

Never-Slighting Bodhisattva

Chapter 20

At that time the Buddha told the Bodhisattva Mahasattva Great Strength, “You should now know that if someone reviles, abuses, or slanders a Bhikshu, Bhikshuni, Upasaka, or Upasika who upholds the Dharma Flower Sutra, he will incur great offense retribution as described above. The meritorious virtues obtained through the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind gained by the upholder of the Sutra are also as described above.”

“Great Strength, once limitless, boundless, inconceivable asamkhyeyas of eons ago, there was a Buddha by the name of King of Awesome Sound Thus Come One, One Worthy of Offerings, One of Proper and Universal Knowledge, One Perfect in Clarity and Conduct, Well-Gone One, One Who Understands the World, Unsurpassed Lord, Regulating Hero, Teacher of Gods and Humans, Buddha, World Honored One.”

“His eon was named ‘Apart From Decay.’ His country was named ‘Great Accomplishment.’”

“In that world, the Buddha King of Awesome Sound spoke the Dharma for the gods, humans, and asuras. To those who sought to be Hearers, he spoke the Dharma of the Four Truths to take them across birth, old age, sickness, and death to ultimate Nirvana. To those who sought to be Pratyekabuddhas, he spoke the Dharma of the Twelve Causes and Conditions. For the Bodhisattvas, in order to lead them to

Anuttarasamyaksambodhi, he spoke the Dharma of the Six Paramitas, which culminates in Buddha-wisdom.”

“Great Strength, the Buddha King of Awesome Sound had a life span of eons equal in number to the grains of sand in forty myriads of kotis of nayutas of Ganges Rivers.”

“His proper Dharma dwelt in the world for eons equal in number to the motes of dust in a single Jambudvipa. The Dharma Image Age dwelt in the world for eons equal in number to the motes of dust in one set of four continents. After benefiting living beings, he passed into stillness.”

“After the Proper and Image Dharma had become completely extinct, in this country yet another Buddha appeared, also by the name of King of Awesome Sound Thus Come One, One Worthy of Offerings, One of Proper and Universal Knowledge, One Perfect in Clarity and Conduct, Well Gone One, One Who Understands the World, Unsurpassed Lord, Regulating Hero, Teacher of Gods and Humans, Buddha, World Honored One. In this way, in sequence, there were twenty thousand kotis of Buddhas, all of the same name.”

“When the first Thus Come One King of Awesome Sound had passed into stillness, and after the extinction of his proper Dharma, during the Dharma Image Age there were Bhikshus of overweening pride who assumed great power. At that time there was a Bhikshu-Bodhisattva by the name of Never-Slighting.”

“Great Strength, for what reason was he called Never-Slighting? Whomever this Bhikshu met, be

it a Bhikshu, Bhikshuni, Upasaka, or Upasika, he would bow to them all and praise them, saying, 'I deeply respect all of you and dare not slight you. Why? You are all practicing the Bodhisattva Path and shall attain Buddhahood.'"

"This Bhikshu did not read and recite Sutras, but specialized in making obeisance to the point that when he saw the four assemblies from afar, he would approach them, bow, and praise them, saying, 'I dare not slight you, for you shall all become Buddhas.'"

"Within the four assemblies, there were some who grew irate, those with impure minds who reviled him with foul mouths, saying, 'Where did this senseless Bhikshu come from, who says "I dare not slight you" and then gives us predictions, saying we shall become Buddhas? We don't need such false predictions!'"

"In this way for many years he was scolded and reviled. But he never got angry. He always said, 'You shall become Buddhas.' When he said that, those people would beat him with sticks or throw stones at him. He would run off, stand at a distance, and shout out, 'I dare not slight you, for you shall all become Buddhas!' Because he always said that, the Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, and Upasikas of overweening pride gave him the name 'Never-Slighting.'"

"When this Bhikshu's life was coming to an end, in space he heard all of the complete twenty thousand myriad kotis of verses of the Dharma Flower Sutra previously spoken by the Buddha King of Awesome Sound. He was able to receive and uphold them all. He immediately obtained the purity of the eye and the purity of the ear,

nose, tongue, body, and mind, as mentioned above. Having obtained the purity of the six senses, his life span was further increased by two million kotis of nayutas of years. He extensively spoke the Dharma Flower Sutra for others.”

“At that time the four assemblies of Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, and Upasikas of overweening pride who had ridiculed him and named him Never-Slighting saw that he had gained great powers of spiritual penetrations, the power of the eloquence of delight in speech, and the power of great wholesome silence. Hearing what he said, they faithfully submitted to him and followed him.

