

# De-coding the Dharma

A Dharma talk given by Reverend Heng Sure at the DRBU Translation Seminar on August 12, 2019

**Editor's Note:** Participants in the seminar included monastics, scholars, translators, and current DRBU students with diverse backgrounds from around the world actively translating Buddhist texts together.

One of the things we talk about at Berkeley Buddhist Monastery and also in the translation seminar on the Avatamsaka is what we're calling "Buddhist code." There's this wonderful medium called 四字成語(sì zì chéng yǔ), four character idioms. Four character phrases, that put into crystallized form, encapsulate the principles of the Dharma. The men and women who pretty much formed those are focused around what came to be known as the 天台教觀(tiān tái jiào guān), the perspectives and viewpoints of the Tian Tai school. There is a level of speaking Dharma where you do nothing but repeat the four character phrases. People might say, "What? I don't understand." They don't understand a word, so they think it must be really good.

It's called 文字般若(wén zì bō rě), literary prajna. It is just like filling a cup with cold water and dropping little tea nurdles (small pearl shapes) in it. What happens? [The tea is in the water, but there is no flavor]. The four character phrases of the Dharma without cultivation is just like this, recitation without actually putting it in your heart.



## 佛法解碼

恒實法師二零一九年八月十二日

開示於法大暑期譯經班

編按：參加此次譯經班的成員來自不同的背景，有出家眾、法界佛教大學學生、訪問學者，以及正在翻譯佛教典籍的譯者。

我們在柏克萊聖寺和華嚴經翻譯研討會正在討論的其中一個議題就是「佛教代碼」；有一種很好的媒介叫做「四字成語」，它言簡意賅地彰顯了佛法教理。後世稱這群致力構思四字詞語的人為天台教觀，即天台學派的主張和觀點。有一種講法的方式就是講者不斷重複四字成語，其他什麼也不做。有人可能會說，「什麼？我聽不懂！」因為聽眾一個字也聽不懂，就以為這一定是非常了不起的。

這就叫文字般若，就像在裝了冷水的杯子裡丟入幾片茶葉，會發生什麼事呢？（杯裡的確是茶湯，但卻毫無味道可言。）如果沒有真修實證的四字詞句就像是順口溜，無法真正與你的心相應。

Perhaps a better metaphor is that of putting on shoes and walking in them, but there's no flavor. And often, like the code of this four character phrases relating to teachings behind them, such actions are tips of an iceberg behind them. There's this ice underneath—an iceberg of human experience of toil, trial and failure, retrial and then ultimate success.

When we translate, we want to give some respect to these stories, because people put their lives into the symbols. As the Buddhist, I need to be humble, as I show up in front of other groups. I'm wearing a robe and I got the haircut, you know, so you must be the Buddhist? Well, I wonder how deep are those stories in me? Have I completely absorbed the new story of who has the power? Who has the authority? Who has the Proper Dharma Treasury? Well, ultimately, it's me.

Venerable Master Hua grew up on a farm in Manchuria. And yet, his nature was so uncovered that after his mother died, he decided he was going to listen and talk about principles and character phrases. Why would somebody sit by his mother's grave site for three years after their death? Well, you say filiality, yeah, but what did he get out of that? As I understand it, what he got out of that was releasing his mother from having to come back as his mother ever again, so that she could cultivate. By sitting by her grave for three years, praying or cultivating and transferring, he was trying to end that relationship. Why? It's because he deeply, deeply understood the power of maternal love mothers have for their children. Moms will die for their children; they will not cultivate, but do everything so that the child can cultivate. Master Hua deeply embodying this, by saying, "No mom, you've done your best. I want you to cultivate and become a Buddha. I'm going to stay with you for three years, so you'll never have to see me again."

I'm doing a project on the *Song of Enlightenment* or *Song of Realizing the Way*. And this was apt because I was in Vancouver over the weekend. Master Hua, in 1985, would visit there every three or four months. After his lectures, he would come down and sit on the couch, under the Wei Tuo Bodhisattva image at the back of the Buddha Hall and then kind of spread out. You knew then that Shifu was open for teaching and stories.

Master Hua started reciting the *Song of Enlightenment* one night, all sixty-three verses. It took seventeen minutes. When he was done, he said if you can memorize the *Song of Enlightenment*, then any day you can memorize and recite the *Song of Enlightenment*, that day, you will have no affliction. That

也許更好的比喻是，穿著鞋走路，無法得到實在的感受。通常，四字詞語與其背後的教理相關，這些代碼不過是冰山的一角，冰山的底下蘊藏的是先人的苦修、嘗試、失敗、再嘗試，最終取得成功的完整經驗。

當我們從事翻譯的時候，我們希望對這些故事給予一定的尊重，因為這些故事都代表著真實的人生。作為一名佛教徒，當我出現在其他團體面前時，我必須謙卑。我穿著長袍，剃去頭髮，你們就認為我是個佛教徒嗎？好吧，我想知道這些故事在我內心有多深？我是否完全吸收新版的故事，有關誰擁有力量？是誰擁有正法藏？那麼，最終的答案都是我們自己。

