

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Thesis

Today Buddhism consists of two main schools which are *Theravada* and Mahayana. It is widely understood that *Theravada* represents the earliest form of Buddhism and *Mahayana* is considered as a new form of Buddhism. Sometimes, it is believed as well that what the *Mahayana* school teaches may not be what the Buddha teaches; and this kind of problem does not occur to the *Theravada* school as it is the earliest form of Buddhism.

In terms of history, Mahayana Buddhism has its own long tradition that can be traced back to the Buddha. Some Mahayana Buddhist schools claim that their earliest masters are *Mahakassapa*, *Ananda*, and so on. We know that these names are the great disciples of the Buddha and the *Theravada* school highly esteems these names. At the outset, we see that Mahayana and Theravada share something important.

However, the understanding that Mahayana may be a Buddhist school that does not teach what the Buddha teaches persists. This thesis has been undertaken to explore the truth about this understanding. As there are a lot of texts in Mahayana and *Theravada*, it is not possible to explore all of them in terms of comparison. So, the specific texts are chosen for that purpose. For the *Theravada* school, the text named the *Sutta Nipata* has been chosen; and for the Mahayana school, the text named the Lotus Sutra has been chosen—to comparatively study for the purpose to find out underlying both the *Sutta Nipata* and the Lotus Sutra.

Objectives of the Thesis

- (1) To study the *Sutta Nipata* and the Lotus Sutra.
- (2) To compare these texts.
- (3) To state that finally both *Sutta Nipata* and the Lotus Sutra represent the teachings of the same Buddha.

The Texts Used in the Thesis

- (1) The *Sutta Nipata*: an English translation by K. R. Norman, published by the Pali Text Society, London, (2001)

- (2) The Lotus Sutra: an English translation by Burton Watson, published by Columbia University Press. (1993)

Expectations

This thesis is hoped to provide a new understanding, for those who believe that Mahayana may teach what the Buddha does not teach, that at least there are two important texts in Theravada and Mahayana representing the teachings of the same Buddha. However, this does not mean that there is no difference in them. There are some differences in these texts. But they are just minor differences, happening from different traditions adopted by both schools. These differences are not at the level of idea; they are just at the level of culture or external form.

2. And the Exalted One, with clear and Heavenly Ear surpassing the hearing of men, overheard this conversation among the *bhikkhus*. And arising from his seat he came to the pavilion in the *Kareri* grounds, and took his seat on the mat spread out for him. And when he had sat down he said to the brethren:-----‘What is the talk on which you are engaged sitting here, and what is the subject of conversation between you?’

3. Then he said: ---‘Do you not wish, brethren, to hear some religious talk on the subject of former lives?’

‘Now is the time, O Exalted One, now is the time, O Welcome One, for the Exalted One to give us a religious discourse on the subject of former lives. When the brethren have heard it from the Exalted One they will bear it in mind.’

‘Wherefore then, brethren, hearken well to me, and I will speak.’

‘So be it, lord,’ replied the brethren. And the Exalted One said

4. ‘It is now ninety-one aeons ago, brethren, since *Vipassi*, the Exalted One, *Arahant*, Buddha Supreme, arose in the world. It is now thirty-one aeons ago, brethren, since *Sikhi*, the Exalted One, *Arahant*, Buddha a Supreme, arose in the world. It was in that same thirty-first aeons, brethren, that *Vessabhu*, the Exalted One, *Arahant*, Buddha Supreme, arose in the world. It was in this present auspicious aeon, brethren, that *Kakusandha*, the Exalted One, *Arahant*, Buddha Supreme, arose in the world. It was in this auspicious aeon, that *Konagamana*, the Exalted One, *Arahant*, Buddha Supreme, arose in the world. It was in this auspicious aeon, brethren, that *Kassapa*, the Exalted One, *Arahant*, Buddha Supreme, arose in the world. It is in this auspicious aeon, brethren, that now I, an *Arahant*, Buddha Supreme, has arisen in the world.¹

This *Suttanta* [the 14th chapter] become the bases of the life-stories of Buddhas matured in later time as the pioneer of precursor in literature of Buddha stories. More, in the Lineage of the Buddhas (*Buddhavamsa*), the fourteenth section of Collection of Minor Works [*Khuddaka-nikaya*], mentions twenty-five Buddhas of

¹ *Mahapadana-suttanta* became the foundation for the biographical stories of Buddha in after age.

the Past [with eighteen Buddhas preceding the above mentioned seven Buddhas of the Past] as well as twenty-eight Buddhas of the Past.

