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# LOTUS NOBEL SUTRA

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# Book 1

## Chapter 1: The beginning

*I have heard:*

One day the Buddha and twelve thousand disciples assembled at Mount Grdhrakūṭa near Rājagṛha<sup>1</sup> (Wikipedia, 2022). The disciples were all arhats<sup>2</sup> who had elevated above greed, sorrow, desires, and attachments. The names of some of them were: Kauninya, Mahā-kāśyapa, Uruvela-kāśyapa, Gayā-kāśyapa, Nadī-kāśyapa, Śāriputra, Moggallāna, Mahākātyāyana, Anuruddha, Mahākapphiṇa, Gavāṃpati, Revata, Pilindavatsa, Bakkula, Mahākauṣṭhila, Nanda, Pūrṇa, Subhūti, Ānanda, Rāhula<sup>3</sup>, etc. (bdkamerica.org, 2019).

There were two thousand believers and non-believers attended the assembly. Nun Mahāprajāpatī<sup>4</sup> and her six thousand attendants assembled. Mother of Rāhula, nun Yasodharā<sup>5</sup>, and her attendants assembled.

Attended were also eighty thousand mahāsattvas<sup>6</sup> who firmly committed to Buddhahood enlightenments, had achieved healing powers<sup>7</sup>, mastered oratory skill, served countless buddhas and planted countless merits<sup>8</sup>. They were often praised by buddhas for they lived by compassion, naturally absorbed vast

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<sup>1</sup> mount Grdhrakūṭa or Vulture Peak, a mountain in the town Rajgir of district Nalanda of state Bihar of India. Sanskrit: Grdhrakūṭa, Pali: Gijjhakūṭa, Vietnamese: núi Kỳ Xà Quật, thành Vương Xá

<sup>2</sup> arhat, Buddhist monk who reached enlightenment, v: a la hán

<sup>3</sup> names of arhats mentioned:

- s: Kauninya, p: Añña Koṇḍañña, v: Kiều Trần Như, one of the first 5 disciples of the Buddha
- s: Mahā-kāśyapa, p: Mahā-kassapa, v: Ma Ha Ca Diếp, the foremost disciple of the Buddha.
- s: Uruvela-kāśyapa, p: Uruvela-kassapa, v: Ưu Lô Câu Lô Ca Diếp, the oldest of the 3 Kassapa brothers
- s: Gayā-kāśyapa, p: Gayā-kassapa, v: Già Đa Ca Diếp, the youngest Kassapa brother
- s: Nadī-kāśyapa, p: Nadī- Kassapa, v: Na Đề Ca Diếp, the middle Kassapa brother
- s: Śāriputra, p: Sāriputta, v: Xá Lợi Phất, one of the first 10 disciples of the Buddha.
- s: Moggallāna, p: Maudgalyāyana, v: Mục Kiền Liên
- s: Mahākātyāyana, p: Mahācāyana, v: Ma Ha Ca Chiên Diên
- s: Anuruddha, p: Anuruddhā, v: A Nậu Lô Đà
- s: Mahākapphiṇa, p: Mahākapphina, v: Ma Ha Kiếp Tân Na
- s: Gavāṃpati, p: Gavampati, v: Kiều Phạm Ba Đề
- s: Revata, v: Ly Bà Đa, younger brother of Śāriputra
- s: Pilindavatsa, p: Pilindavaccha, v: Tất Lãng Già Ba Ta
- s: Bakkula, v: Bạc Câu La, known for suffering and overcoming many diseases
- s: Mahākauṣṭhila, p: Mahākotthita, v: Ma Ha Câu Hy La, uncle of Śāriputra.
- s: Nanda, v: Tôn Đà La Nan Đà, prince Nanda, cousin of prince Siddhārtha Gautama (Buddha)
- s: Pūrṇa, p: Puṇṇa, v: Phú Lô Na Di Đa La Ni Tử, known as a skillful preacher
- s: Subhūti, v: Tu Bồ Đề, known for the foremost understanding emptiness
- s: Ānanda, v: A Nan, the primary attendant of Buddha Shakyamuni, known for best memory
- s: Rāhula, v: La Hầu La, son of prince Siddhārtha Gautama (became Buddha Shakyamuni)

