

## The Many Levels of Learning Provided by the Shurangama Sutra

A talk by Bhikshuni Heng Chih in Australia, October 2008  
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# 楞嚴經

## 的多層次學習



On a day in 1968, the Master ascends the high seat and begins: Da Fo Ding Ru Lai Mi Yin Xiu Zheng Liao Yi Zhu Pu Sa Wan Heng Shou Leng Yan Jing and with that, the Shurangama Sutra becomes a focal point. All else fades in importance.

I, who know nothing of Chinese or Buddhism, am captivated. I hear the Master's slow recital of the text passage and listen to his animated explanation of its meaning. The dynamics of the Master's delivery in Chinese communicate serious intent, gentle compassion, unexpected humor, and keen awareness of his audience. Those qualities transcend the language barrier.

But it is not until the English translation commences that I gain intellectual comprehension, as the sounds I've just heard take on meaning and resonate with underlying wisdom. I carefully record in my notebook: A Scripture Explaining the Great Shurangama Above the Buddha's Head, the Full Meaning of the Tathagata's Cultivation and Attainment of the Hidden Cause, and the Bodhisattvas' Myriad Practices.

That's how the Master began to teach us Westerners Buddhism. He took the bull by the horns and chose to initiate us with a profound Mahayana sutra. His lecture approach was positive, powerful, and relentless. His broad assumptions were that we were quite capable of learning the Chinese language—both the classical Buddhist texts and his modern spoken

一九六八年的一天，宣公上人陞座，開講《大佛頂如來密因修證了義諸菩薩萬行首楞嚴經》。從那時起，《楞嚴經》成為眾人學習的焦點，其他的都退居其次了。

而我，一個對中文和佛法一無所知的人，也從此被深深地吸引了。我聆聽著上人緩緩地念誦一段經文，然後生動地解釋其義理。師父巧妙而鄭重其事的中文講說，傳達出了他柔和的慈悲，再加上出其不意的幽默，以及對聽眾敏銳的覺知，這些特質超越了語言的障礙。

然而，直到開始英文翻譯，再聽著師父的音聲，我才真正領悟到含義，而與潛在的智慧發生共鳴，因而得以窺其義理。我小心翼翼地筆記本上寫：大佛頂，如來密因，修證了義，諸菩薩萬行，首楞嚴。

就這樣，上人開始教導我們西方人佛法。他不畏艱難，而選擇了一部深奧的大乘經典來作為我們的啟蒙。他的講解積極有力，而且毫不馬虎放鬆。他大膽地假設我們具有相當的能力來學習中文——文言文的佛經，以及他的白話文淺釋——並且全然能夠領悟釋迦牟尼佛在這部獨特的經中所宣示的奧理，也能躬行實踐。例如：在這期間，有些人開始吃素、吃一餐，我也是其中一位。這對從小習慣

commentary—and that we were perfectly able to understand and put into practice the principles that Shakyamuni Buddha imparted in the passages of this unique sutra. For instance, during this time some of the participants immediately became vegetarians; some began eating one meal at midday. I was one who did both. It wasn't easy to suddenly change the patterns of eating that had been habitual to me as an American. The Venerable Master's example and encouragement and the *Shurangama Sutra's* clear principles provided the strength that helped us accept and embody practices that enabled us to develop purer and more disciplined lifestyles.

Not only did the Master expect these things of us, we came to expect them of ourselves. By the time we heard:

**Ru ren yi biao. biao wei zhong shi. dong kan zai xi. nan guan cheng bei. Biao ti ji hun. xin ying za luan.**

Those like me who had no knowledge of Chinese to begin with were able to recognize the simple characters like 人(person) and 中(middle), which spurred us on to heckle the scholar-disciples who guided the daily hour of review with more and more questions about how the English translation matched the Chinese text—word for word if possible; about how to use a Chinese-English dictionary; about which characters were special Buddhist terms; and, of course, about what the entire phrase meant.

