

Minwa Fu Hokekyo Dowa
(Volume 10 of 30 Volumes)

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Recall Your Original Vow

Chapter 9 of the Lotus Sutra

The Assurance of Future Buddhahood of the Sravakas Who Have Something More to Learn and the Sravakas Who Have Nothing More to Learn

Chapter 1

New Buddhas

Let us review how many people were assured to become future Buddhas so far.

The first was Sariputra who was Number One in Wisdom would be called Flower Light Tathagata.

Next,

Kasyapa who was the Number One Leader would be called Light Tathagata,

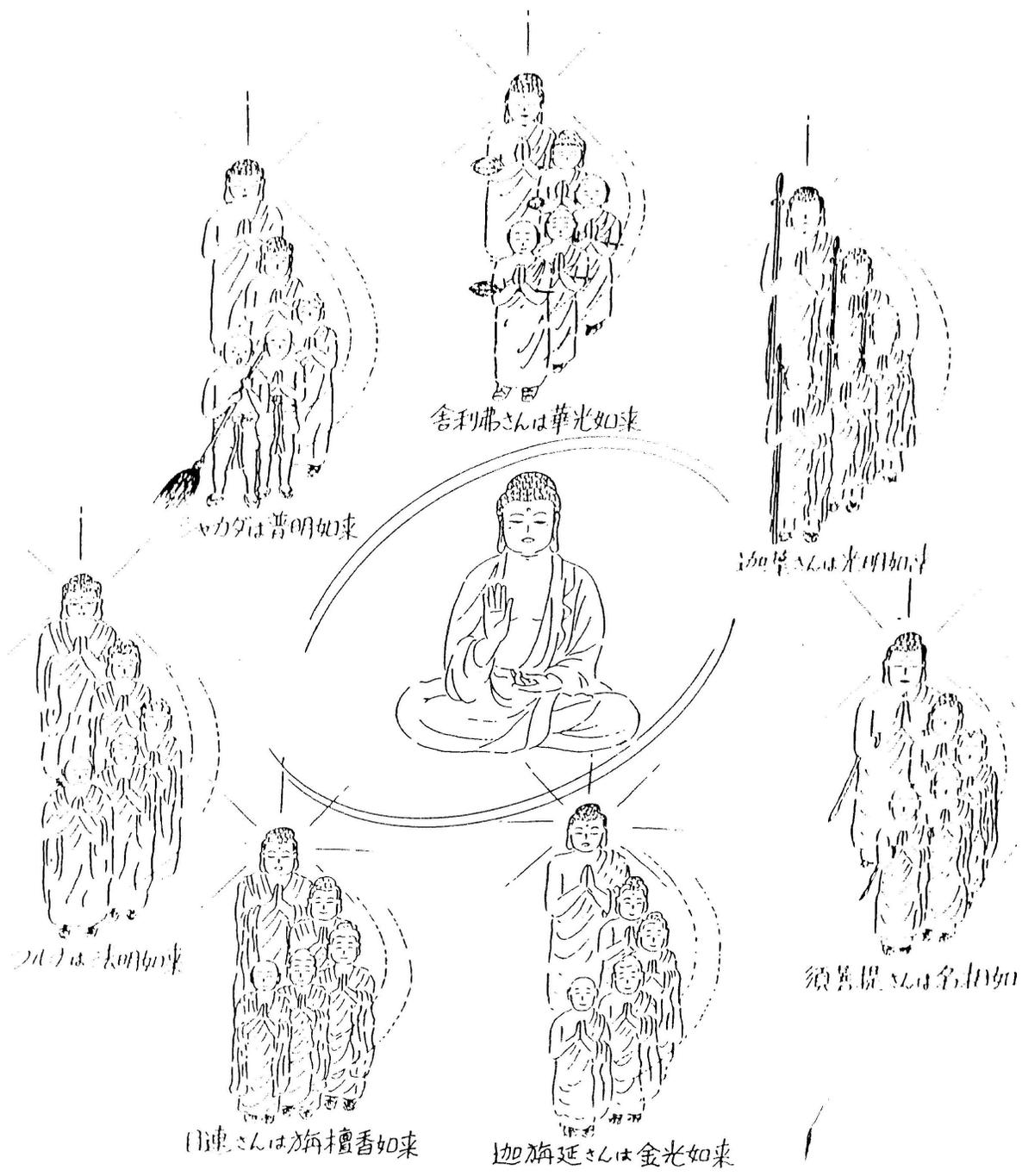
Subhuti who was the Number One Realization of the Emptiness would be called Beautiful-Form Tathagata,

Katyayana who was the Number One Debater would be called Gold-Light Tathagata, and

Maudgalyayana who was the Number One Obtainer of the Supernatural Power would be called Tamalapattra-Candana-Fragrance Tathagata.

