

Venerable Ones Appearing in the Lotus Sutra

— Prabhūtaratna Buddha and Amitābha Buddha —

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I. Prabhūtaratna (Abundant Treasures) Buddha

① Influence on Nichiren’s Doctrine from Teachings during “The Assembly in the Sky”

Starting with Śākyamuni Buddha, a great number of Venerable Ones appear in the Lotus Sutra—among them Mahābhijñāñābhibhū (All-surmounting Power of Great Insight) Tathāgata, Bhīṣmagarjitasvararāja (Awesomely Resounding Majestic Voice) Tathāgata, Maitreya Bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva, heavenly beings, dragon beings, the eight classes of ever-present guardian spirits, the guardian Indra, the guardian divinity Brahmā, Śāriputra, Kāśyapa, and others—and each plays a significant role.⁽¹⁾

Of particular note is Abundant Treasures (Prabhūtaratna) Buddha who, in chapter eleven of the Lotus Sutra (The Appearance of a Jeweled Stupa), comes from a world in the eastern direction called Treasure Purity and appears together with a stupa made of seven jewels. Testifying to the truth of what Śākyamuni Buddha teaches, in a resounding voice he says:

“Splendid, Splendid! O Śākyamuni! The Bhagavat teaches the Lotus Sutra to the great assembly: the instruction for bodhisattvas and treasured lore of the buddhas, which is the wisdom attainable by every sentient being! Just so! Just so, O Śākyamuni Bhagavat! What you teach is true!”⁽²⁾

Nichiren thought that Abundant Treasures Buddha’s appearance in the Lotus Sutra was very important. He thought that the truth of the Lotus Sutra is verified by Abundant Treasures Buddha’s testimony, and that the Appearance of a Jeweled Stupa chapter was setting the stage for chapter sixteen, The Lifespan of the Tathāgata. In his *Kaimokushō*, (Opening of the Eyes) Nichiren wrote:

“Thus Come One Taho [Abundant Treasures Buddha], who dwells in the world of Treasure Purity in the east, appeared in a huge tower adorned with the seven kinds of treasures and measuring 500 *yojanas* high and 250 *yojanas* wide...the treasure tower emerged out of the ground before him [Śākyamuni Buddha] and ascended into the sky. It came forth like the full moon rising from behind the eastern mountain in the dark of night.”⁽³⁾

“Now in the “The Appearance of a Jeweled Stupa,” the eleventh chapter of

the Lotus Sutra, however, a step was taken in preparation for revealing the Eternal Buddha in the sixteenth chapter on “The Lifespan of the Tathāgata.”⁽⁴⁾

Śākyamuni Buddha completed his entrustment of the teachings in chapter twenty-two (Entrustment), and he instructed the various buddhas who had come from all over the ten directions to return to their original lands. He caused the door of the seven-jeweled stupa that was suspended in the air to close in preparation for its return to from where it had come. Shortly after that, he descended from his location on the stupa and made his way toward Mt. Eagle Peak. The scene of the “assembly in the sky” ends in this chapter, and the stage dramatically returns to Mt. Eagle Peak once more.

Nichiren created a sutra-based structure for his fundamental position of saving people during the Latter Age of Degeneration (Mappō):

Beginning (起) - chapter ten, Expounder of the Dharma, and chapter eleven, The Appearance of a Jeweled Stupa;

Revelation (顯)- chapter fifteen, Bodhisattvas Emerging from the Earth, and chapter sixteen, The Lifespan of the Tathāgata;

Completion (竟) - chapter twenty-one, The Transcendent Powers of the Tathāgata, and chapter twenty-two, Entrustment.

It is well known that he placed importance on the concreteness of propagation in the era after Śākyamuni Buddha’s death, and this became clear to him from what was expounded during the “assembly in the sky.” Nevertheless, after being mentioned at the end of chapter twenty-two, Abundant Treasures Buddha is also mentioned in chapter twenty-three (Ancient Accounts of Bhaiṣajyarāja Bodhisattva), chapter twenty-four, (Gadgadasvara Bodhisattva), and chapter twenty-five (The Gateway to Every Direction [Manifested by Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva]).⁽⁴⁾

② Abundant Treasures Buddha in the Scene of “The Assembly in the Sky”

[Chapter Eleven: The Appearance of a Jeweled Stupa]