The names of them are 1. *Dipankara* 2. *Kondanna* 3. *Mangala* 4. *Sumana*
5. *Revata* 6. *Sobhita* 7. *Anomadassin* 8. *Paduma* 9. *Narada* 10. *Padumuttara*
11. *Sumedha* 12. *Sujata* 13. *Piyadassin* 14. *Atthadasin* 15. *Dhammadassin*
16. *Siddhattha* 17. *Tissa* 18. *Phussa* 19. [1. *Vipassi*] 20. [2. *Sikhi*] 21. [3. *Vessabhu*]
22. [4. *Kakusandha*] 23. [5. *Konagamana*] 24. [6. *Kassapa*] 25. [7. *Gotama*]. In the case of
28 Buddhas, 3 Buddhas are added in front of 25 Buddhas. Moreover, *Maitreya* will
be predicted as a future Buddha.

Kassapa Buddha is the just before Shakyamuni Buddha. A remarkable method for the teaching is the quotation of the past Buddha's teaching in order to give a clear grasp to people. In the Buddha's time, ascetics did not eat flesh. *Tissa* praises ascetics who live on vegetables by the verse 239 and abuses *Kassapa* Buddha to his face far from attitude of question to *Kassapa* Buddha by the verses 240, 241 as the following:

239. '[Those] eating millet seed, plant, beans, green leaves, roots and creeper-fruits, obtained in accordance with the doctrine of the good, do not tell lies from desire for sensual pleasure.

240. Eating what is well-prepared, given by others, pure, outstanding, enjoying food [made] of rice, one partakes, *Kassapa*, of tainted fare.

241. "Tainted fare does not apply to me", thus you speak, you relative of Brahma, [although] enjoying food [made] of rice, together with well-dressed flesh of birds. I ask you this, *Kassapa*: What form does your tainted fare have?

In the verses 242-248, *Kassapa* Buddha gave the teaching of true meaning on "Tainted fare".

242.— 'Hurting living creatures, killing, cutting, and binding, stealing, telling lies, fraud and deceptions, useless studies, intercourse with other men's wives --- this is tainted fare, not the eating of flesh.

243.— If any persons here are completely unrestrained in respect of sensual pleasures, are greedy for flavors, associated with impurity, having the view that nothing exists, wrong, hard to fathom --- this is tainted fare, not the eating of flesh.

244.— If any persons are rough, pitiless, back-biting,

harming their friends, heartless, arrogant, ungenerous, and do not give to anyone --- this is tainted fare, not the eating of flesh.

245.— Anger arrogance, obstinacy, and hostility, delusion, envy, and grandiloquence, and conceit acquaintance with the bad --- this is tainted fare, not eating of flesh.

246.— If any persons are of evil moral conduct, debt-repudiators, informers, cheats in their business dealings here, dissemblers, vile men who commit sin here --- this is tainted fare, not the eating of flesh.

247.— If any persons here are completely unrestrained in respect of living creatures, taking others' property, intent on injury, of bad moral conduct and cruel, harsh, disrespectful --- this is tainted fare, not the eating of flesh.

248.— Those beings [who are] very greedy, hostile, hurtful constantly intent [on evil], who having passed away go to darkness, [and] fall headlong into hell --- this is tainted fare, not the eating of flesh.

Just as that moment when *Tissa* heard '*Kassapa* Buddha eats flesh', doubt to the Buddha arose in *Tissa's* heart. *Kassapa* Buddha, here, teaches that the path to purification (*visuddhi-magga*) is to cross beyond doubt. It is the verse 249.

