Śākyamuni Buddha’s Manifested Deeds

Written by Puji of the Song Dynasty

Contents

Manifestation Traces of Our Fundamental Teacher

Examination and Biographical Account

Manifestation Traces of Our Fundamental Teacher

Śākyamuni Buddha. [The fourth Buddha of the Fortunate Aeon.] His clan was Kṣatriya; his father was Pure-Rice Deva, and his mother was Great Purity, Wondrous Rank. Having ascended to the rank of successor, he was born in Tuṣita Heaven, where he was named the Deva Victorious in Goodness, and was also called the Great Being Protector of Light. He liberated the hosts of devas, expounded the practices of a successor, and manifested bodies throughout the worlds of the ten directions to teach the Dharma.

The Sūtra of Universal Illumination says: “When the Buddha was first born into the household of a Kṣatriya king, he emitted the light of great wisdom, illuminating the worlds of the ten directions. Golden lotuses sprang from the earth and naturally supported his two feet. He took seven steps each toward east and west, south and north. Pointing one hand to heaven and the other to earth, he gave a lion’s roar: ‘Above and below, and throughout the four directions, none is more venerable than I.’” This was the eighth day of the fourth month in the jiayin year, the twenty-fourth year of King Zhao of Zhou.

By the eighth day of the second month in the forty-second year, at the age of nineteen, he wished to leave home. Reflecting to himself, he said, “What further encounter should I seek?” He then toured and observed the four gates, saw four kinds of events, and, with sorrow and joy in his heart, reflected: “Old age, sickness, and death are ultimately to be renounced.” Then, at midnight, a deva named Pure Abode joined his palms at the window and said, “The time to leave home has come; you may go.”

Having heard this, the prince rejoiced. He scaled the city wall and departed, cultivating the Way on Mount Dāṇṭaka. He first spent three years with Ārāḍa Kālāma, studying the samādhi of the sphere of nothingness; knowing that it was not the way, he abandoned it. He then spent three years with Udraka Rāmaputra, studying the

samādhi of neither perception nor nonperception; knowing that it too was not the way, he abandoned it. He next went to Elephant-Head Mountain, where, together with various non-Buddhist ascetics, he ate sesame and wheat each day for six years.

Therefore, the sūtra says: “With neither mind nor intention, neither sensation nor volitional activity, he completely subdued all non-Buddhist paths.” He first experienced and tested erroneous teachings, displayed various skillful means, brought forth diverse views, and led them to bodhi. Thus, the Sūtra of Universal Assembly says: “On the eighth day of the second month, when the morning star appeared, the bodhisattva realized the Way. He was called Teacher of Humans and Devas, and he was then thirty years old.” This was the guiwei year, the third year of King Mu.

Thereafter, in Deer Park, he turned the wheel of the Dharma of the Four Noble Truths for Kauṇḍinya and the other four, and they realized the fruit of the Way. He remained in the world teaching the Dharma for forty-nine years. Later, he told his disciple Mahākāśyapa: “I now entrust to you the pure dharma eye, the wondrous mind of nirvāṇa, the reality-mark of no mark, and the subtle, wondrous, right Dharma. You must preserve and uphold them!” He also instructed Ānanda: “Assist in the transmission and transformation; do not allow it to be cut off.”

He then spoke this verse: “The Dharma that is fundamentally Dharma is not Dharma; the Dharma of no Dharma is also Dharma. Now that I entrust the time of no Dharma, when have dharmas ever been dharmas?” Having spoken this verse, the World-Honored One again told Kāśyapa: “I shall transmit to you my gold-threaded saṃghāṭī robe. Pass it on in turn to the successor, until Maitreya Buddha appears in the world. Do not allow it to decay.” Having heard the verse, Kāśyapa bowed with his head at the Buddha’s feet and said, “Excellent! Excellent! I shall follow your instruction and comply reverently, out of respect for the Buddha.”