Together, they are the four great Sravakas. (cf. Volume 4 and 7)

Besides them in the preceding Volume 9, “The Brilliant and Also the Unintelligent,” Purna, who was the Number One Expounder of the Dharma, and



seven hundred Sravakas were assured and would be called Dharma-Brightness Tathagata. They all have the same Buddha name and dwell in the same world and the same district.

At the same time another five hundred Sravakas including the unintelligent Svagata and Kaundinya Bhiksu were assured to become Buddhas and would be called Universal-Brightness Tathagata.

Thus, Sakyamuni Buddha gave assurances to 1,200 disciples who were in the lower capacities of understanding the Dharma, the four great Sravakas in the middle level of understanding the Dharma, and one pratyekabuddha with a superior capacity of understanding the Dharma that they would all become Buddhas.

Chapter 2

How about Ananda and Rahula?

I wonder if Sakyamuni Buddha has forgotten about someone else to be assured of becoming Buddhas? Don't you think He has forgotten some very important disciples?

As I mentioned in *The Prince, Sakyamuni Buddha* (Volume 1), when the Buddha was still the prince of Sakya Clan, there was a lovely and cute son named Rahula between Him and Princess Yashodhara. Do you recall him now? Rahula at the age of fifteen became the Buddha's disciple three years later after his father attained enlightenment and became the Buddha.

Besides him, there was Buddha's cousin named Ananda who was King Shuddhodana's younger brother's son. Ananda joined the Sangha together with Rahula. For over 20 years since they joined the Sangha, Ananda served the Buddha as a steward of the Buddha. He was always together with the Buddha day and night, so he always listened to all of Buddha's talks. Because he had excellent memory, he remembered all of the contents of the Buddha's speech. Most sutras start with a phrase, "Thus have I heard." "I" means Ananda.

"I heard the Buddha's teachings as such and such!" Ananda was a very

important person for all of us, because without him, the Buddha's true teachings may not exist correctly today.



Chapter 3

The Son, the Cousin, and also The Other Disciples

Why did Sakyamuni Buddha not assure His family members and relatives to become Buddhas at the same time that some of His disciples had received Buddha-Names. Why?

Was it because Rahula was His son? Was it because Ananda was His cousin? What do you think? What was the reasons His lovely son and His dutiful cousin received their Buddha-Names last? Listen well while you are thinking about the reasons.

Ananda and Rahula were not comfortable while watching 1,200 disciples receive their Buddha-Names together with Purna, Number One Expounder of the Dharma, and Kaundinya Bhiksu, a chief vassal of Sakya Clan; and Svagata, Number One Unintelligent man.

Ananda and Rahula could not hold their breath and could not remain patient, so they spoke up!