249.— Not the flesh of fish, nor fasting, nor nakedness, nor shaven head, matted hair, dirt, nor rough animal skin, nor observance of the fire ceremony, nor even the many penances there are in the world for [gaining] immortality, nor hymns nor oblations, nor the performance of sacrifices at the proper season, purify a mortal who has not crossed beyond doubt.

After *Kassapa* Buddha gave the teaching that ascetic practices not to eat flesh cannot purify an ascetic, then, *Kassapa Buddha* preached *Tissa* for giving the method to be able to purify the man. It is the verse 250.

250.— Guarded in the apertures [of the sense-organs], one should wander with one's sense-faculties conquered, standing firm in the doctrine, delighting in uprightness and mildness. Gone beyond attachment, with all miseries eliminated, a wise man does not cling to things seen or heard.'

Kassapa Buddha gives individual instruction by devoting himself wholeheartedly to *Tissa* who abuses to *Kassapa* to his face. Even for us, whatever our unique purpose or mission may be, by devoting ourselves wholeheartedly to it, we are creating something that will shine with eternal brilliance. How much more growing brilliance will the teaching of *Kassapa* Buddha be for people in later age, too. Probably there may be many valuable teachings for lay people handed over as the teachings of *Kassapa* Buddha. It have been passed down that there had been the stupa of *Kassapa* Buddha in *Kosala* country. It gives an example that the Buddhas in the past attracted people's piety in those days.

The verses 251 and 252 were mentioned by the compilers of Buddhist teaching (*sangitikara*).

251.— Thus Blessed One proclaimed this matter again and again, and the [*Brahman*] who had reached the far shore of the [vedic] hymns understood it. With variegated verses the sage without taint, unfettered, hard to fathom, declared it.

252.— Having heard the Buddha's well-spoken word, without taint, thrusting away all miseries, with humble mind he praised the *Tathagata's* [feet]. On that very spot he chose to go forth.

In this way, *Tissa* became to be most able disciple of *Kassapa* Buddha, and *Bharad-vaja*, one of a group, became to be second able disciple. pursuing this course, *Kassapa* had two chief disciples, *Tissa* and *Bharadvaja*.

Now then, Shakyamuni Buddha adopted the total of fourteen verses of the beginning three verses by *Tissa*, the nine verses at the middle that the *Kassapa* Buddha preached, and last two verses by the compilers of Buddhist teaching (*sangitikara*) and gave the sermon to *Amagandha* of the instructor and five hundred followers (*manavaka*) of him.

They with humble mind praised the Shakyamuni Buddha's feet and on that very spot they chose to go forth same as *Tissa* and his followers. According to *Paramattha-jotika*, they got to the rank of "*ehi-bhikkhu-bhava*", several days later, they firmly established the stage of *arhat* (*arahatta*), that is supreme fruit (*agga-phala*). In *Amagandha-sutta* of *Sutta-Nipata*, Shakyamuni takes the same process as *Kassapa* Buddha.

The Concept of Buddhas in the Past in the Lotus Sutra

In the Lotus Sutra, the five categories of Buddhas are all Buddhas, past Buddhas, present Buddhas, future Buddhas, and Shakyamuni Buddha.

According to the “Expedient Means” (second) chapter of the Sutra, all these Buddhas preach in a uniform manner. It is called “the five categories of Buddhas all employ a similar process” (五仏道同). That is, the Buddhas all employ a similar process by which to lead people to the one Buddha vehicle. (In the “Expedient Means” chapter, the disciple, who is addressed by the Buddha during sermons, is *Shariputra*.)

Quoting on all Buddhas’ preaching in a uniform manner from this chapter is as follows.

(1. All Buddhas) “The Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones, simply teach and convert the bodhisattvas. All the things they do are at all times done for this one purpose. They simply wish to show the Buddha wisdom to living being and enlighten them to it. *Shariputra*, the Thus Come Ones have only a single Buddha vehicle which they employ in order to preach the Law to living beings. They do not have any other vehicle, a second one or a third one. *Shariputra*, the Law preached by all the Buddhas of the ten directions is the same as this.”

