

Exhortation to Maintain

Chapter 13

At that time the Bodhisattva Mahasattva Medicine King, and the Bodhisattva Mahasattva Great Delight in Speaking, along with a retinue of twenty thousand Bodhisattvas came before the Buddha and made the following vow: “We only pray that the World Honored One will not be concerned. After the Buddha’s extinction, we will reverently maintain, read, recite, and explain this Sutra.”

“In the future evil ages, as their good roots diminish, living beings will become increasingly arrogant, greedy for benefits and offerings, of increasingly unwholesome roots, far removed from liberation, and difficult to teach and transform. Still, we shall give rise to the great power of patience, read, and recite this Sutra, maintain and speak it, write it out, and make various kinds of offerings to it, not sparing our very bodies and lives.”

Then, the five hundred Arhats in the assembly who had received predictions, spoke to the Buddha saying, “World Honored One, we too, vow to speak this Sutra extensively in other lands.”

Again, those still studying and those beyond study, eight thousand in number, who had received predictions, rose from their seats, placed their palms together, and facing the Buddha made this vow, “World Honored One, we too, will speak this Sutra extensively in other lands. Why? The people in the Saha World are

for the most part evil, arrogant, of scanty merit and virtue, hateful, turbid, flattering, and deceitful, their hearts untrue.”

The Buddha’s foster mother, the Bhikshuni Mahaprajapati, together with six thousand Bhikshunis, both those still studying and those beyond study, rose from their seats, singlemindedly joined their palms, and gazed at the Honored One’s countenance without removing their eyes for an instant.

The World Honored One then spoke to Gautami saying, “Why do you stare at the Thus Come One with such a worried expression? Are you not thinking of saying that I have not mentioned your name in connection with receiving a prediction for anuttarasamyaksambodhi? Gautami, I included all of you when previously I conferred predictions upon all of the Hearers. Now you wish to know about your prediction.

In the future, within the Dharma of sixty-eight billion Buddhas, you shall be a great Dharma Master. You and the six thousand Bhikshunis who are studying and who are beyond study shall all become Dharma Masters. In this way you shall gradually perfect the Bodhisattva Path and become a Buddha by the name of “Thus Come One Upon Whom All Beings Look With Delight,” One Worthy of Offerings, of Right and Universal Knowledge, Perfect in Clarity and Conduct, Well-gone One Who Understands the World, Supreme Lord, Regulating Hero, Teacher of Gods and Humans, Buddha, World Honored One. Gautami!

The Buddha Upon Whom All Beings Look With Delight and the six thousand Bodhisattvas will successively confer predictions for anuttarasamyaksambodhi upon one another.”

The Bhikshuni Yashodhara, Rahula's mother, then thought, "When conferring predictions, The World Honored One never mentioned my name."

The Buddha told Yashodhara, "In a future age, within the Dharma of hundreds of thousands of ten thousands of millions of Buddhas, you shall cultivate the Bodhisattva conduct as a great Dharma Master, gradually perfecting the Buddha Path. In the world 'wholesome' you shall become a Buddha by the name of 'The Thus Come One Complete With Tens of Thousands of Radiant Marks.' One Worthy of Offerings, of Right and Universal Knowledge, Perfect in Clarity and Conduct, Well-gone One Who Understands the World, Supreme Lord, Regulating Hero, Teacher of Gods and Humans, Buddha, World Honored One. As a Buddha your life span will be limitless asamkhyeyaeons."

At that time, the Bhikshuni Mahaprajapati and the Bhikshuni Yashodhara, together with their retinues, all rejoiced greatly, having gained what they never had. They spoke these verses in the presence of the Buddha:

"The World Honored One, our leader,
Brings tranquility to gods and humans;
Hearing this prediction
Our hearts know perfect peace."

When they had finished speaking this verse, the Bhikshunis said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, we too shall extensively proclaim this Sutra in other lands."

At that time, the World Honored One looked upon the eighty billion nayutas of Bodhisattva Mahasattvas.

All of these Bodhisattvas were Avaivartikas who turned the irreversible Dharma-wheel and who had attained all of the dharanis. They immediately rose from their seats, went before the Buddha, singlemindedly with palms joined, and thought, “If the World Honored One were to command us to maintain and speak this Sutra, we would follow the Buddha’s instruction and vastly proclaim this Dharma.”

They further thought: “The Buddha is silent now and gives no command. What should we do?”

Then all the Bodhisattvas, reverently complying with the Buddha’s will, and wishing to fulfill their own past vows, went directly before the Buddha, and uttered the lion’s roar, proclaiming this vow: “World Honored One, after the Thus Come One’s extinction, we shall circulate throughout the ten directions to lead living beings to copy out this Sutra. To receive, maintain, read and recite, and explain its meaning, to cultivate in accord with Dharma, and to keep it properly in mind—all through the awesome power of the Buddha. We only pray that the World Honored One although dwelling in another direction will lend us his protection from afar.”

At that time, all the Bodhisattvas in unison raised their voices to speak verses saying:

“Pray do not be concerned,
For after the Buddha’s extinction,
In the frightening evil age,
We will vastly preach.

There are ignorant people with evil
mouths will revile us,

Or even beat us with knives or staves,
But we will endure it all.

Bhikshus in the evil age
With deviant knowledge and flattering,
crooked minds,
Who claim to have gained what they
have not,
Have minds filled with arrogance.

Some may appear to be aranyakas,
For they wear rags and dwell in the
wilds.
But although they claim to be on the true
path,
They scorn those who live among
people.

Coveting profit and offerings,
They will speak Dharma to the white-
robed
And be held in reverence by the world
As Arhats with the Six Penetrations.

These people harbor evil thoughts,
Always thinking of vulgar, worldly
matters.
Falsely calling themselves aranyakas,
They will take delight in pointing out our
faults,
Saying things like,
“All of these Bhikshus are greedy for
profit and offerings,”
And so they preach externalist doctrines.

They have written the sutras themselves
To deceive and confuse worldly people

All for the sake of reputation.
They will single out this Sutra
And in the midst of the multitudes
slander us
Before the kings, ministers, Brahmans,
and lay people
And even to other Bhikshus.
Attempting to defame us, they will say,
“These are people of deviant views
Who preach an externalist doctrine.”

Because we revere the Buddha,
We will endure all of this evil.
For this we will be mocked
And people will flippantly say,
“All of you are Buddhas.”

All such words of ridicule
We will patiently endure.
In the turbid eon, in the evil age
When there will be much to fear,
Evil ghosts will possess others
In order to slander and insult us.

But revering and trusting the Buddha,
We shall put on the armor of patience.
In order to speak this Sutra,
We shall endure all these difficulties.

Not cherishing body or life itself,
But caring only for the supreme path
We in the ages to come,
Will protect and uphold the Buddha's
entrustment.

As the World Honored One himself
knows,
In the turbid age, evil Bhikshus,
Not knowing of the Buddha's expedients

Whereby the Dharma is spoken
appropriately,
Will frown and speak ill of us,
Repeatedly banishing us
From stupas and temples.
So will be the host of evils,
And yet, recollecting the Buddha's
command,
We shall bear up under these events.

If there are those who seek the Dharma,
In the villages, cities, and towns,
We will go to those places
To speak the Dharma entrusted
To us by the Buddha.

We are the Buddha's attendants
Dwelling fearlessly among the
multitudes,
We speak the Dharma skillfully,
And hope the Buddha will remain at
peace.

We in the presence of the World
Honored One,
And before the Buddhas who have come
from the ten directions,
Make vows such as these,
And the Buddha himself knows our
thoughts."