Chapter 4

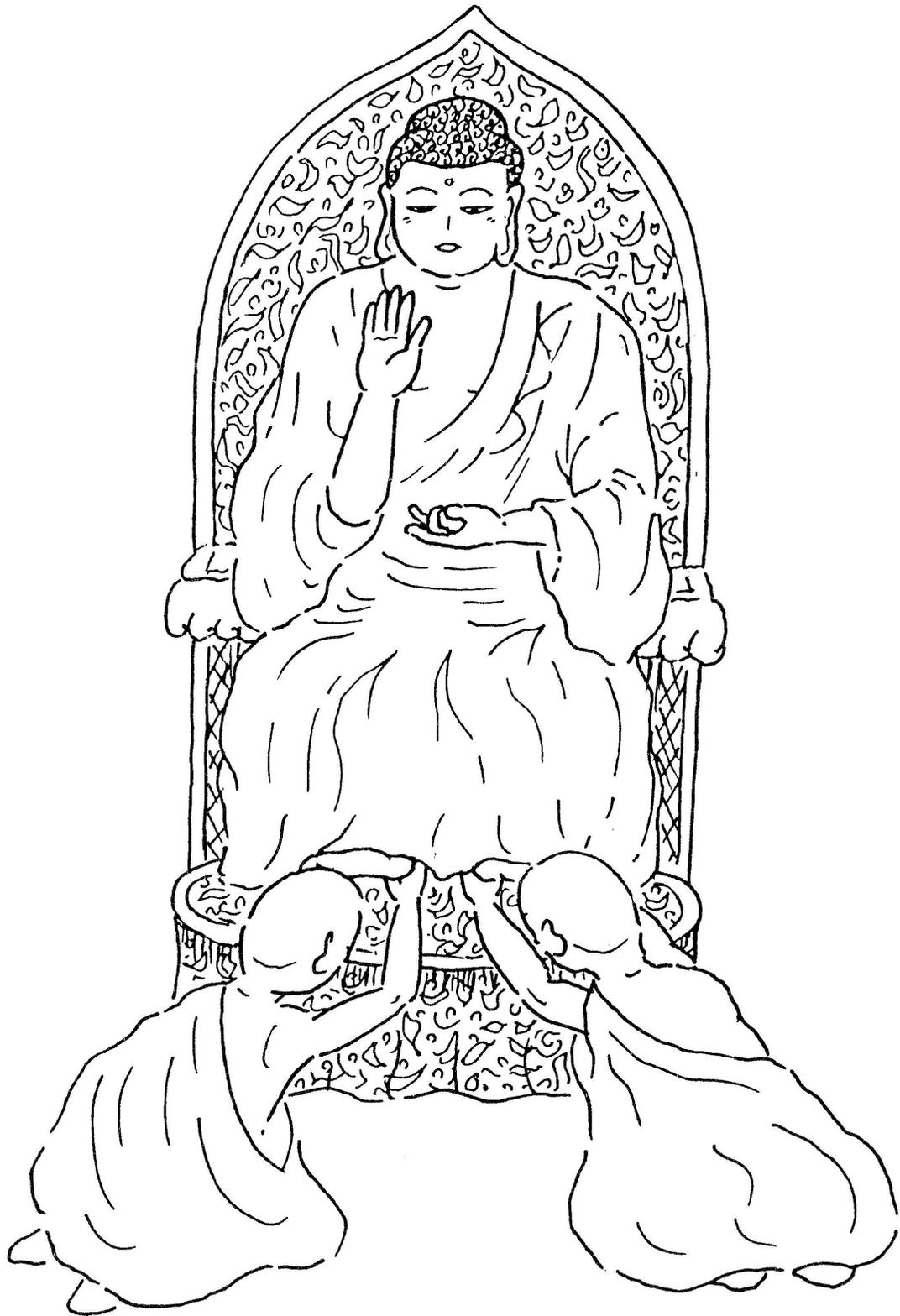
Ananda and Rahula Request Their Buddha-Name

As the son and a cousin, they tried to calm down their hasty minds and tried to ensure other disciples would not laugh at them as they put their palms together in the honor pose after touching the feet of the Buddha and finally said respectfully as follows:

A) Sakyamuni Buddha with the Three Virtues of the Lord, the Master, and the Parent

“Oh, Supremely Awakened One and the most Honored One! You are our master. But You are also the father of Rahula and a cousin of Ananda. Besides that, You are the guardian for us as monks. The people recognized us as Your son and Your cousin!

How glad we shall be if we are assured our future Buddhahood! If You are satisfied watching our devotion and practices, please give us a Buddha-Name, too,” they said.



B) 2,000 Disciples who Have Something More to Learn and the Disciples Who Have Nothing More to Learn

Thereupon the two thousand disciples composed of the two kinds of Sravakas: those who had something more to learn and the Sravakas who had nothing more to learn, also rose from their seats, bared their right shoulders, came to the Buddha, joined their hands together with all their hearts, looked up at the World-Honored One without a blink.

I wonder what the Buddha was thinking? He was supposed to easily be able to read their minds.



C) Years Rahula Hated His Father

Rahula joined the sangha and became a monk at the age of fifteen, but the Buddha let Sariputra take care of him. Rahula might have expected his father to educate his son directly with love and compassion.

You see, a few months after Rahula was born, his father left leaving him and his mother at the Kapilavastu Palace. Therefore, Rahula had no memory of his father. It might be because of his father's unavoidable decision, but Rahula had no responsibility as an infant soon after his birth. The baby was named Rahula which means an obstacle! How sad and hard for the Buddha to give the name "Obstacle" to His lovely baby; however, Rahula had no way to understand his father's feelings.

When he grew up to boyhood, he was able to know the meaning of his name but could not understand why his father had to name him "Obstacle." Rahula was awfully angry and hated Him. There is no way to understand his father's mind. It could not be helped. I feel sympathy towards Rahula.



D) Father Became the Buddha

Rahula heard that his father attained Buddhahood called Sakyamuni Buddha when he was twelve years old. His feelings must have been complicated.

He thought that his father had deserted his lovely and beautiful wife and his son. There is no child who does not hate his or her father who deserted him or her as a child. Rahula was too small to understand his father's feeling. The father loved the baby and the baby's mother so much,



so his mind was captivated with them. But He had to leave his beautiful wife and lovely and only son at home and became a homeless monk in order to attain freedom from the sufferings of birth and death. It took several months for the Buddha to decide renounce them.