宣公上人在東北的一個農村長大。然而，他的自性如此顯現，所以在母親去世後，他決定要傾聽並討論道理和偈語。為什麼要廬墓三年呢？好吧，你們說是因為孝順，沒錯，但是他從中學到了什麼呢？據我所知，上人幫助他的母親免於輪迴再來做他的母親，讓母親可以去修行。上人廬墓三年，用功誦經持咒、修行、迴向，以結束和母親的業緣。為什麼？這是因為上人非常明白母愛的力量，母親會為了孩子付出生命，但是不會去修行；母親會竭盡所能，讓自己的孩子能夠修行。上人深深明白這一點，他說：「不可以的，母親，您已經盡力了。我要您修行證果。我用三年的時間陪在您身邊，這樣您就不必再見到我。」

我正在進行《證道歌》的翻譯工作。談論這個題目相當適合，因為上個週末我在溫哥華。1985年，上人每三或四個月會去一次溫哥華。講法後，上人會下來坐在沙發上，在佛堂後面的韋陀菩薩像前坐下，大家也圍坐著，聽上人講故事、講開示。

有一晚上人開始念誦《證道歌》，他花了17分鐘誦完63首偈頌。之後，上

is the whole ballgame. Affliction is ultimately what kills us again and again over time. So I set to work memorizing it for quite a few years. I did have it memorized in Chinese, but it goes away if you don't keep it up, but I memorized it. I put it on three by five cards, and memorized it at lunch in between bites of tofu (tofu) and *dì guā yè* (sweet potato leaves,) I would turn each card over and memorize. Unfortunately, I kept my afflictions. So I guess I didn't have it truly memorized.

Anyway, I thought this is so good. I wanted to translate it for people who can't read the Chinese. I started looking, and sure enough, there was the Xuyun Order, Robert Akin's translation. There was also the Dragon Flower Chan temple's version. And there was the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association version, which various people have worked on. This one has Shifu's commentary, and also a vow Shifu made when he first explained it in 1965. So it was really, really early when Shifu explained *Song of Enlightenment*. There is a copy of that translation. There is a Buddhist Text Translation Society (BTTS) version and lots of other different versions online. And so I set about translating.

We do Buddhist music every day. What else do we have? We have sacred names — *Namo Guanshiyin Bodhisattava*. We have mantras and sutras. And each one of these has a musical setting. Another thing that we have abundance of, that people don't talk about very much, is songs. We have praises, 彌陀讚 (*mí tuó zàn*), the *Amitabha Priase*.

Christianity is a praise tradition, and Buddhism is also a praise tradition. So we've got all these different kinds of musical genres. Within Buddhism, we also have songs, and they're meant to be sung. If you translate it without the meter, then you've made it into something that wasn't meant to be. So when I looked at *Song of Enlightenment*, what I discovered was first of all, Master Xuanjue, who's called Yongjia Dashi, Great Master from Yongjia's place, his name was Xuanjue. His story about how he woke up is in the *Sixth Patriarch Sutra*. He's one of the hosts in the *ji yuan pin* who wakes up. He's the one who comes in, raps his staff and doesn't bow. And the Sixth Patriarch says, "Boy, you're pretty arrogant, aren't you?" Master Xuanjue goes right back at him, they have this wonderful dialogue, check it out in *Sixth Patriarch Sutra*. ☞ To be continued

人對我們說：「如果能記住《證道歌》，哪一天你會背誦《證道歌》，那一天你就不會有煩惱。」這就是關鍵所在，煩惱長久以來對我們不斷的傷害。我就開始努力背誦，也記住了很多年。我當時確實用中文背誦《證道歌》，但是如果沒有經常吟誦就會忘記它，但是我的確曾經會背《證道歌》。我把它抄在三英寸乘五英寸大小的卡片上，午餐的時候，一邊吃著豆腐和地瓜葉，一邊背誦它。（我會把卡片翻到背面，然後背誦。）遺憾的是，我仍然有煩惱，我想我沒有真的記住它。

無論如何，我認為《證道歌》實在太好了，我想為不懂中文的人翻譯它。於是我開始蒐集資料，有羅伯特·艾金翻譯的虛老版本，有龍華禪寺的版本，還有多人參與的法總版本。現在這個版本包括師父的淺釋，以及他在1965年首次講解《證道歌》時所發的願。所以這是上人早期講《證道歌》的版本和當時的翻譯。法總中文編輯部在網路上有很多不同的版本，這是當時的翻譯。佛經翻譯委員會和網絡上也有許多不同版本的《證道歌》，因此我們將盡快完成它。

我們每天都沉浸在佛教音樂中。我們有什麼呢？我們有聖號—南無觀世音菩薩；我們有經咒……，每種都有其音樂格式。另外，我們還有很多平時人們很少談論的歌曲；我們有讚頌：〈彌陀讚〉。

基督教有唱讚美詩的傳統，佛教也有。因此，我們擁有所有這些不同類型的音樂風格。在佛教中，我們也有各種歌曲，而且是用來唱的。如果翻譯的時候沒有考慮節拍，那麼這個翻譯就讓作品失真。因此，當我看著《證道歌》時，首先注意的是寫歌的玄覺大師，他也叫永嘉大師，是永嘉這個地方著名的大師，他的名字叫玄覺。《六祖壇經》裡有關於他如何悟道的故事，他是〈機緣品〉中談及的開悟高僧之一。他去拜訪六祖時，繞六祖三圈，卻不叩頭頂禮。六祖說：「唉呀，你真是個貢高我慢的人，是不是？」玄覺大師立即回應，他與六祖大師進行了一場精彩的對話，請看《六祖壇經》。

☞待續