(2. Past Buddhas) “*Shariputra*, the Buddhas of the past used countless numbers of expedient means, various causes and conditions, and words of simile and parable in order to expound the doctrines for the sake of living beings. These doctrines are all for the sake of the one Buddha vehicle. These living beings, by listening to the doctrines of the Buddhas, are all eventually able to attain wisdom embracing all species.

(3. Future Buddhas) “*Shariputra*, when the Buddhas of the future make their appearance in the world, they too will use countless numbers of expedient means, various cause and conditions, and words of simile and parable in order to expound the doctrines for the sake of living beings. These doctrines will all be for the sake of one Buddha vehicle.

(4. Present Buddhas in the ten directions) “*Shariputra*, the Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, who exist at present in the countless hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, and millions of Buddha-lands in the ten directions, benefit and bring peace and happiness to living beings in large measure. These Buddhas too use countless numbers of expedient means, various causes and conditions, and words of simile and parable in order to expound the doctrines for the sake of

living beings. These doctrines are all for the sake of the one Buddha vehicle.”

(5. Shakyamuni Buddha) “*Shariputra*, I too will now do the same. I know that living beings have various desires, attachments that are deeply implanted in their minds. Taking cognizance of this basic nature of theirs, I will therefore use various causes and conditions, words of simile and parable, and the power of expedient means and expound the Law for them. *Shariputra*, I do this so that all of them may attain the one Buddha vehicle and wisdom embracing all species.”

Here, The reason to quote the passage of “the five categories of Buddhas all employ a similar process” (五仏道同) from the “Expedient Means” (second) chapter is to point out that Buddhas always employ the similar means for the salvation of the people, such as in II.2. Tainted fare of II. The Small Chapter is named *Amagandha-sutta*.

The most important concept of the Buddha in the Lotus Sutra is the Buddha preached in the ‘Life Span of the Thus Come One’ (sixteenth) Chapter. The Buddha in the Chapter is quite different from the Buddha of all the other scriptures.

The chapter title ‘The Life Span of the Thus Come One’ means the duration of Shakyamuni’s life as a Buddha, that is, how much time has passed since he originally attained Buddhahood.

In the beginning of the chapter, Shakyamuni Buddha reveals that he originally attained enlightenment in the far distant past rather than in his present life in India as his listeners generally thought.

The chapter opens with three exhortations and four entreaties, in which the Buddha three times admonishes the multitude to believe and understand words, and the assembly four times begs him to preach.

The first address from Shakyamuni Buddha to the assembly is ‘Good men.’

The scriptures of Mahayana Buddhism, including the Lotus Sutra, make frequent use of the form address ‘good men and good women.’ It originally referred to men and women of good families and came to indicate men and women of the laity. However it can be said that it is used in the Lotus Sutra not make a distinction between lay practitioners and priests but instead to transcend that division. These men and women are referred to as ‘good’ because they have made commitment to follow the path set forth by Shakyamuni Buddha. ‘Good’ here refers to goodness of intent.

Shakyamuni Buddha proceeds to explain that, he first attained enlightenment in his present lifetime under the *bodhi* tree not far from the city of *Gaya*, it has been an immeasurable, boundless hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of *nayutas* of *kalpas* since I in fact attained Buddhahood.

More, he explains that during that time he has spoken about the Buddha Burning Torch (*Dipankara*) and others, and described how they entered nirvana. All this he employed as an expedient means to make distinctions.

Shakyamuni Buddha, further, continues that good men, if there are living beings who come to him, he employs his Buddha eye to observe their faith and to see if their other faculties are keen or dull, and then depending upon how receptive they are to salvation, he appears in different places and preach to them under different names, and describe the length of time during which his teachings will be effective. Sometimes when he makes appearance he says that he is about to enter nirvana, and also employ different expedient means to preach the subtle and wonderful Law, thus causing living beings to awaken joyful minds.