The Buddha Abundant Treasures appeared with the seven-jeweled stupa from the eastern land called Treasure Purity to verify that the teachings of Śākyamuni Buddha were true:⁽⁵⁾

“Then the Buddha told the Bodhisattva Mahāpratibhāna:

‘The Tathāgata is in this jeweled stupa. In the remote past, immeasurable, incalculable thousands of myriads of koṭis of worlds away in the east there was a land called Ratnaviśuddha. In that land there was a buddha

called Prabhūtaratna. When this buddha was practicing the bodhisattva path in his previous lives he made a great vow, saying:

“If I become a buddha, after my parinirvāṇa if the Lotus Sutra is being taught anywhere in all the lands of the ten directions, my stupa shall appear there so that this sutra may be heard, and in order that I may bear testimony to it and praise it with the word, ‘Splendid!’”

‘After the Buddha had perfected the path and immediately before his parinirvāṇa, he addressed the monks among the great assembly of devas and humans, saying:

“After my parinirvāṇa anyone who wishes to pay me homage should build a great stupa!”

‘If there is anyone teaching the Lotus Sutra anywhere in the worlds of the ten directions, this buddha makes a jeweled stupa emerge out of the ground in that place through his transcendent powers and the power of his vow. He is in the stupa giving praise with the words, “Splendid, splendid!”’

“O Mahāpratibhāna! The Tathāgata Prabhūtaratna has now emerged from the earth, within his stupa, so that he may hear the Lotus Sutra and give praise with the words, “Splendid, splendid.””⁽⁶⁾

[Chapter Twelve: Devadatta]

The bodhisattva Prajñākūṭa [Accumulation of Wisdom], who, from the lower region, was accompanying Abundant Treasures Buddha, suggested that he return to his original buddha-land since the verification of the truth of the Lotus Sutra had been completed. Śākyamuni Buddha then suggested to Accumulation of Wisdom Bodhisattva that, before returning to his land, he should meet and talk with Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva:

“At that time, in the lower region there was a bodhisattva called Prajñākūṭa who was accompanying the Bhagavat Prabhūtaratna. He urged the Buddha Prabhūtaratna to return to their original land. The Buddha Śākyamuni addressed Prajñākūṭa, saying:

‘O son of a virtuous family! Wait for a moment! There is a bodhisattva called Mañjuśrī. Let us meet him together and discuss the true Dharma. After that you can return to your original land.’”⁽⁷⁾

[Chapter Fifteen: Bodhisattvas Emerging from the Earth]

A great number of bodhisattvas that emerged from the earth each went to the wonderful seven-jeweled stupa in the air where Abundant Treasures Buddha and Śākyamuni Buddha were. They reverently paid homage to them—and to the many buddhas seated under the jeweled trees—and, after walking around them three times with palms placed together in respect, they sat to one side and happily looked at the two World-honored Ones:

“Having emerged from the earth, each of these bodhisattvas approached the Tathāgatas Prabhūtaratna and Śākyamuni, still seated in the beautiful seven-jeweled stupa in the air. Going up to them, they bowed until their foreheads touched the feet of both Bhagavats. Then, having bowed to the other buddhas, each sitting on a lion seat under the jeweled trees, they circumambulated them to the right three times, honoring them with their palms pressed together. Having praised them with various bodhisattva eulogies, they withdrew to one side and joyfully gazed at the two Bhagavats. All these bodhisattvas, great beings, having emerged from the earth, praised the buddhas with various bodhisattva eulogies. While they did, fifty intermediate kalpas passed.”⁽⁸⁾

[Chapter Seventeen: Description of Merits]

When Śākyamuni spoke of how bodhisattvas had obtained great benefit from the Dharma, *māndārava* and great *māndārava* flowers rained down from the sky and scattered over Śākyamuni Buddha and Abundant Treasures Buddha, who were both seated in the seven-jeweled stupa:

“When the Buddha explained that these bodhisattvas, great beings, had attained deep insight into the Dharma, *māndārava* and great *māndārava* flowers rained down from the sky, scattering over the buddhas who were seated on lion seats under immeasurable hundreds of thousands of myriads of koṭis of jeweled trees; and they scattered over Śākyamuni Buddha and the Tathāgata Prabhūtaratna, who had attained parinirvāṇa long ago, both of whom were sitting on the lion seat in a seven-jeweled stupa; they also scattered over all of the great bodhisattvas and the fourfold assembly.”⁽⁹⁾

