

# 地藏菩薩本願經淺釋

THE SUTRA OF THE PAST VOWS OF

EARTH STORE BODHISATTVA WITH COMMENTARY

宣化上人講 Commentary by the Venerable Master Hua  
國際譯經學院記錄翻譯  
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## 第一 教起因緣

「教」是聖人一種教化眾生的語言——聖人被下之言。「起」是本來沒有的，現在有了，生起來了，生出來了。「因緣」，因是一種因素，緣是一種緣故。那什麼因緣生出這種教來？

因為釋迦牟尼佛成佛之後，說法四十九年，講經三百餘會，始終也沒有去超度他的母親。釋迦牟尼佛是從他母親的左脅（肚子的左上方）生出來的，生出來之後，他的母親就死了，而他成佛之後，知道他的母親摩耶夫人已經生天了。所以等到釋迦牟尼佛說完《法華經》之後，在沒說《涅槃經》之前，想起母親來了，就升到天上去，到忉利天宮三個月，為母親說法。說什麼法？就說這部《地藏經》——這一部孝經。

因此這是釋迦牟尼佛為度慈親，為度他的母親而到忉利天宮，說這一部《地藏菩薩本願經》，為什麼有這部經的因緣，是釋迦牟尼佛為了母親而說法的，這部經是不是很重要呢？這是教起的因緣。

## 第二 藏乘所攝

攝，是所屬的那一部；藏，是三藏——經藏、律藏、論藏。經藏屬於定學，律藏屬於戒學，論藏屬於慧學，經律論也就是戒定慧。而這一部經是屬於經藏和律藏所

### 1. The Reasons for the Arising of the Teaching

“Teaching” is communication in language used by the sages to transform beings—the words of a sage to his followers. “Arising” refers to the fact that what did not exist previously now exists, having arisen and come forth. “Causes” are the factors and “conditions” refers to the reasons. So what causes and conditions brought forth this teaching?

After he had attained Buddhahood, Shakyamuni Buddha spoke sutras for 49 years in over 300 assemblies, yet all along, never once did he get a chance to rescue his mother. Shakyamuni Buddha was born from his mother’s left ribcage, and his mother passed away after giving birth. When he became a Buddha, he learned that his mother, Lady Maya, had ascended to the heavens. After he had spoken the *Dharma Flower Sutra* and before starting the *Nirvana Sutra*, he thought of his mother and ascended to the Palace of Trayastrimsha Heaven. He stayed there for three months to expound the Dharma for her. And what was that Dharma? It was the *Earth Store Sutra*, the sutra on filial piety.

Because Shakyamuni Buddha wanted to take his kind mother across, he spoke the *Sutra of the Past Vows of Earth Store Bodhisattva* in the Palace of Trayastrimsha Heaven. The reason this sutra exists is because Shakyamuni Buddha wanted to speak Dharma for his mother. That makes this sutra very important, don’t you agree? That sums up the Causes and Conditions for the Arising of the Teaching.

### 2. The Divisions and Vehicles in Which It Is Contained

“Contained” refers to the categories to which it belongs, i.e., the “divisions” refers to the three parts of the Tripitaka—suttas, vinaya, and shastras. Suttas belong to the study of samadhi, vinaya belongs to the study of precepts, and shastras belong to the study of wisdom. Suttas, vinaya, and shastras are simply precepts, samadhi, and wisdom. This sutra belongs to both the division of suttas and the division of vinaya because in it the

攝，因為其中也講戒律。這個乘，就是五乘，有的說三乘，三乘是聲聞、緣覺、菩薩這三乘，五乘呢？再加上人乘和天乘，合起來就叫五乘。

我們人有千差萬別，天上的人也千差萬別，聲聞、緣覺這其中也是千差萬別，菩薩也不只是一尊菩薩，有很多菩薩。而這部《地藏經》是屬於人天乘和菩薩乘所攝，這是藏乘所攝。

### 第三 辨定宗旨

那麼這一部經以什麼作為宗旨呢？這一部經的宗旨有八個字——「孝道、度生、拔苦、報恩」。它指的是什麼呢？就是精研孝道——孝順父母這個道理。人能孝順父母，這是天地的光輝。

