

Insight from Translating *the Sutra of the Buddha Proclaiming the Names of Buddhas*

◎ By Bhikshu Jin Yan
◎ English Translation by Alejandro, Gracia Miguel & Gracia Benjamin Phua

從翻譯佛說佛名經說起 (續)

◎ 葛漢鐸 米格爾 潘景安 英譯
◎ 比丘近巖 文

名呢，用來詮釋一個人的生命，所以叫「名以正體」——看我們人要為生命注入什麼樣的內涵，但是名到一個人成年行冠禮後，名只有自己父母、師長，或長輩才可以稱；同輩與晚輩們都應避呼其名，而以字稱之。字與名互為表裡，名為裡，字為表；表什麼呢？表這一個人的德行，或一個人崇尚的風範。字是對名做進一步的補充說明，所以說「字以表德」。同樣地，諸佛名號亦是一種表法，於諸佛清淨無相法身中表一種相，表一種法，表一種德……

一般人稱揚禮拜佛名時，不會去想這種名號的含義與來歷。一萬多尊佛菩薩名號，數都數不過來。不過，面對這麼多的佛名，如果能知其名號的立名，了然於胸，我們就能夠提綱契領，不會被這麼多的佛名給「淹沒」。諸佛菩薩以何立名？有以行立名，如南無大精進佛；有以德立名，南無清淨施佛；以所成就立名，如大勢至菩薩；以所化眾

Given names are used to interpret one's life. What given name you receive depends on what you do with your life. However, only your parents, teachers, and elders are meant to call you by your given name after you have been crowned as an adult. People of similar or lower status and age should avoid calling you by your given name and should instead use your courtesy name. *Zi* and *ming* complement each other as the surface and the core. *Ming* is inside, or your core essence. *Zi* is outside to express your virtue or the style of your demeanor. *Zi* is a further supplement of your *ming*. Therefore, we say “*zi* is meant to express your virtues.” Similarly, the Buddhas' names are meant to express what virtues they possess or what Dharma they practiced, although ultimately the Buddhas' pure Dharma Body is formless.

When we are exalting and bowing to the Buddhas' names, we usually don't pay attention to the origin and meaning of the Buddhas' names. We cannot even count one by one because there are more than ten thousand Buddhas listed. However, if we can have a better understanding of why they received their names, then we will not be lost, “Drowning in the sea of Buddhas' names.” So how exactly were the names of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas established? Some names are based on their cultivation; for example, Great Diligence Buddha. Some names are based on their virtue, such as Pure Giving Buddha. Some names are based on what they have accomplished; for example, Great Strength Bodhisattva. Some are based on the beings whom they teach and transform; for example, Teacher



生立名，如天人師。如果再把諸佛名加以歸納起，大約可分二十四小科、三大科。三大科，言其一切佛之所以得其名，不離人（能緣）、境（所緣）、事（能緣與所緣的互動）。二十四小科文暫不討論。

所有這些佛名，外再配以三世：過去、現在、未來，再配十方：東、南、西、北，東南、西南、東北、西北，上、下；這一配，就有無量無邊那麼多的佛名。此乃佛名總說。

F. 諸佛洪名，滅罪消災

一般佛弟子對於《普門品》和《地藏經》較為熟悉，因此對於經中描述稱揚佛菩薩名號的功德也有較多的了解。稱揚觀世音菩薩者，設入大火火不能燒，設入大水水不能溺……欲求男者得男，欲求女者得女……。《地藏經》卷九，更是詳述聞名、憶念、稱揚、瞻禮諸佛菩薩者，能獲不可思議功德。究其道理，為何會這樣？就因為諸佛菩薩往昔生中所具的悲心和所發的大願。