<sup>4</sup> aunt of prince Siddhārtha Gautama, s: Mahāprajāpatī, v: Ma Ha Bà Xa Đề Kiều Đàm Nhi

<sup>5</sup> wife of prince Siddhārtha Gautama, s: Yasodharā, v: Gia Du Đà La

<sup>6</sup> great bodhisattva, s: mahāsattvas, v: đại bồ tát

<sup>7</sup> healing power, s: dhāraṇī, p: dharaṇī, v: pháp Đà La Ni (ReferenceOxford, 2022)

<sup>8</sup> dharma merits, v: công đức

knowledge of Buddhism, and had blessed countless beings. The names of some of them were: Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara, Mahāsthāmaprāpta, Nityodyukta, Anikṣiptadhūra, Ratnapāni, Bhaiṣajyarāja, Pradānaśūra, Ratnacandra, Candraprabhā, Pūrṇacandra, Mahāvīkrāmin, Anantavīkrāmin, Trailokyavikramin, Bhadrāpāla, Maitreya, Ratnākara, Susāthavāha<sup>9</sup>, etc. (bdkamerica.org, 2019).

Śakra, king of all celestial kings<sup>10</sup>, and his twenty thousand attendants and kings assembled. There were celestial kings<sup>11</sup>, Chandra, Samantagandha, Ratnaprabhā, Great Quartet kings and their ten thousand sons attended. Celestial princes<sup>12</sup>, Īśvara, Maheśvara, and thirty thousand princes attended. Celestial rulers of earth<sup>13</sup>: Brahma, Śikhin, Jyotiṣrabha, etc., and their twelve thousand attendants and sons assembled.

Eight kings of waters<sup>14</sup>, Nanda, Upananda, Sagara, Vasuki, Takshaka, Anavatapta, Manasvin, and Utpalaka, along with their hundred thousand attendants assembled.

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<sup>9</sup> great bodhisattvas mentioned:

- s: Mañjuśrī, v: Vân Thù Sư Lợi, known for transcendent wisdom
- s: Avalokiteśvara, v: Quán Thế Âm, known for compassion
- s: Mahāsthāmaprāpta, v: Đắc Đại Thế, Đại Thế Chí, known for knowledge
- s: Nityodyukta, v: Thường Tinh Tấn
- s: Anikṣiptadhūra, v: Bất Hưu Tức
- s: Ratnapāni, v: Bửu Chưởng
- s: Bhaiṣajyarāja, v: Dược Vương
- s: Pradānaśūra, v: Dống Thí
- s: Ratnacandra, v: Bửu Nguyệt
- s: Candraprabhā, v: Nguyệt Quang
- s: Pūrṇacandra, v: Mãn Nguyệt
- s: Mahāvīkrāmin, v: Đại Lực
- s: Anantavīkrāmin, v: Vô Lượng Lực
- s: Trailokyavikramin, v: Việt Tam Giới
- s: Bhadrāpāla, v: Bạt Đà Bà La
- s: Maitreya, v: Di Lạc
- s: Ratnākara, v: Bửu Tích
- s: Susāthavāha, v: Đạo Sư

<sup>10</sup>heavenly deities, king of all celestial kings, p: Sakka, v: Thích Đề Hoàn Nhơn

<sup>11</sup> celestial kings:

- s: Chandra, v: Minh Nguyệt thiên tử
- s: Samantagandha, v: Phổ Hương thiên tử
- s: Ratnaprabhā, v: Bửu Quang thiên tử

<sup>12</sup> celestial princes:

- s: Īśvara, v: Tự Tại vương
- s: Maheśvara, v: Đại Tự Tại vương

<sup>13</sup> mythical deities, rulers of earth:

- s: Brahma, v: Phạm Thiên vương
- s: Śikhin, v: Thi Khí Đại Phạm Thiên vương
- s: Jyotiṣrabha, v: Quang Minh Đại Phạm Thiên vương

<sup>14</sup> mythical deities, dragon like beings or demigods:

- s: Nāgarāja, v: long vương
- s: NagaNanda, v: Nan Đà long vương
- s: NagaUpananda, v: Bạt Nan Đà long vương

Four chiefs of celestial musicians<sup>15</sup>, Dharmā, Sudharmā, Mahādharmā, Dharmadhara, along with their hundred thousand attendants assembled.

