

# THE LOTUS SUTRA

Lecture #55 (December 21, 2011)

Lecture #56 (January 4, 2012)

## **Chapter 27** **King Wonderful-Adornment**

### **SUMMARY**

The main theme of the five chapters from Chapter 23 to Chapter 27 is propagation of the Lotus Sutra for us in the Declining Latter Age of the Dharma or the period of 10,000 years since 2,000 years after Sakyamuni Buddha's death. Medicine-King Bodhisattva in Chapter 23 expounds the sutra by offering his body by the means of burning his arm, Wonderful-Voice Bodhisattva in Chapter 24 and World-Voice-Perceiver Bodhisattva in Chapter 25 show many different appearances of human beings in order to save them all, Medicine-King Bodhisattva and Brave-In-Giving Bodhisattva in Chapter 26 reveal their *dharani* spells and vow to protect those who expound the sutra. This leads to the next set of Pure-Store Bodhisattvas (actually Medicine-King Bodhisattva's other name in his previous life) and Pure-Eyes Bodhisattvas, who reveal magic to convert their father. All of us have different talent, skill and knowledge. We can use our skills to expound the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. Bodhisattvas are lay people; therefore, the Bodhisattva statues have all kinds of ornaments on their bodies. Even priests should not stay in their monasteries or temples, but go out and mingle around with lay people and find what the best method is to lead these lay people to the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. All of these last five chapters of the Lotus Sutra talks about these Bodhisattvas' propagation.

This chapter reveals the story of two sons who converted their parents to the *Lotus Sutra*. It is very difficult for us to convert our spouses and immediate family members because they know everything about us, inside and out and good or bad. Therefore, words may not be as effective for them but our actions would be. The two children showed their magic (something others cannot do) to draw their father's attention.

It is very interesting to know this family's previous lives. The story goes as follows:

Once upon a time there were four monks who tried to attain enlightenment of the Lotus Sutra. Even though they tried hard, they were not able to fully understand it. They renounced all daily living matters of food, living, and clothing. However they thought if they starved to death before enlightenment, it would be meaningless. Then one of the monks said, "I will volunteer to beg for food for three of you, so that you can continue to seek enlightenment. When one of you reaches salvation, please share with all of us."

Thus the three of them continued seeking the true aspect of the Lotus Sutra while the other went to town to obtain the minimum necessary to survive day after day, season after season. He never complained about servicing his fellow monks. After several years of their hard practice and meditation, the three monks have finally attained the truth of the Lotus Sutra and waited for their fellow monk to return with food. They waited and waited day after day, but he never came back to them and eventually they starved to death.

The monk begging food had a hard time receiving food that day; no one was standing outside of the houses to offer food. Without food he could not go back to the monastery. He

became so depressed and felt somewhat in vain what he was doing. He wondered what to do. Then he saw a king and his entourage passed in front of him. The begging monk suddenly recalled his joyful time of his youth before renouncing his worldly life. He felt envy towards the luxurious life of the king, but this monk also died of starvation.

Because the merit of serving the three fellow monks for years, he was born as King Wonderful-Adornment. Among the three monks, one became the king's wife called Pure-Virtue; the other two monks were born as the king's sons, Pure-Store and Pure-Eyes.

All of us have some sort of strong desires, but the wise Bodhisattvas are able to use people's desires to lead them to practice the teaching of the Lotus Sutra. In this chapter magic is one of them to attract others to the Lotus Sutra.

## EXPLANATIONS

**“Under that Buddha (Cloud-Thunder-Peal-Star-King-Flower-Wisdom) lived a king called Wonderful-Adornment. His wife was called Pure-Virtue. They had two sons, Pure-Store and Pure-Eyes by name. The two sons had great supernatural powers, merits, virtues and wisdom.”** (P.330, LL.5~9)

Sakyamuni Buddha told the following story:

Once upon a time, there was a king called Wonderful-Adornment and a queen, Pure-Virtue. They had two children, Pure-Store and Pure-Eyes, who practiced Buddhism for many years. They practiced many different practices in Buddhism in their previous and present lives. The sons had already attained the Four States of Mind (Compassion, Loving-kindness, Joy and Impartiality) while their parents are not ready for the stage.

**“The two sons, Pure-Store and Pure-Eyes, came to their mother, joined their ten fingers and palms together, and said, ‘Mother! Go to Cloud-Thunder-Peal-Star-King-Flower-Wisdom Buddha! We also will go to attend on him, approach him, make offerings to him, and bow to him because he is expounding the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma.’** (P.331, LL.1~5)

The two sons persuaded their mother to go listen to the Buddha who preached the Lotus Sutra. She said, “Yes, I will. But your father deeply believes in Brahmanism. Go tell him to join us.” It is very hard to alter the belief of a family member if they believe in another faith.

Kenji Miyazawa (1896-1933) was a poet and wrote a lot of poems and fairy tales based on the teachings of the *Lotus Sutra*. On his deathbed, when he was 36 years old, he left a will to his parents who were very devoted to the Pure Land faith. “I am very sorry to die before you and I could not repay my gratitude to you, but I wish to repay your favor in my next life and my many lives after that. Please call on me by chanting the Odaimoku, “*Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*” after my death. Thus, he asked his parents to chant the Odaimoku to communicate with him in the spiritual realm. This is a Buddhist way of bonding and communicating with the deceased. He also requested his parents to publish 100 copies of the entire Lotus Sutra in Japanese language and give them to his relatives and friends to make a relationship, or “*en*”, with the sutra.

