

The Quantum Life Sangha

As I have identified in previous writings, the Sangha, one of the three jewels of Buddhism (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha) is the relationship of all practicing Buddhist in their efforts of awakening Buddha mind in this life. As I have found through years of practice and study, the scholarship of Buddhism from Shakyamuni to Nichiren and beyond clearly identifies the sharing of study and practice of Buddhism is the jewel or treasure that the word or term “Sangha” represents. Nowhere is this relationship more explicit than in the practice of Bodhisattva. If this is understood, then it should also be understood that the Lotus Sutra clearly identifies all sentient beings of the age of Mappo, this latter age, to be Bodhisattvas of the Earth. As Bodhisattvas of the Earth, it is we who are the Sangha. This is the reason I do not obsess about ‘membership’ in my school or practice. The Quantum Life Sangha is exactly that. All life is ultimately of the same source of potential, manifest throughout all phenomena, and inherently Sangha. As a Bodhisattva it is my responsibility to be true to those aims, to share, study, and facilitate all to attain awakening, no matter what their current state. In my humble opinion, to endeavor to inculcate special or distinctive characteristics of an isolation into group or organization is a capricious and bold affront to the idea that all is Buddha and Sangha. To further make my point, it is my observation that any ‘teaching’ that occurs is derived from the student, and not those calling themselves ‘teachers’. This is the special meaning of Bodhisattva.

A Bodhisattva brings others into realization, but the realizing and therefore self-teaching, is the effort of the student, the individual. The Bodhisattva is a facilitator. Please understand that I recognize the value of having a ‘place’ for this facilitation. But, the place is only of import at the moments of facilitation, and here I speak of the treasure also of the Sangha. It is not a building, a temple, or even a beautiful field. Nor is it the gathering of many people; it is the effort toward awakening, that specific relationship of minds. When we gather to chant, it is in the chanting that we manifest Itai-Doshin (many in body and one in mind). Many examples from the teachings demonstrate exhaustively the power of propagation even down to the fiftieth person who hears the teachings from one to another to another, completely removed from the person making the effort to facilitate, share, the teachings of the Sutra. The treasure is in the manifestation of the sharing, the facilitation, and the learning or self-teaching. In this way I am deeply appreciative of those who come to my school in the same degree that I am thankful for Patrons online in text, videos, or forums. These are all Sangha. Further I quote the Lotus Sutra chapter 18 of

contemporary translations, and lest you think 20th century translations are tainted, I will use H. Kern's translation from the late 19th century from chapter 17, “

INDICATION OF THE MERITORIOUSNESS OF JOYFUL ACCEPTANCE.

Thereupon the Bodhisattva Mahasattva Maitreya said to the Lord: O Lord, one who, after hearing this Dharmaparyaya being preached, joyfully I accepts it, be that person a young man of good family or a young lady, how much merit, O Lord, will be produced by such a young man or young lady of good family?

And on that occasion the Bodhisattva Mahasattva Maitreya uttered this stanza:

1. How great will be the merit of him who, after the extinction of the great Hero, shall hear this exalted sutra and joyfully accept it?

And the Lord said to the Bodhisattva Mahasattva Maitreya: If any one, Agita, either a young man of good family or a young lady, after the complete extinction of the Tathagata, hears the preaching of this Dharmaparyaya, let it be a monk or nun, a male or female lay devotee, a man of ripe understanding or a boy or girl; if the hearer joyfully accepts it, and then after the sermon rises up to go elsewhere, to a monastery, house, forest, street, village, town, or province, with the motive and express aim to expound the law such as he has understood, such as he has heard it, and according to the measure of his power, to another person, his mother, father, kinsman, friend, acquaintance, or any other person; if the latter, after hearing, joyfully accepts, and, in consequence, communicates it to another; if the latter, after hearing, joyfully accepts, and communicates it to another; if this other, again, after hearing, joyfully accepts it, and so on in succession until a number of fifty is reached; then, Agita, the fiftieth person to hear and joyfully accept the law so heard, let it be a young man of good family or a young lady, will have acquired an accumulation of merit connected with the joyful acceptance, Agita, which I am going to indicate to thee. Listen, and take it well to heart; I will tell thee.

It is, Agita, as if the creatures existing in the four hundred thousand Asankhyeyas of worlds, in any of the six states of existence, born from an egg, from a womb, from warm humidity, or from metamorphosis, whether they have a shape or have not, be they conscious or unconscious, neither conscious nor unconscious, footless, two-footed, four-footed, or many-footed, as many beings as are contained in the world of creatures, -(as if) all those had flocked together to one place. Further, suppose some man appears, a lover of virtue, a lover of good, who gives to that whole body the pleasures, sports, amusements, and enjoyments they desire, like, and relish. He gives to each of them all Gambudvopa for his pleasures, sports, amusements, and