[Chapter Twenty-one: The Transcendent Powers of the Tathāgata]

By means of the Buddha’s wondrous capabilities, Śākyamuni Buddha and Abundant Treasures Buddha could be seen [by beings in worlds throughout the ten directions]

sitting on a lion seat in the jeweled stupa, and the great number of bodhisattvas and those from the fourfold assembly respectfully gathered around Śākyamuni Buddha were also seen:

“Through the transcendent powers of the Buddha, all the sentient beings in these worlds—humans and such nonhumans as devas, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kinnaras, and mahoragas—saw all the buddhas sitting on the lion seats under the immeasurable, limitless hundreds of thousands of myriads of koṭis of jeweled trees in this saḥā world.

They saw Śākyamuni Buddha sitting on the lion seat in the jeweled stupa, together with Tathāgata Prabhūtaratna. They also saw immeasurable, limitless hundreds of thousands of myriads of koṭis of bodhisattvas, great beings and the fourfold assembly respectfully surrounding Śākyamuni Buddha.”⁽¹⁰⁾

Those who are able to preserve this sutra will gladden Śākyamuni Buddha, his separate buddha-forms, and Abundant Treasures Buddha:

“Those who preserve this Sutra
Have already seen me,
The Buddha Prabhūtaratna,
And the various magically created forms;
And today they see all the bodhisattvas
I have led and inspired up until now.
Those who preserve this Sutra
Will gladden me, my magically created forms,
As well as the Buddha Prabhūtaratna
Who has entered nirvana.
They will also see, gladden, and pay homage to
The past and future buddhas, and those who are present
In the ten directions.”⁽¹¹⁾

[Chapter Twenty-two: Entrustment]

Having completed his commission, Śākyamuni Buddha had the various buddhas who had come from the ten directions return to their own lands, and said that the stupa of Abundant Treasures Buddha would be restored as before. All those who heard Śākyamuni’s words were joyful:

“At that time, in order to cause all of the buddhas who were his magically created forms and who had come from the ten directions to return to their own lands, Śākyamuni Buddha said this:

‘All the buddhas should be at ease. The Buddha Prabhūtaratna will be restored as before.’

“When he said this, all the innumerable buddhas in their magically created forms from the ten directions sitting on the lion seats under the jeweled trees, the Buddha Prabhūtaratna, the great assembly of the limitless and incalculable bodhisattvas beginning with Viśiṣṭacāritra, the fourfold assemblies of the śrāvakas beginning with Śāriputra, and the devas, humans, and asuras in all the worlds, having heard what the Buddha had taught, rejoiced greatly.”⁽¹²⁾

③ **Abundant Treasures Buddha in the Scene of the Assembly on Mt. Eagle Peak**

[Chapter Twenty-three: Ancient Accounts of Bodhisattva Bhaiṣajyarāja]

Eighty-four thousand bodhisattvas attained a dhāraṇī during Śākyamuni Buddha’s discourse on Bhaiṣajyarāja (Medicine King) Bodhisattva, Śākyamuni entrusted the teaching to the Bodhisattva Nakṣatrarājasamkusumitābhijña (Flower of the Greatest of Constellations), and Abundant Treasures Buddha praises the bodhisattva Flower of the Greatest of Constellations from inside the jeweled stupa:

“When this chapter, “Ancient Accounts of Bodhisattva Bhaiṣajyarāja,” was being taught, eighty-four thousand bodhisattvas attained the dhāraṇī of understanding the speech of all sentient beings. The Tathāgata Prabhūtaratna in the jeweled stupa praised Bodhisattva Nakṣatrarājasamkusumitābhijña, saying:

‘Splendid! Splendid! O Nakṣatrarājasamkusumitābhijña! You have attained marvelous merit, for you have questioned the Buddha Śākyamuni about these things and benefited all of the immeasurable numbers of sentient beings.’”⁽¹³⁾

[Chapter Twenty-four: Bodhisattva Gadgadasvara]

1. Śākyamuni Buddha told Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva that Abundant Treasures Buddha would make an appearance long after entering nirvana. Abundant Treasures Buddha summoned Gadgadasvara (Wondrous Sound) Bodhisattva because the Prince of the

Dharma, Mañjuśrī, desired to meet him:

“Then, the Buddha Śākyamuni spoke to Mañjuśrī, saying:

‘The Tathāgata Prabhūtaratna, who long ago entered parinirvāṇa, will manifest the signs for you.’”

