

Dharmapada Sutra

Chapter on Auspicious Signs

Sutra 211 exercise 4 DTTT

During his stay at Rajagriha on Vulture Peak, the Buddha taught gods, people, dragons, and yakshas the Three Dharma Vehicles. At that time dwelling on the bank of the Ganges River on the south side of Vulture Peak, there was a Brahman who knew a lot and had a vast understanding, there were no obstacles to the depth of his knowledge. The Brahman educated his 500 disciples by teaching them thoroughly about astronomy, feng shui, human affairs, good and bad omens, good and bad retributions, a plentiful harvests and barren harvest, there was nothing he didn't study deeply.

One day the disciples of the Brahman came near the place where the Buddha attained Enlightenment, as they sat on the bank of the river, discussing points about auspicious signs, they wondered what people in the other countries of the world considered to be auspicious signs. Not arriving at any answer, they went to look for their teacher to ask. After prostrating, they joined their palms to ask: "we have studied a long time, we have learned lot, but still do not know what people in other countries consider as the greatest auspicious sign?" The Brahman said: "You asked a very excellent question! In this land Jambudvipa, (India) there are 16 big countries and 8400 small countries. The people of each country have different concepts concerning auspicious signs; there are people who consider the appearance of gold, silver, crystals, lapis lazuli as auspicious signs, there are also people who consider the appearance of a full moon, magical gems, elephants, horses, beautiful women, coral reefs, precious stones, the phoenix, and the peacock as auspicious signs. There are also people who consider the appearance of stars, precious vase, the four kinds of great beings, or monks as auspicious signs. The view of each group of people is different." The disciples asked: "Then what is the determining factor to know for sure if we will have happiness in this life and in the life to come in heaven, when we die?" The Brahman said: "the ancestors haven't taught about that yet and there hasn't been anything written down about it yet." The disciples said: "Recently, we heard there is a person with the name Sakya who ordained to search for the way. After sitting in meditation for six years, he conquered Mara, and became Awakened, attaining the Three Knowledge, shall we go there to learn more? What do you think, Teacher?"

The Teacher and students numbering more than five hundred crossed mountains and forests to arrive at the place where the Buddha stayed. After prostrating, the monks joined their palms and politely asked: "Respected Tathagatha, each country in the world has a different view about auspicious signs. According to the Tathagatha what is the truest auspicious sign?" The Buddha said: "There is the worldly view, whereby any time a person sees something he likes, he regards it as an auspicious sign, and whatever he doesn't like is a bad sign. Whatever people may call 'auspicious signs', isn't enough to save one's spirit, and overcome suffering. The true auspicious sign, according to me, is whatever has the capacity to bring true happiness in this life and also has the capacity to help liberate people from the three worlds and attain nirvana." Then the Tathagatha taught the following gatha:

1. The Buddha is the most revered in the realm of gods and humans.
The Buddha has the capacity to expound the wonderful teaching of the Tathagatha.
One day a Brahman came to ask a question:
What is the greatest auspicious sign?
2. With love, the Buddha taught
Whatever is essential and true
The Lord taught: to have faith and to be happy when studying the Dharma

That is the greatest auspicious sign.

3. Not to run after gods and humans
Begging for merit and protection from accidents
Also not to have the need to go pray in sanctuaries:
That is the greatest auspicious sign.
4. To choose a good environment and to have wise friends,
To be able to create merits
To keep a pure and honest heart:
That is the greatest auspicious sign.
5. To abandon evil ways to follow the good,
To abstain from alcohol and to eat moderately,
Not to drown in sensual pleasures:
That is the greatest auspicious sign.
6. To be a wealth of knowledge and to continuously practice the mindfulness trainings,
To diligently train ourselves to follow accordingly to the Dharma and the Vinaya,
To know how to nourish body and mind, and not get caught up in other people's disputes:
That is the greatest auspicious sign.
7. To be a person with filial piety, to have the opportunity to take care of your parents,
To know how to take care of your family, to maintain a harmonious household,
Not to let your family fall poor or into hunger:
That is the greatest auspicious sign.
8. Not to be arrogant, not to think of ourselves as superior,
To be content, to know how to reason,
To have time to read and recite sutras:
That is the greatest auspicious sign.
9. To listen with a peaceful and accepting heart when you hear things that you don't agree with
To be happy every time you meet a monastic practitioner
Every time you hear the Dharma, wholeheartedly to receive it and put it into practice:
That is the greatest auspicious sign.
10. To eat vegetarian, to keep chastity,
To be happy when you meet up with a sage,
To take refuge in people with insight:
That is the greatest auspicious sign.
11. To have faith, to live a spiritual life,
To have an upright mind, to be free from doubt,
To be determined to keep far away from the three lower realms:
That is the greatest auspicious sign.
12. To be mindfully generous without discrimination,
To serve enlightened people,
To respect those worth respecting in the two worlds of humans and gods:
That is the greatest auspicious sign.

13. To be far from sexual misconduct,
Anger and ignorance,
To always practice in order to attain right view,
That is the greatest auspicious sign.
14. To know how to let go of unwholesome careers,
To have the capacity to apply the dharma in our daily life,
To pursue the ideal worth pursuing:
That is the greatest auspicious sign.
15. To serve all living beings,
To cultivate a mind with great loving-kindness,
To nourish love in order to bring peace to the world:
That is the greatest auspicious sign.
16. To be a wise one in this life,
Always putting into practice auspicious signs,
To be a person with great understanding:
That is the greatest auspicious sign.