天地所歡喜的，就是人能孝順父母，所以說：「天地重孝，孝當先。」這個孝字是最要緊的，就用一個孝字，全家都會平安。「孝順還生孝順子」，你要是孝順你的父母，將來你的子女也會孝順你；你要是不孝順你的父母，你的子女也不會孝順你。

所以為什麼要做人呢？做人有什麼意思？不是說：「啊！我就這麼糊糊塗塗的來做人就算了。」不是這樣，做人的本分就應該孝順父母。因為父母就是天地，父母就是師長，父母也就是諸佛。你要是沒有父母，就沒有你這個身體，沒有你這個身體，就不會成佛了。所以你要想成佛，先要孝順父母，因此第一就是「孝道」。

第二就是「度生」。怎麼叫「度」呢？由此岸到彼岸這叫度、由生死到涅槃這也叫度、由煩惱到菩提這也叫度。現在所說的這個度生，就是度眾生。度眾生不是說度一個、兩個，也不是度三個、五個就叫度眾生。度眾生是指所有一切十二類的眾生，都應該發心來教化他們，令一切眾生早成佛，這才叫度眾生。

第三是「拔苦」。這一部經要拔除眾生的苦。第四是「報恩」。要報父母的恩。孝道、度生、拔苦、報恩，這八字是這部《地藏經》的宗旨。要是詳細講，這太多了，所以現在就講這個重要的意思，講明白了，然後大家也就明白了。 ㊦待續

precepts are discussed as well. “Vehicles” refers to either the Five Vehicles or the Three Vehicles. The Three Vehicles are those of the Shravakas, the Pratyekabuddhas, and the Bodhisattvas. Adding to these three, the vehicles of humans and gods complete the Five Vehicles.

Just as one human being is unique and different from one another in millions of ways, so are the celestial beings, the Shravakas, and Pratyekabuddhas. Likewise, there are—not just one—but many Bodhisattvas. The *Earth Store Sutra* is contained within the Vehicles of Humans, Celestial Beings, and Bodhisattvas. This is the Divisions and Vehicles in Which It Is Contained.

### 3. Determining Its Aim and Purport

So what does the sutra take as its aim and purport? The tenets of this sutra can be expressed in eight words: Filial piety, delivering beings, uprooting suffering, and repaying kindness. What do these tenets mean? First, we must thoroughly understand how to be filial. This is the principle of being kind to and taking care of one’s parents. One who can be filial to one’s parents is heaven and earth’s light of glory.

What gladdens heaven and earth is for people to be filial to their parents, hence the verse: Heaven and Earth value filiality. Filiality comes first: Filiality is of utmost importance. Through the workings of filiality, the entire family may enjoy peace. Filial people beget filial offspring: If you are filial to your parents, your children will be filial to you. If you are not filial to your parents, your children will not be filial to you.

Why be a person, and what is the point? Do not allow yourself to just be a muddled and confused person. That is not the way to go. Being a person, you have a moral obligation to be filial to your parents because your parents can be likened to heaven and earth, they can be likened to your teachers and elders, and they can be considered to be future Buddhas. If it were not for our parents, we would not have a physical body. Devoid of a physical body, we would have no way of becoming Buddhas. Therefore, if you wish to become a Buddha, first you need to be filial to your parents, hence filial piety is foremost.

The second is delivering beings. What does “delivering” mean? It means to embark from this shore to arrive at the other shore, which represents passing from birth and death to nirvana and also from afflictions to Bodhi. Here, “ferrying beings” means to take sentient beings across. To take across one sentient being, two sentient beings, or three, or five does not qualify as taking sentient beings across. The term refers to resolving on teaching and transforming all the twelve categories of sentient beings, thus quickly leading them to Buddhahood—that qualifies as taking beings across.

The third is uprooting suffering. This sutra aims at putting an end to beings’ sufferings. The fourth is repaying kindness. We must reciprocate the kindness of our parents. Filial piety, delivering beings, uprooting suffering, and repaying kindness—these eight words make up the aim and purport of the *Earth Store Sutra*. It would be too much for us to go into detail. I went over the important points so you would get the gist of it.

㊦To be continued