

# VIMALAKĪRTI'S DISCOURSE ON EMANCIPATION

(Continued)

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## CHAPTER VIII

### THE WAY OF BUDDHA

Then Mañjuśrī asked Vimalakīrti: "In what manner does the Bodhisattva practise the way of Buddha?"

Vimalakīrti replied: "When the Bodhisattva practises no-way he is said to practise the way of Buddha."

Again Mañjuśrī asked: "In what manner does he practise 'no-way'?"

Vimalakīrti replied: "The Bodhisattva is said to practise the way of Buddha, when he feels no anguish, no anger in the commission of the five grave sins; when he enters hell even without the defilement of sin; when he enters the animal world without errors of ignorance and arrogance, etc.; when he enters the world of hungry ghosts though himself endowed with merits; when he practices such acts as may lead him to heaven either with form or without form though he does not himself consider heaven an excellent abode; when he is free from defilements, while appearing as if practising covetousness; when he is free from impediments of anger, while appearing as if practising anger; when he controls his mind in wisdom, while appearing as if practising ignorance; when he abandons his possessions, both inner and outer, and does not spare even his body nor his life, while appearing as if practising avarice; when he abides in pure morality and trembles with great fear even for a minor misdemeanour, while appearing as if practising trespasses; when he is ever merciful and patient, while appearing as if practising anger; when he is diligent in virtue, while appearing to be slothful; when he is ever abiding in meditation, while appearing to be distracted in mind; when he is in possession of the wisdom both

of this world and that of the world beyond, while appearing to be ignorant; when he follows the teaching of the scripture in accordance with the necessary means, while appearing as if practising flattery and hypocrisy; when he is even like a bridge for all beings, while appearing to be arrogant; when he is pure in mind, while appearing to practise passions; when he is obedient to the wisdom of Buddha, never following the doctrines of the heretical teachers while appearing to be with the evil one; when he is preaching for the sake of all beings, the law which has never been heard before while appearing to be with Śrāvakas; when he is endowed with great compassion and teaches all beings, while appearing to be with Pratyeka-Buddhas; when his hands are jewelled and his virtues are inexhaustible, while appearing to be with poor people; when he is endowed with excellent forms with which he is adorned, while he looks as if defective in the body; when he is endowed with virtues and born in the race of Buddhas, while appearing to be of mean birth; when he is regarded by all beings with pleasure having obtained the body of the Nārāyaṇa, while appearing to be weak and uncomely; when he eradicated the root of disease and is gone far beyond the fear of death, while appearing to be subject to old age and disease; when he is ever meditating on the transiency of things and is never covetous, though in possession of property; when he is far above the mire of the five senses, though he possesses wives and children: when he is endowed with eloquence and memory which never fails, while appearing to be slow in speech; when he saves beings and leads them in the right path, while appearing to be in the wrong path; when he has exterminated causes for the evil paths, while manifesting himself everywhere in all those paths; when he has exterminated birth and death, while manifesting Nirvāṇa. Mañjuśrī, when the Bodhisattva realises the no-way in these manners, he is said to comprehend the way of Buddha.”

Then Vimalakīrti asked Mañjuśrī: “What are the seeds

of Tathāgatahood?"

Mañjuśrī replied: "To possess the body is the seed. Ignorance and thirst are the seeds. Covetousness, anger, and ignorance are the seeds. The fourfold false idea is the seed. The fivefold passion is the seed. The six Āyatanas are the seed. The sevenfold abode is the seed. The eight wicked paths are the seeds. The ninefold passion is the seed. The tenfold wickedness is the seed. To speak briefly, the sixty-two heresies and all passions are the seeds of Buddhahood."

Mañjuśrī asked: "What is the meaning of this?"

Vimalakīrti replied: "He who enters into the "state of fixedness" by seeing the uncreated, can never awaken the thought of supreme enlightenment. Just as a lotus flower can never grow on a high dry land but only in the filthy mire, even so he who enters the "state of fixedness" by seeing the uncreated can never bring forth the law of Buddha; it is only in the mire of passion that beings bring forth the law of Buddha. Again, seeds sown in the sky can never grow, but only in manured soil can they grow and bring forth fruit; even so he who enters the "state of fixedness" by [seeing] the uncreated, does not bring forth the law of Buddha; but it is in those beings who caress selfishness as high as Mount Sumeru that the law of Buddha grows, cherishing the thought of supreme enlightenment. Therefore, it should be known that all passions are the seeds of Tathagatahood. Just as one can not obtain the inestimable treasure buried in the deep ocean unless one dives into it, even so no one can obtain the treasure of omniscience unless one enters the great ocean of passions."