In this case, the meaning of the passage was: "Suppose that someone were to place a marker to indicate the location of a middle. Seen from the east, it would be in the west; seen from the south, it would lie to the north. Such a marker is indefinite, and in the same way, it is unclear what it might mean for the mind to be located in a 'middle'."

From this passage and the Master's explanation, we not only learned a new character: biao 表, meaning 'marker' as a noun and 'indicate' as a verb, but found out that our mind, which we always assumed was in our body, could not be settled into such a convenient location, much as we might hope it could.

When the Master came to the passage:

**Fo yan: da wong, ru mian sui zhou, erci jian jing, xing wei seng zhou. Zhou je wei bian. Bu zhou fei bian. Bian je shou mieh. Bi bu bian je. Yuan wu sheng mieh. Yun he yu zhong. Shou ru sheng si.**

We, along with King Prasenajit, learned the important lesson that our inherent nature transcends birth and death. The English translation brought that meaning out well: "The Buddha said, 'Great king, your face is in wrinkles, but the essential nature of your seeing will not wrinkle. What wrinkles is subject to change. What does not wrinkle does not change. What changes will become extinct, but what does not change is fundamentally free of coming into being and ceasing to be. How can it be subject to your birth and death?'"

What is more, we could follow the characters of the text with our

美國食物的美國人來說，是相當不容易的；上人和《楞嚴經》的力量幫助我們成長。

不僅上人對我們有如此的期許，我們也開始這樣期許自己。當我們學到這段經文：「如人以表，表為中時，東看則西，南觀成北，表體既混，心應雜亂。」

那些像我一樣——沒有任何中文背景的初學者——已經能認得像「人」、「中」等簡單的字彙了，這激發我們提出越來越多的問題，苦苦地詢問帶領大家進行日常溫習的學者同參們，比如，英文翻譯是怎樣與中文對應的——如有可能的話，逐字對照解釋；如何使用漢英字典；哪些是佛學術語；當然也問到了一整句話是甚麼意思。

這段經文的意思是：假設有人用一個標誌來表示「中」，在這個「中」的東邊看，「中」就變成西了；在這個「中」的南邊看，「中」就變成北了。這麼一來表體就含糊不定了，同樣的道理，說心在「中」，意思也是模糊不清的。

從這段經文以及上人的解釋，我們不僅學到一個新字「表」，這個字當名詞用時，是「記號」的意思；當動詞用時，是「標示」的意思。同時，我們也學到：「心」，一直以來被我們假定為居在身中，可不是像我們所堅信地被安放在這麼一個方便的處所。

當上人講到：「佛言：大王！汝面雖皺，而此見精，性未曾皺。皺者為變，不皺非變。變者受滅；彼不變者，元無生滅。云何於中，受汝生死？」

我們也跟波斯匿王一樣，學到了重要的一課——我們的自性是不生不滅的。英文的翻譯很清楚地傳達出這意思：佛說，大王！你的面貌雖然皺了，但是你的見精不會變皺。會皺的是變，不會皺的是不變。會變的就會滅；那個不會變的，本來是沒有生滅的。既然這樣，這個見精怎麼會也和你這個身體一樣而受生死呢？

另外，當上人念誦經文時，我們可以用指頭指著經文跟上節拍了，而且很高興我們又認識了更多簡單的漢字，比如：言、大王、生死。

對了，我記得有一天當上人讀到：「若見是物，則汝亦可見吾之見。若同見者，名為見吾；吾不見時，何不見吾不見之處？若見不見，自然非彼不見之相；若不見吾不見之地，自然非物，云何非汝？」

finger as the Master spoke them and were delighted to recognize more simple ones, like 言 (said) and 大王 (Great King) and 生死 (birth and death).

