

# A Prevalent Manifestation

## 無刹不現身

Venerable Master, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Dharma Masters and all Dharma Friends, Good Evening. Tonight I was asked to share some experience surrounding the *Earth Store Sutra* and the *Great Compassion Mantra*, which happens to be one of my favourite sutras. Please forgive me if I say anything that does not accord with the Dharma.

Last month when I accompanied another Bhikshuni who was conducting a meditation session at Yoga Mendocino Center in Ukiah, during the question and answer section a woman asked me “What is a Sutra?” Knowing that this woman was from the Judeo-Christian background, I answered “You know the *Bible*? Well the *Bible* is to Christianity, what the Sutra is to Buddhism. Sutras are the scriptures of Buddhism.”

The commentary in the *Prajna Paramita Sutra* gives a very simple

上人、諸佛菩薩、各位法師和佛友們：晚上好。今晚想和大家分享一下我和《地藏經》以及〈大悲咒〉的因緣，《地藏經》是我最喜歡的佛經之一。若是所說的有不如法之處，尚請見諒。

上個月，我陪一位比丘尼到曼德仙諾郡瑜伽中心指導禪修。在問答時段，有一位女士問：「什麼是佛經？」在瞭解提問者有猶太教和基督教的背景後，我回答她：「妳知道《聖經》嗎？佛經之於佛教，就像《聖經》之於基督教。佛經是佛教的聖典。」

關於佛經的功用，在《般若波羅密多心經》淺釋的序言裏，有一段言簡意賅的描述：「所有的佛經

Spoken by Bhikshuni Jin Kai  
at the Buddha Hall of CTTB on September 5, 2013  
Chinese Translation by Shu-Lin Hong

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洪淑玲 中譯

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and clear description of the Function of Sutras.....it says “The concern of all the Sutras the Buddha spoke is simply about the life and death of living beings...what is good versus what is evil; what the world is; why we are born into this world and where we will go when we die; what we should do with ourselves now while we are in the world; and how we can stop our suffering and find true happiness for ourselves and others”.... these are the questions that the Buddha answered which are found in all Sutras.

*Earth Store Sutra* is a sutra about filiality, repaying kindness, liberating beings and eliminating suffering. A few days ago a resident Bhikshuni walked into the Girls school trying to locate the telephone number of a teacher who has retired from the Girls school almost a decade ago. What made this request so special is that her nephew who is now in university, and who now recognizes the value in being filial, wanted to contact this retired teacher who also taught him many years ago, to thank her for having corrected his wrongdoing many years ago, when he was an elementary school student in the Boys school.

In Venerable Master's commentary he indicated that we can invoke the names of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas as well as the sutras to help give relief to beings with weighty karmic loads, who are headed for great suffering. Venerable Master also stated that even if a person is on the verge of dying, the words of the sutra will enter the 8th Consciousness of that person. At birth this 8th Consciousness is the first to arrive and at death it is the last to leave. Venerable Master adds that at the final moment, people tend to awaken to what they have done, oftentimes manifesting a good heart, becoming aware of their past errors and wanting to repent.

I am reminded of my maternal grandmother who passed away a few years ago at the age of 104. Years after leaving the Caribbean Island of Grand Cayman, she lived with my mother and aunt in New York, and about 6 months before her passing, on a daily basis she would wail and cry non-stop, saying things like “they are hurting me, beating me, kicking me,” and listing all manner of abuses that she was undergoing, indicating that “They” were taking her away and that she did not want to go. Her constant weeping and wailing could be heard in the hallways outside the apartment. Her pleading and shouting that she did not want to go and that she did not want to be “taken away by them,” gave my Mum and my aunt continuous sleepless nights and agonizing days.

