

Mahāratnakūṭa Sūtra

30. The Maiden Sumati

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Thus have I heard. At one time, the Buddha was in the city of Rājagṛha, on the mountain of Gṛdhrakūṭa, along with a great assembly of bhikṣus, twelve hundred and fifty people in all. The bodhisattva-mahāsattvas there numbered ten thousand in all.

At that time in the city of Rājagṛha, there was a laywoman named Sumati, who was in her eighth year. Her appearance and features were upright, colorful, and beautiful, appearing so nice that those who saw her were happy. Already, she had approached and made offerings before innumerable buddhas of the past, planting good roots. When that maiden went to the place of the Tathāgata, she bowed her head at the feet of the Buddha, and then circled around him three full times to the right. Kneeling with palms joined, she spoke a gāthā:

Anuttarā Samyaksambodhi
Is a lamp for the entire world!
Of the practices of a bodhisattva,
I wish you would hear my questions!

The Buddha said to Sumati, “You may now ask questions as you like, and the answers will cut through your net of doubts.” At that time, Sumati went before the Buddha and spoke a gāthā to inquire:

How can one attain upright features
And a body of wealth and nobility?
Moreover, what causes and conditions
Make kinship difficult to destroy?

How may one perceive oneself
Receiving birth by transformation,
Arising from a thousand-petaled lotus flower,
And giving reverence to the bhagavāns face-to-face?

How is one able to attain realization
Of supreme and sovereign superknowledge,
And go off to innumerable lands
To pay homage to the buddhas?

How can one attain blamelessness,
So that others will have belief,
Purely removing obstacles to the Dharma
And forever departing from the deeds of Māra?

How is one able, at the end of life,
To attain perception of the buddhas,
Hear the speech of the pure Dharma,
And not be subject to suffering?

Great compassionate supremely honored one,
I merely wish you would speak of these for me!

At that time, the Buddha spoke to the maiden Sumati, saying, “Excellent, excellent! It is good that you are able to ask about such profound matters. Now listen carefully, listen carefully and well mindfully, and I will tell you.” Sumati then spoke, saying, “Just so, Bhagavān. We are joyfully wishing to hear it.”

The Buddha told Sumati, “A bodhisattva who accomplishes four dharmas receives an upright body. What are these four? [1] The first is not giving rise to a mind of hatred for bad friends. [2] The second is to abide in great kindness. [3] The third is to have profound delight in the correct Dharma. [4] The fourth is to create images of the Buddha.” At that time, the Buddha spoke a gāthā:

Avoid hatred which spoils good roots,
Have kindness, delight in the Dharma, and make buddha images;
These will cause you to have good features adorning your body
So that all sentient beings are happy when they perceive it.

“Moreover, Sumati, a bodhisattva who accomplishes four dharmas will attain a body that is rich and noble. What are these four? [1] The first is that you should give timely gifts. [2] The second is to do so without a mind of disdain for others. [3] The third is to do so with happiness. [4] The fourth is to do so without expecting any reward.” At that time, the Bhagavān spoke a gāthā:

Giving timely gifts without disdain,
Happily giving without seeking reward—
Being able to constantly strive and cultivate this,
You will be born into great wealth and nobility.

“Moreover, Sumati, a bodhisattva who accomplishes four dharmas will have unfailing kinship. What are these four? [1] The first is to be skilled at abandoning divisive speech. [2] The second is to cause sentient beings with wrong views to abide in the right view. [3] The third is to cause the correct Dharma to be protected from extinction, and to abide for a long time. [4] The fourth is to teach sentient beings the path to the Bodhi of the buddhas.” At that time, the Bhagavān spoke a gāthā:

Abandon divisive speech and wrong views,
Protect the correct Dharma from extinction,
And peacefully establish beings in Great Bodhi,
And this will accomplish unfailing kinship.

