

# *A Discourse on the Great Drum Sutra*

## *Preface*

The true cultivational method and attainment of the Buddha Dharma have been overwhelmed for an extended time due to chaos, allowing non-Buddhist teachings to become rampant. For this reason, even though there are still 9,000 years left for the True Dharma in the Dharma-ending period before it becomes extinct, it is unexpectedly lost. Thirty years ago, Pingshi started to propagate the Dharma and set the benchmark that the target of true realization in Buddhism is the realization of the eighth consciousness (S: *vijñāna*), *tathāgatagarbha*. After the True Enlightenment Practitioners Association (C: Zhengjue) proposed this advocacy, it drew the attention of Buddhist communities in Taiwan and China, causing the association to be labeled non-Buddhist and accused of being a heretical group. However, after the tireless efforts of book publications to publicly expound sutras, circulate commentaries on *Gong'an* cases of Chan School, and explain the principle of the eighth consciousness taught by the Buddha in the *Āgama* sutras, Buddhist communities finally confirm the teachings of the association as correct. However, it has been nearly 30 years since Zhengjue preached this Dharma, and this achievement, to a certain extent, shows that Buddhist communities are reluctant to recognize the True Dharma principle. These facts conform to what the Buddha had said: The great Dharma of the eighth consciousness is difficult for sentient beings to believe and accept, for it is a wonderful and inconceivable dharma that is hard to bear. For these reasons, practitioners who have realized the eighth consciousness and accept that it is inherently non-arising have attained acquiescence to non-arising in the Great Vehicle<sup>1</sup>.

In the *Great Drum Sutra*, the mundane and supramundane dharmas are established based on two categories: dharma and non-dharma. The supramundane great Dharma of the eighth consciousness, *tathāgatagarbha*, subsumes the non-dharma of the various mundane dharmas and ultimately encompasses all sentient beings and phenomena in the supramundane and mundane worlds. However, this great Dharma is also known as “this sutra,<sup>2</sup>” referring to the eighth consciousness, *tathāgatagarbha*. Why is [this] so? This is because all worldly phenomena and sentient beings arise, abide, change, and cease from this great Dharma, bringing endless cyclic birth and death in the three realms. Thus, without “this sutra,” there will be no

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<sup>1</sup> 大乘無生忍

<sup>2</sup> 「此經」

existence in the ten directions and the three lifetimes (of the past, present, and future). The presence and established teachings of the Three-Vehicle Bodhi are also attributed to the eighth consciousness.

All the sutras taught by the World-Honored One in His generation are based on the great Dharma, *tathāgatagarbha*. The Buddha taught His disciples to realize it. Thus, there are illustrations and teachings of the Tripiṭaka and the twelve divisions of scriptures, all of which are based on this great Dharma. There are many illustrations from different aspects and levels that enable various bodhisattva disciples to enter the Path early and even attain Buddhahood. For the aforementioned reasons, each of the sutras that directly demonstrate the great Dharma, regardless of its name, is also called “this sutra,” which is the great Dharma, the eighth consciousness, *tathāgatagarbha*.

Those who can understand the aforementioned principle correctly and practice the six *pāramitās* extensively, attain the complete Sixth Abiding stage<sup>3</sup> through actual sequential practice, and then continue to cultivate the four intensified efforts<sup>4</sup> to seek the realization of the eighth consciousness, *tathāgatagarbha*, can directly witness<sup>5</sup> the intrinsic dharma nature of reality-suchness pertaining to this consciousness when they realize it. They can then be called sages or worthies who have attained reality-suchness. Afterwards, practitioners continue to cultivate the unposited three kinds of mind<sup>6</sup> regarding the ultimate truth in the three stages of worthiness and subsequently cultivate the posited sixteen minds and nine minds<sup>7</sup> regarding the Four Noble Truths just before entering the First Ground, provided that they make the ten great inexhaustible vows<sup>8</sup>. After repetitively making these vows for a long time and thus being able to uphold them with a pure mind forever, practitioners are said to have the pure superior intent<sup>9</sup>, and they can then enter the First Ground. Subsequently, they will advance to cultivate the ten *pāramitās* and gradually complete the Tenth Ground stage. They carry on further in cultivating excellent characteristics over one hundred eons<sup>10</sup> to accumulate a tremendous number of virtues and become sublime enlightenment bodhisattvas upon their completion of such an accumulation process.

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<sup>3</sup> 第六住位滿心

<sup>4</sup> 四加行

<sup>5</sup> 現觀

<sup>6</sup> 非安立諦三品心

<sup>7</sup> 安立諦十六品心、九品心

<sup>8</sup> 發十無盡願

<sup>9</sup> 增上意樂清淨

<sup>10</sup> 百劫修相好

At this time, the sublime enlightenment bodhisattva<sup>11</sup> awaits a Buddha to make predictions on his Buddhahood attainment, and become an *eka-jāti-pratibaddha*<sup>12</sup> who will wait for the due time to descend to the earth, be born as a human being, and attain Buddhahood to benefit many sentient beings.

The foregoing outlines the Path to Buddhahood, which can be achieved only by realizing the eighth consciousness, *tathāgatagarbha*, which is the origin of all dharmas in the universe. Why is this so? This is because the eighth consciousness is the origin of all sentient beings, and it denotes the “original face” before birth. All realms of existence and sentient beings arise and cease from it, transmigrating as such continuously. Therefore, those who realize the eighth consciousness can witness its dharmic nature of reality-suchness and successfully align themselves with it. They can thus be called worthies or sages.

On the other hand, without following through the sequential practice of the *pāramitās* (i.e., starting with the elimination of greed through charitable giving, followed by practicing the observance of pure precepts and even the four intensified efforts of the later stage), practitioners will fail to align themselves with the True Mind<sup>13</sup>, even if they encounter a wholesome mentor by chance and attain realization under his/her guidance. Consequently, they will be subject to regression and will thus be susceptible to defaming the Dharma and sages. They will then be destined to fall into the three lower paths after death, without redemption. All practitioners should be informed of this and keep it in mind.

Given that the realization of the eighth consciousness, *tathāgatagarbha*, is both difficult and hard to accept, even for those who have already realized it after attaining enlightenment, it is imperative for us to protect and support the continuation of this great Dharma to save sentient beings. Additionally, as the Dharma-ending period becomes closer, it is even harder for ordinary people to believe, accept, and abide by this great Dharma. For these reasons, a *bodhisattva-mahāsattva* must protect and strengthen this great Dharma in the final eighty years of the Dharma-ending era to help enlightened practitioners develop a firm certitude and become immune to any possibility of regression (to the previous stage). In the Great Drum Sutra, the Buddha thus predicted that bodhisattva Sarvaloka-Priyadarśana Licchavi<sup>14</sup> would uphold and teach the tenets of “this sutra,” the wondrous dharma of the eighth consciousness,

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<sup>11</sup> 妙覺菩薩

<sup>12</sup> 一生補處菩薩

<sup>13</sup> 無法轉依成功

<sup>14</sup> 「一切世間樂見離車童子」

*tathāgatagarbha*, in the last eighty years of this Dharma-ending era to conclude the major theme of the Great Drum Sutra.

The lecture series on the Great Drum Sutra has been completed and has been undergoing compilation for publication in sequential volumes since the beginning of 2023. Hence, Pingshi made a guidance for this sutra the preface, ahead of the publication.

Buddha's Son, Pingshi,  
Early summer of 2021  
In the Pine Mountain Lodge

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