Then the World-Honored One arrived at the city of Kuśinagara and told the great assembly: “My back now aches; I wish to enter nirvāṇa.” He then went to the bank of the Hiraṇyavatī River, beneath the twin śāla trees, lay on his right side with his feet crossed, and serenely entered repose. He later rose from the coffin and taught the Dharma to his mother. He specially revealed his two feet to convert Poqi, and spoke this verse on impermanence: “All conditioned phenomena are impermanent; they are dharmas of arising and ceasing. When arising and ceasing have ceased, quiescent cessation is bliss.”

The disciples then competed to cremate him with fragrant firewood, but after the fire had burned out, the golden coffin remained as before. The great assembly then praised the Buddha in verse: “How could the fierce flames of ordinary people set him ablaze? We beseech the Venerable One to use the fire of samādhi to cremate

the golden-colored body.” Then the entire coffin and bier rose seven tāla-tree heights into the air; moving back and forth in space, he manifested the fire samādhi. Before long, ashes appeared, and eight hu and four dou of relics were obtained. This was the fifteenth day of the second month in the renshen year, the fifty-second year of King Mu. One thousand and seventeen years after the World-Honored One’s passing, the teaching reached China, in the wuchen year, the tenth year of Yongping in the Later Han dynasty.

Examination and Biographical Account

As soon as the World-Honored One was born, he pointed to heaven with one hand and to earth with the other. He walked seven steps, looked in the four directions, and said, “Above heaven and below heaven, I alone am honored.”

One day, the World-Honored One ascended the seat, and the assembly had gathered. Mañjuśrī struck the gavel and said, “Contemplate well the Dharma of the Dharma King: the Dharma of the Dharma King is thus.” The World-Honored One then descended from the seat.

One day, the World-Honored One ascended the seat and sat silently. Ānanda struck the gavel and said, “Please, World-Honored One, teach the Dharma.” The World-Honored One said, “Two bhikshus in this assembly have violated the monastic discipline; therefore I will not teach the Dharma.” Ānanda used his power of knowing others’ minds to identify the bhikshus and had them sent out. The World-Honored One remained silent. Ānanda again said, “Earlier, because two bhikshus had violated the discipline, you would not teach the Dharma. Those two bhikshus have now been sent out. Why will the World-Honored One not teach the Dharma?” The World-Honored One said, “I have vowed not to teach the Dharma for śrāvakas of the two vehicles.” He then descended from the seat.

One day, the World-Honored One ascended the seat, and the assembly had gathered. Kāśyapa struck the gavel and said, “The World-Honored One’s teaching of the Dharma is complete.” The World-Honored One then descended from the seat.

For ninety days, the World-Honored One stayed in Trāyastriṃśa Heaven teaching the Dharma to his mother. When he took leave of the heavenly realm and descended, the fourfold assembly and the eight classes of beings all went into the sky to receive him. The bhikshunī Utpalavarṇā thought, “As a nun, I will certainly see the Buddha only after the great saṅgha. Better to use my spiritual powers to transform myself into a wheel-turning sage king, surrounded by a thousand sons, and be the first to see the Buddha.” Her wish was fulfilled. As soon as the World-Honored One saw her, he rebuked her: “Bhikshunī Utpalavarṇā, how dare you precede the great saṅgha in seeing me? Although you see my physical body, you do

not see my dharmakāya. Subhūti, sitting peacefully in meditation in a rocky cave, sees my dharmakāya."

Once, when Mañjuśrī came to the place where the Buddhas had assembled, he found that each Buddha had returned to his own place. Only a woman remained, seated near that Buddha and absorbed in samādhi. Mañjuśrī then asked the Buddha, "Why is this person permitted to sit near the Buddha, while I am not?" The Buddha said to Mañjuśrī, "You need only awaken this woman from samādhi and ask her yourself."

Mañjuśrī circumambulated the woman three times, snapped his fingers once, and even transported her to Brahmā Heaven, but he exhausted his spiritual powers without being able to bring her out. The World-Honored One said, "Even if there were hundreds of thousands of millions of Mañjuśrīs, they could not bring this woman out of samādhi. Below, beyond forty-two sands-of-the-Ganges River worlds, there is Bodhisattva Wangming, who can bring this woman out of samādhi." Before long, the great being Wangming emerged from the earth and paid homage to the World-Honored One. The World-Honored One instructed Wangming to bring her out. Wangming went before the woman, snapped his fingers once, and the woman emerged from samādhi.

