

上維摩詰經課感想

Reflections on the Vimalakirti Sutra

A talk given by Bhikshuni Jin Xiang on November 12, 2009 at Buddha Hall of CTTB

比丘尼近祥講於萬佛城大殿 2009年11月12日

今年有兩樁似乎相類又相互矛盾的活動。在春季學期時，我們在法大開了一門課，針對巴利文大乘經的中長經（Majjhima Nikaya）來進行討論；而秋季這學期，我們又有一個法大的課程，是講大乘經典的《維摩詰經》。這兩個課程的講師，在今年四月份於柏克萊舉行的紀念上人涅槃十四週年的講座上見了面。

當菩提比丘來上為期八天的中長經課程時，來自南、北傳的學子擠滿了道源堂。這學期，法大邀請了拉魯·邦本教授來法大教授短期的課程，他選擇和大家分享他研究《維摩詰經》長達五年的個人心得。

通常在學期一開始，我們不知道到時會有多少人來上課，所以我們不知道應該把教室安排在法大的會議室或道源堂。等到接近開課日十月二十六號時，根據網上報名及註冊表，我們才決定在法大的會議室上這門課。讓人驚訝的是，當學生開始進入這會議室時，這間課室正好就容納這麼多人；五十多名學生當中的絕大多數，是來自我們萬佛聖城的學區。

《維摩詰經》是大乘經典，不過並非佛金口所宣；即便如此，釋迦牟尼佛還是在這本經中扮演了重要的角色。維摩詰是一位明心見性者，在佛住世時，示現居士身來教化眾生。有一次，他大權示現生病，俾使探病者圍繞著他，聽他講述「大智慧到彼岸」的不二法門。釋迦牟尼佛請他的資深弟子去探訪這居士，但他們都非常害怕；即使是像彌勒菩薩這樣的大菩薩也害怕去探望他，最後才由文殊師利



There were a couple of events this year that seemed both in parallel and in paradox. In the Spring semester, we had a DRBU (Dharma Realm Buddhist University) course on Majjhima Nikaya, the Middle-length Discourses from the Pali Canon. This semester, we had a DRBU course on a Mahayana Sutra called *Vimalakirti Sutra*. The lecturers of these two courses met in April of this year for Venerable Master Hua's 14th Memorial Lecture in Berkeley.

When Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi came to teach the suttas from the Middle-length Discourses for eight days, people from southern and northern traditions filled the Daoyuan Hall. This semester, Professor Raoul Birnbaum was invited to teach a short-term seminar at DRBU. He chose to share his insights from five years of studying the *Vimalakirti Sutra*.

Before the seminar began, as always, we did not know how many people would show up, so we did not know whether to hold the class in the DRBU Conference Room or in the Daoyuan Hall. As it got closer to the starting date of October 26th, based on the online registration and signup sheets, we decided to hold it in the DRBU Conference Room. Surprisingly, as people starting coming in, they all fit into the room and filled out. Most of the 50 or so students were from our own CTTB campus.

The *Vimalakirti Sutra* is a Mahayana sutra, but it was not spoken by the Buddha, even though Shakyamuni Buddha plays a role in the sutra. Vimalakirti was an enlightened being manifesting as a layman in order to teach living beings during the time of Shakyamuni Buddha. One time, he expediently 'manifested' being sick so that people would gather around him while he expounded the Prajnaparamita teaching of nonduality. Shakyamuni Buddha asked his senior disciples to go visit this layman. They were all afraid. Even Bodhisattvas like Maitreya Bodhisattva were afraid to go and visit him. Finally, Manjushri Bodhisattva went to visit him. This was one of the many perplexing incidents that happened in the sutra. Why were the Arhats and Bodhisattvas afraid to go visit a sick layman? There were many reasons that people came up with during the discussion period. This was like a meditation topic for us to contemplate. This question is as much for us as for the Arhats and the Bodhisattvas in the sutra. Why are we afraid? In the discussion period, Professor Birnbaum, seeing that people were not sitting in the first row, asked a similar question.