“At that time the Buddha Prabhūtaratna addressed that bodhisattva saying:

‘Come, O son of a virtuous family! Mañjuśrī, the Prince of the Dharma, wishes to see you.’”⁽¹⁴⁾

2. Wondrous Sound Bodhisattva comes to the saḥā world and inquires after Śākyamuni Buddha on behalf of the buddha Kamaladalavimalanakṣatrarājasamkusumitābhijñā (Vital Force of the Greatest of Constellations and Pure Lotus Flowers in Full Bloom). Then he expresses his desire to see the body of Abundant Treasures Buddha. Śākyamuni conveys that message to Abundant Treasures Buddha, who then acknowledges the bodhisattva Wondrous Sound:

“He presented the necklace to the Buddha, saying:

‘O Bhagavat! The Buddha Kamaladalavimalanakṣatrarājasamkusumitābhijñā inquires of the Bhagavat:

Are you without illness or pain? Is your daily life pleasant? Are you at ease in practice? Is the world around you harmonious? Are your worldly affairs bearable? Is it easy to save sentient beings? Are they not filled with greed, anger, foolishness, avarice, and pride? Are they mindful of their parents? Do they respect śrāmaṇas? Do they not have false views or erring thoughts? Do they control the desires of their five senses? O Bhagavat! Do the sentient beings conquer māras? Has the Tathāgata Prabhūtaratna sitting in the seven-jeweled stupa long after his parinirvāṇa come here to hear the Dharma?’

“Furthermore, he inquired of the Tathāgata Prabhūtaratna saying:

‘Are you at ease and without pain? O Bhagavat! Will your life be long and endured with patience? I now wish to see the body of the Buddha Prabhūtaratna. I entreat you, O Bhagavat, to manifest and show it to me.’”

“At that time the Buddha Śākyamuni said to the Buddha Prabhūtaratna: ‘This Bodhisattva Gadgadasvara wants to see you.’

“Then, the Buddha Prabhūtaratna addressed Gadgadasvara, saying:

‘Splendid! Splendid! You have paid homage to the Buddha Śākyamuni and heard the Lotus Sutra, and have come here in order

to see Mañjuśrī and others.”⁽¹⁵⁾

3. After paying his respects to Śākyamuni Buddha and the stupa of the buddha Abundant Treasures, Wondrous Sound Bodhisattva returns to his homeland and reports to the buddha Vital Force of the Greatest of Constellations and Pure Lotus Flowers in Full Bloom that he had been to the saḥā world, had benefitted living beings, had seen Śākyamuni Buddha, had seen and paid homage to the stupa of Abundant Treasures Buddha, had seen Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva and others, and had caused eighty-four thousand bodhisattvas to attain a samādhi:

“Then, the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Gadgadasvara paid homage to the Buddha Śākyamuni and the stupa of the Buddha Prabhūtaratna and returned to his own world.

“Those worlds through which he traveled quaked in six ways and it rained jeweled lotus flowers. Hundreds of thousands of myriads of koṭis of variegated music was heard. Having returned to his own world, he approached the Buddha

Kamaladalavimalanakṣatrarājasamkusumitābhijña, surrounded by eighty-four thousand bodhisattvas, and said to him:

‘O Bhagavat! I have been to the saḥā World and benefitted the sentient beings. Having seen the Buddha Śākyamuni and the stupa of the Buddha Prabhūtaratna, I paid homage to them and made them offerings. Having seen Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, the Prince of the Dharma, the Bodhisattva Bhaiṣajyarāja, the Bodhisattva Vīryabalavegaprāpta, and Bodhisattva Pradānaśūra, I caused these eighty-four thousand bodhisattvas to attain the samādhi called Sarvarūpasamdarśana.”⁽¹⁶⁾

[Chapter Twenty-five: The Gateway to Every Direction] (Manifested by the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara)

The bodhisattva Akṣayamati (Inexhaustible Resolve) wished to give a necklace of precious jewels to the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (Regarder of All Sounds in the World) as an offering, but the bodhisattva did not consent to receive it. After being counseled by Śākyamuni Buddha to compassionately accept the necklace, the bodhisattva then received the necklace, divided it, and then made offerings in turn:

“The Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara accepted the necklace out of pity for the fourfold assembly, devas, nāgas, humans, nonhumans, and the rest. He then divided it into two parts and gave one part to the Buddha

Śākyamuni and the other part to the stupa of the Buddha Prabhūtaratna.
“O Akṣayamati! With such inherent transcendent powers the
Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara wanders throughout the saḥā world.”⁽¹⁷⁾

Nichiren considered the “verification by the buddha Abundant Treasures” to be extremely important, and it is often referred to in his writings. But, after the conclusion of the scene of the “assembly in the sky” in chapter twenty-two (Entrustment), he doesn't offer much commentary on Abundant Treasures Buddha's presence from chapter twenty-three (Ancient Accounts of King of Medicines Bodhisattva) onward. In his *Shugo-kokka-ron* (A Treatise on Protecting the Nation), he wrote:

“In more than 2,000 years after the death of the Buddha, so many false doctrines may have been added to Buddhism that not even one out of 10,000 may be the true teaching. Many Buddhist scriptures, therefore, may have errors. For instance the doctrine of the “inherent seed of natural emancipation from delusions” preached in the *Meditation on the Mind-base Sutra* denies Buddhahood for such as men of *śrāvaka* and *pratyekabuddha*; the chapter on the “Entrustment” in the *Lotus Sutra* is placed at the end in Dharmarakṣa's translation instead of the twenty-second chapter as in Kumārajīva's translation; sixteen characters not found in the Sanskrit original are arbitrarily added in the *Great Commentary* on the *Abhidharma* translated by Hsüan-chuang; the consciousness expounded in the *Collection of Mahayana Essentials* by Asaṅga is divided into eight parts in one translation by Hsüan-chuang but nine in another by Paramārtha; discrepancies exist between Vasubandhu's *Commentary on the Lotus Sutra* and the Lotus Sutra in Chinese. The *Treatise on the Nirvana Sutra* by Vasubandhu states that the Lotus Sutra is smeared by evil passions; the Hossō Sect insists that those with fixed nature of *śrāvaka* and *pratyekabuddha* and *icchantika* without the Buddha-nature will never attain Buddhahood; and the She-lun (Shōron) Sect maintains that the Lotus Sutra's claim of attainment of Buddhahood by those who chant, “Homage to the Buddha!” just once is merely an expedient means of encouraging idlers. These are all mistakes rendered by translators of sutras and commentaries and teachers of various sects.”⁽¹⁸⁾

Nichiren points out errors of translators of sutras, of commentaries, and of teachers of various sects, giving as one example Dharmarakṣa's placement of the “Entrustment”

chapter at the end of his translation in comparison to it being the twenty second chapter as in Kumārajīva's translation. In the Entrustment chapter, Śākyamuni Buddha had Abundant Treasures Buddha restored to his original state, and Śākyamuni moved from his place on the seven-jeweled stupa in the air to Mt. Eagle Peak. However, after his appearance in chapter twenty-two (where the "assembly in the air" ends) Abundant Treasures Buddha is again mentioned in chapters twenty-three, twenty-four and twenty-five. From his commentary in the *Shugo-kokka-ron*, one could speculate that Nichiren thought the appearance of Abundant Treasures Buddha from chapter twenty-three onward was related to the issue of the position of the Entrustment chapter in the translation of the sutra.

II . Amitābha (Amida) Buddha

The Lotus Sutra was firmly fixed as the core of Nichiren's doctrines. And he severely criticized the Pure Land Buddhism of Hōnen in his *Risshō-ankoku-ron* (On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land) and other works. But, the Buddha Amitābha (Amida), who is worshipped in Pure Land Buddhism, appears in the Lotus Sutra in chapters seven (The Apparitional City) and twenty-three (Ancient Accounts of Medicine King Bodhisattva). I want to consider how he was thinking about this issue.

[Chapter Seven: The Apparitional City]

Before he renounced home life, the buddha Mahābhijñāñānābhībhū (All-Surmounting Transcendent Power of Great Insight) had sixteen royal sons, and one of them becomes Amida Buddha:

"The Buddha addressed the monks, saying: "These sixteen bodhisattvas always willingly taught this Lotus Sutra. Each bodhisattva has inspired six hundred myriads of koṭis of nayutas of sentient beings equal in number to the sands of the Ganges River. In life after life, they remained with these bodhisattvas and, hearing this teaching from them, they believed and understood. For this reason they were able to meet four myriads of koṭis of Buddha Bhagavats during a period uninterrupted up to the present.

