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THE SUTRA OF THE PAST VOWS OF
EARTH STORE BODHISATTVA
WITH COMMENTARY

【切利天宮神通品第一】

CHAPTER I: SPIRITUAL PENETRATIONS IN THE PALACE
OF THE TRAYASTRIMSHA HEAVEN

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第二，依四念處而住。四念處就是身、受、心、法；觀身不淨、觀受是苦、觀心無常、觀法無我，這四念處。第三，佛在世的時候，以佛為師；佛入涅槃之後，就以波羅提木叉（戒）做師父，這是一切比丘、比丘尼的師父。第四，對待惡性比丘，就要默而擯之。「默」是不講話，「擯」就是擯棄他，不睬他，不理他。

這個「如是我聞」，是為了斷除眾疑。在結集經藏的時候，大眾頓起三疑。阿難在結集經藏時（之前他證了四果阿羅漢），沒有人給他開門，他就從門縫進到結集經藏的會場裡邊來。因為其他參與結集經藏的人雖然已經證果，但是記憶力都沒有阿難好。阿難是大權示現，在過去一切諸佛出世，他都當侍者，親近一切諸佛。等釋迦牟尼佛成佛了，他也來出世，當釋迦牟尼佛的侍者，這侍者就是預備結集經藏的。

在阿難一上法座時，大眾就頓起三疑。第一是懷疑釋迦牟尼佛又活過來了，沒有人涅槃。因為阿難登上獅子法座結集經藏的時候，相好莊嚴，相貌和佛一樣，只比佛矮了三指，所以大眾就以為釋迦牟尼佛又活了。第二，以為他方佛來了。第三懷疑大約是阿難已經證果成佛了。大眾生了這三種疑，等阿難一說出「如是我聞」四個字，這三種懷疑就都沒有了。

結集經藏用「如是我聞」，第一是斷眾

2. Abide in the four applications of mindfulness. These pertain to the body, feelings, the mind, and dharmas. Contemplate the body as being impure, contemplate feelings as being suffering, contemplate the mind as being impermanent, and contemplate dharmas as being without a self. These are the four applications of mindfulness. 3. When the Buddha was in the world, you took the Buddha as your teacher; after the Buddha enters nirvana, take the pratimoksa (the precepts) as your teacher. The precepts are the teacher of all bhikshus and bhikshunis. 4. Deal with evil natured bhikshus by silently ignoring them and they will leave. “Silently” means not speaking to them; “ignoring” means paying no attention to them.

“Thus I have heard” put an end to the assembly’s doubts. When the sutras were being compiled, those participating suddenly had three doubts. These doubts concerned the Venerable Ananda, who joined the sutra compilations just after he became a fourth stage arhat. No one opened the door for him, so he entered the sutra compilation room through the crack in the door. Although all the other participants who joined the compilation of the sutras had certified to arhatship, their memories were not as good as Ananda’s. Ananda was a great being who took on a provisional appearance in this life. He was the attendant to all the Buddhas in the past. Ananda was born around the time Shakyamuni Buddha became fully awakened. Later, he became Shakyamuni Buddha’s attendant. As attendant he became prepared to conduct the compilation of the sutra treasury.

However, as soon as Venerable Ananda mounted the Dharma seat, everyone present had three doubts: 1. They wondered if Shakyamuni Buddha had come to life again and had not entered nirvana after all. While Ananda ascended the lion seat to compile the Sutra treasury, he had the same magnificent appearance as the Buddha, only three inches shorter. therefore the assembly thought that Shakyamuni Buddha had

疑，第二是遵佛囑，第三是息爭論。因為結集經藏時，阿難的年紀並不大，還很年輕。像他那樣年紀輕的人結集經藏，恐怕就有些老資格的，好像老迦葉、憍陳如、須菩提，這些長老恐怕會說：「你一個年紀這麼輕的人，有什麼經驗，有什麼知識，可以編集經典？可以結集經藏呢？」因為如果阿難說經典是他自己寫出來的，大眾就未免生出一種爭論，說：「你說的根本不對，佛沒有這麼講。」可是阿難一說「如是我聞」，大眾就不爭了。為什麼呢？統統都是阿難聽佛所說的，並不是他自己杜撰的，所以就能息爭論。