One day my Aunt decided to turn on the *Great Compassion Mantra* recitation machine and place it next to Grandma's bed. Literally, within 15 minutes of playing the *Great Compassion Mantra* they told me that she had calmed down and that her wailing had decreased by 90 percent. They were amazed, and my Mum asked me, “What is that Chinese music that quited Mamma down?” I told her “Mum it is the power of the mantra,” and went on to tell her many stories and testimonials from CTTB residents who had received magical responses from this *Great Compassion Mantra*. Since then, the experience of the Great Compassion Mantra has

都在談論眾生的生、死、善業、惡業，世界是什麼？為什麼我們來到這個世界？死後又將何去何從？還活著的時候，必須怎麼做才能遠離苦厄，為自己與他人找到真正的快樂？」這些問題的答案，在任何一部佛經裏都可以找到。

《地藏經》是講述孝道、報恩、度生、拔苦的一部經典。前不久有一位比丘尼到女校來，詢問一位退休將近十年的老師的電話號碼。原因是她正在讀大學的姪子，想要找到這位當年在男校教書的老師，感謝她在小學的時候不厭其煩地糾正他，讓他現在能明白孝順的重要。

上人說過，我們可以藉由唸佛菩薩聖號或者唸經，來幫助那些業重受苦的眾生減輕苦難。上人也提到，即使是為臨終的人誦經，經文也會進入他的八識田。因為投胎出生時，第八識是最先到的；死的時候，第八識是最後離開肉體。上人也說人在臨死的時候，會天良發現，對於自己一生所做的事，都會有一種反省；這時候對自己所做不對的事情，會真正知道不對了，會生出一種懺悔心。

這讓我想起幾年前，以104歲高齡過世的外婆。她老人家在離開加勒比大開曼島多年後，和我的媽媽還有阿姨定居在紐約。在她過世前大約6個月左右，她每天都不停地哭泣哀嚎，說一些「他們害我、打我、踢我」的話，甚至把被虐待的種種方式一一列出來。她說「他們」想把她帶走，但是她萬萬不想；即便在公寓的走道上，都能清晰地聽到她不願離開、不願被「他們」帶走的懇求和哀嚎。這種情形，讓我的母親和阿姨晚上無法入睡，白天也不得安寧。

有一天我阿姨打開〈大悲咒〉的唸佛機，並把它放在外婆的床邊。真的，她們告訴我才放了15分鐘的〈大悲咒〉，我外婆就奇蹟般地鎮靜下來，哀嚎也減少了百分之九十。震驚之餘，我母親問我：「這個讓媽媽安靜下來的中國音樂是什麼？」我告訴她：「媽，這就是真言的力量。」接著，我告訴她好多聖城住眾唸〈大悲咒〉的感應故事。從那時候開始，我母親對〈大悲咒〉留下深刻的印象。她常常對我說：「我不知道妳的佛陀是什麼，但是我千真萬確地知道，他有一種難以言宣的力量。」直到今天，她們還繼續在家裏小聲地播放著〈大

left its mark on My Mum, who will often say to me “I don’t know what it is about your Buddhas, but there is a power that is beyond words.” To this day they keep the recitation machine turned on low volume in the apartment.

When I had gone to visit her in New York a week before she passed away, my grandma pointed next to the bed and began yelling at what she called “a black angel” (she used a Creole/patois expression to describe “them” that was hurting her). Although I could not see the black angel she was referring to, I remember feeling my hairs stand on ends due to the energy in the room. I asked her not to be angry at them and she said OK, and in turn said to me “ask them not to hurt me.”

Before going to visit her in New York, I remember planning to read the *Earth Store Sutra*, and so I had taken along a copy of this sutra. But unfortunately I had accidentally left my English copy behind and had only a copy in Mandarin with Pin-yin (transliteration of Chinese sounds). I am unable to read mandarin. I followed along clumsily with the Pin-yin while in my mind, trying to recollect the meaning in English. My Grandma listened quietly for a while, then fell asleep as I continued slowly to recite in Pin-yin.

I reflected on my Grandma’s feeling of being tortured, her wailing and responding to beings surrounding her that were invisible to the rest of the family, knowing that she had no dementia and she was mentally stable, I reckoned that these experiences she was having were very real and vivid to her.