"O monks! I shall now tell you that these sixteen śrāmaṇeras, disciples of that buddha Mahābhijñāñānābhībhū, have now attained highest, complete enlightenment and presently teach the Dharma in the lands of the ten directions. There are immeasurable hundreds of thousands of myriads of bodhisattvas and śrāvakas who have become their attendants.

“Two of these śrāmaṇeras have become buddhas in the east. One is called Akṣobhya in the land called Abhirati and the other is called Merukūṭa. In the southeast there are two buddhas. One is called Siṃhaghṣa and the other is called Siṃhadhvaja. In the south there are two buddhas called Ākāṣapraṭiṣṭhita and Nityaparinirvṛta. There are also two buddhas in the southwest. One is called Indradhvaja and the other is called Brahmadvaja. In the west there are two buddhas called Amitāyus and Sarvalokadhātūpadravodvegapratyuttīrṇa. There are two buddhas in the northwest. One is called Tamālapatracandanagandhābhijña. The other is called Merukaḷpa. In the north there are two buddhas. One is called Meghasvaradīpa and the other is called Meghasvararāja. In the northeast there is a buddha called Sarvalokabhayacchambhitatvavidhvamsanakara. And the sixteenth one is myself, Buddha Śākyamuni, who in this saḥā world achieved highest, complete enlightenment.”⁽¹⁹⁾

[Chapter Twenty-three: Ancient Accounts of Medicine King Bodhisattva]

In chapter twenty-three it is preached that if a woman hears the Lotus Sutra and practices according to the teaching, she will go to Amida Buddha’s world.

“If there is any woman five hundred years after the parinirvāṇa of the Tathāgata who hears this sutra and practices according to the teaching, she will immediately reach the dwelling of the Buddha Amitāyus in the Sukhāvātī world, surrounded by great bodhisattvas, and will be born on a jeweled seat in a lotus flower.”⁽²⁰⁾

Nichiren thought that Śākyamuni was the buddha who had a relationship with this saḥā world, and that it was made clear in chapter sixteen of the Lotus Sutra that it is the eternal Śākyamuni Buddha who will rescue the people of the saḥā world and not the buddha Amitābha of the western Pure Land. In his *Hokke-shuyō-shō* (On Taking the Essence of the Lotus Sutra) he wrote:

“In these days, people in Japan believe that the Amitābha Buddha will come to save them. This is as nonsensical as feeding a baby cow on horse milk or trying to have the moon reflected on a roof tile.”

“Lord Śākyamuni Buddha attained Wonderful Enlightenment in the remotest past of ‘500 dust-particle kalpa ago.’”

“Śākyamuni Buddha is like the moon in the sky and other Buddhas are like its reflections on water.”

“We, sentient beings in this *Sahā* world, have all been beloved children of the Lord Śākyamuni Buddha since ‘500 dust-particle *kalpa* ago.’”⁽²¹⁾

Commenting on the Pure Lands preached in pre-Lotus expedient sutras, in the *Shugo-kokka-ron* he wrote:

“QUESTION: Sutras such as the Flower Garland Sutra, Hōdō sutras, Wisdom Sutra, Āgama sutras, and the Sutra of Meditation on the Buddha of Infinite Life recommend being reborn in the Paradise Heaven of Bodhisattva Maitreya, the Pure Land of the Amitābha Buddha to the west, and Pure Lands all over the universe. The Lotus Sutra, too, recommends being reborn in the Paradise Heaven, Pure Land to the west, and Pure Lands throughout the universe. Why do you contradict these sutras and recommend this impure land filled with tiles, stones, and thorny shrubs?