Then Mahāśyapa praised him by saying: "Rightly said! rightly said! O Mañjuśrī, thou hast spoken excellently. What thou hast spoken is true. All passion is the seed of Tathāgatahood. While we Śrāvakas can never cherish the thought of supreme enlightenment, those beings who commit even the five unpardonable sins are able to cherish the thought

[of supreme enlightenment] and bring forth things relating to Buddhahood. But we are forever incapable of cherishing it. Just as a man who is defective in his sense-organs can never again enjoy the advantages of the five senses, even so Śrāvakas and those who have exterminated passions can never partake in the advantages accruing from things relating to Buddhahood and cherish forever no desire [for higher things]. Therefore, O Mañjuśrī, ordinary men know how to return what they have received, while the Śrāvakas do not. And why? Ordinary men hearing the law of Buddha and cherishing the thought of supreme enlightenment will never let the three treasures be discontinued, but the Śrāvakas, even when they have heard throughout their lives of the Buddha's [tenfold] power and [fourfold] fearlessness, can never cherish the thought of supreme enlightenment."

At that time there was in that assembly a Bodhisattva named Samantadarśanarūpakāya who asked Vimalakīrti: "O sir, who are thy father, mother, wife, children, relatives, kinsfolk, officers, and friends, and where are thy servants, maids, elephants, horses, and vehicles?"

Vimalakīrti replied in the following gāthās:

1. "Prajñāpāramitā is the mother of the Bodhisattva; Upāya is his father; all the leaders of men are born of such [parents].

2. "The joy of hearing the law is his wife; the mind of mercy and compassion is his daughter; and to possess good will and sincerity is his son; absolute emptiness is his house.

3. "Passions are his disciples; they are obedient to the intentions of his will; the [thirty-seven] branches of knowledge are his friends by whom he attains to supreme enlightenment.

4. "All the Pāramitās are his friends of righteousness; the four acceptances are his singing maidens who sing in concert the song of the law.

5. "There are the gardens of the Dhāranīs; the trees

of the law far above passion, the pure and excellent flowers of the mind of Bodhi, and the fruits of wisdom of emancipation.

6. "There in the bathing lake of the eightfold deliverance the water of meditation runs over, strewn with the flowers of the sevenfold purity.\* Those who bathe [in that water] are men free from the filth of passion.

7. "Elephants and horses of the five supernatural powers yoked to the Mahāyāna vehicles, driven by intent mind, serve for the journey to the quarters of the eightfold righteousness.

8. "He is endowed with a form adorned with excellent things the best garment of penitence and the garlands of profound mind [are for him to wear].

9. "There is the wealth of the sevenfold treasure;\*\* to teach beings is the interest brought forth therefrom; to make them practice according to the law and bring these merits to maturity are the great profit.

10. "The fourfold meditation is the seat born of pure living; much learning and increase in wisdom serve as the awakening music.\*\*\*

11. "The food of the immortal law he takes; the savour of emancipation is the sauce; the purity of mind is the bath, the anointing is the chapters of the law of discipline.

12. "Destroying all the enemies of passion, there are none who surpass him in courage and strength; repressing the four evils he sets up the banner of victory in the Bodhimandala.

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\* The sevenfold purity is: (1) the purity of the body, speech, and mind; (2) the purity of being separated from passions; (3) the purity of seeing truth; (4) the purity of being without doubt; (5) the purity of discriminating the way of enlightenment; (6) the purity of comprehending the conduct leading to enlightenment; and (7) the purity of Nirvana.

\*\* The sevenfold treasure: (1) faith, (2) discipline, (3) hearing, (4) indifference, (5) wisdom, (6) penitence, and (7) penance.

\*\*\* Kumārajīva commentating on this passage says that the nobles of India in his time had in their house a professional musician, whose duty it was to awaken them in the morning by soft music.

