall I attain to supreme enlightenment.” Śāriputra said, “It is against reason that I shall again become an ignorant man.” She said: “It is also against reason that I shall attain to supreme enlightenment. And why? Bodhi has no abode; therefore there is no one who attains.” Śāriputra said: “All Buddhas equal in number to the sands of the river Gāṅgā are attaining to or have attained to or will attain to supreme enlightenment—what does that then mean?” She said: “It is because of the letters and numbers of those worlds that we speak of the past, the present, and the future; but in enlightenment there is neither past nor present nor future.” She asked: “O Śāriputra, hast thou attained to the way of Arhat?” He replied: “I have attained to it because there is nothing to attain.” She said: “Even so it is with all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas; they have attained to supreme enlightenment because there is nothing to attain.”

Then Vimalakīrti spoke to Śāriputra and said: “This heavenly maiden having honoured ninety-two millions of Buddhas is now able to exercise the supernatural powers of a Bodhisattva; having realised all her desires she has obtained the acquiescence in the eternal law, and having realised the state of steadfastness she manifests herself as she wills and in consequence of her original vows she teaches all beings.”