**“Thereupon the two sons went up to the sky seven times as high as the tala-tree, and displayed various wonders because they were thinking of their father. They walked, stood, sat, and reclined in the sky. Then they issued water from the upper parts of their bodies, and fire from the lower part.”** (P.331, LL.18~23)

They showed these wonders to their father because the mother told them to do so, so that the father may change his mind and allow them to go to the Buddha.

To attain this kind of magic is not the purpose of Buddhism, although some *yogi* may be able to perform some magic. These wonders by the two children represent is a metaphor that suggests that we do something different to capture the attention of others. For example, if you continue to recite a chapter of the sutra and chant the Odaimoku everyday without fail, your character naturally changes and you improve yourself in daily life. This change makes others wonder.

**“Seeing these wonders displayed by the supernatural powers of his sons, the father had the greatest joy that he had ever had. He joined his hands together towards his sons staying in the sky, and said, ‘Who is your teacher?’”** (P.331, LL.31~34)

The two sons practiced the *Samadhi* (concentration of the mind on a single matter) only for themselves, so this was their first time to practice *samadhi* for others. They influenced their father to be interested in a different faith, Buddha Dharma. So he said to them, “I also wish to see your teacher. I will go with you.”

**“Excellent, Father and Mother! Go to Cloud-Thunder-Peal-Star-King-Flower-Wisdom Buddha, see him, and make offerings to him because to see a Buddha is as difficult as to see an udumbara-flower or as for a one-eyed tortoise to find a hole in a floating piece of wood!”** (P.332, L.25~29)

*Udumbara* is the name of a legendary tree which is thought to blossom once in three thousand years. It often stands in Buddhist writings for what is exceptionally rare. It is also very rare for a one-eyed tortoise to find a hole in a piece of wood floating on the ocean surface in a moving wave. Thus, it is very rare to meet a Buddha. The physically real Buddha existed almost 2,500 years ago on this earth. It is said that the next Buddha after Sakyamuni, Maitreya will appear in this world five billion six hundred and seventy million years after the death of Sakyamuni. So we had better be born again that many years later to meet the Maitreya Buddha physically.

**“Thereupon King Wonderful-Adornment, Queen Pure-Virtue, and their two sons came to that Buddha. The king was accompanied by his ministers and attendants; the queen, by her ladies and attendants; and their two sons, by forty-two thousand men.”** (P.333, LL.13~16)

The king, queen and princes with their ministers and attendants all came to that Buddha. Then the Buddha expounded the Dharma of the Lotus Sutra to them and showed them Buddhism, taught them, benefited them and caused them to rejoice. The king and queen took off their necklaces of pearls worth hundreds of thousands, and gave the necklaces to the Buddha in

appreciation.

**“This king will become a bhiksu under me, strenuously study and practice the various ways to the enlightenment of the Buddha, and then become a Buddha called Sala-Tree-King in a world called Great-Light.”** (P.333, L.34~37)

Cloud-Thunder-Peal-Star-King-Flower-Wisdom Buddha said to the congregation that King Wonderful-Adornment will become a Buddha after strenuous study and practice and will be called Sala-Tree-King Buddha.

We must know why the Cloud-Thunder-Peal-Star-King-Flower-Wisdom Buddha gives assurances to the king that he will become a Buddha before his sons and wife who have practiced Buddhism much longer than the king. I think it is because when a leader becomes a Buddhist; his followers are influenced by the leader and easily for them to become Buddhists. Therefore, Nichiren Shonin tried to convert authorities of the Kamakura Government in Kamakura; and Nichiren also asked at his deathbed his grand-disciple, Nichizo, to propagate in Kyoto, official capital of Japan at that time and to convert the royal families in the capital city. It is very important for a leader of any group to practice righteousness; otherwise, others will copy their leader’s wrong doing. Our founder also said, “when the body bends, its shadow also bend.”

**“World-Honored One! These two sons of mine did the work of the Buddha. They converted me from wrong views by displaying wonders. They caused me to dwell peacefully in your teachings. They caused me to see you. These two sons of mine are my teachers. They appeared in my family in order to benefit me. They inspired the roots of good which I had planted in my previous existence.”** (P.334, LL11~17)

This king is great because it is hard for adults to say their children are their teachers. We often tend to say, “I did it,” when something good happens, while we tend to blame others when something wrong happens. However, this king realized that his sons caused him to dwell in Buddha Dharma and they were born into his family in order to lead him to Buddha’s teachings. **“These two sons of mine are my teachers.”** The original term for teacher in this case uses **“*zenchishiki*”** in the Chinese version. *Zenchishiki* literally means good knowledge; however, it means a person who helps in conversion or religious progress. Nichiren Shonin used the term for those who gave him persecutions, especially the Shogunate of the Kamakura Government. Sakyamuni Buddha used the term for Devadatta who tried to kill him in their previous lives, Devadatta caused the Buddha to have loving-kindness, compassion, joy and impartiality, so Devadatta was Buddha’s *zenchishiki*. For Nichiren, those who gave trouble to him are his *zenchishiki* because they made him become a real practitioner of the Lotus Sutra. In our daily life, too, we do not like someone criticize you, but they may be your good teachers.

**“King Wonderful-Adornment was no one but Flower-Virtue Bodhisattva of today. Queen Pure-Virtue was no one but the Light-Adornment-Appearance Bodhisattva who is now before me. . . . The two sons were Medicine-King Bodhisattva and Medicine-Superior Bodhisattva of today.”** (P.335. LL.16~22)

The Lotus Sutra is the teachings of the past, present and future. In previous lives we might have had a relationship or “*en*” with the Lotus Sutra, and we are practicing it together now, and then we will be able to attain Buddhahood in the future.

Medicine-King Bodhisattva appears in this chapter, so as in Chapters 1, 10, 13, 23, 24, 26, and 27. His name also appears on the Mandala Gohonzon.