The Lotus Sutra reveals that the Shakyamuni Buddha in the remote past is a single Buddha who possesses all three Bodies. Three Bodies are the dharma body (*dhamma kaya*), the reward body (*sambhoga kaya*), and the manifested body (*nimmana kaya*). *Dhamma kaya* is the essential property of a Buddha, similar with *buddhanam dhammata* described in *Sanyutta-nikaya*. *Sambhoga kaya* is the wisdom, or the spiritual property of a Buddha. *Nimmana kaya* is compassionate actions, or the physical property of a Buddha, namely, the historical Shakyamuni Buddha and all Buddhas. General Buddhist scholar treats Shakyamuni of the 'Life Span' chapter as a kind of deity. But this interpretation is a mistake. *Dhamma* is the *dhamma kaya* of eternal Buddha. That is, it indicates that the eternal Buddha (the Shakyamuni Buddha in the remote past) is one with the eternal Dhamma. In this chapter, Shakyamuni displays the eternal *Dhamma* while never for a moment departing from this status as a human being. It is as *Sanyutta-nikaya* teaches, 'those who see the Law see me, those who see me see the Law.'

Compared to the text of *Abhidharma* Buddhism, many of the Mahayana scriptures are extremely poetic and express symbolically the Law of life which Shakyamuni realized. All of these scriptures took the form of the Buddha's discourse to bodhisattvas and monks. Whereas the traditional schools compiled the tenets and regulations which the historical Gautama Buddha had expounded, the Mahayana scriptures attempted to express the eternal truth or Law of life permeating the entire being of *Goutama* Buddha. This sought to do in ways that people of the day could easily understand. For this reason, the Buddha who appears in the Mahayana scriptures is

often depicted as a transcendent or ideal being, not to describe the historical person Shakyamuni.

Returning to the first chapter (Introduction) of the Lotus Sutra, like a great many Buddhist sutras, begins with of the sentence “This is what I heard.” It then goes on to identify the setting Eagle Peak in *Rajagriha* and names representatives of the countless *arahants*, bodhisattvas, heavenly gods, *asuras*, *garudas*, and other beings, human and nonhuman, who have gathered there to hear Shakyamuni Buddha preach.

According to this chapter, the Buddha has finished preaching the Immeasurable Meaning Sutra and enters into profound meditation. At that time, four kinds of flowers rain down from the heavens, and the earth trembles in six different ways. The members of the whole assembly gain what they never had before, are filled with joy, and, pressing their palms together, gaze at the Buddha with a single mind. Then the Buddha emits a beam of light from the tuft of white hair between his eyebrows, illuminating eighteen thousands worlds to the east. All the living beings in the six paths of existence as well as the Buddha and their disciples in all these worlds are clearly visible, and the entire assembly is astonished at these fabulous portents. (to be continued)

As mentioned above, there are divided two categories of six auspicious happenings in the “Introduction” chapter: the six auspicious happenings occurring in this world and those occurring in other worlds.

The six auspicious happenings in this world are as follows:

1. The Buddha preaches the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, an introductory teaching to the Lotus Sutra.
2. He enters a profound meditation called the Samadhi of the origin of immeasurable meanings.
3. Four kinds of exquisite flowers rain down from the heavens.
4. The earth trembles in six different ways.
5. Seeing these portents, the whole assembly rejoice and, placing their palms together, single-mindedly behold the Buddha
6. The Buddha emits a beam of light from the tuft of white hair between His eye-brows, illuminating eighteen thousand worlds to the east.

The “Introduction” chapter goes on to describe the six auspicious happenings occurring in other worlds the Buddha has just illuminated, which differ from the six events listed above. They are;

1. The light emitted by the Buddha reaches as high as the *Akanishtha* Heaven and as deep as the *Avichi* hell, so that the living beings of the six paths in all the illuminated worlds are clearly visible to those at the assembly of the sutra.