Four chiefs of celestial dancers<sup>16</sup>, Manojña, Manojñavara, Madhura, Madhurasvara, along with their hundred thousand attendants assembled.

Four rulers of the underworld<sup>17</sup>, Bali, Kharaskandha, Vemacitra, Rāhu, along with their hundred thousand attendants assembled.

Four kings of birds<sup>18</sup>, Mahātejas, Mahākāya, Mahāpūrṇa, Maharddhiprāpta, along with their hundred thousand attendants assembled.

King Ajātaśatru<sup>19</sup>, son of Vaidehī, and hundred thousand attendants assembled.

All bowed at the feet of the Buddha then withdrew aside.

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- s: Sagara, v: Sa Đà La long vương
  - s: Vasuki, v: Hòa Tu Cát long vương
  - s: Takshaka, v: Đức Xoa Ca long vương
  - s: Anavatapta, v: A Na Bà Đạt Đa Ca long vương
  - s: Manasvin, v: Ma Na Tư long vương
  - s: Utpalaka, v: Ưu Bát La long vương

<sup>15</sup> mythical deities, half human, half bird being or demigods:

- s: Kīṃnara, v: Khẩn Na La vương
- s: Dharmā, v: Pháp vương
- s: Sudharmā, v: Diệu Pháp vương
- s: Mahādharmā, v: Đại Pháp vương
- s: Dharmadhara, v: Trì Pháp vương

<sup>16</sup> mythical deities, half human, half horse being or demigods:

- s: Gandharvas, v: Càn Thát Bà vương
- s: Manojña, v: Nhạc vương
- s: Manojñavara, v: Nhạc Âm vương
- s: Madhura, v: Mỹ vương
- s: Madhurasvara, v: Mỹ Âm vương

<sup>17</sup> mythical deities, rulers of the underworld:

- s: Asuras, v: A Tu La vương
- s: Bali, v: Bà Trí vương
- s: Kharaskandha, v: Đà La Khiên Đà vương
- s: Vemacitra, v: Tỳ Ma Chất Đa vương
- s: Rāhu, v: La Hầu vương

<sup>18</sup> mythical deities, eagle like being or demigods:

- s: Garuḍa, p: Garuḷā, v: Ca Lôu La vương
- s: Mahātejas, v: Đại Oai Đức vương
- s: Mahākāya, v: Đại Thân vương
- s: Mahāpūrṇa, v: Đại Mãn vương
- s: Maharddhiprāpta, v: Như Ý vương

<sup>19</sup> king of Magadha, a kingdom of ancient India, p: Ajātasattu, v: vua A Xà Thế

At the time, the Buddha, surrounded and paid homage by the crowd, gave a sermon from a Mahāyāna<sup>20</sup> (Silk, 2017) text called “Infinite Meanings Sutra”<sup>21</sup> to the attended bodhisattvas. After the sermon he sat down, mediated into samahdi<sup>22</sup> of “infinite meanings” realm. His body and mind were perfectly still.

The sky then rained down mādārava and maha-mādārava flowers<sup>23</sup>, and mañjūṣaka and maha-mañjūṣaka flowers<sup>24</sup> covering the Buddha and the crowd. Six rhythms of heavenly sounds and vibrations were heard throughout all worlds of buddhas.

Monks, nuns, male and female devotees<sup>25</sup>, Devas, Nāga, Yakṣa, Gandharvas, Asura, Garuḍa, Kiṃnara, Mahoraga (deities of Eight Legions<sup>26</sup> (Schumacher, 2014)), men, women, kings, universe rulers<sup>27</sup>, all witnessed an event they had never seen before. Everyone was excited and attentively revered the Buddha for his wisdoms.