King Prasenajit asked the World-Honored One, "Within the ultimate truth, is there conventional truth? If one says there is not, wisdom should not be twofold. If one says there is, wisdom should not be one. What is the meaning of one and two?" The Buddha said, "Great King, you asked this question in the teaching of the past Buddha Dragon-Light. I now do not speak, and you now do not hear. No speaking and no hearing—this is called the meaning of one and two."

One day, the World-Honored One saw Mañjuśrī standing outside the gate and said, "Mañjuśrī! Mañjuśrī! Why do you not enter the gate?" Mañjuśrī said, "I do not see a single dharma outside the gate. How could you tell me to enter the gate?"

One day, while seated, the World-Honored One saw two people carrying a pig past. He asked, "What is this?" They said, "The Buddha possesses all knowledge, yet he does not even recognize a piglet!" The World-Honored One said, "One must still ask."

A non-Buddhist inquirer asked the World-Honored One, "Are all dharmas permanent?" The World-Honored One did not reply. He then asked, "Are all dharmas impermanent?" Again, the World-Honored One did not reply. The inquirer said, "The World-Honored One possesses all knowledge. Why do you not answer me?" The World-Honored One said, "Everything you ask is mere speculative discourse."

One day, the World-Honored One displayed a wish-fulfilling jewel that changed color and asked the heavenly kings of the five directions, "What color is this jewel?" The

heavenly kings each named a different color. The World-Honored One then hid the jewel in his sleeve, raised his hand, and asked, “What color is this jewel?” The heavenly kings said, “There is no jewel in the Buddha’s hand. Where could there be a color?” The World-Honored One sighed and said, “How deeply confused you are! When I showed you a worldly jewel, each of you insisted that it was blue, yellow, red, or white. When I showed you the true jewel, none of you knew it.” At that time, all the heavenly kings of the five directions attained awakening.

When the king of the gandharvas offered music to the World-Honored One, the mountains, rivers, great earth, and all things became the sound of a lute. Kāśyapa rose and danced. The king asked, “Is Kāśyapa not an arhat whose outflows have all been exhausted? Why does he still have residual habits?” The Buddha said, “In truth, he has no residual habits. Do not slander the Dharma.” The king again played the lute three times, and Kāśyapa likewise danced three times.

The king said, “Was Kāśyapa not dancing?” The Buddha said, “In truth, he never danced.” The king said, “How can the World-Honored One speak falsely?” The Buddha said, “I do not speak falsely. When you played the lute, the mountains, rivers, great earth, trees, and stones all became the sound of a lute. Was that not so?” The king said, “It was.” The Buddha said, “Kāśyapa was likewise so. Therefore, in truth, he never danced.” The king then accepted this in faith.

A non-Buddhist inquirer asked the World-Honored One, “What Dharma did you teach yesterday?” He replied, “A fixed Dharma.” The inquirer asked, “What Dharma do you teach today?” He replied, “An unfixed Dharma.” The inquirer said, “Yesterday you taught a fixed Dharma. Why do you teach an unfixed Dharma today?” The World-Honored One said, “Yesterday was fixed; today is unfixed.”

A sage with the five supernormal powers asked the World-Honored One, “World-Honored One, you possess the six supernormal powers, while I possess five. What is that one additional power?” The Buddha called to the sage with the five supernormal powers, and he answered. The Buddha said, “That is the one power you ask me about!”

Bodhisattva Universal Eye wished to see Samantabhadra but could not. He entered samādhi three times and searched throughout the three-thousandfold great thousand world-system, yet could not find Samantabhadra. He came and reported this to the Buddha. The Buddha said, “You need only give rise to a single thought within tranquil samādhi, and you will see Samantabhadra.” As soon as Universal Eye gave rise to a single thought, he saw Samantabhadra riding through the sky on a six-tusked white elephant.

