

THE LOTUS SUTRA

Lecture #48 (September 21, 2011)

Chapter 22 Transmission

SUMMARY

The twenty-eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra are divided in half; the first half is called *shakumon* or temporary teachings, which reveals the historical Sakyamuni Buddha, while the last half is called *hon-mon* or true teachings, which reveals the eternal nature of the Sakyamuni Buddha. Therefore, the disciples that appeared in the first half are called "the disciples in *shakumon*" while the disciples appear in the last half are called "the disciples in *honmon*."

In the previous chapter, Sakyamuni Buddha transmits the Lotus Sutra and assigns the disciples in *honmon* the missionary works after his death. The disciples in *honmon* are the original disciples at the time when the Eternal Buddha attained Enlightenment in the countless eons ago. In this chapter, the Buddha also transmits the sutra and assigns the disciples in *shakumon* the missionary works after the Buddha's death. The disciples in *shakumon* are the disciples of the historical Buddha and disciples of other Buddhas.

Nichiren Shonin had not realized that he was the rebirth of Bodhisattva Jogyo, a disciple in *honmon*, until the Sado Exile. After the Tatsu-no-kuchi Execution and the exile to Sado, he firmly believed that Sakyamuni Buddha transmitted the Lotus Sutra to him because of the persecutions he received were all predicted in Chapter 13 of the Lotus Sutra. He says that those who chant Odaimoku are also the disciples in *honmon*, so we must propagate the Odaimoku.

EXPLANATIONS

“Sakyamuni Buddha rose from the seat of the Dharma, and by his great supernatural powers, put his right hand on the heads of the innumerable Bodhisattva-mahasattvas, and said; "For many hundreds of thousands of billions of asamkha of kalpas, I studied and practiced the Dharma difficult to obtain, and finally attained Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi. Now I will transmit the Dharma to you. Propagate it with all your heats, and make it known far and wide.” (P.297, LL.3~10)

According to Hindu custom, to put one's hand on someone's head is to entrust him or her. Sakyamuni Buddha entrusted all Bodhisattvas who gathered to listen to the Dharma at Mount Sacred Eagle. He put his hand on the heads of all Bodhisattvas to transmit the Lotus Sutra and requested them to propagate it. He did this three times. This transmission of the Lotus Sutra is for anyone who practice the teachings of the Lotus Sutra; therefore, expounding the teachings are not limited to the people on this Saha World but also any other planets, for there are many bodhisattvas who came from other worlds or planets.

Remember in Chapter 13, Medicin-King Bodhisattva together with twenty thousand Bodhisattvas vowed to expound, but Buddha did not respond to them. In a later part of the same chapter, Maha-Prajapati, Yasodhara Bhishunis and the eighty billion nayuta Bodhisattvas also vow to expound his sutra in other worlds; however, the Buddha kept silent. In Chapter 22 Sakyamuni Buddha put his right hands on their head and said, **“Now I will transmit the Dharma to you. Propagate it with all your hearts, and make it known far and wide.”**

Abhiseka in Hindu or *Zucho-kancho* in Japanese is a special ceremony. When a king is installed on his throne, his head is wetted with ocean water. Rev. Shokai Kanai also performs a similar ceremony when a person is ready to convert and to become a Nichiren Shu member or when blessing a newborn baby.

“I will transmit the Dharma to you. Keep, read, recite and expound this sutra in which the Dharma is given and cause all living beings to hear it and know it!” (P.297, LL. 14~17)

The Buddha is warning that one must keep, read and recite the sutra before he or she can expound the sutra. One must keep up with these practices; otherwise people will not follow him or her.

“When you see anyone who does not receive this sutra by faith, you should show him some other profound teachings of mine, teach him, benefit him, and cause him to rejoice.” (P.297, L.26~Next page)

There are many people who do not listen to the profound teachings of the Lotus Sutra. The Buddha advises us to educate them by some other teachings of the Dharma, like the Laws of the Three Seals, Middle Way, the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Paths and the Twelve Causes and Effect. One must lead others with these teachings step-by-step methods:

1. “To Show Him” means that if you show how to do it, he may wish to learn.
2. “To Teach Him” means that when you explain in detail, the meaning of the Dharma becomes clearer one by one.
3. “To Benefit Him” means that when you practice the Dharma, the benefits are shown to him.
4. “To Cause Him to Rejoice” means to show that by continuing to do the practices will bring joyfulness.

“We will do as you command. Certainly, World-Honored One! Do not worry!” (P.298, L.6.):

The *shaku-mon* Bodhisattvas respectfully and joyfully said these words three times simultaneously. Because the Buddha repeated his transmission of the Dharma to the Bodhisattvas three times, the Bodhisattvas also said these words three times. Number three is an indivisible and a sacred number. When you have a serious prayer, it may be better to repeat the prayer three times and also say the above phrases.

The Lotus Sutra emphasizes for us to keep, read, recite, expound and copy the sutra. Among these practices, expounding is mostly emphasized because to save others in attaining Buddhahood is better rather than for us to attain Pari-Nirvana and not to repeat the cycle of birth

and death.

“Thereupon Sakyamuni Buddha, wishing to send back to their home worlds the Buddhas of his replicas, who had come from the worlds of the ten quarters, said ‘May the Buddhas be where they wish to be! May the pagoda of Many-Treasures Buddha be where it was!’”
(P.298, L.11~14)

Since Sakyamuni Buddha has finished his lecture on the Lotus Sutra at this time, he requests all Buddhas to return to their own home worlds in the ten quarters. He also requests to close the doors of the pagoda of Many-Treasures Buddha who came to prove that this sutra is excellent and all true. Also, this is the end of the assembly in the sky.

Similarly, Nichiren Shu priests quote part of the above sentence, “Wishing to send back to their home worlds,” at the end of prayers of ceremonies such as Burning Religious Items and Closing-Eye of Gohonzon or family shrine. In a sense they are “sending back the items to their home worlds”; to wish the souls in those religious items to return to their original lands and/or return to nature.

“Having heard these words of the Buddha, not only the innumerable Buddhas of his replicas, who had come from the worlds of the ten quarters and were sitting on the lion-like seats under the jeweled trees, Many-Treasures Buddha, and the great multitude of the innumerable, asamkhya Bodhisattvas, including Superior-Practice, but also the four kinds of devotees including Sariputra and other Sravakas, and the gods, men and asuras of the world, had great joy.” (P.298, L. 16~to the end of page)

It is quite joyful when we know that this world becomes the Buddha's pure land when the minds of each one of us are the same with the Buddha's.

This chapter ends the logical explanations of the Lotus Sutra. We understand the sutra logically, but it is hard for us to practice it in our daily lives. Therefore, the Buddha prepared another six chapters for us to practice the Dharma through the examples of previous lives of Bodhisattvas and explanations of protection of deities.

Thus, the main purpose of the Lotus Sutra is to spread its teachings, unification of all Buddhist and other religious denominations; that is the teaching of One Vehicle.