



The Asian Classics Institute



Diamond Mountain University

In-Depth Course 1
Teachings of the Future Buddha:
The Uttara Tantra of Maitreya

Homework and Quiz Master, Class Ten: The Twelve Deeds of the Buddha

*1) Name the twelve deeds of the Buddha.

- [(1) Coming to our world from the Heaven of Bliss.
- (2) Entering the holy womb of his mother.
- (3) Taking birth from her womb.
- (4) Mastering the worldly arts.
- (5) Enjoying himself with the queens.
- (6) Leaving the worldly life.
- (7) Undertaking spiritual hardships.
- (8) Coming to the Seat of the Diamond, the “Heart of Enlightenment,” and seating himself before the Bodhi Tree.
- (9) Defeating the demons.
- (10) Attaining total enlightenment.
- (11) Turning the wheels of the dharma.
- (12) Attaining final nirvana.]

*2) What moves, from where, but not from where, and for what reason, when the Buddha undertakes these twelve deeds? (Tibetan and Sanskrit tracks answer in those languages.)

[Due to the Buddha's great compassion, as he looks upon the suffering of the entire universe directly, the emanation body is sent from the enjoyment body to perform the twelve deeds—but without the Buddha actually *moving* from the dharma body.]

ཏུལ་ཀུ།
trulku

निर्माणकाय

nirma-n.aka-ya

ལོང་ཀུ།
longku

सम्भोगकाय

sambhogaka-ya

ཚུལ་སྐྱེ།

chuku

धर्मकाय

dharmaka-ya

སྙིང་ཇེ་ཆེན་པོ།

nyingje chenpo

महाकरुणा

maha-karun.a-

3) Why does Lord Buddha come to our particular realm?

[Because our world (technically the southern continent of Jambudvipa, and more particularly the “central land” of India) is a “realm of deeds,” where humans have a good intellect and are capable of renunciation.]

4) According to some ways of counting the twelve deeds, the Buddha undertakes another deed before the traditional first, which is then combined with the second. Name this new first deed.

[He takes birth as the divine youth named Shveta Ketu, in the Heaven of Bliss (that is, Tushita or Ganden paradise). There he teaches the Dharma and, when he perceives directly that it would be of benefit for all living beings, hands his crown over to the keeping of the coming Buddha, Maitreya, and heads for our realm.]

5) Give and explain the two well-known names that Lord Buddha receives upon his birth.

[The prince is named “Siddhartha” (which means “fulfilled [*siddha*] wishes or goals [*artha*]) by his family because, on the day that he is born, the people in his land are freed from all kinds of illness and trouble, and things that they had been wishing for come true. He is named “Shakyamuni” by the divine beings who come to pay him honor because all the rest of the Shakya people spend their time with meaningless talk and activities while this particular Shakya proves to be wisely quiet (*muni*).

*6) Compare how those of the lower way, the greater way, and the secret way describe the level the Buddha was on as he went through the twelve deeds.

[According to “regular” position held by those of the lower way and some of the higher way, the Buddha was a bodhisattva (and more specifically either a bodhisattva on the

path of accumulation or else a tenth-level bodhisattva) during the first nine deeds, and a Buddha during the last three deeds. According to the “special position—which is that of most texts of the greater way, the Buddha had long since become enlightened and only pretended to go through the twelve deeds for the benefit of disciples. According to the secret way, Lord Buddha appears in his enlightened enjoyment body as Vajradhara and various other forms located in the Akanishtha, the Heaven Below None—as well as in special realms around our world—to give the secret teachings.]

7) There are two positions as to the deed the Buddha was performing when he attained “automatic ordination” as a full monk. State them.

[The Detailists say this happened when Lord Buddha left the worldly life, which is the sixth of the twelve deeds. Some masters say that, rather, it occurred when he reached the wisdom of no more learning (the tenth deed).]

8) Why, according to the Detailist School, was Lord Buddha forced to endure six years of spiritual hardship as the seventh deed?

[They say that it was a karmic result of his having spoken badly of the previous Buddha, Kashyapa. The higher schools say that statements in the original sutras to this effect must be taken figuratively.]

9) Name the four demons that are defeated as the ninth deed, and describe a position of Je Tsongkapa on when they are actually stopped.

[The first is the demon of the mental afflictions, which according to a presentation by Je Tsongkapa is defeated at the eight bodhisattva level. Next is the demon of death; according to the same presentation, the need to die through karma and mental afflictions is absent from the first bodhisattva level, but since one still takes rebirth up until Buddhahood then it can be said that this demon and the demon of the impure heaps are not defeated until then. The “demon of the divine youth” is a destructive spirit who obstructs the final defeat of the other three demons, and so it too is defeated only upon enlightenment.]

10) Are all the twelve deeds of Shakyamuni Buddha performed by Shakyamuni Buddha?

[Technically speaking, the first two deeds of coming to our world from the Heaven of Bliss and entering his holy mother's womb are deeds done by the person who was to become Shakyamuni Buddha.]

*11) Speculate a bit on how each of the twelve deeds may represent a message from Lord

Buddha to us on how to conduct each stage of our own life, over the course of our life.

[Deciding to come to our world can represent the decision to get involved in helping others in an ultimate way, once we have seen their suffering. Entering the womb and taking a human birth represent the decision to take on a form that other people can relate to, in order to teach them. Mastering the worldly arts could represent our worldly careers, which we must sooner or later leave behind. The same with sensual pleasures, especially sex and a mundane married life. The spiritual hardships show us that enlightenment is won only with hard work and many pains, especially if we are not careful in the path we choose. Coming to sit at the Buddha tree is like that personal sense of responsibility for the enlightenment of all beings, and the decision to work to the death if necessary to achieve enlightenment. Defeating the demons is a statement upon who our real enemies are: our own mental afflictions; death itself; any state of mind or body short of an enlightened Angel's; and anything that would hold us back from our task. Reaching the state of enlightenment is a statement to us that it *is* possible to be of ultimate benefit to all living beings. Teaching others the path is the highest form of help we can give to others; and the fact that even Lord Buddha passed from this world is a reminder of how fragile we ourselves are—and also a reminder that many of the things we see around us may not be at all what they seem to be.]

*12) When Lord Buddha came out of his holy mother's womb, he took seven steps in each of the six directions of space. Lotuses appeared below his feet with each step, and he made a high proclamation in each direction. Give the famous line that He spoke as he stepped to the west. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

["I am the highest being to walk on this planet."]

ང་ནི་འཇིག་རྟེན་འདི་ན་མཚོན།

nga ni jikten dina chok

Debate assignment: Remember to review this class at least once before the review class, by sitting down with a friend over a cup of coffee or tea and simply discussing what was said.

Meditation assignment: Sit down for 15 minutes a day, and do a review meditation on the series of twelve deeds, and how each one is a message to us.