菩薩出面去探病。這是本經中所發生的許多令人困惑的事件之一，為什麼連阿羅漢、菩薩都害怕去探望一個患病的居士呢？在討論期間，大家提出了很多理由；就像我們參禪的話頭一樣，這個問題能

讓我們思考，就如同本經中能令那些阿羅漢、菩薩去思考的那麼多。為什麼我們會怕？在討論時，拉魯·邦本教授也針對學生不坐第一排座位，提出了一個類似的問題。

在本經中，每一次維摩詰居士說話，他都是從般若的角度來探討事情。例如第五章的〈文殊師利問疾品〉。文殊師利菩薩問維摩詰居士：「是誰生病躺在床上？生病的原因是什麼？此病又如何能治癒？」維摩詰居士回答說：「由愚痴所感，才招惹疾病；因為所有有情衆生都病了，所以我才生病。假如所有有情衆生的病都沒有了，那麼我的病也沒有了。這是什麼緣故呢？菩薩是為衆生而入世，因為世間有輪迴，所以有病。假如衆生能夠超脫疾病，那麼菩薩也不會生病。」這一段就是暗示：維摩詰居士自己就是個跟所有衆生一體而無別的菩薩。

在同一章，文殊師利菩薩問維摩詰居士：「菩薩應該怎樣去安慰生病的菩薩？」這個問題對我們來說是特別重要的，因為我們常常會遇到生病的人，這是我們在這樣的時刻所應記住的教誨。維摩詰居士回答說：「對他解釋人的這個身體是無常的，但是不要教他應該厭惡自己的身體。對他解釋這個身體是苦的，但是不要教他應該享受涅槃的樂。對他解釋這個身體是無我的，但是不要教他應該去教化有情。對他解釋這個身體是空寂的，但是不要教他萬物終歸寂滅。」

南傳的佛教著重「四念處」。第一，觀身不淨。第二，觀受是苦。第三，觀心無常。第四，觀法無我。大乘對這四念處的

In the sutra, whenever Vimalakirti speaks, he speaks from the perspective of Prajnaparamita. For example, in Chapter V, called Manjushri's Condolence Visit, Manjushri asks Vimalakirti who is sick and lying on a couch what the cause of his illness is and how it can be cured. Vimalakirti answers, "From stupidity there is affection, and hence the generation of my illness. Since all sentient beings are ill, therefore I am ill. If the illness of all sentient beings were extinguished, then my illness would be extinguished. Why? Bodhisattvas enter samsara on behalf of sentient beings. Because there is samsara, there is illness. If sentient beings were able to transcend illness, then bodhisattvas would not also be ill." This is a hint that Vimalakirti himself is a bodhisattva, one who is no different from sentient beings and the same substance as all sentient beings.

In the same chapter, Manjushri asks him: "How should bodhisattvas comfort bodhisattvas who are ill?" This question is particularly important for us since we often encounter sick people, and this is the teaching that we ourselves should remember in such times. ...Vimalakirti replied, "Explain that the body is impermanent but do not teach that one should have aversion for one's body. Explain that the body suffers but do not teach that one should take pleasure in nirvana. Explain that the body is without self but do not teach that one should guide sentient beings. Explain that the body is empty serene but do not teach that it is ultimately extinguished."

The southern tradition focuses on the four stations of mindfulness: 1) the body is impure, 2) feelings are suffering, 3) thoughts are impermanent, 4) dharmas or mental objects are without a self. The Mahayana way of looking at these four stations of mindfulness is that it maintains the Middle Path without fixing on the views of suffering, emptiness, impermanence, and no-self. Even though bodhisattvas view sentient beings as a mirage or bubbles on water, they are mindful that there are sentient beings who still need to be saved.

The *Vimalakirti Sutra* guides us to let go of dualistic thinking. In the



處理模式，是保持中道，而不執著於「苦、空、無常、無我」的觀點。雖然菩薩看有情衆生就好像幻影或水上泡沫，但是他們也是會想到仍然有須要救度的衆生。

《維摩詰經》指導我們要放下「二元論」的思想（註：即「常、樂、我、淨」和「苦、空、無常、無我」二者是相對的）。經中，維摩詰居士也叫阿羅漢、菩薩擺脫自我觀的任何微細惑。雖然維摩詰居士是一個在家人，但是本經也沒有蔑視出家人的修行之道；相反的，它提醒着我們要注意到我們的思考的習氣，不要做出一些不必要的判斷。在日常生活中，我們仍然須要做出種種決定；我們仍然須要有明辨力，以維持這個社會的一種禮法和互相尊重。這一部經值得我們進一步的研究，因此我們能夠有智慧地將經典上的道理運用到我們的修行上面。

sutra, Vimalakirti teaches both Arhats and Bodhisattvas to get rid of any subtle residues of self. Even though Vimalakirti is a layman, this sutra does not slight the path of cultivation as a monastic; rather, it reminds us to pay attention to our minds' habit of making unnecessary judgments. In our daily lives, we still need to make certain decisions; we still need to have clear discernment (awareness) to maintain propriety and mutual respect in our community. This sutra is worthy of further study so that we can wisely incorporate its principles and topics into our practices.