This Bodhisattva further transformed thousands of myriads of kotis of multitudes, causing them to dwell in Anuttarasamyaksambodhi. When his life was over, he was able to encounter two thousand kotis of Buddhas, all named Brightness of Sun-Moon-Lamp. Within their Dharmas, he spoke the Dharma Flower Sutra. By means of these causes and conditions, he further encountered two thousand kotis of Buddhas, all named Cloud-like Comfort Lamp King.

Within the Dharma of those Buddhas, he received, upheld, read, recited, and spoke for others of the four assemblies this Sutra, and so obtained the purity of his ordinary eye and the purity of his ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. He spoke the Dharma in the four assemblies with a heart free of fear.”

“Great Strength, the Bodhisattva Mahasattva Never-Slighting made offerings to as many Buddhas as these: revering, honoring, and praising them and planting the roots of

goodness.”

“He later encountered a thousand myriad kotis of Buddhas, and within the Dharma of all these Buddhas, he spoke this Sutra. When his merit and virtue were realized, he became a Buddha.”

“Great Strength, what do you think? At that time, could the Bodhisattva Never-Slighting have been anyone else? He was none other than myself! Had I not in former lives received, upheld, read, and recited this Sutra and explained it to others, I would not have been able to gain Anuttara-samyaksambodhi so quickly. Because in the presence of former Buddhas I received, upheld, read, and recited this Sutra and explained it to others, I quickly gained Anuttarasamyak-sambodhi.”

“Great Strength, because at that time the four assemblies of Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, and Upasikas hatefully reviled me, for two hundred kotis of eons they did not encounter a Buddha or hear the Dharma or meet the Sangha. For a thousand eons they suffered great torment in the Avici Hell. Having received their punishment, they once again encountered Never-Slighting Bodhisattva, who taught and transformed them to Anuttarasamyaksambodhi.”

“Great Strength, what do you think? At that time could the four assemblies who constantly slighted this Bodhisattva have been anyone else? They were just Bhadrapala Bodhisattva and the five hundred Bodhisattvas in this assembly, Lion Moon and the five hundred Bhikshus, and Sugatachetana and the five hundred Upasakas, all of whom are irreversible from Anuttarasamyaksambodhi.”

“Great Strength, you should know that the Dharma Flower Sutra greatly benefits all the Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas, causing them to arrive at Anuttarasamyaksambodhi. Therefore all the Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas after the extinction of the Thus Come One should always receive, uphold, read, and recite this Sutra, explain it to others, and write it out.”

At that time the World Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses, saying,

“In the past there was a Buddha
By the name of King of Awesome
Sound.
With limitless spiritual powers and
wisdom,
He guided all living beings.

Gods, humans, dragons, and spirits
Made offerings to him.
After this Buddha’s passing into stillness,
When the Dharma was about to become
extinct,
There was a Bodhisattva
By the name of Never-Slighting.

At that time the four assemblies were
attached to the Dharma.
The Bodhisattva Never-Slighting
Would approach them
And say to them,
“I will not slight you,
For you are practicing the Way
And shall become Buddhas.”

Hearing that, they slighted him,
Slandered and reviled him,

And Never-Slighting Bodhisattva
endured it all.
When his punishment was finished,
At the end of his life,
He got to hear this Sutra,
And his six sense faculties were purified.

By the power of spiritual penetrations,
His life span was increased,
And for the sake of others,
He vastly spoke this Sutra.

The multitudes who were attached to
Dharma
All received this Bodhisattva's
Teaching and successfully
Were led to dwell in the Buddha Way.

When Never-Slighting's life ended,
He met with countless Buddhas,
And because he spoke this Sutra,
He obtained limitless blessings.

Gradually perfecting his merit and virtue,
He quickly realized the Buddha Way.
At that time Never-Slighting
Was indeed myself!

At that time the four assemblies
Were attached to the Dharma.
Hearing Never-Slighting's words,
"You shall become Buddhas,"

By means of those causes and
conditions
Were countless Buddhas encountered.
The multitude of five hundred
Bodhisattvas in this assembly
And the men and women of pure faith

Within the four assemblies
Are now in front of me,
Listening to the Dharma.

In former lives
I exhorted these people
To listen to and receive this Sutra,
Which is the foremost Dharma.

I instructed them
And led them to dwell in Nirvana,
And life after life, to receive and uphold
A Sutra such as this.

For only in millions and millions of
myriads of eons,
Inconceivable in number,
Can one get to hear
The Dharma Flower Sutra.

And only in millions and millions of
myriads of eons,
Inconceivable in number,
Do the Buddhas, World Honored Ones,
Happen to speak this Sutra.

Therefore, the practitioner,
After the Buddha's extinction,
On hearing this Sutra,
Should not give rise to doubts,
But should, with a single mind,
Extensively proclaim this Sutra,
So that life after life he may meet the
Buddhas
And quickly realize the Buddha Way."