“Moreover, Sumati, a bodhisattva who accomplishes four dharmas will attain birth by transformation before the buddhas, seated upon a lotus flower. What are these four? [1] The first is to give flowers, fruit, and fine powdered incense as offerings to the Tathāgata and to the stūpas. [2] The second is not to tell lies or harm others. [3] The third is to make images of the Tathāgata placed within a lotus flower. [4] The fourth is to give rise to profound and pure faith in the bodhi of the buddhas.” At that time, the Buddha spoke a gāthā:

By giving flowers and incense to the Buddha and stūpas,
And by not harming others, making images,
And having profound faith and understanding of Bodhi,
You may attain lotus flower birth before the buddhas.

“Moreover, Sumati, a bodhisattva who accomplishes four dharmas may travel from one buddha-land to another buddha-land. What are these four? [1] The first is to not perceive others’ cultivation of goodness as obstruction or annoyance. [2] The second is to never hinder others when they are expounding the Dharma. [3] The third is to burn lamps and make offerings to the stūpas of the Tathāgata. [4] The fourth is to constantly strive to cultivate the dhyānas.” At that time, the Bhagavān spoke a gāthā:

By seeing others cultivating and speaking the correct Dharma

And not giving rise to slander, blame, or obstruction,
By making offerings of lamps to stūpas of the Tathāgata,
And cultivating dhyānas, you may travel the buddha-lands.

“Moreover, Sumati, a bodhisattva accomplishes four dharmas for the station of blamelessness in the world. What are these four? [1] The first is to draw near to virtuous friends without a mind of flattery. [2] The second is to not have a mind of jealousy regarding others’ excellence in the Dharma. [3] The third is to always be happy when others receive honors and recognition. [4] The fourth is to not vainly criticize the practices of a bodhisattva.” At that time, the Bhagavān spoke a gāthā:

Not flattering your close virtuous friends,
Not having jealousy for others’ excellence in the Dharma,
Always being happy when others obtain honor and recognition,
And not slandering bodhisattvas, one attains blamelessness.

“Moreover, Sumati, a bodhisattva accomplishes four dharmas for his speech to be believed by others. What are these four? [1] The first is develop speech and cultivation always in unison. [2] The second is to not do evil things to virtuous friends. [3] The third is to not find faults in the Dharma one has heard. [4] The fourth is to not give rise to a mind of evil for one who speaks the Dharma.” At that time, the Bhagavān spoke a gāthā:

By developing speech and cultivation in unison,
Not harboring animosity for virtuous friends,
And not seeking faults in the Dharma or its teacher,
What you say will be believed and accepted by all.

“Moreover, Sumati, a bodhisattva accomplishes four dharmas for being able to leave obstacles to the Dharma and quickly attain purity. What are these four? [1] The first is to accept the Threefold Discipline with profound conviction. [2] The second is that one does not give rise to slander for extremely profound sūtras. [3] The third is to perceive the newly-developed intention of a bodhisattva as the arising of the mind of omniscience. [4] The fourth is regarding sentient beings with great kindness and equanimity.” At that time, the Bhagavān spoke a gāthā:

By accepting the precepts with profound intention,
Believing and understanding extremely profound sūtras,
Venerating the mind of a beginner as buddha-thought,
And having a mind of kindness, one eliminates obstructions.

“Moreover, Sumati, a bodhisattva accomplishes four dharmas for being apart from māras. What are these four? [1] The first is to fully know the equality of the nature of dharmas. [2] The second is to give rise to determination. [3] The third is to constantly strive to be mindful of the Buddha. [4] The fourth is to transfer over all good roots.” At that time, the Bhagavān spoke a gāthā:

Able to know the nature of dharmas is equal,
Always with determination, mindful of the Buddha,
And transferring over all good roots,
The multitude of māras cannot gain advantage.

“Moreover, Sumati, a bodhisattva accomplishes four dharmas so that at the end of life, the buddhas manifest before him. What are these four? [1] The first is to fulfill the wishes of others by giving what they are seeking. [2] The second is giving rise to profound faith and understanding of good dharmas. [3] The third is to give adornments to the bodhisattvas. [4] The fourth is to diligently make offerings to the Triple Gem.” At that time, the Bhagavān spoke a gāthā:

By giving to others what they seek,
Believing and understanding profound Dharma, giving adornments,
And diligently giving to the field of merit of the Triple Gem,
At the end of life, buddhas will manifest before you.

