

## Chapter 12

### DEVADATTA

### 堤婆達多品

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#### Summary

There are two topics in this chapter. One is the Enlightenment by an evil-minded male and the other is enlightenment by a female.

I must explain what kind of person Devadatta was since the Lotus Sutra does not mention him in detail: Devadatta was a cousin of Siddhartha Gautama and older brother of Anannda who served Sakyamuni Buddha his entire life. Both Devadatta and Siddhartha must have been around the same age. They both were very smart and talented; therefore, the cousins often competed against each other on multiple occasions. It is said that they even challenged each other for the right to marry Princess Yasodhara of a neighboring kingdom. As a result of the games, Siddhartha won and married Yasodhara. Since then Devadatta had hated his cousin, who later became Sakyamuni Buddha.

Devadatta was jealous of the Buddha's fame and position. For him, Sakyamuni was not much different from him; he could be just like the Buddha. When King Binvisara of Magada Kingdom honored and supported the Buddha by offering food and place for him and his disciples to live, Devadatta approached Prince Ajatasatru, the son of King Binvisara, and succeeded to gain the prince's support. Devadatta deceived the prince into killing his father, the king, and taking over his throne. Then using the prince's throne, he attempted to take over the leadership of the Buddha's Sangha. He wounded the Buddha by pushing a huge rock over a cliff onto a trail below where the Buddha was traveling. He also tried to murder Sakyamuni with the use of an angry elephant. Devadatta also disturbed the Buddha's Sangha by misguiding any disciple he came in contact with.

Thus, Devadatta did all kinds of mischievous deeds and eventually perished for his actions. It is said that he fell into hell. Chapter 12 of the Lotus Sutra reveals the relationship between Sakyamuni and Devadatta in their previous lives, that Devadatta was once Sakyamuni's master; therefore, because of that merit and although Devadatta is infamous as an evil person, he will attain Buddhahood in the future.

The last half of this chapter shows the attainment of enlightenment by a female through the example of an eight year old daughter of a Dragon-King. According to Hindu customs at that time in India, females were considered to be sinful. They could not enter the five superior existences:

- 1) Brahman Heavenly-King (a Hindu God as the creator of the universe)

- 2) King Sakra (a god to protect Buddha Dharma. He takes care of human being's moral behavior. He tested Sakyamuni by sending all kinds of seductions before his enlightenment)
- 3) King Mara (King of the Devils)
- 4) Powerful Holy King (a King able to rule an entire world)
- 5) Buddha

However, breaking with these traditions, the eight year old daughter of the Dragon-King proved the attainment of enlightenment by the Buddha's acceptance of a gem given by her. She then transformed herself into a male and supernaturally performed the bodhisattva ways required by tradition.

The enlightenment by the evil person and the woman is a part of the main teaching of the Lotus Sutra. It teaches that all living beings - male, female, young, old, human, non-human are potential Buddhas.

## Explanations

**“When I was a Bodhisattva in my previous existence, I sought the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma for innumerable kalpas without indolence.”** (P.195, LL.3~5)

The Lotus Sutra always talks about the three generations: past, present and future. Sakyamuni Buddha sought the sutra in his former lives, too. In this previous life, he was a king who lived for many, many years. Even as a king, he always sought the path towards enlightenment.

## The Six *Paramitas* 六波羅蜜

**“I practiced almsgiving in order to complete the six paramitas.”**(P.195, LL.7~8)

The Six *Paramitas* are the six kinds of practice by which bodhisattvas are able to attain enlightenment. They are:

- 1) Giving布施: There are three kinds of giving: Teachings, Monetary, and Objects. Among them, the act to give teachings is the most superior because it is limitless while monetary has limits which can best be used for the neediest, and objects are very limited in that only a small few can receive benefits. Even if we do not have money and food to give, we are still able to give a smile, say kind words, or be gracious towards others.
- 2) Keeping Precepts持戒: All societies, communities, countries and families regardless of group structure have rules for people to keep. Theravada Buddhists keep very strict precepts as professional practitioners while Mahayana Buddhists have fewer precepts because they emphasize practicality as lay Buddhists.