誦持菩薩名號有如此功德，誦持諸佛名號更是如此。若人能有此堅固信心，他拜起「萬佛寶懺」來就為多所感應，多所遂心如意。正如《佛說佛名經》中開頭，就已經開宗明義了：

若善男子、善女人，受持讀誦諸佛名者，是人現世安隱，遠離諸難。

結尾，世尊又再一次告訴舍利弗：

若有善男子、善女人、比丘、比丘尼、優婆塞、優婆夷，能受持諸佛菩薩名者，終不墮惡道；生天人中，常值佛菩薩善知識，

of Gods and People. If we characterize all the Buddhas' names, we can categorize them into 24 small sections within three large categories. The three are: beings (the doer), the environment (of the doer), and the deeds (karmic interaction). The 24 small sections will not be discussed in this article.

Additionally, when all of these Buddhas' names are combined with the three periods of time—the past, the present, and the future—and combined again with the ten directions—East, South, West, North, Southeast, Southwest, Northeast, Northwest, Above, and Below—all the combinations create countless Buddhas' names. This is a summary of the naming of Buddhas.

F. Mindfulness of the Buddhas' Names Helps Eliminate Offenses and Quell Disasters

Generally, most Mahayana Buddhists are very familiar with *The Universal Door of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva Chapter* and *the Sutra of the Past Vows of Earth Store Bodhisattva*. It is well understood that these two sutras praise the act of reciting the Buddhas' and Bodhisattvas' names, because by reciting their names you receive merit and virtue. Based on *The Universal Door of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva Chapter*, if one has fallen into a fire and recites the name of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva, the fire will not burn that person. If one is being tossed about in deep and treacherous waters and calls out to Guanshiyin Bodhisattva, that person won't drown and will quickly reach the shallows. If women seeking sons bow to and make offerings to Guanshiyin Bodhisattva, they will give birth to sons who are happy, virtuous, and wise. If instead, they wish for daughters, they will bear gifted, beloved daughters who are respected by all. In Chapter Nine of *the Sutra of the Past Vows of Earth Store Bodhisattva*, there are detailed instructions to hear, contemplate, praise the Buddhas' and Bodhisattvas' names, and to gaze upon them with reverence. All the above actions will bring you unimaginable merit and virtue. Why is this? This is because all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas developed deep compassion and made great vows in their past lives.

Reciting Bodhisattvas' names brings much merit and virtue. Reciting Buddhas' names brings even more merit and virtue. If someone bows in the Ten Thousand Buddhas Repentance with this immovable faith, that person can receive an auspicious response that is intertwined with the Dharma Path and have all of his or her wishes fulfilled. Such benefits are clearly stated at the beginning of the Sutra of the Buddha Proclaiming the Names of Buddhas:

If a good man or woman recites and holds all the Buddhas' names listed here, that person will enjoy a safe and peaceful life, be far away from all kinds of disasters, and eradicate all of their offenses.

At the end of the Sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha again told Shariputra:

If good men, good women, bhikshus, bhikshunis, upasakas, and upasikas can recite and hold all the Buddhas' and Bodhisattvas' names, they will not fall into the three evil paths. Moreover, they will be reborn in the heavens, frequently encounter Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and upright Dharma friends, leave all afflictions far behind, and ultimately attain great Bodhi.

Thus, we should have deep faith and understanding when we praise, recite, and bow to the Buddhas' names and to their merit and virtue. Whenever Venerable Master Hsuan

遠離諸煩惱，乃至得大菩提。

所以於稱揚讚嘆禮拜諸佛名號功德者，當深信解。宣公上人在提到此一法門之殊勝時，常常講說修此法門者，無福能生福，少福能多福，有災能消災，有難能免難。他舉一個福建和尚的例子：這位和尚久患心臟病，久治不癒；後來誠心拜這一「萬佛寶懺」，心臟病不知不覺消失。