2. The Buddhas present in the other worlds can be seen.
3. The preaching of these Buddhas can be heard.
4. The four kinds of believers --- monks, nuns, layman, and laywoman --- who have carried out Buddhist practices and attained the way can be seen.
5. Bodhisattva practicing the bodhisattva way can be seen.
6. It can be seen that, after the Buddhas have entered nirvana, towers adorned with the seven kinds of treasures are built to house the Buddhas' relics.

It is for giving evidence to the veracity, eternality and universality of the Law beyond time and place to quote the previous instances of the past Buddha in the sutra. (It is like *Kassapa* Buddha in the "Tainted fare" of *Sutta-Nipata* and the Buddha Sun Moon Bright [Skt *Chandra-surya-pradipa*] in the Introduction chapter of the Lotus Sutra). Countless *Kalpas* ago, *Manjushri* says, there once appeared twenty thousand Buddhas in succession, each with the same name, Sun Moon Bright. The last and twenty-thousandth Sun Moon Bright Buddha had once preached a scripture known as the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, after which he entered into deep meditation and the very same portents appeared. Then this Buddha immediately expounded a sutra called the Lotus Sutra of the assembly named Wonderful Law.

At that time, *Manjushri* says, there was a bodhisattva in the assembly named wonderfully Bright, accompanied by his eight hundred disciples, among whom was one named Seeker of Fame. Bodhisattva Wonderfully Bright, says *Manjushri* is now himself, and Bodhisattva Seeker of Fame is the present Bodhisattva *Maitreya*. The portents they are now witnessing are identical with those they saw in the past. Bodhisattva *Manjushri* concludes that Shakyamuni Buddha is about to expound the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law.

Comparison and Comment

Here is the comparison and comment about what is given above, with only the essence.

First, compared the text of *Abhidharma* Buddhism with many of the *Mahayana* scriptures, another views are as follows.

(1) *Abhidharma* Buddhism teaches that the highest enlightenment for a *savaka* is that of the *arahant*, not buddhahood. During the *Abhidharma* period, Shakyamuni was, in effect, deified. Shakyamuni's attainment of buddhahood was considered to be the result of eons of accumulated practice as a bodhisattva. His disciple, by contrast, had merely heard his teachings and begun to practice in response to them.

Mahayana scriptures teach that all sentient beings possess the Buddha-nature (*buddhagotta*), the disposition and capacity to attain buddhahood, and thus are capable first of becoming bodhisattvas by means of four universal vows.

(2) A- The final goal is the escape from the bonds existence, release from the suffering inherent in existence of Karmic retribution, or from the cycle of birth and death and attainment of the tranquil. (Good karmic requital thought).

M- The primary goal of Mahayana bodhisattvas was to fulfill the bodhisattvas' first vow to bring all sentient beings to enlightenment. They, voluntarily, embrace the adverse destinations of rebirth to share the distress of their inhabitants. (Vows and practice thought).

(3) A- *Savakas* seek their enlightenment through perfecting themselves as an exclusive focus in the fundamental doctrine of the Four Noble Truth and the Eightfold Path. This implication is inherent in the literal meaning of *arahant*, 'worthy of respect.' After they have perfected themselves, they as individuals teach others and guide them to enlightenment.

M- As a corollary of this goal, they emphasized altruistic practice. The practices of Six Perfections (*paramita*) are characteristic of their concern for altruistic practice. The concept of altruistic practice was further clarified with the formalization of the four means by which bodhisattva leads sentient beings to release. Four means are donation, kind words, acting to benefit others, and sharing others' hardships and cooperating with them.

(4) A- Developed within Buddhism, concern turned increasingly to theoretical rather than practical matters, ontological subjects, particularly the idea of existence.

M- In an endeavor to revive Shakamuni's teachings, they emphasized the actual state to existence and what it should be in light of the emptiness of wisdom. In doing so, they restored the original doctrine of dependent origination.

(5) A- The convoluted academic studies are very specialized for general comprehension, did nothing to furthered the faith and religious practice of believers as a whole.