Rahula needed many decades to understand his father's love. His father's quest (freedom from the sufferings) was the spirit of the Eternal Original Buddha.

Twelve years* had passed after his father left them at the palace and when he attained Buddhahood under the Bodhi tree. Another three years passed when the Buddha heard that His father, King Shuddhodana Gautama was seriously sick. Thus, the Buddha returned to His Hometown, Kapilavastu Palace after a fifteen-year interval. It happened like this ...

**Twelve years: some books say it was six years.*

E) Even Though Rahula Met His Father in a Dream

The Buddha returned home and met his sick king and family for the first time after attaining Enlightenment. Reading Rahula's sad mind, the Buddha watched his son for a while with deep empathy.



Rahula wanted to rush into his father's arms and to be embraced. However, the father in front of him was not just his father but also the Most Honored One for all living beings. Thus, Rahula was not able to jump into his father's arms and cry.

F) Pity Rahula

Rahula could not understand the extraordinary relationship of being born as the son of the Buddha at that time. Even after he joined the sangha as one of the Buddha's disciples, he was irritable in a way that is hard to describe. He spoke impatiently and behaved in an unsettled manner.

Seeing his son's attitude, the Buddha called him after returning from being out and said, "Rahula, bring me a bowl of water to wash my feet." Rahula sulked and brought the water while having a fit.

"Rahula! Dump the water on the yard!" said the Buddha. Rahula got angry because He did not wash his feet but ordered the water be dumped instead. Rahula was a little upset about it but followed what the Buddha said because He was his father and now the Buddha whom everyone respected. So, Rahula could NOT ask, "Why dump the water without washing your feet?" The water immediately soaked into the ground.

Then the Buddha said again, “Rahula! Bring back the water you spilled back into the bowl!” After all this, Rahula talked back to the Buddha without considering the consequences.

“You are too mean to me! How can I gather the spilled water back into the bowl?”



G) Spilled Water Cannot Be Gathered Again

Then the Buddha preached to Rahula slowly and compassionately one word after another:

“Rahula! Listen well! The words you have spoken or the behavior you have done once cannot be taken back just as the spilled water cannot be gathered again. Once you tell a lie or steal something, you cannot bring back your trust from others. Once you have carelessly hurt somebody’s mind, you are not able to mend it! Just one word or one behavior will either make your personality better or make you lose credit with others,” warned the Buddha.



H) Finally Understood Father's Love

With these Buddha's compassionate lessons, wise Rahula realized at last why his father named his son "Rahula."

The father named his son "Rahula," because the father loved the baby so much, and the father thought the infant was a barrier for him to renounce worldly matters. But it was not because the father disliked the baby. Even if He broke the bonds of affection to his child, He tried to save all living beings from suffering. Rahula finally understood that his father is Number One in the world.



Thus, Rahula became a disciple of the Buddha and practiced the Dharma as a monk. However, in any case Rahula had been raised as the only princely heir of Kapilavastu and was waited upon by many servants and didn't face any problems until he was fifteen years old. Therefore, he unconsciously expected everyone to respect, praise, and honor him. He showed off, took pride in and acted as if he must be the center of the group. It was understandable for him; but from the Buddha's viewpoint, it was not acceptable because "Everyone is equal."

I) A Popular Person Now

When the Buddha expounded the Lotus Sutra, Rahula was already over forty years old, so he had advanced in his practice of the Dharma.



He was able to understand other people's feelings and did not show off anymore. He hid himself and practiced in order to avoid showing off himself, so he was eventually called Number One Hidden-Practitioner and recognized as one of the ten great disciples of the Buddha.

How about Ananda who is the Buddha's cousin?

J) A Freak of Fate?

Ananda is the son of the younger brother of King Shuddhodana who is Sakyamuni Buddha's father. Devadatta is the son of the elder brother of Queen Maya who is the Buddha's mother. So Ananda, Devadatta and the Buddha are cousins. Devadatta is very well known because of his several attempts to kill the Buddha and to destroy the sangha.

Ananda felt guilty because his cousin Devadatta tried to kill the Buddha, so Ananda faithfully served the Buddha day and night to cover Devadatta's wrong conducts.

However, when Ananda was young, he was fond of the new staff and very curious about everything new. Even after he became a disciple of the Buddha, he preferred to activate the teachings of the Buddha practically. Instead of teaching the Equality of the Four Castes, he participated in the anti-caste movement. He was not satisfied by just teaching about the equality of man and woman; he became active in the feminist movement. Sometimes he made trouble with the Buddha with these movements. He was also the one who recommended the Buddha let women join in the sangha. They were called bhiksunis (nuns) while the men were called bhiksus (monks).