- 3) Patience 忍耐 : It is very important to be patient. Many people these days are easily upset and cannot control their emotions. They are very short-tempered and quick to use fists, a knife, or a gun to solve their problems; however, this creates more trouble through retribution. Violence begets violence. Be patient! Understanding others from their perspective leads to greater understanding of oneself.
- 4) Assiduity 精進: It is to practice Buddhist ways, but it also means to have effort. To be strenuous is very important in accomplishing one's goal. Rome was not built in a day.
- 5) Meditation 禅定: Zen practice is often referred as the definition of meditation; however, it also means to settle your mind and to create calmness. When you lose your calmness, you may easily become upset, lose your temper or have an accident.
- 6) Wisdom 智慧: This means to attain the truth, which is often called Buddha Wisdom.

Here the king practices the six *paramitas*. He offered elephants, horses, treasures, countries, wives, children or servants to whomever needed them. He did not spare his head, eyes, marrow, brain, flesh, hands, feet or even his life. There are many stories in Sakyamuni's previous lives about giving a part of his body to animals as an offering.

**“I collected fruits, drew water, gathered firewood, and prepared meals for him. I even allowed my body to be his seat. I never felt tired in body and mind.”** (P.196, LL.2~4)

The king prepared drinks, foods, firewood and bedding for Ashita, the Hermit, for many years, without exhaustion or hesitation. Is this what a mother does everyday looking after her children? In this chapter, there is no indication that the hermit teaches the dharma. In other words, what we are doing everyday is the practices of the bodhisattva. When we do something that we enjoy such as a hobby, we do not feel tired; therefore, enjoy your work whatever it is, then you will have less stress. That is why the sutra says, “I never felt tired in body and mind.”

When Kingo Shijo, a follower of Nichiren Daishonin, was mistreated by his employer because of his faith in Nichiren, he asked the advice of his master about quitting his work and obtaining ordination to become a priest, Nichiren Daishonin told him: “To serve your master (at work) is the way of Buddhists. Daily lives are nothing but the practice of Buddhism.”

## **The Pleasures of the Five Desires** 五欲の楽

**“I sought the Great Dharma strenuously because I wished to save all living beings. I did not wish to benefit myself or to have the pleasures of the five desires.”** (P.197, First Paragraph)

The five desires are our five senses: seeing, listening, smelling, tasting, and touching. We are attached to these five senses in our daily lives. Animals act on instinct while human beings act logically and rationally. We are able to control our desires. We have free will, but free will does not mean that you can do anything you want. If you abuse your free will, you may enjoy it

temporally, but later you will suffer the consequences. Buddhism always teaches to control your mind. Development and constant evolution of our mind will benefit others. When your mind becomes purer, you will enjoy working for others and will not be tired working for others. This is the way of the Bodhisattvas.

Thus, the king served his master and eventually attained Buddhahood. The king sought Buddha-Dharma for the salvation of all living beings in order to accomplish his supreme enlightenment; he offered all his belongings and contributed even his physical body to serve his seer, Ashita. As a result of his practice of the Six *Paramitas*, the king was finally able to become a Buddha.

### ***Zen-chishiki* 善知識**

**“The king at that time was a previous life of mine. The seer at that time was a previous life of Devadatta. Devadatta was my teacher.”** (P.197, LL.10~11)

Senchu Murano translated “*zen-chishiki* 善知識” as “teacher” from Kumarajiva’s Chinese Translation. But the word, “*zen-chishiki*” has a deeper meaning. Literally *zen* means “good”, while *chishiki*, “wisdom”. Other translators of the sutra use “friend” or “friendship” for the word *chishiki*.

The relationship between that of Devadatta and the Buddha cannot be separated just as the relationship between the king and the hermit cannot be separated. Because of this relationship, the wicked Devadatta will become a Buddha.

Nichiren Daishonin also says that Yoritsuna Hei-no-Saemon is my real *zen-chishiki*. Yoritsuna tried to execute the saint at Tatsu-no-kuchi Execution Ground in Kamakura city. Because of this execution, Nichiren realized that he was the rebirth of *Jogyo Bodhisattva*. He was the one to spread the teachings of the Lotus Sutra in the age of *Mappo*. Just as Buddha learned from Devadatta in the past, Nichiren Daishonin learned from Yoritsuna the truth of the dharma as revealed in the Lotus Sutra and emboldened his spirit.

There must be a few people who criticize you bitterly. Can you accept the criticism as a good lesson or not? If you can accept the criticizer as good teachers or friends, you can grow spiritually to a higher level because the criticism often contains truth about your nature. Then you can accept your criticizers as *zen-chishiki*.

