

SHURANGAMA MANTRA

Verses and Commentary by Tripitaka Master Hua

verses translated by Bhikshuni Heng Tao

commentary trans. by members of BTTS

reviewed and edited by Bhikshuni Heng Ch'ih

Explanation of this Month's Cover Verse

MANTRA:

NA MWO SWO JYE LI TWO CHYE MI NAN

VERSE:

*Although called the once-returner, actually there is no returning.
With thought delusions terminated, one sits upon a lotus platform.
In empty space, constantly manifesting the eighteen transformations.
In this realm and other directions, there are a million changes.*

COMMENTARY:

SWO JYE means "again." CHYE MI means "come." This refers to a "Once-returner," the Sage of the second fruition (Sakridagamin). A second-stage Arhat is born once more among gods and once more among people. *Although called the once returner, actually there is no returning.* In actual fact, there isn't any coming or not coming. *With thought delusions terminated, one hits upon a lotus platform.* The Sage of the first fruition has cut off the eighty-eight sections of views. The Sage of the second fruition has cut off some of the eighty-one thought delusions. The first fruition is the position of WAY OF SEEING. At the first, second, and third positions there is still something left to study. Having attained the fourth fruition of Arhatship, birth and death are truly ended. One is certified as having attained patience with the non-production of dharmas. At this stage, one doesn't see the least dharma produced, or the least dharma destroyed. What is meant by view delusion? This means to give rise to greed in response to a state or circumstance--to become confused about situations. Whatever state comes along, one doesn't recognize it and so is confused by it. One sees something, is greedy for it, or give rise to love for it. For example, if one sees money, one thinks, "Oh, I'll get a hold of that money." This is the thought of greed. Or, one sees a handsome man or a good looking woman, and gives rise to the thought of lust or love. Before they saw the thing that confronts them, there was no problem. But once they see it, they lose control and become confused. View delusion happens on the phenomenal level.

What is thought delusion?

Thought delusion is on the noumenal level, that is, one gives rise to discriminations about principle. This means you can't determine clearly the principles that govern the specifics. You don't know right from wrong. Being confused about the theory, you give rise to all kinds of false thoughts and discriminations. This is what the delusion of thought is. The more one makes discriminations about it, the more one fails to understand it. The more one misunderstands it, the more one makes discriminations about it. This is piling confusion on top of confusion, stupidity on top of stupidity. When the delusions of thought are completely cut off, then one is seated "upon a lotus platform," and is really at ease and comfortable.

In empty space, constantly manifesting the eighteen transformation./ The sage who attains the second fruition is able to go up into empty space at any time and manifest eighteen kinds of transformations. He can travel about in empty space and from the top of his body emit water, and from the bottom of his body emit fire, or from the bottom of his body emit water and from the top of his body emit fire. He can do a somersault in empty space, turn over in empty space, or go to sleep in empty space--just whatever he wants to do.

In this realm and other directions, there are a million changes/. While sitting in a certain place in this world, he can go to any other place. You see him in this world explaining the Sutras and speaking the Dharma, but simultaneously he is also in other worlds explaining the Sutras and speaking the Dharma. In this world he is teaching and transforming living beings, and in other worlds he is also teaching and transforming living beings; he manifests bodies in many worlds to speak the Dharma for living beings. The second fruition of Arhatship is the position of the WAY OF CULTIVATION. The third fruition is also the position of the WAY OF CULTIVATION, and the fourth fruition is the position of the WAY OF CERTIFICATION.

-continued next issue