13. “ Though he understands that there is neither birth nor death, yet he manifests himself in all lands as the sun is seen from every quarter.

14. “ Honouring countless millions of Tathagatas in all the ten quarters, in him there is no idea of partiality because he distinguishes not between those Buddhas and himself.

15. “ Though he comprehends the emptiness of the nature of those Buddha-lands and beings therein, yet he ever realises the land of purity for the sake of beings who ought to be taught.

16. “ He is the Bodhisattva who possesses the power of fearlessness and manifests even in one moment all beings with their forms, voices, and behaviour.

17. “ Though being conscious of evil yet he follows evil deeds of evil; and he manifests those evils according to his will, through his wisdom of the necessary means.

18. “ He shows himself as subject to old age, disease, and death in order to teach all beings; though he knows that [things are] even as a phantom, yet he understands their real nature in a most thorough manner.

19. “ He causes a world conflagration and reduces the universe into nothing; this is to make all beings realise transiency of things, as they are possessed by the idea of permanency.

20. “ When countless millions of beings come to invite the Bodhisattva, he goes even simultaneously to all their houses and make them walk in the way of Buddha.

21. “ All the books of spells and all kinds of arts he produces, making use of all these things in order to benefit all beings.

22. “ He mixes himself among all the heretics of the world becoming himself one of the mendicants and helps others to be freed from errors, while he himself never falls into any of these heresies.

23. “ He manifests himself as the sun or moon or Śakra

or Brahman who is the lord of this world, or sometimes even as earth or water, or again as fire or wind.

24. "When there is a plague in this kalpa, he shows himself as a medicinal herb; those who use it will be cured of disease and all poisonous [effects] will be nullified.

25. "When there is a famine in this kalpa, he shows himself as food; and delivering people from hunger and thirst, he preaches the law to them.

26. "If there be a war in this kalpa, he shows mercy and compassion to all beings, and teaches them to enter a state of non-resistance.

27. "If a great battle takes place, the Bodhisattva opposes the enemy with an equal force; manifesting a mighty power he subdues them and restores peace.

28. "To all the lands where there are infernal regions the Bodhisattva will go and be busily engaged in saving all the suffering beings.

29. "In all the lands where the beasts devour one another, he will manifest himself among them and benefit them.

30. "Though he appears as if enjoying the five senses, yet he practises meditation; thus causing confusion in the mind of the evil ones he gives them no chance to assert their power.

31. "To see a lotus flower blowing right in fire, this is indeed a rare thing; even so to practise meditation while leading a sensuous life, this is rare indeed.

32. "Manifesting himself as a harlot he attracts those sensuously minded; this is to catch them by the hook of sensuality, and induce them later into the wisdom of Buddha.

33. "He will sometimes be manifested as a burgomaster, or as a leader of traders, or as a national teacher, or as a minister of state, and benefits all beings.

34. "He manifests himself as an inexhaustible store of treasure for all who are in need, and by this means persuades

them to cherish the thought of enlightenment.

35. "He manifests himself as a hero in possession of mighty power and suppresses all the arrogant spirits cherished by those that are egotistic and conceited; and makes them abide in the supreme enlightenment.

36. "To those who are timorous he manifests himself before them and gives them comfort: he first bestows fearlessness on them and then lets them awaken the thought of supreme enlightenment

37. "Showing himself as a hermit, free from sensuality and in possession of the five supernatural powers, he leads all beings to realise discipline, patience, and mercy.

38. "If there is any who requires attendants, he will be manifested to him as a servant; first he satisfies him in his needs, and then persuades him to cherish the thought of supreme enlightenment.

39. "Whatever beings desire he bestows upon them; he induces them to the way of Buddha, and by the power of the good necessary means he provides them with everything they are need of.

40. "Thus infinite are the ways of Bodhisattvas and measureless his deeds; and innumerable are beings he thus delivers; limitless is his wisdom.

41. "Though all the Buddhas through countless millions of kalpas praise the virtues of the Bodhisattva, yet the limits will never be reached.

42. "Who but the foolish, ignorant, and unintelligent, hearing such excellent teachings as these, cherish not the thought of supreme enlightenment?"