

CHAPTER XVII.

INDICATION OF THE MERITORIOUSNESS OF JOYFUL
ACCEPTANCE.

Thereupon the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Maitreya said to the Lord : O Lord, one who, after hearing this Dharmaparyāya being preached, joyfully¹ 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 Mahāsattva 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 Sūtra and joyfully accept it ?

And the Lord said to the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Maitreya : If any one, Agita, either a young man of good family or a young lady, after the complete extinction of the Tathāgata, hears the preaching of this Dharmaparyāya, 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,

¹ Or, gratefully.

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 *Asaṅkhyeyas*¹ 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 *Gambudvīpa* 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

¹ An incalculable great number.

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 Tathâgata, and instruct them. Thereupon, Agita, the man exhorts all those beings, thereafter initiates them in the discipline of the law revealed by the Tathâgata, and makes them adopt it. Those beings learn the law from him, and in one moment, one instant, one bit of time, all become Srotaâpannas, obtain the fruit of the rank of Sakrîdâgâmin and of Anâgâmin, 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 Mahâsattva 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 Mahâsattva 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 Asaṅkhyeyas 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 Dharmaparyāya 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 Dharmaparyāya, 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 $\frac{1}{100}$ part, not the $\frac{1}{100,000}$, not the $\frac{1}{10,000,000}$, not the $\frac{1}{1,000,000,000}$, not the $\frac{1}{1000 \times 10,000,000}$, not the $\frac{1}{100,000 \times 10,000,000}$, not the $\frac{1}{100,000 \times 10,000 \times 10,000,000}$ 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 Dharmaparyāya; how much more then (will) he (produce), Agita, who hears this Dharmaparyāya 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 *Dharmaparyâya* 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 bulls¹, and of celestial aerial cars. If further that same person at that preaching sits down, were it but a single moment, to hear this *Dharmaparyâya*, 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 *Dharmaparyâya* 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 *Dhârani*. 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

¹ *Rishabhayânânâm*.

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 loathsome¹ ; 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 round² ; the eyebrows well-shaped ; the forehead well-formed. He will receive a very complete organ of manhood. He will have the advantage that the *Tathâgata* renders sermons intelligible³ 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 *Sûtra* and with placid mind joyfully adopts it.

3. Suppose there is a man in the habit of giving

¹ Burnouf has some terms wanting in my text ; they have been added by a later hand in the margin, but the characters are indistinct.

² *Pranîtamukhamandala* ; a marginal reading has *prînamukha*°.

³ *Tathâgatañ kâvavâdânubhâsakam pratilabhate*. I am not sure of the real meaning of *anubhâsaka* ; it may as well be 'suggesting.' Burnouf has, 'c'est de la bouche du *Tathâgata* qu'il recevra les avis et l'enseignement.'

alms to myriads of koṭis of beings, whom I have herebefore indicated by way of comparison¹; 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 Nirvāṇa 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 Sūtra is rare in many myriads of koṭis of Æons;

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

¹ From this reference to the preceding prose we must gather that these stanzas are posterior to or coeval with the prose version.

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 Sûtra, 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 kings¹.

¹ The purport of this passage seems to be that lay devotees who are regular in attending the sermon, besides receiving terrestrial blessings, will rank high as churchwardens and be entitled to conspicuous places apart in the chapel. The gist of the whole chapter, at any rate, is that it is highly meritorious to come to church.