The Buddha then emitted a ray of bright light from his frown line, illuminating eighteen thousand worlds in the East, shone down to the lowest hell Avīci<sup>28</sup>, and up to the highest heaven Akaniṣṭha<sup>29</sup>. All beings on earth could see six realm beings<sup>30</sup> of the other worlds.

They also saw buddhas of the other worlds and heard their dharma<sup>31</sup> (Webster, n.d.) sermons. They saw monks, nuns, male and female devotees, and arhats. They saw bodhisattvas practicing Bodhisattva Path<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Mahāyāna or literally Great Vehicle/Path, the main branch of early Buddhism, v: Đại Thừa

<sup>21</sup> Ananta Nirdeśa Sūtra or Infinite Meanings, v: kinh vô lượng nghĩa

<sup>22</sup> state of tranquil consciousness from meditative concentration, s: samadhi, v: thiền định

<sup>23</sup> colorful heavenly flower, p: mādārava, v: hoa Mạn Đà La

<sup>24</sup> fragrant heavenly flower p: mañjūṣaka, v: hoa Mạn Thù Sa

<sup>25</sup> male, female devotee, s: upāsaka, v: cận sự nam, s: upāsikā, v: cận sự nữ

<sup>26</sup> eight legions or eight deities protecting Dharma:

- s: devas, v: trời
- s: nāga, v: rồng
- s: yakṣa, v: dạ xoa
- s: gandharvas, v: càn thát bà
- s: asura: v: a tu la
- s: garuḍa: ca lâu la
- s: kiṃnara, v: khẩn na la
- s: mahoraga, v: ma hầu la dà

<sup>27</sup> chakravarti or mythical universe deities/rulers:

- s: dvīpa chakravarti, v: tiểu vương
- s: chakravala chakravarti, v: chuyển luân thánh vương,

<sup>28</sup> lowest hells, s: Avīci, v: địa ngục A Tỳ

<sup>29</sup> highest heavens, s: Akaniṣṭha, p: akaniṣṭha, v: trời Sắc Cứu Cánh

<sup>30</sup> six types of sentient (still subject to reincarnations):

- s: devas, v: trời, thánh
- humans, v: người
- s: asuras, v: a tu la, thần
- animals, v: thú
- s: yakṣa, quĩ dạ xoa
- hell denizens, v: phạm nhân ở địa ngục

<sup>31</sup> Buddhist divine principles/laws of cosmic and individual existence, s: dharma, v: Phật pháp

<sup>32</sup> literally Bodhisattva Vehicle/Path, s: Bodhisattvayāna v: Bồ Tát thừa

through various causes, faiths, and appearances. They also saw buddhas entering nirvana<sup>33</sup> and their relics<sup>34</sup> were used to build stupas<sup>35</sup>.

Then bodhisattva Maitreya thought “Today the Lord has manifested signs of transcendent power. What is the reason for this blessed event? But the Buddha is currently meditating, who should I ask about this marvel? Who can answer?”. He then thought further: “Mañjuśrī had known and paid homage to many past buddhas. Maybe he had seen these signs. I should ask him.” At that same time, monks, nuns, male and female devotees, and deities of Eight Legions, all wondered the same question.

Maitreya, wanted to clear his mind and the minds of all monks, nuns, male and female devotees, and deities of Eight Legions, asked Mañjuśrī: “What is reason for the Lord to emit a ray of bright light illuminating eighteen thousand worlds in the East, revealing the solemn worlds of all buddhas?”

Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī replied: “Gentlemen! I think the Buddha is about to give an extraordinary dharma sermon. Gentlemen! I had been with many past buddhas and had seen these blessed signs. Buddhas emitted a ray of bright light then taught extraordinary dharma. Today I am sure that the Buddha will do the same. To help all beings know about the unfathomable dharma power the Buddha had manifested this blessed sign.

