

THE LOTUS SUTRA

Lecture #29 (May 20, 2009)

Lecture #30 (June 3, 2009)

Chapter 13

ENCOURAGEMENT for KEEPING this SUTRA

SUMMARY

At the end of Chapter 11, Sakyamuni Buddha says that he shall soon enter into *Pari-Nirvana*. "Is there anyone who is willing to expound the Lotus Sutra in this world after my extinction? I wish to hand it on to someone, so that it can be perpetuated."

Chapter 13 is the response from Medicine-King Bodhisattva 藥王菩薩, Great-Eloquence Bodhisattva 大樂說菩薩, and twenty thousand other Bodhisattvas who vowed to the Buddha that they would keep, read, recite and expound the sutra. But they said they will do so in some other world rather than on this earth because the people of this world have many evils.

Meanwhile, the Buddha gave assurance of attainment of Buddhahood to his step-mother and his wife before he became a monk.

Then there were eighty billion nayuta of Bodhisattvas who made up their minds to expound this sutra and vowed to endure any hardship and persecutions in any place including this earth.

EXPLANATIONS

"World-Honored One, do not worry! We will keep, read, recite and expound this sutra after your extinction. The living beings in the evil world after your extinction will have less roots of good, more arrogance, more greed for offerings of worldly things, and more roots of evil." (P. 203, LL.4~8)

This is the response from Medicine-King Bodhisattva 藥王菩薩, Great-Eloquence Bodhisattva 大樂說菩薩, and twenty thousand other Bodhisattvas who vowed to the Buddha that they would keep, read, recite and expound the sutra, but in some other world. The people of this world have many evils.

Recall that in Chapter 10 Sakyamuni Buddha talked to Medicine-King Bodhisattva 藥王菩薩 while the Buddha talked to Great-Eloquence Bodhisattva 大樂說菩薩 in Chapter 11. Sakyamuni made it be known the difficulties in expounding the truth after his extinction to them.

Chapter 10 says, **“Many people hate it with jealousy even in my lifetime. Needless to say, more people will do so after my extinction.”** (P. 175, Last line) 「如来現在猶多怨憎」 Chapter 11 says, **“It is difficult to expound this sutra. Make a great vow to do this.”** (P.190, LL.17~19) 「此為難事、宜發大願」; therefore, the expounders of the sutra after the passing of Sakyamuni Buddha must vow to expound the Lotus Sutra wholeheartedly, even sacrificing their bodies to spread the teachings.

To those whom Sakyamuni Buddha gave assurances of enlightenment in Chapters Three through Nine, spoke up and vowed to spread the Lotus Sutra after the extinction of the Buddha; however, they mentioned they would do so in another world not this Saha-world. Since the Buddha already gave assurances of their Buddhahood, they must be Buddhas. Why then they cannot preach in this world? One of the reasons must be that they are still in the novice stage and are not ready to bear hardships such as taunting, harassment and other persecutions. Thus, it is necessary to explain how to expound the sutra much easier, which will be discussed in the next chapter. But just before the Buddha was about to reveal this explanation, there was an interruption by two nuns who wished to have the Buddha’s assurance as follows:

Assurance of Buddhahood to Nuns 諸尼の授記 :

“There were Maha-Prajapati Bhiksuni, the sister of the mother of the Buddha, and six thousand bhiksunis, ... joined their hands together with all their hearts, and looked up at the honorable face with un-blenching eyes.” (P.204, LL. 5~9)

"Gautami! I have already said that I assured all the Sravakas of their future attainment of Buddhahood." (P.204, L.13)

The childhood name of Sakyamuni Buddha was Siddhartha Gautama. Gautama was the family name for males while Gautami was used for females. Gautami (Kyodonmi in Japanese) is Sakyamuni Buddha's step-mother. His paternal mother, Queen Maya, passed away seven days after his birth. Gautami is Queen Maya's younger sister who raised Siddhartha Gautama just like her own son. Her Buddhist name is Maha-Prajapati Bhiksuni (摩訶波闍波提比丘尼) which means “The Way of Great Love”. Gautami was the first woman to be accepted into the Sangha (a group of Buddhists) and the first woman to be given assurance of Buddhahood among Buddha’s female disciples.

The Buddha said to Yasodhara, **“you will finally become a Buddha in a good world. The name of that Buddha will be Emitting-Ten-Million-Rays-Of-Light.”** (P.205, L.7)

Yasodhara was Sakyamuni Buddha's wife before his renunciation. She is Rahula's mother. Yasodhara and Gautami took ordination within the Order of Nuns after Buddha's father passed away. They were the last persons whom Sakyamuni Buddha gave future assurance of attainment of Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi.