On the day of the self-confession ceremony, Mañjuśrī spent the rains retreat in three places. Kāśyapa wished to strike the gavel and expel him. But as soon as he

raised the gavel, he saw hundreds of thousands of millions of Mañjuśrīs. Kāśyapa exhausted his spiritual powers but could not lift the gavel. The World-Honored One then asked Kāśyapa, “Which Mañjuśrī do you intend to expel?” Kāśyapa had no reply.

The brahmin Long-Claws sought a debate on doctrine and made an agreement: “If my position is defeated, I will cut off my own head.” The World-Honored One asked, “What is the central tenet of your position?” The brahmin said, “I take nonacceptance of everything as my tenet.” The World-Honored One said, “Do you accept this view?” The brahmin shook his sleeves and left. Halfway down the road, he came to realization and said to his disciples, “I should return and cut off my head to repay the World-Honored One.”

His disciples said, “Before the multitudes of humans and devas, you were fortunate enough to gain victory. Why cut off your head?” The brahmin said, “I would rather cut off my head before a wise person than gain victory before those without wisdom.” He then sighed: “My position is defeated in two ways. If I accept this view, my defeat is obvious; if I do not accept this view, my defeat is subtle.”

“Among all humans, devas, and followers of the two vehicles, none knows where my position is defeated. Only the World-Honored One and the great bodhisattvas know where my position is defeated.” He returned before the World-Honored One and said, “My position is defeated in two ways; therefore I should cut off my head to repay you.” The World-Honored One said, “There is no such thing in my Dharma. You should turn your mind toward the Way.” Thereupon, he and his five hundred followers all took refuge in the Buddha and left home at once, attaining arhatship.

The World-Honored One once wished to lead the assembly of saints to the sixth heaven to teach the Mahāsaṃnipāta Sūtra. He commanded all fierce ghosts and spirits from other lands and this land, from the human realm and the heavens, to gather and receive the Buddha’s charge to protect the True Dharma. If any failed to come, the kings of the four heavenly gates would fly after them with blazing iron wheels and compel them to assemble. Once they had gathered, none disobeyed the Buddha’s command. Each made a great vow to protect the True Dharma. Only one demon king said to the World-Honored One, “Gautama, when all sentient beings have become Buddhas, when the realm of sentient beings is empty and not even the name ‘sentient being’ remains, then I will arouse bodhicitta.”

Once, while walking with Ānanda, the World-Honored One saw an ancient stūpa. The World-Honored One immediately paid homage to it. Ānanda asked, “Whose stūpa is this?” The World-Honored One said, “It is the stūpa of the Buddhas of the past.” Ānanda asked, “Whose disciples were the Buddhas of the past?” The World-Honored One said, “They were my disciples.” Ānanda said, “It should be so.”

A non-Buddhist inquirer asked the World-Honored One, “I do not ask about speech, nor do I ask about silence.” The World-Honored One remained silent for a long while. The inquirer praised him, saying, “The World-Honored One is greatly compassionate and greatly merciful. You have dispelled the clouds of my delusion and enabled me to enter.” He then paid homage and departed. Ānanda asked the Buddha, “What principle did this non-Buddhist attain, that he praised you and departed?” The World-Honored One said, “Like a fine horse in the world, it moves at the sight of a whip’s shadow.”

One day, the World-Honored One instructed Ānanda, “Mealtime is approaching. You should enter the city with your bowl.” Ānanda assented. The World-Honored One said, “Since you are carrying the bowl, you must follow the ritual of the seven past Buddhas.” Ānanda then asked, “What is the ritual of the seven past Buddhas?” The World-Honored One called Ānanda, and Ānanda answered. The World-Honored One said, “Go carry the bowl!”

A bhikshu asked the World-Honored One, “Within the World-Honored One’s Dharma, I have understanding, but I have not yet attained realization. What should the World-Honored One show me?” The World-Honored One said, “Bhikshu so-and-so, what should be shown? Is that not your question?”

