

## Opening Poem for Teishos on the Buddha Way Chapter of the Vimalakirti Sutra

Whose capacities are the highest of the high?  
How do we return to the Tathagata Gate  
through which our innate power emerges?  
Letting go all desire for enlightenment,  
all seeking for the Way,  
Clearly seeing our Original Nature  
is to repay our debt to the ancestors

In this way Vimalakirti says at the beginning of this chapter that we cannot simply walk a conceptual, pre-determined path on some kind of already set of rails. We have to let go of even that idea and offer everything for the liberation of all beings or there will be no liberation. To not have our mind moved around at all. Then for the first time we can become one with the Buddha's way. Like Master Rinzai also said, to not get stopped by ideas and preferences and opinions. To throw everything into this liberation, yet even then a warm, caring mind is still present. Then we can reflect each person simultaneously and function appropriately.

When each mind moment is empty then we can still offer with this body a kind smile, a kind word, we can offer our seat – all of these are ways to offer our deep warm feeling of our compassionate mind. There are important details for constructing a Buddha Land, and these ways of doing it without any material offerings are very important for that. When every mind moment is empty, we can simultaneously offer love, and live in a way that will liberate all living beings.

Next he says that hate, greed and anger are also seeds of becoming Buddha. Not a conceptualization of letting go of these, rather all of our cells deeply want to survive. To be greedy sounds bad, but we are all greedy to stay alive all the way down to our cells. Anger can also be a positive thing when angry at the appropriate thing when they need correction. Because there is love, that is why wisdom is born. Love and wisdom are one, yet it cannot be a small, self-centered love. It has to be a love that is encompassing all beings. Even if we have anger, if it is used in a skillful way, it can also be a seed of Buddha.

While thinking that everything we see is transient, it is true that everything in this world is transient. It is something that will never change, no matter how much we long to hold onto them. We can see that everything is changing, but we do want to hold on to our youth, our health, our possessions, yet things

are always transforming so that we have to see that we will have to let go of all of it. We might think that something is perfect, but we need to acknowledge that everything changes. Whatever we have received we have to give back. That is why we offer everything to all beings. We live in a world which appears to be not pure. But to not settle for that. To not settle for pleasure but to let go of things as soon as they are finished. This world is like a fleeting world, a star at dawn, a bubble in a stream. To see this in every situation – but to also see that we cannot become the seed of a Buddha by trying to hold on and avoid these changes. But to go beyond the world's transiency, going beyond the place where everything is changing. And to realize the deepest joy within that no matter what we are doing. To see clearly who is the true master in each of these situations. And in this way our seed will become Buddha. We get confused thinking that it is a clear, pure world but knowing that it is not.

If we think we are already good, then there is no strong motivation and wisdom and Ki energy. For that reason we have to see that we are not formally some kind of good person, but we need to deepen and polish this wisdom always.

To this Manjusri responded: one who stays in the fixed determination in the vision of the uncreated is not capable of conceiving the spirit of unexcelled perfect enlightenment. However, one who lives among created things, their mind full of passions is able to conceive the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment.

It is not about not doing as in we mustn't see, we mustn't hear, we mustn't smell, it is not about throwing away all of society, which that would lead to. Rather like it says here: Flowers like the blue lotus, the red lotus, the white lotus and the moon lily do not grow on the dry ground but do grow in the swamps and mud banks. Just as the Buddha qualities do not grow in living beings who always want to do right, but rather grown in those people who are filled with passions. These are famous words of this sutra. That is why living in a small self-centered way is not the point. We have to see what all people are suffering. We have to be among them and see what that experience is, and only then are we able to be motivated to bring forth this way of liberation.

It may seem that Vimalakirti is speaking contradictory, telling us these ways of working on our wisdom, but it is about how to use these desires and not to be used by them – this is the greatest mistake. We have to polish that wisdom and use and offer this for the liberation of all beings. This is the way of the Mahayana.

Vimalakirti is saying that those of many desires become Buddhas. Likewise lotuses do not grow in the sky but on the earth, so the Buddha qualities do not grow in the one determined for the absolute, but do grow in the one who can conceive the spirit of enlightenment. Manjuisri is pursuing him, asking him to explain about this seed. The flower when blooming simultaneously also produces a seed for the next generation.

When the Buddha awakened he said that he had realized that all beings in the whole world were awakened at the same time. He was astonished to realize that everyone had always been endowed with an awakened mind. There are so many different kinds of people, their age, their interest, we usually judge them on their external features like their clothes. We depend on that appearance, only because we don't know well that awakened mind. We don't see it as an appearance and this is what the Buddha realized. Everyone believes that they can already see clearly with sharp cutting abilities. While we have this awakened mind from the origin, each and every one of us, we have a hard time believing it, that is what the Buddha saw.

Roshi's good friend is the head of the police department. Every morning when he wakes up he reads a sutra in front of his white Kannon Statue, he then sits zazen in front of her for a while, eats breakfast. But only thinks about his job after he has aligned his state of mind. He arrives at the police station, and first doesn't go to his desk but he goes and visits each of the prisoners. To each of them he does greetings, saying "Good Morning", even to those who have just been caught and thrown into jail who don't want to be told anything. Every single morning he says hello to each of them. And every one of them, eventually answers a quiet "Morning". Sometimes he gets busy with police work and doesn't have time to come by, and even those prisoners who were so timid in their response to him, they would ask, whether he wouldn't be coming that day?