Thus, Ananda was a very interesting person.

K) Extraordinary Memory Power

Now, Ananda was already in the sangha for over twenty years. Forgetting about his participation in outside movements, he was now serving the Buddha day and night as an attendant. He listened to all of Buddha's messages and memorized everything he said.

He had excellent memory among the Buddha's disciples. Since Ananda was together with the Buddha day and night until His death at the age of eighty, he was shocked to face his separation from his master.



L) People Thought Ananda Will Also Die

Even though the Buddha entered His Parinirvana (no more to repeat of birth and death), Ananda served Him as if He was still alive. Watching him, other disciples worried that Rahula might also die.

But wise Ananda finally realized what he must do after Buddha's death and returned to his normal sense. Thus, we are able to study the Buddha Dharma now.

Shall we go back to the main subject now?



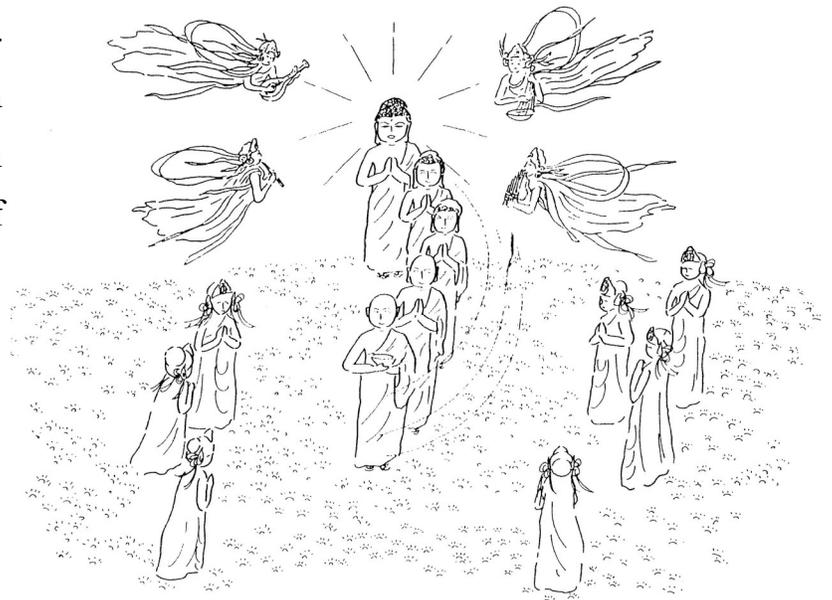
Chapter 5

Ananda Is Mountain-Sea-Wisdom-Supernatural-Power-King

Responding to the begging by Ananda and Rahula, the Buddha said compassionately with a smile to Ananda first, “In your future life you will become a Buddha called Mountain-Sea-Wisdom-Supernatural-Power-King Tathagata.”

“You will attain Buddha-hood after you make offerings to sixty-two hundred million Buddhas and protect the stores of their teachings. That Buddha will teach twenty thousand billion Bodhisattvas, that is, as many Bodhisattvas as there are sands in the River Ganges and cause them to attain Buddha-hood. The world of that Buddha will be called Always-Raising-Banner-Of-Victory. His world will be pure and the ground of it will be made of lapis lazuli.”

“Ananda! Mountain-Sea-Wisdom-Supernatural-Power-King Tathagata will be praised for his merits by many thousands of billions of Buddhas of the ten quarters.” Thus, Sakyamuni Buddha gave the name of the Buddha to Ananda.



Chapter 6

Names of the Buddha Hardly Given Even to the Great Bodhisattvas

There were eight thousand Bodhisattvas who had just resolved to aspire for the Buddha-hood in this congregation. They thought, “As far as we have heard, even great Bodhisattvas have hardly been assured of their future Buddha-hood. Why have these Sravakas been assured?”

They wondered if Ananda was assured just because he was one of the Buddha’s cousins. He was just the number One Server to the Buddha but not an expert in speech, a superior in debate, nor having extra merit to expound the Dharma. Why did the Buddha give the name of the Tathagata to Ananda? We, Bodhisattvas, have hardly been seen receiving the names of the Buddha for us, Bodhisattvas. There must be a special cause and condition for this result. Thus, they thought in their minds.