After attaining the Way, the World-Honored One sat cross-legged beneath a tree in Jeta Grove. Two merchants, traveling with five hundred carts, passed by the edge of the grove, but the oxen of two carts refused to move forward. The merchants were puzzled and saw a mountain deity, who told them, “A sage has attained the Way in the grove. More than forty-nine days have passed without his eating. You should make an offering.” The merchants entered the grove and indeed saw a person sitting upright and unmoving. They asked, “Are you Brahmā? Śakra? A mountain deity? A river deity?” The World-Honored One smiled slightly and lifted the corner of his robe to show them. The merchants bowed at his feet and presented offerings.

Because Jīvaka was skilled at distinguishing sounds, the World-Honored One went with him to a burial mound and saw five skulls. He tapped one skull and asked Jīvaka, “Where was this being reborn?” Jīvaka replied, “This being was reborn in the human realm.” The World-Honored One tapped another and asked, “Where was this being reborn?” Jīvaka replied, “This being was reborn in the heavenly realm.” The World-Honored One then tapped another skull and asked, “Where was this being reborn?” Jīvaka had no idea where it had been reborn.

The brahmin Black-Clan used his spiritual powers to carry two flowers, one a silk tree flower and the other a paulownia flower, in his left and right hands, and came to offer them to the Buddha. The Buddha called to the sage, and the brahmin answered. The Buddha said, “Put them down.” The brahmin then put down the

flower in his left hand. The Buddha again called to the sage and said, “Put them down.” The brahmin put down the flower in his right hand. The Buddha again called to the sage and said, “Put them down.”

The brahmin said, “World-Honored One, both my hands are now empty. What more are you telling me to put down?” The Buddha said, “I am not telling you to relinquish the flowers. You should relinquish the six external sense objects, the six internal sense faculties, and the six consciousnesses in between. Relinquish them all at once. When there is no place left for relinquishment, that is where you are freed from birth and death.” At these words, the brahmin awakened to the patience of the unborn.

At the assembly on Vulture Peak, five hundred bhikshus attained the four dhyānas and possessed the five spiritual powers, but had not attained the Dharma-patience. Through the spiritual power of knowing past lives, each saw that in former lives he had killed his father, harmed his mother, and committed other grave offenses. Each harbored doubt within his own mind and could not realize the profound Dharma. Thereupon, Mañjuśrī, sustained by the Buddha’s spiritual power, grasped a sharp sword in his hand and held it threateningly toward the Tathāgata.

The World-Honored One then said to Mañjuśrī, “Stop! Stop! You should not commit such a transgression; do not harm me. I am bound to be harmed—harmed for doing good. Mañjuśrī! From the very beginning, there have been no self and persons; it is only because inwardly you see self and persons.”

“When this thought arises within, I am bound to be harmed; this is what is called harm.” Thereupon, five hundred bhikshus awakened to their own minds. Like a dream or an illusion, within dreams and illusions there are no self or persons, nor even begetters and begotten—parents and children. The five hundred bhikshus then praised together: “Mañjuśrī, great wise one, deeply penetrates the source of the Dharma. With his own hand he grasps a sharp sword and holds it threatening the body of the Tathāgata. The sword is thus, and so too is the Buddha: one mark, without duality. Formless and unborn—how could there be killing within this?”

At the causal stage, the World-Honored One spread out his hair to cover the mud and offered flowers to Dīpaṅkara Buddha. When Dīpaṅkara saw the place where the hair had been spread, he asked the assembly to step back and pointed to the ground, saying, “A Brahmā shrine should be built on this plot of land.” At that time, an elder named Xianyu inserted a marker at the place indicated and said, “The Brahmā shrine has been built.” Then the devas scattered flowers in praise, saying, “This young man possesses great wisdom!”

Once, when the World-Honored One was in the Śītavana charnel forest with seven virtuous women, one woman pointed to a corpse and said, “The corpse is here;

where has the person gone?" Another said, "What? What?" The sisters contemplated deeply, and each attained realization. Indra, moved by this, scattered flowers and said, "Holy sisters, whatever you may need, I shall provide for you throughout my life."