I thought about the Venerable Master’s words in his commentary on the *Earth Store Bodhisattva Sutra*, when he said that “just as there are prisons in our world which are established to reform offenders and criminals, there are also prisons in the shadowy places within the ground. These prisons, he added, differ from prisons in our world in that they are not established by a judiciary system ...”, he explained that these prisons have no concrete forms, and that when someone is due to fall into one of those prisons due to misdeeds of the past, these prisons manifest and appear as a result of that person’s Karma.

When I first came to CTTB in 2002 after having lived and worked in New York and New Mexico, a Dharma Master gave me a copy of the *Earth Store Sutra* to read. Wow! I could barely keep my eyes open after reading the first few pages of this Sutra. I was overcome by such exhaustion each time that I opened it, and before you knew it, I was sound asleep.

As CTTB is a place of great learning and transformation, it did not take long for my good and wise advisors...(I have many good and wise advisors here, both Laity and Sangha) to teach me that the exhaustion I was experiencing when reading the sutra was a result of my heavy karmic offenses which were acting as obstructions. The same extreme sleepiness used to hit me when I first began chanting the Shurangama Mantra and was even more overpowering when doing the Great Compassion

悲咒)。

在外婆往生前一個禮拜，我去紐約看望她。外婆指著床邊，開始朝著她所謂的「黑色天使」大喊大叫（就是她用土語描述的那些傷害她的「他們」）。雖然我看不到她所說的黑色天使，但我記得房間裏的磁場讓我毛骨悚然。我請她別再對「他們」生氣，她說好，但是她也對我說：「讓他們別再傷害我。」

去紐約探望外婆之前，我打算要唸《地藏經》，所以隨身帶了一本《地藏經》。但是糟糕的是，我忘了帶英文版的，只帶了漢語拼音的中文版。我看不懂中文，所以只好跟著拼音唸，然後試著聯想對應的英文意思。外婆靜靜地聽我唸了一會兒就睡著了，我則繼續小聲地按著拼音唸。

仔細回想外婆所受的折磨、她的哀嚎，以及對身邊那些其他人都看不到的「東西」的反應。我知道外婆沒有患老年癡呆症，她的精神狀況也很穩定，所以我相信她的感受和經歷都是真實不虛的。

這令我想到上人在《地藏經》上的開示。上人說：「人間有監獄，地府也有監獄。可是地獄的監獄不像人間的監獄，是政府先造好給犯罪人預備著；地獄這個監獄，是有名而無形，要等著你到地獄受罪的時候，才有這個形相現出來；也就是你造什麼罪業，地獄就現出來一個什麼監獄。」

在紐約和新墨西哥州生活工作多年後，我在2002年第一次來到萬佛聖城。那時候，一位法師送了我一本《地藏經》。看完頭幾頁之後，天啊！我的眼睛幾乎睜不開。甚至每一次打開《地藏經》要讀，我都會累得不知不覺睡著了。

然而聖城是一個很好的學習場所，很能幫助人脫胎換骨，所以到這裏不久就有善知識告訴我（在這裏我有很多善知識，有法師也有在家人），每次讀《地藏經》會想睡覺，是因為過去的業障障礙我念經。同樣的情形，也發生在我開始學唸〈楞嚴咒〉的時候，而每天中午十二點半拜〈大悲懺〉更是睏得不得了。

有一次在法大上馬丁梵赫文博士的課時，我跟他提起每次拜〈大悲懺〉都覺得非常累，累到才開始10分鐘就得離開。課堂上提出這個問題之後，梵赫文博士回應我：「不管怎樣，在結束前都不要離開佛殿。就算妳累到必須到佛殿後邊休息，也要全程留在佛殿。」他進一步解釋這都是



Repentance Ceremony at 12:30 each afternoon.