After a week or so he will put an appropriate magazine in their cell, and next he will look for a good book for them to read and puts that in their cells. When they get send to a different prison, they ask him whether they could take the book with them. There people who have been thrown away by society, naturally will do things to improve themselves if this way is made available to them. They come back to this deeper interest. In our mind even more so if we are a criminal, we want to improve and cultivate within. We have to realize this place of no self and no other, but while knowing this place of true inner quiet, we cannot lose our passion for the liberation of all beings. In the deep mud is where these prisoners have lived. The flowers begin to grow again, like lotuses

growing from the mud. The lotus, the symbol of Buddhism, is the same as these prisoners.

Manjusri then says in response to Vimalakirti, that in the ocean we can find the pearls and the corals. The ocean seen as a place for treasures from the olden days. But if you do not enter the ocean these could not be found. The same is true for our mind – without knowing desire we cannot know the passion that leads us to liberate all beings. This is the very basis of the Mahayana.

In this way Manjusri and Vimalakirti exchange in this way, and all the top disciples of the Buddha who had refused to come and visit Vimalakirti when asked by the Buddha to do so. That is why finally only Manjusri would go even if he felt that he couldn't be as wise as the Buddha, very insufficient for the job, yet as soon as it became known, all of the 84000 Bodhisattvas, all of the top disciples of the Buddha, all wanted to be on site. In a small room where everything has been put away, Vimalakirti rested. Yet in that small room he was giving his attention to the whole universe. And that is why all of the many students were fitting into that small room.

We can know this great awakening because we know these passions, and the passions are the seed of the Tathagatas wisdom. And it is from this compassion that all things come forth.

Just as those who are blind or deaf cannot perceive wondrous things as they are being put in front of them. We need to have those desire still, like a Bodhisattva, understanding the people that need to be liberated, and not like a Buddha, who is already free from all desires.

People who know that they were mistaken can apologize and decide to begin again. They can review their behavior and can make a new passionate vow to make it differently. But a disciple of the Buddha who has no more attachments, they have nothing to review and therefore they cannot give rise to awaken to the illuminated mind. The Buddha Dharma is not really about being still and secluded, but to be open minded in society.

This is all about the state of mind of the Buddha, not about the world of things. So how should our mind be? We have a body because of karmic affiliations with our parents, but once we have a body, we also have to take care of this body. But from the endless past to the limitless future we have to use this body and this mind. Once when the Buddha was travelling he met Ananda, who became his disciple and was inseparable from him for 25 years. He actually

was a nephew of the Buddha. The Buddha told him that he had become old, like a broken cart and Ananda knew this well because he had always been with the Buddha, so he asked the Buddha: how shall all of us continue then? And how should they deal with problems that they always had taken to the Buddha to which the Buddha said: make your mind your refuge, do not look outside of yourself. Make the Buddha's way your refuge, do not look to others. Sometimes we will become confused and we become deluded, so how shall we act? You have to align your body, you have to align your determination, not only for ourselves but to live for all beings deepest liberation. For that we must live in a good way in this life. It is important that we take refuge in nothing outside, only take refuge in that truth that we know. And in the truth of the way the Buddha has always taught. This is the way of life of the Buddha Dharma.

The Buddha's way is being expressed by Vimalakirti, until now he said that as soon as there is an idea about the Buddha's path, then what can be seen as the seed for enlightenment? having ideas about the Buddha's qualities, where there are no thoughts left whatsoever, that would be a big mistake. the seeds for the Buddha are all situations in society, not some pure far away place, from there the problems of the world would not be resolved. the people in society suffer from many things, and from there the wish and vow to resolve these comes forth. Saying clearly that the seeds for realization are found in the midst of society. how then can we guide people in the midst of their challenges?

Here Vimalakirti is giving a poem responding to this question. Today we would say it is like an opera, it would be a most beautiful piece. Manjusri and Vimalakirti are exchanging and explaining how the Buddha's path can be practiced.

Going to the other side, from there we can realize our true nature, this is not how it is seen by Mahayana Buddhism. From our birth we all have the ability to awaken to our true nature. Because we do not awaken to this wisdom, that is why we get confused and create suffering. Awakening to this wisdom is our own liberation to the Buddha mind. This awakening to our own wisdom is the way to liberate ourselves. It is not that God or Buddha will come and save us. We get liberated from our own wisdom. even if we live in wealthy circumstances, if we do not make use of our wisdom, we are no better off, then someone born in a poor family using his wisdom. We need to clarify what this wisdom is all about.

Like it says at the end of the Heart Sutra: Bodhisattva Mahasattva can liberate all being through the Hannyā Haramita, the great Prajñā wisdom. We awaken to this wisdom and all barrier in our minds have disappeared. Thus we also feel no uncertainty.

## **Closing Poem for the Lectures on the Vimalakīrti Sūtra, Buddha Way Chapter**

Lecturing and explaining, the nature of nonduality is clear:

Nothing to practice, nothing to realize—

Everything's right under your feet!

Open your eyes and Original Nature is clear and bright—

A single sprig blossoming on an early plum,

Fresh, the colors of spring!