**“Devadatta will become a Buddha after innumerable kalpas.”** (P.197, L.23)

It is said that Devadatta fell into a crack in the ground at the time of an earthquake and went into hell. I wonder what he is doing for innumerable kalpas in hell? I guess he is repenting his wrong conducts. “Repentance is the mysterious medicine which cures illness and the sacred dharma to change one's fate.” -- *Prayers of Repentance (Sange-mon)*

There is a saying in Japan: “If a person is very bad, he could be very good, too, after repentance.” A good example in the Lotus Sutra is Kishimo or Mother of Devil revealed in Chapter 26. I will discuss further about her in a later chapter.

In the teachings of the Lotus Sutra there are no absolute bad or absolute good. The doctrine of the One Hundred Stages of One's Mind (十界に具有する十界の心) teaches us that even the Buddha has the mind of hell; therefore, he can understand the people in hell. Even people in hell or a murderer has the stage of mind of a Buddha.

## **Having Faithful Respect with Pure Mind 淨心に信敬**

**“Good men or women in the future ... with faithful respect caused by their pure minds, and have no doubts, will not fall into hell or the region of the hungry spirits or the region of animals. They will be reborn before the Buddhas of the worlds of the ten quarters. They will hear this sutra at the places of their rebirth. Even when they are reborn again among men or gods, they will be given wonderful pleasures. When they are reborn before the Buddhas, they will appear in lotus-flowers.”** (P.198, Second Paragraph)

After the Buddha assured Devadatta's attainment of Buddhahood, he encouraged those people in the era after his extinction to have faithful respect with pure mind and without any doubt. Then they will not fall into hell but will be born as human beings in better place than their previous lives or will appear on the petals of the Lotus Sutra. This means that we will become Buddhas. These phrases are often quoted at the end of a memorial service prayer in order for the deceased to reach the Buddha Land.

## **Bodhisattva's Appearance from the Great Sea 大海より菩薩の出現**

**“Manjusri had sprung up from the palace of Dragon-King Sagara in the great ocean, gone up to the sky and traveled through the sky to Mt. Sacred Eagle.”** (P.199, LL.8~10)

In Chapter 11, Many-Treasure-Buddha appeared from an underground world. It is now Manjusri Bodhisattva who appeared from another world, from a palace in the great ocean.

Manjusri was probably the first overseas minister. The country could be present day Sri Lanka. His propagation was not only in the sea but also in the sky which symbolize that the Buddha's compassion reaches to all living beings from the bottom of the ocean, to the earth and to the sky.

When Manjusri appeared at Mt. Sacred Eagle, Accumulated-Wisdom Bodhisattva, who accompanied Many-Treasures Buddha, asked “How many living beings did you lead the Way to Bodhi there?” “Their number is immeasurable.” answered Manjusri.

**“There is a daughter of Dragon-King Sagara among those whom I taught. She is eight years old. She is cleaver. She knows the karmas of all living beings. She obtained dharanis.”** (P.200, Middle of the Page)

Manjusri Bodhisattva and Dragon-King Sagara were among the congregation together with the other Dragon-Kings in Chapter 1 of the Lotus Sutra.

*Dai-Chidoron*, a commentary on a sutra by Nagarjuna, comments that the Dragon-Kings are manifestations of great bodhisattvas whose aim is to save animals. I am not sure that the daughter of Dragon-King Sagara who attained enlightenment was an animal (dragon) or a human being (person), or she might have been both characters of an animal and a human being.

Manjusri taught only the Lotus Sutra in the great sea. The sutra is superior compared to the other sutras; therefore, Manjusri answered Accumulated-Wisdom Bodhisattva with the extraordinary enlightenment by an eight year old girl.

It was unbelievable for the people in India at that time that a woman could become a Buddha. Women have almost always been neglected in most countries until very recently. Even in the United States, women only obtained the right to vote in 1920.