At that time, the maiden Sumati heard what the Buddha had spoken, and said, “Bhagavān, as the Buddha has spoken of the practices of a bodhisattva, so will I practice them! Bhagavān, among these forty practices, if there is one that is lacking or uncultivated, then this will be conflicting with the Buddha’s teachings and deceiving the Tathāgata.”

At that time, Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana spoke to Sumati, saying, “The practice of a bodhisattva is extremely difficult to carry out. You are now developing this extraordinary great aspiration. How will you attain accomplish mastery over this vow?” At that time, Sumati replied, saying, “Venerable, if my great aspiration is true and not void, able to bring these practices to complete fulfillment, then may the three thousand great thousand-worlds shake in six directions, and the heavens rain wondrous flowers, and may the drum of heaven sound of its own accord!” When this had been spoken, flowers fell from the sky like rain, and the drum of heaven sounded of its own accord, and the three thousand great thousand-worlds shook in six directions.

At this time, Sumati again addressed Maudgalyāyana, “From my true words, in a future era I will attain buddhahood, just as Śākyamuni, the Tathāgata. In my land there will be no deeds of Māra, and not even the words for evil destinies, or for women. If what I say is not fabrication, then may the bodies of those in the great assembly all take on a hue of gold!” After speaking this, the assembly took on a hue of gold. At that time, Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana then arose from his seat, bared his right shoulder, and bowed with his head at the Buddha’s feet. He spoke saying, “Bhagavān, from these things I have developed the mind of a bodhisattva and even that of the assembly of bodhisattva-mahāsattvas!”

At that time, Dharma Prince Mañjuśrī spoke to Sumati, saying, “In what dharma do you abide to make this sincere aspiration?” Sumati replied, saying, “Mañjuśrī, it is not proper to ask this. Why? This is because in the Dharma Realm there is nothing which abides.” He also asked, “Then what is Bodhi?” She answered, “The non-differentiation of dharmas is what is called Bodhi.” He also asked, “Then what is it that is called a bodhisattva?” She answered, “A bodhisattva is one who is aware that all dharmas are equal to the manifestation of empty space.” He also asked, “What is it that is called the practice of Bodhi?” She answered, “The practice of Bodhi is like a mirage, or like the echo of a valley.” He also asked, “With what underlying meaning do you say such things?” She answered, “In this I do not perceive even the slightest thing which may be underlying or manifest.”

He also asked, “If it is as you say, then all ordinary people would have Bodhi.” She answered, “You speak of Bodhi as being different from an ordinary person? You should not have this view. Why? These are all of the same characteristic of the Dharma Realm, to be neither grasped nor abandoned, with nothing to accomplish or destroy.” He again asked, “How many beings are able to fully understand your meaning?” She answered, “Their number is like the number of illusory minds and mental functions. The illusion of sentient beings is already able to understand my meaning.” Mañjuśrī said, “Illusions are without basis, so how can there be such minds and mental dharmas?” She answered, “The Dharma Realm is also such, neither existing nor non-existing, and for the Tathāgata is it also such as this.”

At that time, Mañjuśrī addressed the Buddha, saying, “Bhagavān, this Sumati is extraordinary, even able to accomplish such dharma-patience!” The Buddha said, “Thusly, thusly! What she has spoken is sincere and true. In such a way, this maiden has long since developed the mind of Bodhi, throughout the past thirty eons, even developing the destiny of my supreme Bodhi, causing such abiding in the patience of the non-arising of dharmas.”

At that time, Mañjuśrī arose from his seat to pay homage, and addressed Sumati,

saying, “Throughout innumerable eons in the past, I have made offerings, and never have I encountered what you now speak of!” Sumati spoke, saying, “Mañjuśrī, now you should not give rise to such discriminations. Why? It is non-discrimination that causes the patience of the non-arising of dharmas.” He again asked Sumati, “Why do you still not transform your female body?” Sumati replied, saying, “The appearance of female cannot be grasped, so what is there to transform?”