Oh, I remember the day the Master spoke the passage:

**Ruo jian shi wu. Je ru yi ke jian wu zhi jian. Ruo tong jian je. Ming wei jian wu; wu bu jian shi. He bu jian wu be jian zhi chu. Ruo jian bu jian. Zi ran fei be bu jian zhi xiang; ruo bu jian wu bu jian zhi di. Zi ran fei wu. Yun he fei ru.**

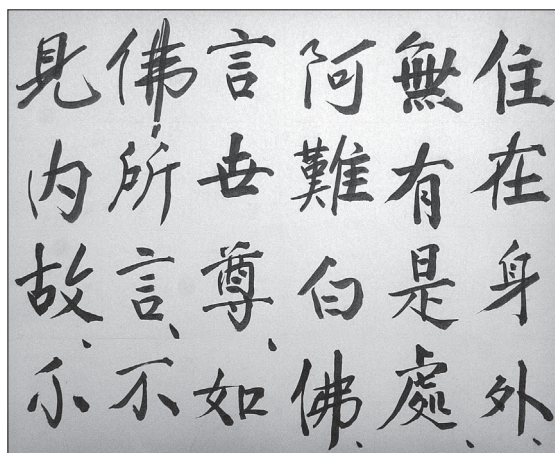
My fingers fairly flew down the vertical lines of characters as I recognized twelve 見 'to see' as a verb and 'seeing' as a noun; five 吾, a classical character meaning 'I, me, my, mine'; and two 汝, the classical form of 'you, yours.'

However, as to the meaning of that passage, the English translation didn't help much, except to inspire me to pursue the Chinese language with even greater diligence.

A more recent translation of this passage is:

"If visual awareness were a perceived object like other perceived objects, then wouldn't you be able to see my visual awareness as an object? You may argue that you do see my visual awareness at the moment when we are both looking at the same thing; but when I am no longer looking at that thing, why wouldn't you see my visual awareness then? And even if you could see my awareness when I am no longer looking at something, clearly you cannot be seeing my awareness at the

point where I am no longer looking. And since you cannot see my awareness at that point



← ↑楞嚴經墨寶·上人手書

A passage of the *Shurangama Sutra* written in calligraphy by the Ven. Master

我的指頭滑過一行行的字，並認出十二個「見」字，有當動詞用的「看見」和當名詞用的「見」；五個「吾」字，這是文言文，意思是「我」和「我的」；還有兩個「汝」字，也是文言文，意思是「你」或「你的」。

但是，即使透過英文的翻譯，我還是不瞭解這段經文的意思；不過，這反而激勵我要更勤奮地學習中文。這段經文較新的語譯如下：

如果見性是個物體，就像其他物一樣，那你是不是也可以看見我的這個見呢？假設你說當我們看同一個物時，你看見我的見性了；那麼我沒有看，你也應該看見「我沒有看」這個見，你怎麼看不見呢？即使你見得到我「不見」的地方，但這個談不到你見得到我「沒有看見」那個相！既然你看不見我不見那個地方、那種的相，這個「見」自然就不是個物了。所以，你怎麼可以說這個「見」不是你的呢？

我們每日專注地聽上人講經，然後在「路上、食上、枕上」溫習所學，就這樣，三個月的暑期楞嚴經講習飛逝而過。我們鑽研義理，熟悉術語，獲得新的洞察力，同時開始著手試著將所學付諸實踐，打坐參禪及探索；但最後，遠不止於此，我們還一字一字地逐漸熟諳了中文佛教用語。

當夏天接近尾聲，上人也快講完整部經時，我們真正意識到《楞嚴經》是多麼豐厚的法施，它清楚而明確地回答了這些問題：

我們是誰，我們怎麼來的，我們現在要做什麼，我們為什麼要修行，哪裏是我們真正的歸宿，還有這一切是什麼時候開始和何時結束。

where I am no longer looking, then clearly my visual awareness cannot be an object at all. Therefore, how could your own visual awareness not be what is fundamentally you?"

Thus it was that the three months of the Shurangama summer session passed swiftly as we focused on the Master's daily explications of the sutra, and then reviewed them, 'on the road, on the pot, and on the pillow'. We delved into the principles, became familiar with the terminology, gained new insights, began trying to put what we learned into practice, meditated and inquired, and last but by far not least, gradually, character by character, became familiar with Chinese Buddhist language.