enjoyments; gives bullion, gold, silver, gems, pearls, lapis lazuli, conches, stones (?), coral, carriages yoked with horses, with bullocks, with elephants; gives palaces and towers. In this way, Agita, that master of munificence, that great master of munificence continues spending his gifts for fully eighty years. Then, Agita, that master of munificence, that great master of munificence reflects thus: All these beings have I allowed to sport and enjoy themselves, but now they are covered with wrinkles and grey-haired, old, decrepit, eighty years of age, and near the term of their life. Let me therefore initiate them in the discipline of the law revealed by the Tathagata, and instruct them. Thereupon, Aota, the man exhorts all those beings, thereafter initiates them in the discipline of the law revealed by the Tathagata, and makes them adopt it. Those beings learn the law from him, and in one moment, one instant, one bit of time, all become Srotaapannas, obtain the fruit of the rank of Sakridagamin and of Anagamin, until they become Arhats, free from all imperfections, adepts in meditation, adepts in great meditation and in the meditation with eight emancipations. Now, what is thine opinion, Agita, will that master of munificence, that great master of munificence, on account of his doings, produce great merit, immense, incalculable merit? Whereupon the Bodhisattva Mahasattva Maitreya said in reply to the Lord: Certainly, Lord; certainly, Sugata; that person, Lord, will already produce much merit on that account, because he gives to the beings all that is necessary for happiness; how much more then if he establishes them in Arhatship!

This said, the Lord spoke to the Bodhisattva Mahasattva Maitreya as follows: I announce to thee, Agita, I declare to thee; (take) on one side the master of munificence, the great master of munificence, who produces merit by supplying all beings in the four hundred thousand Asanikhyeyas of worlds with all the necessaries for happiness and by establishing them in Arhatship; (take) on the other side the person who, ranking the fiftieth in the series of the oral tradition of the law, hears, were it but a single stanza, a single word, from this Dharmaparyaya and joyfully accepts it; if (we compare) the mass of merit connected with the joyful acceptance and the mass of merit connected with the charity of the master of munificence, the great master of munificence, then the greater merit will be his who, ranking the fiftieth in the series of the oral tradition of the law, after hearing were it but a single stanza, a single word, from this Dharmaparyaya, joyfully accepts it. Against this accumulation of merit, Agita, this accumulation of roots of goodness connected with that joyful acceptance, the former accumulation of merit connected with the charity of that master of munificence, that great master of munificence, and connected with the confirmation in Arhatship, does not fetch the 1/100 part, not the 1/100,000, not the 1/10,000,000 not the 1/1000,000,000 not the 1/1000 x 10,000,000 not the 1/100,000 x 10,000,000, not the 1/100,000 x 10,000 x 10,000,000

part; it admits of no calculation, no counting, no reckoning, no comparison, no approximation, no secret teaching. So immense, incalculable, Agita, is the merit which a person, ranking the fiftieth in the series of the tradition of the law, produces by joyfully accepting, were it but a single stanza, a single word, from this Dharmaparyaya; how much more then (will) he (produce), Agita, who hears this Dharmaparyaya in my presence and then joyfully accepts it? I declare, Agita, that his accumulation of merit shall be even more immense, more incalculable.

And further, Agita, if a young man of good family or a young lady, with the design to hear this discourse on the law, goes from home to a monastery, and there hears this Dharmaparyaya for a single moment, either standing or sitting, then that person, merely by the mass of merit resulting from that action, will after the termination of his (present) life, and at the time of his second existence when he receives (another) body, become a possessor of carriages yoked with bullocks, horses, or elephants, of litters, vehicles yoked with bulls, and of celestial aerial cars. If further that same person at that preaching sits down, were it but a single moment, to hear this Dharmaparyaya, or persuades another to sit down or shares with him his seat, he will by the store of merit resulting from that action gain seats of Indra, seats of Brahma, thrones of a Kakravartin. And, Agita, if some one, a young man of good family or a young lady, says to another person: Come, friend, and hear the Dharmaparyaya of the Lotus of the True Law, and if that other person owing to that exhortation is persuaded to listen, were it but a single moment, then the former will by virtue of that root of goodness, consisting in that exhortation, obtain the advantage of a connection with Bodhisattvas who have acquired Dharano. He will become the reverse of dull, will get keen faculties, and have wisdom; in the course of a hundred thousand existences he will never have a fetid mouth, nor an offensive one; he will have no diseases of the tongue, nor of the mouth; he will have no black teeth, no unequal, no yellow, no ill-ranged, no broken teeth, no teeth fallen out; his lips will not be pendulous, not turned inward, not gaping, not mutilated, not loathsome; his nose will not be flat, nor wry; his face will not be long, nor wry, nor unpleasant. On the contrary, Agita, his tongue, teeth, and lips will be delicate and well-shaped; his nose long; his face perfectly round; the eyebrows well-shaped; the forehead well-formed. He will receive a very complete organ of manhood. He will have the advantage that the Tathagata renders sermons intelligible to him and soon come in connection with Lords, Buddhas. Mark, Agita, how much good is produced by one's inciting were it but a single creature; how much more then by him who reverentially hears, reverentially reads, reverentially preaches, reverentially promulgates the law!

