

TWELVE PRINCIPAL DEEDS OF LORD BUDDHA

FIRST THE BUDDHA took birth as a god in a paradise called Tusita which is a place of great happiness. When he was in this paradise of Tusita, he taught the dharma to the gods. Although this was the first deed of the Buddha, it is not counted as one of the Twelve Deeds because the twelve deeds are in reference to beings in our world. Before he left Tusita, he appointed the bodhisattva Maitreya as the representative of the Buddhas in Tusita empowering him to give teachings in Tusita. Before he came into our world, he actually had five visions that told him the right place to go. He saw the social background which at that time was castes in which to be born. He saw his mother, the place of his birth, the time and the kind of people he would be associated with in his life. He saw his caste as a royal family because at the time if he had been born in a low caste he would have been automatically cut off from the appreciation of most persons. The previous buddha, Buddha Kasyapa was born in a Brahmin family for a similar reason because at the time that caste had the greatest prestige. Buddha Shakyamuni was born into a royal family because at the time the royal caste had the greatest prestige. Then he saw his mother who was worth of bearing a buddha with all his perfect marks and signs inside the womb. He also saw that the beings associated with him lived in Jambudvipa so Jambudvipa would be the right place for him to manifest. He saw also the right time to manifest was about 500 BC because beings were spiritually ready for his coming. He saw the country in which he should go because that is where he would be able to help beings in the best way. So having foreseen these five things, the Buddha came from Tusita, entered our world.

The second deed was to enter the womb of his mother and his mother perceived this in the form of a white elephant with six tusks coming into her womb. The third deed was to take birth in a normal way from his mother's womb. Actually the Buddha had the power to be born in any way- he could have appeared miraculously from a lotus flower or just appeared from the sky, but he chose to manifest in a normal birth because all the beings he had to relate to including his disciples later were all born from the womb. Had he had a miraculous birth, they might have thought, "Oh, he is a very special man and we are not like him because he is somebody just descended from space so he can do all these things, but we can't do them because we are just ordinary people born of the womb." So he took a normal birth to show that he was sharing the conditions of all other beings. The fourth deed is that he became very proficient in all arts and crafts. When the Buddha was a little boy, he took teachings with a master, and from him he learned the different aspects of knowledge. Particularly, he learned to write in 60 different languages and he learned all the different skills and material arts and all the aspects of knowledge and he was extremely proficient and skilled in all of them. The reason he did all this was that later when he was going to teach, there would be no risk of people saying, "Well, he is teaching all these things involving the spiritual life because he was a failure in worldly things." To offset this belief the Buddha excelled in all worldly knowledge, science and arts.

The fifth deed was that he enjoyed the company of his wife and consorts in his father's palace. This was to eliminate the belief of persons in the future thinking, "the Buddha is such a different being anyway because he doesn't know what pleasure is all about." To offset this belief he showed that he could indeed enjoy the pleasures of the world, but later he showed that there is no need to become very involved with

all these pleasure and cling to them because they are pointless insofar as they do not last forever. Instead he showed one should practice the way to liberation without attachment.

The sixth and seventh deeds were to eliminate the two possible extremes: the extreme of overindulgence and falling into pleasures and enjoyment without caring for anything else and the extreme of austerity, of practicing too many hardships that this will bring liberation. So in order to show the pointlessness of these extremes, the Buddha renounced the world. This was to show that if one became very involved in the world and its pleasures, one had to leave it behind. The Buddha at the time had been living in all the pleasures of his palace with wife and consorts. To show this was too much of a fetter, he fled secretly from the palace at night and cut his hair off himself, and took up the life of a monk. Once he left the palace he wanted to show that practicing the austerities was not the way to achieve realization. He then went seeking a teacher and for six years he spent his time practicing extreme austerities by the banks of a river. This was to demonstrate that the austerities in themselves were not the answer and that realization came not from imposing difficulties on oneself. Instead the final realization would be the understanding of the true nature of the mind.

The eight deed was to go to the place called Bodhgaya which is known as the heart of enlightenment. This is the place where all the one thousand buddhas of this time cycle will go to reach enlightenment. His ninth deed was to vanquish the host of Mara which are all the demons, all the negative forces. The true meaning of this is that through vajralike samadhi (vajropama samadhi) the Buddha becomes victorious over all the defilements that are known as the demon of the aggregates, the demon of defilements and so on. He vanquished all these aspects of negativity and this was manifested outwardly by vanquishing demons. These demons or obstacles appeared in front of him in order to try to stop him from reaching Buddhahood. They tried to stop him through passion, aggression, and ignorance. When they tried to stop him through passion, they produced a very beautiful woman who was trying to tempt the Buddha, but he overcame this. Then they tried to delude him, producing a messenger who said that his father had died and in this crisis-Devadatta who bore enmity with the Buddha, was going to take over the kingdom. They also tried to stop him by arousing his anger by producing a tremendous army of demons who came from all sides and tried to attack the Buddha through their amazing displays of negative miracles. But all the time, the Buddha just remained in meditation and was immersed in a state of loving kindness unswayed by desire, anger, or delusion. As a result he demonstrated the tenth deed which was to achieve perfect enlightenment. Through vajra-like meditation the Buddha achieved complete purity of all obscurations and realized full knowledge.

Having achieved enlightenment, the Buddha performed the eleventh deed which was turning the wheel of dharma. The first turning taught the four noble truths which was to help the disciples of hinayana. The second turning was the teaching of voidness and the original nature of everything of dharmadhatu. The third turning was teachings on the clarity aspects of Jnana that showed that the true nature of everything is an intimate union of clarity and voidness. This third turning was intended for bodhisattvas who could reach enlightenment.

The twelfth deed of the Buddha was his passing away. The Buddha could see that if he remained among human beings all the time, they wouldn't really develop a sense of renunciation. To kindle a weariness of samsara and also to develop a wish for liberation, the Buddha demonstrated his death. The manifestation of the Buddha with these twelve deeds were all in impure places.

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