Thereupon the World-Honored One, reading what the Bodhisattvas had in their minds, said to them:

Chapter 7

The Original Vow of the Great Bodhisattva Who Wished to Listen a Lot to the Dharma

“Good men! Ananda and I resolved to aspire for Enlightenment under the Void-King Buddha at the same time in our previous existence. At that time Ananda always wished to hear much while I always practiced strenuously. Therefore, I have already attained Buddha-hood, but he has not yet. Now he protects my teachings. He also will protect the store of the teachings of the future Buddhas, will teach Bodhisattvas, and cause them to attain enlightenment according to his original vow. Therefore, now he has been assured of his future Buddha-hood,” thus, the Buddha cleared their wondering minds.

How Ananda was pleased to hear this and be honored!



The Mission to Store the Dharma Clearly Remembered

Having heard from the Buddha, Ananda mysteriously remembered his original vows made under the Void-King Buddha in his previous existence. The memory was very clear just as it happened yesterday, and he said to the Buddha:

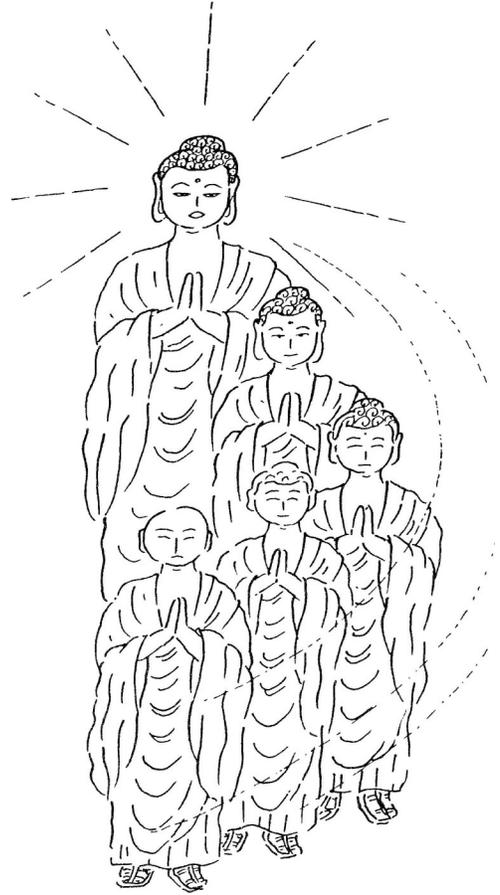
“You, the World-Honored One, I would like to appreciate you. I have completely forgotten my original vow, but you reminded me of the vow in my previous existence. In order to listen correctly to the teachings of Sakyamuni Buddha and store them, I was born as one of the families in the Sakya Clan. Then I became Your disciple and listened to much of the Dharma to store them in my memory without recalling my original vow. Indeed, Sakyamuni Buddha reminded me of the mission to store the Dharma correctly. I shall keep them all!” Thus, Ananda thanked the Buddha.



Chapter 8

Rahula Is Walking-On-Flower-Of-Seven-Treasures

Thereupon Sakyamuni Buddha said to Rahula who was watching Him and Ananda, “Rahula do not worry! In your future life you will become a Buddha called Walking-On-Flowers-Of-Seven-Treasures Tathagata. In your future life you will make offerings to as many Buddhas as the particles of the dust of ten worlds. Before you become that Buddha you will also be born as the eldest son of those Buddhas just as you are now mine.”



“You will be called Walking-On-Flower-Of-Seven-Treasures Buddha. His world will be solemn and pure. The people in the world are also pure in their minds. The life length of the Buddha is limitless.”

“Ananda and Rahula were born as members of the Sakya Clan with the profound cause, condition and effect accordingly with your original vows of “Store of the Dharma” and “Inheritance of the Dharma.”

“Although you were born as My son, you had to be separated soon after your birth. It was because of your birth, I was able to have the firm resolution and was able to renounce the world to seek freedom from sufferings of birth and death. As the result of the twelve years’ ascetic practices, I could realize my original vow to be born on this Saha-world. After I had attained enlightenment and became the Buddha, you became my disciple and practiced the Dharma in order to accomplish your original vow.”