第四異外道。外道用的經典，思想如下：外道的論師說：「一切萬法，世間所有的法，不出有無二字。」或者就是有，說萬法都是有的；或者說萬法都是沒有的。一個有、一個無，就把所有一切法都包括了，所以外道的經典就用阿、嚕兩個字作經首。阿就是無，嚕就是有。為了異於外道，所以佛在經首就用「如是我聞」這四個字，意思是說如是之法是我阿難親自從佛那兒聽來的。這如是是信成就，我聞是聞成就，為什麼不說耳聞，而說我聞呢？因為我是一身的總稱，所以就用我來代表一切的六根。

「一時」：這個「時」，為什麼不說某年某月某日，佛在什麼地方說法？因為國際間曆數不同，有的正月是其他國家的二月，有的正月又是其他國家的三月或四月，沒有一定的，所以佛經上就說有這麼一個時候。如果說是一定的時候，考古家未免又要用很多腦汁來研究。而佛不想費考古家這麼多腦汁、這麼多心血，所以在佛經上就用「一時」——有這麼一個時候，這是時成就。

「佛」：是主成就。佛已經自覺、覺他、覺行圓滿。「三覺圓，萬德備」，所以叫佛。這尊佛就是娑婆世界的教主釋迦牟尼佛。其實釋迦牟尼佛在過去無量百千萬劫已經成佛了，不過因為看見我們娑婆世界南瞻部洲的眾生，機緣已經成熟，所以就來示現成佛，令一切眾生也都成佛，都了脫生死。

☞待續

come back to life. 2. They wondered if a Buddha from another direction had come. 3. They wondered if Ananda had become a Buddha. The great assembly sustained these three doubts until Ananda said the four words “Thus I have heard,” and then these three doubts were dispelled.

At the compilation of the sutras, “Thus I have heard” was used to begin each one for the following reasons: 1. to dispel the assembly’s doubts; 2. to honor Buddha’s final instruction; 3. to put an end to contention. Since Ananda was quite young when the sutras were being compiled, some of those with senior status such as elder Kasyapa, Ajñāta-kaundinya, Subhuti, and others could have challenged him: “What kind of experience and knowledge could a young person like you have to compile the sutras? You can compile the sutras?” If Ananda said he would write out the sutras, people would argue, “What you say is completely wrong. The Buddha did not say this.” But once Ananda said, “Thus I have heard,” there was no contention. Why was that? The sutras being compiled were what Ananda had heard from the Buddha; Ananda did not make them up himself. And that put an end to contention.

4. to differentiate from externalist ways. The thinking in externalist texts is as follows: “All the myriad dharmas in the world do not go beyond the two concepts of existence and non-existence.” Either everything is existent or everything is non-existent. All dharmas fall into one of these two categories. The externalist texts begin with either “a” and “o.” “A” is non-existence while “o” is existence. To differentiate from externalists, the Buddha instructed that the four words “Thus I have heard” is used to begin the sutras. The meaning of those words is that the Dharma I, Ananda, am thus speaking is what I personally heard from the Buddha. “Thus” fulfills the requirement of faith; “I have heard” fulfills the requirement of hearing. Ananda did not say that his ears heard; he said “I” heard, letting the “I” represent all six faculties of the body.

At one time. Why is there no specific year, specific month, and specific day named to describe when the Buddha spoke Dharma at a certain place? It is because different calendars are used around the world; January in some countries is February in another country, or January in some countries is March or April in another country. If the texts stated a certain time, then archeologists might use a lot of mental effort investigating such dates. The Buddha did not want to waste archeologists’ mental and physical energies, so the Buddhist sutras used “at one time” which fulfills the requirement of time.

The Buddha fulfills the requirement of a host. The Buddha enlightened himself, enlightened others, and perfected enlightened practice. He is a Buddha because “he perfected the three types of enlightenment and is replete with the myriad virtues.” The Buddha referred here is the teaching host of the Saha World, Shakyamuni Buddha. Actually Shakyamuni Buddha became a Buddha millions and millions -- even infinite -- eons ago. However, he saw that conditions had ripened for living beings in the Saha World in Southern Jambudvīpa and so he appeared here and became a Buddha in order to let beings know they were all capable of becoming Buddhas -- of escaping the cycle of birth and death. ☞To be continued