

# The Bodhisattva of the Lotus Sutra

A few words here on one of the controversies in Buddhist scholarship. We read of the three vehicles of Sravaka, Pratyekabuddha, and Bodhisattva. The Bodhisattva of the Tripitaka canon of teachings, those adhered to by the early “Hinayana” Āgama, Theravada, Tibetan sects all maintain the false teaching or Counterfeit or Semblance teaching of the (false) Nirvana prior to the Lotus Sutra. As the Lotus Sutra specifically requires much more effort and aspiration to awaken the Buddha-mind in our present form and life. For the earlier sects, this present Buddhahood is simply not possible or within reach, requiring a multitude of lifetimes and ages to encounter and to be bequeathed only by an extant Buddha.

With the Lotus Sutra, these misunderstandings of early schools and monks are obliterated. So too are the three vehicles annihilated. So the Bodhisattva of the Lotus Sutra could be interpreted as an entirely new Bodhisattva teaching; a fourth vehicle, if you will. This fourth vehicle is subsumed in the ***One-Buddha-Vehicle*** Dharma teaching.

Is this of critical importance to the achievement of our practice of Nichiren’s doctrine? I think it is interesting, but more academic in its study than an actual affect to the teachings of Shakyamuni and further on through the lineage of scholar monks leading to Bodhisattva Nichiren. For more on this, a reading of the “Conjured City” or Apparitional City parable in the seventh (7<sup>th</sup>) chapter of the Lotus Sutra is very clear on the temporary target used by early students of Shakyamuni to hold their commitment to study and practice. With the ultimate Mahayana of the Lotus, this temporary respite is removed to cause the students (monks) to aspire to the full goal of the Buddhist teachings for immediate and complete enlightenment in this lifetime.

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