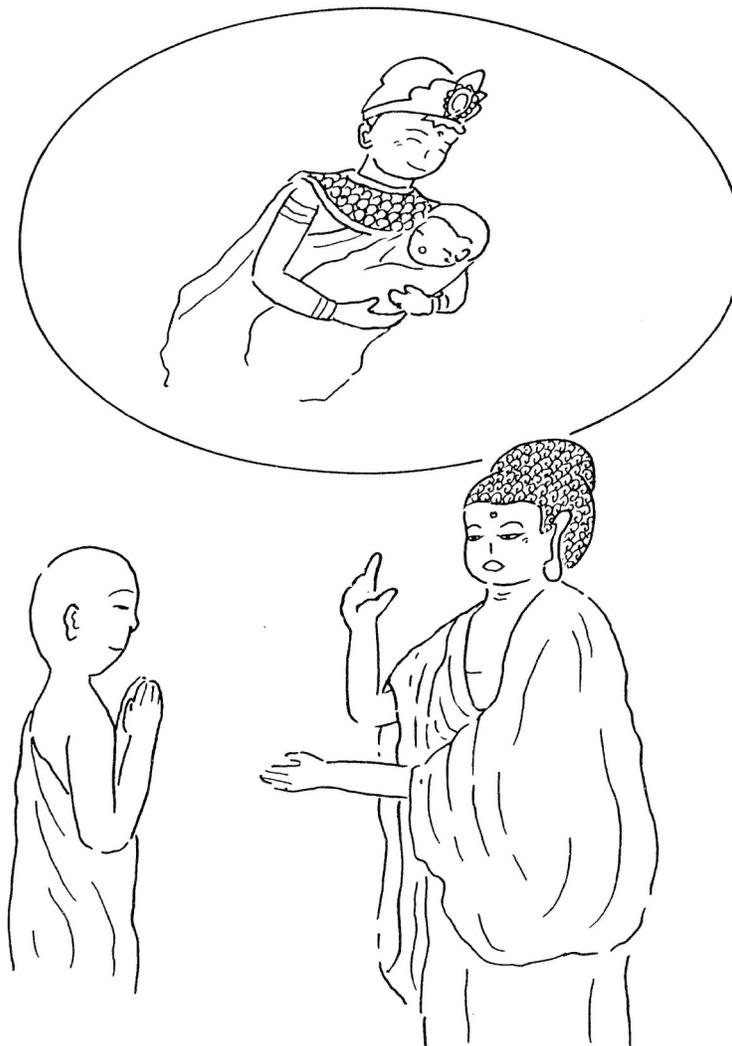
“In your early monk-life, you inherited and lived in the life style of a prince, but you are now practicing in hiding, without showing-off, to keep your original vow. You are fully worthy to inherit the Buddha Dharma. Undoubtedly you are executing your mission to lead the people to the righteousness as my son. Thus, you have a heavy duty to inherit the Dharma.”

“After becoming the eldest son of the Buddha in your future existence, you will attain Buddha-hood and become Walking-On-Flower-Of-Seven-Treasures Buddha!” Thus, Sakyamuni Buddha assured Rahula to become the Buddha. How wonderful he is!

The Original Vow Was to Become the Buddha’s Son To Inherit the Dharma

Rahula must be delighted! He thought that he and his mother were deserted soon after his birth and hated his father. But in fact, it was a part of his life to realize his real mission on this earth. Thus, Rahula was told by the Buddha.

The Buddha proved that Rahula repeatedly was born as the eldest son of many Buddhas in his previous existences and carried on inheriting the Buddha Dharma. As a result, he was born again as the son of Sakyamuni Buddha in this life. Although he had experienced a hard, lonesome, and sad childhood, he should not have any hatred for his father any more. He was so glad to know the Buddha saw through how hard Rahula practiced the Dharma even if in his seclusion. He felt the Buddha's deep compassion and love, so he could not stop the tears running down his face.



Chapter 9

The Sravakas Who Have Something More to Learn and Who Have Nothing More to Learn Are All Treasure-Form Buddhas

The Buddha sees the gentleness and compassion of the Sravakas who practice obediently; however, even if they are His son or cousin, He cannot assure them to become Buddhas if they have a dirty or arrogant mind.

The Buddha sees all His disciples equally and compassionately. But He gives Buddha-name only when He recognizes them to be qualified to receive it only if their minds are pure, brave, responsible, endeavoring, unselfish, and behave with others in mind.

Sakyamuni Buddha has not forgotten about His son and cousin. He has waited for the appropriate time for Rahula and Ananda to be qualified to receive their names. It was wonderful that both of them received their Buddha-names!