“Mañjuśrī, for you I will remove and cut off all doubt and confusion with the truth of my own words. In a coming era when I attain Anuttarā Samyaksambodhi, the bhikṣus will hear my Dharma, hear of the virtuous life, leave home, and enter the path. In my land, all the sentient beings will have bodies of a golden hue, and wear provisions like those of the Sixth Heaven. The drinks and food will be rich and abundant and will arrive with a single thought. There will be no deeds of Māra, nor evil destinies, and not even the name female. There will be a forest of the Seven Jewels, and above a net of jewels, and a jeweled canopy covered with lotus flowers made of the Seven Jewels. It will be gloriously adorned just as the adornments of Mañjuśrī’s completely pure land, equal and without difference.

“If what I say is not false, then may the bodies of those in the great assembly all take a gold hue, and may my female body transform into male, like a thirty-year old bhikṣu who knows the Dharma!” When this was spoken, the great assembly all took on a gold hue, and Sumati Bodhisattva transformed from female into male, like a thirty-year old bhikṣu who knows the Dharma. At this time, a multitude of earth devas appeared around them and uttered their praises: “Wonderful! Wonderful! Great Wisdom Bodhisattva-mahāsattva, in a coming era when she attains Bodhi, will have a pure buddha-land adorned with such merits!” At that time, the Buddha spoke to Mañjuśrī, saying, “This Sumati Bodhisattva, in a coming era when she accomplishes complete enlightenment, will have the name Extraordinary Merits Jewel Treasury Tathāgata, and manifest in the world.”

When the Buddha had spoken this sūtra, thirty myriads of sentient beings attained non-retrogression from Anuttarā Samyaksambodhi. Eighty myriads of sentient beings left the dust and dirt, and attain the pure Dharma Eye. Eight thousand sentient beings all attained the wisdom of realization. Five thousand bhikṣus set forth in the Bodhisattva Vehicle, turning back from a mind of desires.

Perceiving Sumati Bodhisattva’s extraordinary intention, good roots, and sovereign authority, each bhikṣu uncovered his upper robe. They gave an offering to the Tathāgata by developing a great vow, saying, “From these good roots, we resolve and aspire to accomplish Anuttarā Samyaksambodhi like these good men, and

from these good roots transferred over to Bodhi, leap over ninety eons of the suffering of birth and death, and advance to non-retrogression from Anuttarā Samyaksambodhi!” At that time, the Bhagavān made a pronouncement, saying, “All of you, in the future, over one thousand eons from now, in the eon of stainless radiance and in the buddha-land of the blazing world of endurance, will accomplish buddhahood in a single eon. You will all have the same name of Eloquence Adorned Tathāgata, and manifest in the world.

“Mañjuśrī, such a Dharma gate has great sovereign authority, able to cause bodhisattva-mahāsattvas as well as those of the Śrāvaka Vehicle to obtain great benefit. Mañjuśrī, suppose there were a good man or good woman seeking Bodhi without skillful means, who practiced the Six Pāramitās for a thousand eons. If there is also a person who writes, studies, and recites this sūtra for a single fortnight, then the mass of merit received by the latter is hundreds, thousands, even myriads of times greater — so much greater that the two cannot be compared!

“Therefore, Mañjuśrī, a subtle Dharma gate such as this is fundamental to the canon of the bodhisattvas. I now entrust it to you, so that in a future era you may accept, maintain, study, recite, and explain it to others. For example, when a cakravartin king manifests in the world, the Seven Jewels are each present before him, but when the king has died, then the jewels will all vanish. When a subtle Dharma gate such as this spreads in the world, then the Seven Bodhi Factors of the tathāgatas and the Dharma Eye will not be destroyed; however, if they are not spread, then the correct Dharma will be extinguished. Therefore, Mañjuśrī, if a good man or good woman is seeking Bodhi, then he or she should zealously write this sūtra, and should accept, maintain, study, and recite it, and expound it for others. In a later era, one should not give rise to a mind of regret or disdain for my teachings.”

After the Buddha had spoken this sūtra, then Sumati Bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva, and those of the great multitude, the devas, humans, asuras, gandharvas, and so on, heard what the Buddha had spoken. With great bliss, they believed, accepted, and practiced in accordance.