Gentlemen! In incalculable eon pasts there was a buddha called Candrasūryapradīpa<sup>36</sup>. His dharma sermons, in the beginning, the middle, and the end, were all true and profound. For common believers<sup>37</sup> who sought to overcome the cycle of reincarnation the buddha taught the Four Noble Truths<sup>38</sup>. For solitary monks<sup>39</sup> who

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<sup>33</sup> s: parinirvāṇa, p: parinibbāna, v: nhập Niết Bàn

<sup>34</sup> cremated remains of Buddha, s: śarīrāḥ, v: Xá Lợi Phật

<sup>35</sup> Buddhist monument built with seven precious treasures v: tháp bảy báu

<sup>36</sup> a Buddha, Candrasūryapradīpa literally means “Sun Moon Light”, v: Nhật Nguyệt Đăng Minh

<sup>37</sup> monks, nuns, devotees, s: śrāvaka, p: sāvaka, v: thanh văn

<sup>38</sup> The Buddhist Four Noble Truths, v: Tứ Diệu Đế:

- suffering, v: khổ
- desire, v: tập
- renouncement, v: diệt
- liberation, v: đạo

<sup>39</sup> solitary monks, s: pratyekabuddhayāna, v: duyên giác

sought Buddhahood he taught the Twelve Causalities<sup>40</sup>. For bodhisattvas who sought to enlightenment he taught the Six Virtues<sup>41</sup>.

There was a buddha called Candrasūryapradīpa, and there was a buddha called Candrasūryapradīpa. Total was twenty thousand buddhas with the same name Candrasūryapradīpa and same last name Bharadvāja. Maitreya should know! The first to the last buddhas all had the same name Candrasūryapradīpa, endowed with all full ten epithets<sup>42</sup> (Gakkai, n.d.). Their dharma sermons from the beginning to the middle and the end were all true and profound.

Before consecration the very last of the buddhas fathered eight princes<sup>43</sup>. The princes were all capable rulers of the four continents. Having heard their father obtained enlightenment they abandoned their thrones and

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<sup>40</sup> twelve causalities, s: 12 nidāna, v: mười hai nhân duyên:

- origination: v: nhân duyên
- ignorance, v: vô minh
- action, v: hành
- consciousness, v: thức
- form, v: sắc
- sense, v: lục nhập
- contact, v: xúc
- sensation, v: thọ
- desire, v: ái
- attachment, v: thủ
- existence, v: hữu
- birth, v: sinh
- death, v: tử,

<sup>41</sup> six transcendental virtues, s: 6 pāramitā, v: sáu pháp Ba La Mật:

- giving, v: bố thí
- maintaining the precepts, v: giữ giới
- forbearing hardships, v: nhẫn nhục
- practicing the precepts diligently, v: tinh tấn
- mediating, v: thiền định
- obtaining wisdom, v: trí huệ

<sup>42</sup> ten honorable titles of a buddha:

- One embodies the truth of all things, s: tathagata, v: Ứng-Cúng
- One worthy of receiving offerings, s: arhat, v: Chánh-Biến-Tri
- One understands all things, s: samyak-sambuddha, v: Minh-Hạnh-Túc
- One knows eternity, s: vidyā-charana-sampanna, v: Thiện-Thệ
- One has done world enlightenments, s: Sugata, v: Thế-Gian-Giải
- One understands all religions, s: lokavid, v: Vô-Thượng-Sĩ
- One stands above all living beings, s: anuttara, v: Điều-Ngự-Trượng-Phu
- One trains all beings, s: purusha-damya-sārathi, v: Thiên-Nhơn-Sư
- One can teach human and celestial beings, s: shāstā-deva-manushyānām, v: Thiên-Nhơn-Sư
- One endowed with perfect wisdoms and virtue, s: Buddha-bhagavat, v: Phật Thế Tôn

<sup>43</sup> eight princes of Buddha Candrasūryapradīpa:

- s: Mati, v: Hữu Ý
- s: Sumati, v: Thiện Ý
- s: Anantamati, v: Vô Lượng Ý
- s: Ratimati, v: Bửu Ý



pursued a consecrated life. These princes, having planted many roots of merits and revered thousands buddhas in past lives, determined to follow and practice the Mahāyāna philosophy and later all became expounders of Buddhism.