In Dr. Verhoeven's DRBU class one day I mentioned how lethargic and tired I became during the Great Compassion Repentance Ceremony, so much so that I had to leave after the first 10 minutes of the repentance ceremony. When I mentioned this in class, Dr. V. said "whatever you do, don't leave the Buhha Hall during the repentance even if you have to go to the back of the Buddha Hall to rest, just stay there for its entirety." He further explained the reason being Karmic. So I decided to follow his advice and stayed in Buddha Hall during the Great Compassion Repentance.

Shortly thereafter I noticed a bad smell, like the smell of meat, surrounding me and I wondered what it was, because I knew that I was clean, my clothes were clean. So what was it? ...puzzled I kept sniffing around me until I realized "yes" I was surrounded by this foul smell and it was the smell of meat, but why? I was quite startled, and was tempted to leave and go back to my room, but I remembered my teacher's advice, and stayed put, as this smell of meat became so overpowering. As a child I never liked meat, so each time that I ate meat I got a tummy ache, which meant that my entire childhood, I was plagued with tummy troubles, since my parents, like most well-meaning parents, thought I would be anemic if I did not eat a portion of meat.

After the ceremony, I went back to the Girls Dorm where I was living and working, and by that time the smell had dissipated. The following day I went back at 12:30 to Great Compassion Repentance. This time although I noticed the smell of meat once more, it was much less intense than the previous day, and only noticeable on my hands. Thank goodness, that experience ended there and has not returned since.

During a recent teacher training workshop, we were asked to list items which each of us would try to focus on throughout the school year...I listed. "Try to maintain balance between my work in the school and my cultivation." Then I realized that work is also cultivation. The Ven. Master says "Cultivation doesn't just mean doing morning and evening ceremonies... In our every move, in everything we do and say we should accord with the appropriate rhythm and regulations, for we each have our own music in our inherent nature."

Similar to the time when the Buddha was still in the world, everyone who led a left home life was required to memorize this verse...

*Watch over the Mouth, guard the Mind, with the Body do no wrong  
Do not, in any way annoy a single living being  
Keep far away from non-beneficial practices,  
Cultivation such as this can surely save the World.*

Ven. Master encouraged us to cultivate a peaceful serenity. He added that if we can regulate ourselves so that we are always peaceful, serene and good-natured, that is cultivation. ❀

因為過去的業力使然。聽了他一席話之後，我決定依照他的建議，〈大悲懺〉的時候都待在佛殿。

可是過沒多久，我發現身邊有一股刺鼻的氣味，好像肉的味道。我不知道是怎麼回事，因為我知道自己保持得很整潔，衣服也很乾淨。那究竟是什麼呢？...我好奇地嗅來嗅去，沒錯！我就是被一股難聞的肉味給包圍著。可是怎麼會這樣呢？我有點被嚇到，想回去寮房；可是想起老師的建議，還是決定留在佛殿，即便那股肉味越來越濃。我是個從小就不喜歡吃肉的人，每次一吃肉就肚子痛。可是我的父母也像大多數好心的父母一樣，覺得如果不吃肉就會貧血，所以我的童年幾乎經常都在肚子痛。

拜懺結束後回到女校學生宿舍，我住那裏，也在那裏工作；就在這時候，那股難聞的味道消失了。隔天十二點半，我繼續參加〈大悲懺〉，這次雖然又聞到了肉的味道，可是沒有前一天那麼濃了，而且只在我的手上停留而已。終於，這種經驗在那次之後就再沒出現過了。

在最近的一個教師研習會裏，我們被要求列出這個學年想要實踐的事項。我寫到：「希望在學校的工作和個人修行之間能夠保持平衡。」然後我意識到，其實工作也是修行。上人說過，修行不是說做早晚課才是修行，平時的一舉一動、一言一行，皆要合節奏、合規矩，因為我們每個人自性皆有自己的「音樂」。

就像佛陀在世時，每一位出家人都必須記住的這一首偈頌：

守口攝意身莫犯  
莫惱一切諸有情  
無益苦行當遠離  
如是行者可度世

上人鼓勵我們修行要心平氣和，如果能夠管好自己，時時刻刻就都能心平氣和，陶冶性情，那就是在修行。 ❀