M- The six perfections provide an easily understood way of faith and practice. Furthermore, they taught that the ultimate truth of Buddhism lies in the day-to-day actions of the lay believer, so that everyday life itself is the place of enlightenment (*bodhi-manda*), the place of the bodhisattva practice of attaining enlightenment and helping others do so.

Returning to the Lotus Sutra:—

In ancient India, it seems to have been customary not to write down important teachings but to memorize and transmit them orally. The great Buddhist scholar

Nagarjuna writes in his 'Treatise on the Great perfection of Wisdom': "The Buddha's disciples recited the Buddha's teaching and recorded them as scriptures."

We can only praise the genius of the Lotus Sutra's compilers, for they could extract the essence of Shakyamuni's thought from the teachings handed down both orally and in writing and magnificently restore that essence to life. We cannot help thinking that among the compilers, some brilliant individual pursued and grasped Shakyamuni's enlightenment and demonstrated superlative leadership in setting down the sutra in writing. There existed the Lotus Sutra's compilers, such as touching upon that the verses 251 and 252 were mentioned by the compilers of Buddhist teaching (*sangitikara*), according to *Paramattha-jotika (Sutta-nipata-atthakatha)*.

As research on Buddhist texts proceeds, scholars have discovered the seedlings of later Mahayana teachings in the earliest Theravada texts and have come to emphasize that indeed the Mahayana resulted from developing the Buddha's ideas in a correct and orthodox fashion. Clearly, then, the assertion that only the Theravada scriptures are the Buddha's teachings and the Mahayana scriptures are not is no longer tenable. Both Theravada and Mahayana scriptures derive from a single source: Shakyamuni.

Of all the Mahayana scriptures, the Lotus Sutra is unparalleled in its faith and wisdom to seek Shakyamuni. In some respects, it might even be called a first-century treatise on Shakyamuni.

Now, concerning about 'Introduction' (first) chapter:—

According to the sutra, the vast number of beings gathered at the assembly of eagle's peak. We know that such number of beings could not have assembled at once.

Those who gathered for the ceremony of the Lotus Sutra were the *savakas* and the bodhisattvas and so on, who dwelled within Shakyamuni's own life. Hence, there is nothing to hinder even tens of millions of such *savakas* and bodhisattvas. As he indicates, the Lotus Sutra is an expression of the realm of the Buddha's own life, the world of enlightenment. In that sense, we can interpret all the different beings gathered to hear the sutra as symbolizing the different functions and working inherent in life itself.

Six auspicious happenings in this world and six auspicious happenings in other world might be able to be said to bear the same kind of function as III.11. *Nalaka* of *Sutta-nipata* and II *Avidurenidana* of *Nidanakatha*, that the good omens and the wonderful occurrence on this world and on the world of heavenly world before and after the Buddha was born in the world of men, are described.

In the 'Introduction' chapter of the Lotus Sutra, *Manjushri* said that six auspicious happenings in this world indicate that the Buddha wishes now to expound the great Law, to rain down the rain of the great Law, to blow the conch of the great Law, to beat the drum of the great Law, to elucidate the meaning of the great Law. Also, six auspicious happenings in other world shined by a beam of light indicate that the Buddha wishes to cause all living beings to hear and understand the Law, which is difficult for all the world to believe. And as to the Buddha Sun Moon Bright, *Manjushri* speaks of experiences in previous lives. He describes how in the past a Buddha named Sun Moon Bright manifested the same kind of wondrous phenomena when he preached the Lotus Sutra. On that basis, *Majushuri* says, Shakyamuni must also be about to preach the Lotus Sutra. It is the same as principle of the five categories of Buddhas all employ a similar process.

The wondrous phenomena before and after Shakayamuni birth and before the Shakayamuni Buddha's preach of the Lotus Sutra indicate that the Buddha wishes to expound the great Law and cause all living beings to hear and understand the Law, as *Manjushri* said in the 'Introduction' chapter.

In order to respond the Buddha intention, we should believe in the Buddha's teaching, practice the Buddha's teaching, and learn the Buddha's teaching.