"You will walk the Way to Buddhahood step by step, and finally become a Buddha" (P.205, LL.6~7)

The Buddha says that Yasodhara will walk the Way of Buddhahood and that Gautami will complete the Way of Bodhisattvas in due time. The Way of Bodhisattvas means to act for others, for the people, and for society. It is necessary for us to behave in a manner that benefits others and society.

"World-Honored One! We also will expound this sutra in other worlds. Thereupon the World-Honored One looked at the eighty billion nayuta Bodhisattva-mahasattvas. These bodhisattvas had already reached the stage of avaiivartika, turned the irrevocable wheel of the Dharma, and obtained dharanis. They rose from their seats, came to the Buddha, joined their hands together towards him with all their hearts, and thought, 'If the World-Honored One commands us to keep and expound this sutra, we will expound the Dharma just as the Buddha teaches.' They also thought, 'The Buddha keeps silence. He does not command us. What shall we do?'" (P.205, Last two paragraphs~P.206, first paragraph)

The silence of the Buddha on this occasion is interpreted as an implication that the Buddha did not encourage the Bodhisattvas to expound this sutra. Why is that?

According to the Great Master T'ien T'ai (538-597) of China, it is not necessary for Maha-Prajapati Bhiksuni, Yasodhara and their servants of eighty billion nayuta Bodhisattva-mahasattvas to ask for Buddha's permission; rather they should make a vow to expound the Buddha Dharma instead.

"World-Honored One! After your extinction, we will go to any place and cause all living beings to copy, keep, read and recite this sutra, to expound the meanings of it, to act according to the Dharma, and to memorize this sutra correctly." (P.206, LL.6~10)

Responding to the Buddha's request to expound the Lotus Sutra after his Pari-Nirvana, eighty billion nayuta Bodhisattvas spoke up to declare their vow to expound the sutra. They reached a high level of accomplishment, the stage of irrevocability. They are ready to endure any difficulties and persecutions called the Three Kinds of Arrogant Enemies. They wish to expound the sutra in another world but not on this earth. However, the Buddha does not respond to their proposal because there are other Bodhisattvas already in the other worlds requested by that other world's Buddhas. There are designated Bodhisattvas who will expound the sutra on this Saha-world. We will see who in detail in Chapters 15 and 21.

Three Kinds of Arrogant Enemies三種の増上慢 :

Those who expound the Lotus Sutra in this Saha-world must endure all kinds of self-righteousness and persecutions from enemies who try to block the spreading of the teachings of the Lotus Sutra.

1. **“Ignorant people will speak ill of us, abuse us, and threaten us with swords or sticks, but we will endure all this.”** (P.206, LL.18~21) 俗衆増上慢
2. **“Some bhiksus in the evil world will be cunning. They will be ready to flatter others. Thinking that they have obtained what they have not, their minds will be filled with arrogance.”** (P.206, LL.22~25) 道門増上慢
3. **“Some bihisus will live in aranyas or retired places, and wear patched pieces of cloth. Thinking that they are practicing the true Way, they will despise others.** (P.206, LL.26~29) 僭僧増上慢

Explanation:

1. All kinds of ignorant people will speak ill of the expounders of the sutra. They may even attack the expounders with swords and clubs, but we will endure these kinds of attacks.
2. There will be cunning monks who think that they have obtained what they have not. Their minds will be filled with arrogance. They will abuse the preachers, but we will endure them.
3. Some monks will live in remote, quiet places pretending to practice the Way, but really despising ordinary people. They will be greedy for money and expound the Dharma for pay. People will respect them like Arahats who have attained supernatural powers. These spiritual leaders will encourage powerful people like kings, ministers, and nobles to persecute the expounders of the Lotus Sutra, but we will endure them.

Shinjo Suguro says in the Introduction to The Lotus Sutra as follows:

“These three types of people will persecute expounders of the Dharma during the Age of Degeneration. We know that difficulties such as these will happen. But we will endure everything because we respect the Buddha. We will also ignore their spiteful words. In this evil world, all sorts of dreadful things can happen.

“They must overcome these troubles and expound the Lotus Sutra to make this Saha-world into the Pure Land of the Buddha. It is not just a prophecy; it is a major teaching of the Lotus Sutra.

“Sakyamuni told us in the Lotus Sutra how we should live. We ‘read’ the sutra by comparing its teachings with our deeds. It was Nichiren (1222-1282) who completed the

practice of 'reading' the Lotus Sutra and fulfilling it through his actions all throughout his lifetime. Nichiren endured many persecutions, but he understood his troubles as having been foretold in the Lotus Sutra. Experiencing them, he realized that Sakyamuni's prophecies had proven to be true. Instead of lamenting his fate, he derived spiritual joy at being allowed to fulfill the prophecies through his own body."