順便提到一點，就是此經的流通分與其他諸大乘經典的比例相差懸殊，此經流通分的份量少到不能再少。流通分者，一般講受持讀誦如何利人利己，功德如何不可思議。《佛說佛名經》相形於其他大乘經典如《法華經》、《楞嚴經》或《佛說阿彌陀經》，在這方面，有點著墨太少了點。光是憑輕描淡寫這麼兩三句話，一般眾生是很難起信的。

正因為眾生信根淺陋，諸佛在推動一法門時總是竭力地去宣說讚嘆修持的好處，所用的篇幅也很大，下的筆墨也很重。所以這一流通分的實際重擔，就落到歷代少數幾位高僧大德去推廣流通。前文說過，此萬佛懺法門如果不是宣公上人在萬佛城大力推行，限於種種主客觀條件，我們一般眾生是很難會去修持，修也很難會有成就的。由是觀之，豈能不生稀有想，生感恩心？

◎ 展望未來

正如前文所說的，今年是《佛說佛名經》年。若一切順利，可望明年能有一部英文版的《佛說佛名經》問世。我們深感慶幸者，我們找到一批很優秀的翻譯人才，大家以譯會友，在翻譯中時不時能感受到集體智慧火花的碰撞；有這批人才的發現與參與，遠比某一個翻譯工程的完成或達標來得重要。雖現在人不多，但這些星星之火，必將燎原。 ❀

Hua mentioned this incredible Dharma Door, he would say that if one practices this Dharma, one who lacks blessings will receive them, one who has only a few blessings will receive more, the disasters that one faces will disperse, and one will be saved in difficult situations. He gave an example of a monk in Fujian Province who had a long-term heart condition that was found to be incurable. Later, after sincerely bowing in the Ten Thousand Buddhas Repentance, his heart disease vanished.

There is another unique characteristic about this sutra. The scale of its circulation section is quite different from those of other Mahayana Buddhist sutras. The size of this section in this sutra could not be made any smaller. What is the circulation section? Generally speaking, this part encourages people to recite sutras because of the benefits and immeasurable merit and virtue gained by that act for both oneself and others. Compared to other Mahayana Buddhist sutras, like *the Wondrous Dharma Lotus Sutra*, *the Shurangama Sutra*, or *the Buddha Speaks of Amitabha Sutra*, *the Buddha Proclaims the Names of Buddhas Sutra* has very little writing in the circulation section. The general public will be unlikely to have much faith in its few simple and non-detailed sentences.

Because most people's roots of faith are shallow, while propagating the Buddhas' Dharma Door, the Buddhas always do their best to promote the benefits of cultivating. Thus, the scale of the Buddhist texts is usually vast and great, and the writing style is very powerful. However, the real burden of the difficult task of promoting *The Buddha Proclaims the Names of Buddhas Sutra* had to be carried out by the few eminent monks of great virtue who lived later. In the previous paragraph, we talked about how if it weren't for Venerable Master Hsuan Hua's tireless promotion of this sutra and the Ceremony of the Ten Thousand Buddhas Repentance at CTTB, we the general populace, due to various kinds of personal or external environmental constraints, would have a much harder time practicing this Dharma and accomplishing any achievements in our cultivation. Reflecting upon this, how can we not feel extremely grateful for the rare opportunity to learn this sutra and bow to the Buddhas?

◎ Looking Ahead to the Future

In the previous section of this article, we mentioned that this year is called the Year of *The Buddha Proclaims the Names of Buddhas Sutra* because the major portion of 2012 was devoted to the translation of this Sutra. If everything goes smoothly, we can hope to have an English version of *The Buddha Proclaims the Names of Buddhas Sutra* published by the summer of next year, 2013. We are deeply grateful that we could find a group of outstanding, talented translators: a gathering of people who share a clear and noble purpose of doing regular translation work. During the translation sessions, we frequently felt the spark of wisdom coming from our translation team members. The recruitment and participation of these talented translators is actually more important than the fulfillment of this translation project itself. Although we don't have many translators now, I predict that many more will join later, just like the way in which "a single spark can start a prairie fire." ❀