

## The Cover Verse

# *The Shurangama Mantra: An Explanation*

*Verses and Prose Commentary by Tripitaka Master Hua*

MANTRA: Line 54 NA MWO CHYE SHE JYU LA YE

*Verse:*

*Working for the Dhama, getting things done, in the Karma Division,  
The members of Earth Treasury clean are many.  
Karmic retribution, for good or evil, is never off by a hair,  
For iron-faced and unselfish is the Old King Yama.*

*Commentary:*

This is the Karma Division, which takes Amoghasiddhi Buddha, the Buddha of Accomplishment, as host. CHYE SHE means "karma." It means "doing Dharma", or "getting things done." And so the verse says, *Working for the Dhama, getting things done, in the Karma Division, /The members of Earth Treasury's clan are many/*. In the Northern Division, Earth Treasury's Bodhisattva leads a great number of ghosts and spirits in his retinue. *Karmic retribution, for good or evil, is never off by a hair/* If you do good, your retribution will be good; if you do evil, your retribution will be evil. It is never off by a hair. Plant a good cause, and you will reap a good fruit; plant an evil cause, and you reap an evil fruit. *For iron-faced and unselfish is the Old King Yama/*. King Yama is "Old Stone Face." He is not the least bit sentimental. Things are very cut and dried for him. Right is right, and wrong is wrong, and that's all there is to it. There are no exceptions. His face is as black as cast iron--real tough! If you tried to cheat him, you wouldn't succeed because it can't be done. Therefore all of you should be sure to do good deeds and refrain from evil. If you do evil, King Yama won't pardon you. If you do good, he will respect you. If you constantly recite the Great Compassion Mantra, King Yama won't be able to get you.

There was once a person who recited the Great Compassion Mantra, but he also committed many offenses. King Yama asked him why he had committed so many offenses, and the person said, "I didn't! I've just done good things."

"And what are they?" Asked King Yama.

"I recited the Great Compassion Mantra," the person said.

"Hah! You're lying. You're going to the Mountain of Knives to sweat it out there," and sent him off.

The man started reciting the Great Compassion Mantra, however, and the Mountain of Knives turned into a lotus flower as he went off to rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. Thus, if in one thought you can turn the light around, look within yourself, and change your faults, then all your past offense karma can be eradicated. But you must really, truly reform and be a new person. If you really change, then offenses so great that they fill up the skies can be wiped out in an instant. The lotus will manifest as a sign that your offenses are gone.

This is the Karma Division, in the north, where the Buddha Amoghasiddhi is the host. The center is hosted by Vairocana Buddha and is called the Buddha Division. The Vajra Division is in the East, where Akshobhya Buddha rules. Amitabha Buddha, in the west, rules the Lotus Division.

And, in the south, the Jeweled Birth Division is hosted by Jeweled Birth Buddha. The hosts of these five divisions lead the Bodhisattva, Vajra, and Lotus retinues in watching over all the demons in the world. The world is for the most part peaceful right now. But if the Five Divisions weren't taking care of things, the heavenly demons and externalists would be creating all sorts of havoc.

*translated, reviewed, and edited by members of  
the Buddhist Text Translation Society*