

The Cover Verse

The Shurangama Mantra: An Explanation

Verses and Prose Commentary by Tripitaka Master Hua

Continued from issue #173

Mantra: Line 36 NA YE

VERSE:

*Without shape, without appearance is Shunyata.
One looks but does not see it, nor can it be heard.
Creation, dwelling, decay, emptiness--each takes twenty kalpas.
But through it all in Vajra Samadhi, it has not moved an inch.*

COMMENTARY:

NA literally means "to grab." NA YE can be translated as "emptiness" or "oblivion." Emptiness here refers to the spirit of emptiness. Some of the heavenly spirits don't have anything to do so they look for something to do. Basically emptiness is nothing at all, so why watch over it? These spirits are just like people who set themselves up as an "Energy Commissioner" or an "Air Control Officer." This is all a case of not having anything to do and finding something to do. Emptiness is just empty, after all, so why have a spirit watch over it? What is a spirit of emptiness like anyway? It doesn't have a likeness--it's empty.

Without shape, without appearance is Shunyata. "Shunyata" means emptiness. If you look at emptiness, you can't see it. If you can see it, is it emptiness? If you listen to it, you can't hear anything. *One looks but does not see it, not can it be heard.*

Creation, dwelling, decay, emptiness--each takes twenty kalpas. Each great kalpa is made up of four medium-sized kalpas. There is creation for twenty medium-sized kalpas, dwelling for twenty medium-sized kalpas, decay for twenty medium-sized kalpas, and emptiness for twenty medium-sized kalpas. Altogether this makes one great kalpa--a very long period of time.

But through it all in Vajra Samadhi, it has not moved an inch. Those who enter the great Vajra Samadhi are not moved throughout the whole time of the creation, dwelling, decay, and emptiness of worlds. They do not move a muscle. They are not even afraid of earthquakes! So, too, is it with the spirit of emptiness. If you certify to the principle of emptiness, then you won't have attachments or obstructions. Then it becomes emptiness without there being any emptiness. There isn't even emptiness. Emptiness is destroyed and attachments to emptiness are also put aside. Emptiness is obliterated. NA YE is the spirit of emptiness. If you try to grab it, however, you can't get at it. If you are certified as having attained the principle of emptiness, then there are no afflictions, there are no people, and there are no Buddhas.

The great—thousand worlds, in number like grains of sand, Are but a
bubble on the sea.
The union of the Creative (chyan) and the Receptive (kun)
Is but a lightning flash across the sky.

That's the way it is if you become certified as having attained the Samadhi of Emptiness.

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