In modern times, the Taliban still believes in the strict code that women are prohibited from education and considered as second class citizens just as it has been in India over two thousand years ago. Thus, Accumulated-Wisdom Bodhisattva could not believe that this girl attained perfect enlightenment in a moment and said as follows:

## **The Five Impossibilities for Women** 女性の五障害

**“The body of a woman is too defiled to be a recipient of the teachings of the Buddha. How can she attain unsurpassed Bodhi? The enlightenment of the Buddha is far off. It can be attained only by those who perform the Bodhisattva practices with strenuous efforts for innumerable kalpas. A woman has five impossibilities. She cannot become 1. the Brahman-Heavenly-King, 2. King Sâkra, 3. King Mara, 4. a wheel-turning-holy-king, and 5. a Buddha.”** (P.201, 7<sup>th</sup> line from the bottom of the page)

Women were considered defiled in India at that time. They were considered impure due to the process of pregnancy, childbirth, and menstruation. This equated to dirtiness and uncleanliness; therefore, they could not be a heavenly leader such as Bonten or King Sakra (a Hindu God as the creator of the universe) or Taishaku or King Sakra (a god to protect Buddha Dharma. He takes care of human being's moral behavior.) Today we know that a few female presidents and prime ministers are capable and have succeeded in becoming leaders in some countries. I wonder when a woman will become a president in the United States.

We have already learned that Sakyamuni Buddha had practiced the way of the bodhisattvas in many previous lives. Then, he finally was born as a prince of Kapilvastu, India.

After he renounced the luxurious life of the palace, he became a homeless monk. After six years of ascetic practices, he meditated under a Bodhi tree and at last attained enlightenment.

It was very common in Chapter One through Chapter Eleven of the Lotus Sutra and all other preceding sutras that we can ONLY attain enlightenment with strenuous efforts for innumerable kalpas. This is what we have learned and what the other schools of Buddhism teach. However, in this Chapter of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha reveals that it is possible for us, especially a female to attain Buddhahood INSTANTLY.

Chapter 16 of the Lotus Sutra reveals that Sakyamuni has been a Buddha since eternal *kalpas* ago. Because the prince became a Buddha in this lifetime, we are not required to practice the ways of Bodhisattva for innumerable kalpas. For instance when you drive a car; do you have to make an engine, body, steering wheels, and other parts by yourself? This is not necessary. You just need a key and know how to drive. When you use a computer, you do not need to know how the computer works. The hard part has been done by someone else. We receive their hard work and use the car and computer comfortably. Thus, we just receive Buddha's compassion by chanting the Odaimoku.

## **Instant Attainment of Buddhahood by the Power of the Wonderful Dharma**妙法経力即身成仏

**“Thereupon the congregation saw that the Daughter of the dragon-king changed into a man all of a sudden, performed the bodhisattva practices, went to the Spotless World in the south, sat on a jeweled lotus-flower, attained perfect enlightenment.”** (P.202, LL.12~15)

Today we live in a time of instant gratification. You do not need to understand the whole meaning of the Lotus Sutra. For those who do not like to study, Nichiren Daishonin presented us with the Odaimoku for our instant salvation. Of course studying and practicing help you understand Buddhism and gain the deeper insight of Buddha Wisdom. This is the path for bodhisattvas. But for those who are ignorant and who cannot read or write can still become a Buddha instantly through faith.

Many people have explained why the girl had to change into a man. I know a few reasons, but these explanations were made by men. I would like to know the female perspective on why the girl had to change her appearance and body to a boy.

Some of the reasons explained by men are:

- 1) in order to break one of the Hindu customs at that time, once you were born into a lower caste level, you could never elevate from that caste
- 2) because men were considered superior to women
- 3) because the Lotus Sutra teaches equality between men and women

Manjusri Bodhisattva's propagation was in the great ocean. However, there has to be a deeper meaning. What does the ocean represent? What can water do? Water symbolizes washing away all dirt. When we are in the great ocean of the wonderful truth, there is no difference from the ordinary and the wise, the rich and the poor, male and female. There is only absolute equality.

The daughter of the Dragon-King was able to become a Buddha as a form of a woman; however, the congregations at Mt. Sacred Eagle were not ready to understand the concept of equality just yet. Thus, after she obtained enlightenment, she went to the Spotless World in the south to spread the dharma there.

**“Three thousand living beings of the Saha-World reached the stage of irrevocability, and another group of three thousand living beings of the Saha-World aspired for Bodhi, and obtained the assurance of their attainment of enlightenment. The Accumulated-Wisdom Bodhisattva, Sariputra, and all the other living beings in the congregation received the Dharma faithfully and in silence.”** (P.202, L.30 to the end)

This phrase ends Chapter 12. No more explanation is necessary except having faith in the Lotus Sutra!