The woman said, "My household has all four necessities and the seven treasures in abundance. I require only three things: first, a rootless tree; second, a piece of land without yin and yang; third, a valley that does not echo when called." Indra said, "I have everything that may be needed, but I truly do not have these three things." The woman said, "If you do not have these, how can you save others?" Indra was at a loss and went with them to consult the Buddha. The Buddha said, "Kauśika, even my disciples who are great arhats do not understand this meaning. Only the great bodhisattvas understand it."

Because Devadatta slandered the Buddha, he entered hell alive. The World-Honored One then had Ānanda ask him, "Are you at ease in hell?" He replied, "Although I am in hell, it is as joyful as the heaven of the third dhyāna." The Buddha again had him asked, "Do you still seek to leave?" He replied, "I shall leave when the World-Honored One comes." Ānanda said, "The Buddha is the teacher of the three realms; how could he be destined to enter hell?" Devadatta replied, "If the Buddha has no destiny to enter hell, how could I have a destiny to leave hell?"

Once, when Mañjuśrī suddenly gave rise to views of Buddha and Dharma, the World-Honored One used his spiritual power to confine him between the two Iron Encircling Mountains.

East of the city there was an old woman who had been born at the same time as the Buddha, yet did not wish to see him. Whenever she saw the Buddha approaching, she would avoid him. Yet wherever she looked—to east or west—there was only the Buddha. She then covered her face with her hands, but within the spaces between all ten fingers there was still only the Buddha.

Once, Aṅgulimāla went with his alms bowl to the home of an elder. The wife of the household was suffering a difficult childbirth, and mother and child had not yet been delivered. The elder said, "You are a disciple of Gautama and a most holy one. Is there any method by which this danger may be averted?" Aṅgulimāla told the elder, "I have only recently entered the Way and do not know this method. Let me return and ask the World-Honored One, and then I shall come back and inform you." When he returned, he reported the whole matter to the Buddha. The Buddha told Aṅgulimāla, "Go quickly and tell her: 'Since I entered the Dharma of the sages, I have never killed a living being.'" Aṅgulimāla respectfully followed the Buddha's instruction and hurried to tell her. When the woman heard this, she was immediately safely delivered.

Once, while the World-Honored One was seated beneath a banyan tree, two merchants asked him, “World-Honored One, did you see a cart pass by?” He replied, “I did not see it.” They asked, “Did you hear it?” He replied, “I did not hear it.” They asked, “Were you in samādhi?” He replied, “I was not in samādhi.” They asked, “Were you asleep?” He replied, “I was not asleep.” The merchants exclaimed, “Excellent! Excellent! The World-Honored One is awake and yet does not see.” They then offered two lengths of white cotton cloth.

At the assembly on Spirit Mountain, the World-Honored One held up a flower before the gathering. At that time, all remained silent; only the Venerable Kāśyapa broke into a smile. The World-Honored One said, “I possess the Treasury of the True Dharma Eye, the wondrous mind of nirvāṇa, the true mark that is markless, and the subtle Dharma gate: not established in words and letters, a special transmission outside the teachings. I entrust it to Mahākāśyapa.” Later, before the Many-Children Stūpa, the World-Honored One instructed Mahākāśyapa to divide his seat and sit with him. He wrapped him in his saṅghāṭi robe and said, “I secretly entrust the Treasury of the True Dharma Eye to you. You must preserve and uphold it, and transmit it to future generations.”

As the World-Honored One was about to enter nirvāṇa, the great Mañjuśrī asked the Buddha to turn the Dharma wheel once more. The World-Honored One exclaimed, “Mañjuśrī! During the forty-nine years that I have dwelt in the world, I have not spoken a single word. You ask me to turn the Dharma wheel again—have I ever turned the Dharma wheel?”

At the assembly on nirvāṇa, the World-Honored One stroked his chest with his hand and told the assembly, “You should carefully contemplate my purple-golden body and gaze upon it to your heart’s content, lest you later regret it. If you say that I enter extinction, you are not my disciples. If you say that I do not enter extinction, you are likewise not my disciples.” At that time, hundreds of billions of beings all attained realization.