ANSWER: The Pure Lands preached in the pre-Lotus expedient sutras are mere substitutes tentatively shown by replicas of Śākyamuni Buddha, the Eternal True Buddha. In fact they all are lands of impurity. Therefore, when the true Pure Land was decided in ‘The Life Span of the Tathāgata’ chapter XVI of the Lotus Sutra, the essence of which consists of chapters on the ‘Skillful Means’ and ‘The Life Span of the Tathāgata,’ it was declared that this *sahā* world is the true Pure Land of the Tranquil Light. As for the question why the Lotus Sutra also recommends the Paradise Heaven, the Realm of Peace and Sustenance (Pure Land of the Amitābha Buddha), and Pure Lands all over the universe, it is merely that designations of the Pure Lands, such as Paradise Heaven and Realm of Peace and Sustenance, preached in the pre-Lotus sutras are used without modification to name the Pure Lands to be established in this world.”⁽²²⁾

Based on such commentaries, it can be grasped that Nichiren didn't attach much importance to the appearance of Amida Buddha in chapters seven and twenty-three.

[Reference data]

- (1) Please see my thesis “Roles of Śākyamuni Buddha’s disciples and other venerable ones that depict the characteristic teachings of the Lotus Sutra (in Japanese)” (“*Journal of The Essential Lay Buddhism Study Center*, Volume 5, April, 2010”).
- (2) *The Lotus Sutra*, Translated from the Chinese of Kumārajīva, Tsugunari Kubo and Akira Yuyama, Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2007, p. 175. Refer to *Hokke-honrui-Nichiren-ibun-shō*, Endō Asai, Sankibō-busshorin, 1988 for Nichiren’s quotations of the Lotus Sutra.
- (3) *Shōwa teihon Nichiren Shōnin ibun*, Minobusan-kuonji, 1952, p. 547. *Writings of Nichiren Shōnin Doctrine 2*, Compiled by Kyōtsū Hori, Edited by George Tanabe, Jr., Nichiren Shū Overseas Propagation Promotion Association, 2002, p. 42.
- (4) *Shōwa teihon Nichiren Shōnin ibun*, Minobusan-kuonji, 1952, p. 572. *Writings of Nichiren Shōnin Doctrine 2*, Compiled by Kyōtsū Hori, Edited by George Tanabe, Jr., Nichiren Shū Overseas Propagation Promotion Association, 2002, pp. 69-70.
- (5) *Nichiren Kyōgaku no kenkyū*, Kankō Mochizuki, Heirakuji-shoten, 1958, pp.81 (re: Ki Ken Kyō); *Nichiren Kyōgaku Kenkyū*, Kitagawa Zenchō, Heirakuji-shoten, 1987, pp.21 (re: The two places and three assemblies of the Lotus Sutra).
- (6) *The Lotus Sutra*, Translated from the Chinese of Kumārajīva, p. 176.
- (7) *ibid.* p. 190.
- (8) *ibid.* p. 218.
- (9) *ibid.* p. 242.
- (10) *ibid.* p. 284.
- (11) *ibid.* p. 286.
- (12) *ibid.* p. 290.
- (13) *ibid.* p. 300.
- (14) *ibid.* p. 303.
- (15) *ibid.* p. 304.
- (16) *ibid.* p. 307.
- (17) *ibid.* p. 313.
- (18) *Shōwa teihon Nichiren Shōnin ibun*, p. 99. *Writings of Nichiren Shōnin Doctrine 1*, Translated by Kyōtsū Hori, Edited by Jay Sakashita, Nichiren Shū Overseas Propagation Promotion Association, 2003, p. 21.
- (19) *The Lotus Sutra*, Translated from the Chinese of Kumārajīva, p.136.
- (20) *ibid.* p. 298.
- (21) *Shōwa teihon Nichiren Shōnin ibun*, Minobusan-kuonji, 1952, p. 812. *Writings of Nichiren Shōnin Doctrine 2*, Compiled by Kyōtsū Hori, Edited by George Tanabe, Jr., Nichiren Shū Overseas

Propagation Promotion Association, 2002, pp. 208-209.”

(22) *Shōwa teihon Nichiren Shōnin ibun*, pp. 129-130. *Writings of Nichiren Shōnin Doctrine 1*, Translated by Kyōtsū Hori, Edited by Jay Sakashita, Nichiren Shū Overseas Propagation Promotion Association, 2003, p. 68. For further reference: *Nichiren Kyōgaku Kenkyū*, Kitagawa Zenchō, Heirakuji-shoten, 1987, p. 252; *Nichiren Shōnin Kyōgaku Kenkyū*, Gyōkō Ōtani, Sankibō-busshorin, 1984, p. 222 etc.