At that time buddha Candrasūryapradīpa also gave a sermon from “Infinite Meanings” sutra. After the sermon he sat down mediating into samadhi of “infinite meanings” realm, body and mind were perfectly still.

The sky then rained down mādārava and maha-mādārava flowers, and mañjūśaka and maha-mañjūśaka flowers covering the buddha and the crowd. Six rhythms of heavenly sounds and vibrations were heard throughout worlds of buddhas. Monks, nuns, male and female devotees, deities of Eight Legions, men, women, rulers of continent and ruler of universe, all witnessed an event they had never seen before. Everyone was excited and attentively revered the buddha for his wisdoms.

The buddha then emitted a ray of bright light from his frown line illuminating eighteen thousand worlds in the East like what are seeing today. Maitreya should know! In that assembly twenty thousand dharma loving bodhisattvas had witnessed the unprecedented event and all also wondered the reasons for the bright light.

Among them was bodhisattva Varaprabha<sup>44</sup> who had eight hundred disciples. For him, buddha Candrasūryapradīpa left his mediation and gave a sermon from a Mahāyāna text called “Lotus Nobel” sutra<sup>45</sup> for sixty intermediate eons<sup>46</sup>. At the assembly everyone sat perfectly still, listened to the dharma for sixty intermediate eons as if it was just meal break. There was not a single person, body, or mind, felt lazy or tired.

After the sermon, buddha Candrasūryapradīpa blessed bodhisattva Śrīgarbha<sup>47</sup> to become the next buddha. The buddha declared “Today at midnight I will enter nirvana. Śrīgarbha will become buddha Vimalāṅganetra<sup>48</sup>”.

After buddha Candrasūryapradīpa entered nirvana Varaprabha took up the responsibility of teaching the Lotus Nobel sutra through eighty eons. All eight princes of buddha Candrasūryapradīpa also became students of Varaprabha. Varaprabha taught them well about enlightenment laws. These princes later all became buddhas. The last one was buddha Dīpaṃkara<sup>49</sup>.

Among the eight hundred disciples of Varaprabha there was a lazy bodhisattva called Yaśaskāma<sup>50</sup>. This bodhisattva had planted many dharma merits had had opportunities to served hundred thousand buddhas in past lives. Maitreya should know! The bodhisattva Varaprabha then is no one else but I. The lazy bodhisattva

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- s: Viśeṣa mati, v: Tăng Ý
  - s: Vimatisamudghātin, v: Trừ Nghi Ý
  - s: Ghoṣamati, v: Hưởng Ý
  - s: Dharmamati, v: Pháp Ý

<sup>44</sup> bodhisattva served Buddha Candrasūryapradīpa, s: Varaprabha, v: Diệu Quang bồ tát

<sup>45</sup> Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra or Lotus Nobel Sutra, v: kinh diệu pháp liên hoa

<sup>46</sup> intermediate eons or small kalpa, 1000 x 16.8 million years, or 16 billion years, s: antara-kalpas, v: tiểu kiếp

<sup>47</sup> bodhisattva served Buddha Candrasūryapradīpa, s: Śrīgarbha, v: Đức Tạng bồ tát

<sup>48</sup> buddha Vimalāṅganetra arrived after Buddha Candrasūryapradīpa, s: Vimalāṅganetra, v: Phật Tịnh Thân

<sup>49</sup> last of the seven princes of Candrasūryapradīpa to become buddha, s: Dīpaṃkara, v: Phật Nhiên Đăng

<sup>50</sup> past life of bodhisattva Maitreya, s: Yaśaskāma, v: bồ tát Cầu Danh

Yaśaskāma then is no one else but you. Today I am seeing the same signs. Therefore, I think the Buddha will give a sermon from Lotus Nobel Sutra.”