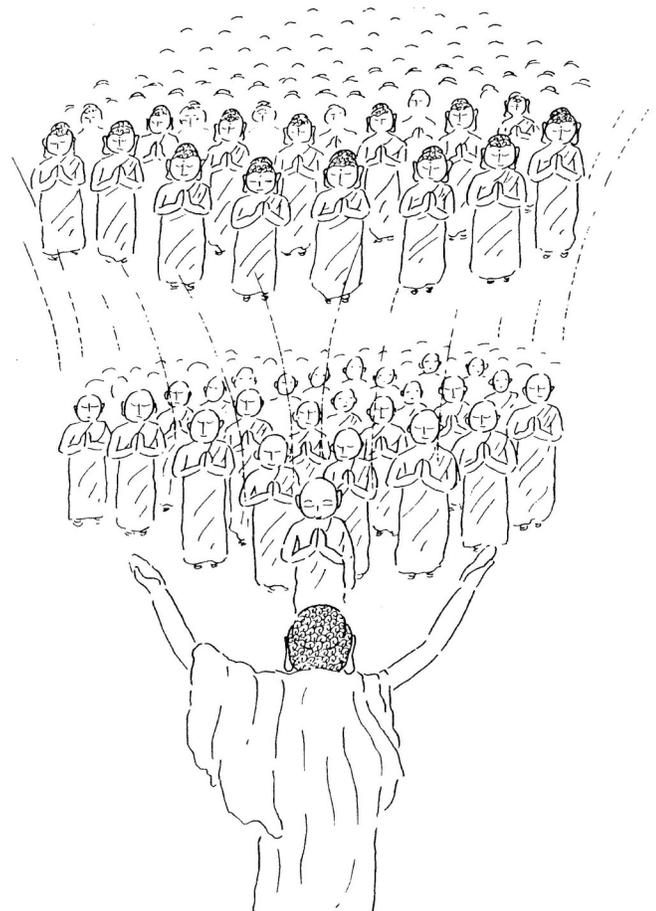
By the way, who was the last Bhiksus who received the Buddha-name among His disciples? There were two thousand Bhiksus who were staring at Rahula and Ananda as they received the Buddha-names from the beginning to the end without a blink. They had strong minds not to be discouraged by anything and had pure minds to keep the Buddha Dharma unselfishly. They were the last ones who received the Buddha-names among the male disciples.

Sakyamuni Buddha Said to Ananda:



Giving their Buddha-names through Ananda

The Buddha said to Ananda, “Do you see these two thousand Sravakas, of whom some had something more to learn while others had nothing more to learn. These people will listen to as many Buddhas and keep the Dharma just like you and make offerings to as many Buddhas as the particles of dust of fifty worlds of the ten quarters and become Buddhas at the same time. They will be equally called Treasure-Form Tathagata. The duration of their lives is eternal. They will expound the dharma to the people in the world. The name of the ‘Treasure-Form Tathagata’ will be well known and spread to the ten quarters of the universe.” Thus, the Buddha gave assurances to the two thousand Sravakas, of whom some had something more to learn while others had nothing more to learn.



Having heard the Buddha assure them of their future Buddha-hood, they danced with joy, and sang in a song:

“We were assured of our future Buddha-hood,
We are as joyful as if we are sprinkled with nectar.
As if the ray of light brightens the dark night,
As if the rain falls on the thirsty land,
The Buddha’s words have soaked into our mind.”

Thus, they appreciated Sakyamuni Buddha.

Chapter 10

How About Assurance to the Nuns?

By the way, you know that those who had been assured of their future Buddha-hood and received the Buddha-names were Bhiksus or male monks. Is the assurance for women possible?



The Lotus Sutra always says, “Everyone becomes Buddhas! Men and women are equal.

Why have none of the women been assured to receive a Buddha-name then?

Do not worry! Chapter 12 and 13 of the Lotus Sutra reveals “Women become Buddhas.” Let us wait for a while. It will be exciting to know the birth of future Buddha-hood of women.



Chapter 11

Recall Your Original Vows in a Hurry!

By the way what kinds of causes and conditions on your birth have you had between you and your parents? I wonder what is your original vow to be born on this earth?

You had better recall this in order to accomplish your original vow.

Sakyamuni Buddha spent twelve years in the ascetic practices and recalled his original vow and then became the Buddha. “I appeared in the world in order to save all living beings. I appeared in the world to reveal the teachings of the Lotus Sutra,” says the Buddha.

Great Bodhisattva Nichiren realized his original vow that he had promised with the Buddha after searching for the true teaching of the Original Buddha for twenty years. He realized himself as “The rebirth of the Superior-Practice Bodhisattva” by sacrificing himself in order to save the people in the defiled world of the Declining Latter Age of the Dharma.



Chapter 12

All People Are Chosen Souls

Therefore, you'd better think about your original vow to be born on this world. Looking at the statue of the Buddha and ask him!

“Oh, the World Honored One, Sakyamuni Buddha! What is my original vow?” Be obedient! He will surely make you recall.

Please do not forget that everyone has his or her original vow to accomplish in this life time. It is not just a coincidence to be born here. You are not a sinful child but Buddha's children. Be brave and trust yourself!

Every person is a chosen soul born in this world carrying a task to accomplish.

Therefore; it is very important to recall your vow, and remember the vow sooner rather than later.