And on that occasion the Lord uttered the following stanzas:

2. Listen how great the merit is of one who, the fiftieth in the series (of tradition), hears a single stanza from this Sutra and with placid mind joyfully adopts it.

3. Suppose there is a man in the habit of giving alms to myriads of kotis of beings, whom I have here-before indicated by way of comparison'; all of them he satisfies during eighty years.

4. Then seeing that old age has approached for them, that their brow is wrinkled and their head grey (he thinks): Alas, how all beings come to decay! Let me therefore admonish them by (speaking of) the law.

5. He teaches them the law here on earth and points to the state of Nirvana hereafter. 'All existences' (he says) 'are like a mirage; hasten to become disgusted with all existence.'

6. All creatures, by hearing the law from that charitable person, become at once Arhats, free from imperfections, and living their last life.

7. Much more merit than by that person will be acquired by him who through unbroken tradition shall hear were it but a single stanza and joyfully receive it. The mass of merit of the former is not even so much as a small particle of the latter's.

8. So great will be one's merit, endless, immeasurable, owing to one's hearing merely a single stanza, in regular tradition; how much more then if one hears from face to face!

9. And if somebody exhorts were it but a single creature and says: Go, hear the law, for this Sutra is rare in many myriads of kotis of Aeons;

10. And if the creature so exhorted should hear the Sutra even for a moment, hark what fruit is to result from that action. He shall never have a mouth disease;

11. His tongue is never sore; his teeth shall never fall out, never be black, yellow, unequal; his lips never become loathsome;

12. His face is not wry, nor lean, nor long; his nose not flat; it is well-shaped, as well as his forehead, teeth, lips, and round face.

13. His aspect is ever pleasant to men; his mouth is never fetid, it constantly emits a smell sweet as the lotus.

14. If some wise man, to hear this Sutra, goes from his home to a monastery and there listen, were it but for a single moment, with a placid mind, hear what results from it.

15. His body is very fair; he drives with horse-carriages, that wise man, and is mounted on elevated carriages drawn by elephants and variegated with gems.

16. He possesses litters covered with ornaments and carried by numerous men. Such is the blessed fruit of his going to hear preaching.

17. Owing to the performance of that pious work he shall, when sitting in the assembly there, obtain seats of Indra, seats of Brahma, seats of kings.

And also this from John Hughes at 500yojanas.org;

The Pure Land Buddhists today ... [say] it is impossible to practice the Lotus Sūtra unless one possesses a high capacity to understand and it bewilders the evil ordinary people in the Latter Age of Degeneration. Are they not contradicting themselves? Grand Master Miao-lo in his Annotations to the Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sūtra asserts, "Most people make mistakes, without knowing how great the merits of the inexperienced practitioners can be. They imagine that only the experienced practitioners can have merits and slander the inexperienced. Therefore, in the 'Merits of Rejoicing at Hearing This Sūtra' chapter it is shown that the merits of the inexperienced practitioner can be great and how great the merits of the Lotus Sūtra are." This passage means that the merit of the 50th person rejoicing at hearing the Lotus Sūtra transmitted one after another was preached to show that the merit of an ignorant person with little capacity in the Latter Age rejoicing even for a moment at hearing the sūtra preached is superior to the merit of sages who practice the pre-Lotus sūtras preached during the 40 or so years before the Lotus Sūtra. This is preached so that the Lotus Sūtra is not mistaken as the teaching attained by only persons of superior capacity and devotion.

Therefore, Grand Master T'ien-t'ai in his Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sūtra compares the 50th person rejoicing at hearing the Lotus Sūtra transmitted one after another, the lowest rank in the practice of the Lotus Sūtra, against the practitioners of non-Buddhist teachings, Hinayana Buddhism, and provisional Mahayana Buddhism. He states that the merits of the lowest rank in the practice of the Lotus Sūtra are superior to those of any other practice.

Shō Hokke Daimoku-shō, Treatise on Chanting the Daimoku of the Lotus Sūtra, Writings of Nichiren Shōnin, Faith and Practice

This is my reason for labeling my method of propagation "Quantum Life", to simply encompass this timelessness of propagation from quiescent energy to quantum fields and all the way to the dependent conditioning of the manifestations of beings

with whom I communicate. The Sangha is life. Let us all walk among the totality of phenomena as “the Sangha”. Not theirs, not other, not mine or yours, but all; all Sangha; the Sangha. To quote Buddhist scholarship, “enlightenment is none other than this Saha world”. In our human condition, we perceive all through the mind of distinctions, of duality. In the Bodhisattva way, we live our Samsaric life in a quest for equanimity. Let us train that equanimity as our experience of Sangha. This must lead to propagation, the spread of Buddhist scholarship, and ultimately, Peace in the Land, this land of Earth.

NaMuMyoHoRenGeKyo

Sylvain Chamberlain, Shonin

Threefold Lotus Kwoon