By the time the summer drew to an end and the Master was nearly finished explaining the text, we truly realized what a great gift of Dharma the *Shurangama Sutra* is. It gives clear and decisive answers to the questions of who we are, how we got here, what we should do now, why we should practice, where we are going, and when all this began and will end. The final section of the sutra was spoken without request, because Shakyamuni Buddha knew that none of his audience would know to ask. It is an unprecedented manual for meditation, in which the Buddha describes in great detail various states that we may experience and advises us how to avoid the pitfalls of our ego as we progress in our practice.

In the general conclusion of that section, the Buddha says:

**Ananda, you wanted to know the depth and scope of the realms of the five skandhas. Form and emptiness are the boundaries of form. Contact and separation are the boundaries of feeling. Remembering and forgetting are the boundaries of thinking. Coming into being and ceasing to be are the boundaries of formations. Deep purity entering to unite with deep purity belongs to the boundaries of consciousness. At their source, these five skandhas arise in layers. Their arising is due to consciousness, while their cessation begins with the elimination of form. You may have a sudden awakening to principle, at which point they all simultaneously vanish. But in terms of the specifics, they are eliminated not all at once, but in sequence.**

Decades have passed since the Master explained the *Shurangama Sutra*. In this Chinese edition, the Master's commentary has been carefully transcribed and edited to give readers an accurate and precise record of how the Master chose to teach us this sutra's profound principles; how he communicated the importance of continually studying this sutra and practicing according to its guidance; and how he exhorted us to preserve and propagate this vitally important teaching of the Buddha.

Over the years, bearing in mind the Master's emphasis on the *Shurangama Sutra*, his disciples have memorized it, translated it, lectured it, practiced it, lived it, and shared it. Some may have suddenly awakened to principle; but all of us gradually cultivate the specifics.

By allowing our initiation into Buddhism to begin with the *Shurangama Sutra*, the Master gave us not only the gift of Dharma but also the gift of fearlessness. He believed in his disciples' ability and that, more than anything else, inspired us to go forward with courage and try our best.

《楞嚴經》的最後章節是釋迦牟尼佛不問自說的，因為佛陀知道當時的聽眾無人懂得如何啟問。這部分是無上的禪修指南，其中佛陀詳盡地描述了我們修行路上可能會遇到的不同境界，並指導我們如何避免落入自我的陷阱。在這部分經文的結尾，佛陀說：

「阿難！是五受陰，五妄想成。汝今欲知因界淺深，唯色與空，是色邊際；唯觸及離，是受邊際；唯記與忘，是想邊際；唯滅與生，是行邊際；湛入合湛，歸識邊際。此五陰元，重疊生起，生因識有，滅從色除。理則頓悟，乘悟併銷；事非頓除，因次第盡。」

從上人講解《楞嚴經》到現在已經數十年了。在這次的中文新版中，我們小心謹慎地謄寫和編輯上人的講解，希望能詳實地記錄上人所要教導的楞嚴奧義，使讀者了解上人所一再強調的：要不斷地學習《楞嚴經》，依《楞嚴經》修行；以及上人勉勵大家要用心護持《楞嚴經》，宣揚《楞嚴經》，因為它是佛陀極重要的教誨。

這些年來，弟子們謹記上人對《楞嚴經》的重視：背誦《楞嚴經》，翻譯《楞嚴經》，講解《楞嚴經》，行持《楞嚴經》，護持《楞嚴經》，宣揚流通《楞嚴經》；雖然不是每個人都能頓悟其理，但是，每個人都在逐漸熏修其詳義。

透過開講《楞嚴經》來讓我們步入佛教之門，上人不僅給了我們法施，也給了我們無畏施。他對弟子們能力的信心，比其他任何東西都更激勵我們盡自己最大的努力，勇往直前。