

CHAPTER 6 ASSURANCE OF FUTURE BUDDHAHOOD 授記品

Lecture #12 (December 24, 2008)

The previous chapter ends with the words, “**You, Sravakas, have not yet attained true extinction. What you are now practicing is the way of Bodhisattvas. Study and practice it continuously, and you will become Buddhas.**” (P.114, Last Lines)

When Buddha’s disciples of the Lesser Vehicle attain their enlightenment and reach nirvana, they leave the world and enter a state of blissful liberation. But Bodhisattvas never leave this world. They remain here with all its evils and sufferings. Therefore they do not aim merely to enter into extinction (nirvana) for themselves; they wish for all beings to enjoy the same happiness.

Thus, in this chapter, Buddha Sâkyamuni gives assurance of the future Buddhahood to four of his ten great disciples. The assurance is more like a provisional charter. The real certificate of Buddhahood will be given when they finish many courses of studies and practices. Although this is only a temporary certificate, it still is an encouragement for the four disciples and for us.

What are the conditions to attain Buddhahood? 仏に成る条件(Practice by body, mind, and mouth身・口・意の三業)

“This Maha-Kasyapa, a disciple of mine, will see three hundred billions of Buddhas, of World-Honored Ones, **make offerings to them, respect them, honor them, praise them and expound an innumerable number of their great teachings** in his future life. After that, on the final stage of his physical existence, he will become a Buddha, called Light, the Tathagata.” (P.115, LL.5~10)

To make offerings to them is an action through one’s body.

To respect them, honor them, praise them are actions by one’s mind.

To expound an innumerable number of their great teachings is action of one’s mouth.

Thus, it is important for all Mahayana Buddhists to practice with our body, mind and mouth. Nichiren Dai-Shonin always practiced with action, voice and spirit. He sent an encouragement letter to his disciples sitting in a dungeon in Kamakura before he was exiled to Sado Island. The letter is called, *Tsuchiro Goshō*. It says, “Tomorrow I, Nichiren, will be exiled to Sado Island. This cold evening, I am thinking of you in the cold dungeon. My thought is that you have read and practiced the Lotus Sutra with your heart and behavior, which would save your parents, brothers, sisters, relatives, ancestors and everyone around

you. Other people read the sutra vocally without feeling it in the depths of their hearts. Or they might read it with their heart, but not experience it as the sutra teaches. Compared with them, you are very precious because you are practicing the sutra in your behavior, voice and heart.”

The Four Assurances 四授記:

1. "Maha-Kasyapa 魔迦加葉 will become a Buddha called Light Tathagata." (P.115, LL.5-10)
2. "Subhuti 須菩提 will become a Buddha called Beautiful-Form Tathagata." (P.118, LL.25-29)
3. "Great Katyayana 大迦旃延 will become a Buddha called Jambunada Gold Light Tathagata." (P.121, LL.2-13)
4. "Great Maudgalyayana 大目犍連 will become a Buddha called Tamalapatracandana Fragrance Tathagata." (P.122, L.26 - P.123, L.4)

“Although Mara and his followers also will live there, they will not do any evil but protect the teachings of the Buddha.” 無有魔事 雖有魔及魔民 皆護佛法 (P.115, Last Sentence)

These phrases are often quoted when Nichiren Shu priests do *kito* blessing. For the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra, all devils and demons become protectors for them. A good example is Kishimo-jin or Hariti. She had many children but hated the babies of others and did very evil things to them because she and her baby had once been tormented by a few women. When she heard the Buddha's teachings, she repented her sins and vowed to protect Buddhism and its practitioners. This is revealed in Chapter 26 of the Lotus Sutra.

There are two kinds of *Mara* or evil; one is within our bodies, which come out of our mind such as desire, temptation, anger, etc. The other is manipulation from outside forces such as seduction and pressure.

“Suppose a man came from a country suffering from famine. Now he saw the meal of a great king. He did not partake of it in doubts and fears. After he was told to take it by the king, he took it at once.” 如以甘露灑 除熱得清涼 如從飢国来 忽遇大王膳 (P.118, LL.4~8)

These phrases are always quoted when Nichiren Shu priests hold the *Segaki* memorial services. *Segaki* is the ceremony of making offerings to the hungry spirits. It is held for the repose of the souls of the dead. Four *Segaki* flags made of five different colors are also hung during the ceremony with the above phrases written on the flags. The phrases are used to help those who are deceased, but they also assure us of our future Buddhahood. Knowing this, we shall feel as cool and as refreshed as if we were sprinkled with nectar.

A man came from a country suffering from famine denotes a man in the lesser vehicle of Sravaka and Pratyak-buddha.

Now he saw the meal of a great king means Buddhahood by Sravaka and Pratyak-buddha who practice the way of Bodhisattva.

“Now I will tell you about my previous existence and also about yours. All of you, listen attentively!”

This phrase is the last sentence of Chapter Six. In Chapter One, Manjusri Bodhisattva recalled his past existence so did Maitreya Bodhisattva. In Chapter Three Buddha Sâkyamuni told previous lives of his and Sariputra's. Now in Chapter Seven, he will tell of his disciples' previous lives as well as his own.

To know one's past, present, and future is one of Buddha's virtues. If you know your past karma good or bad, you can adjust them in the present and then you will see good fortune in future.



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