

# The Teaching and Origin of the Avatamsaka Sutra

## 華嚴經的傳法和本源

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When the Venerable Master was lecturing the *Huá Yán Jīng*, the *Avatamsaka*, he corresponded with other monks and noted their study and understanding of the Sutra. When I visited the Hua Yan Lotus Temple in Taipei, I was told that they had some correspondences from the Venerable Master in dialogue with Venerable Cheng Yi of that temple. I was also told that Venerable Shou Ye wrote, using his own blood, the entire *Avatamsaka Sutra* in Chinese characters: two inches high.

Now, because this Dharma Assembly is investigating the “Ten Grounds” Chapter of the *Avatamsaka*, I would like to refresh everyone’s memory about the origins for the Sutra. Shakyamuni Buddha repeatedly states that his ideas and actions are not philosophies, but paths or vehicles; they are practical methods that allow Awakening. The teaching of the *Avatamsaka*, the Mahayana mind of *Avatamsaka*, was disseminated and developed by Bodhisattava Nagarjuna, and the Venerables Vasubandhu and Aśvaghōṣa in India. It was translated into Chinese by Buddhahadra and Siksana and it has undergone many changes with the passage of time. As a result, numerous variations developed in the teaching. Furthermore, the refinement, development and completion of Avatamsaka School’s system of teaching took place in China from the sixth dynasty (C.386-518 A.D.) to the heyday of Chinese Buddhism during the Sui and Tang Dynasties (C.581-906 A.D.). During this period of over 500 years, numerous

上人講解《華嚴經》的時候，常與對這部經有研究的其他法師書信交流。當我造訪位於台北的華嚴蓮社時，他們告訴我蓮社保存一些上人和成一法師往來的信件，當天並也聊到壽冶法師用自己的血書寫了一部約有兩英吋厚，七十餘萬字的《華嚴經》。

我想談談這部經的起源。釋迦摩尼佛一再提到他的思想和行為並非哲學，而是修行的路徑或方法，是能夠開悟的法門。華嚴的教法即是大乘佛法的思想，由龍樹菩薩、世親菩薩和馬鳴菩薩在印度傳播；之後才由佛陀跋陀羅法師和實叉難陀法師翻譯成中文。隨著時間的推移，歷經許多變化；因此在教法上衍生出許多派別。此外，從公元六世紀（約386-518年）到隋唐中國佛教的鼎盛時期（581-906年），華嚴宗的教體發展日趨成熟。在這五百多年間，眾多得道高僧以《華嚴經》為主要研究與個人修習題材，

learned masters took the Avatamsaka as their major subject of study as well as of personal cultivation and established the Avatamsaka School successfully along with its doctrines.

Nowadays, we try to grasp the Buddha's teaching through the the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, the meaning of which reflects the state of the Buddha. The first step for the study of the *Avatamsaka* is to understand the structure and system of the *Avatamsaka*. For the purposes of the overall understanding of the the *Avatamsaka* itself, its text, translation, commentary and sub-commentary are all recommended.

The Buddha taught the the *Avatamsaka* the first twenty-one days after his enlightenment. As written words are based upon an alphabet of letters or characters, so too all Dharmas are not separate from the Ten Grounds. The teaching of this text forms the unique condition of the Buddha's Enlightenment. In the transmission of the the *Avatamsaka*, without preaching Dharma by sound and word himself, the Buddha emits a kind of light to transmit the dharma through the mind to the Bodhisattvas, who will appreciate and assimilate the vast nuances of the Buddha's Enlightenment. The explanations for this teaching were in a different awareness than the earthly world we typically are aware of. Indeed, the infinite truth pervades not just this earth but the Dharma Realm. Any possible feature of the truth is be revealed anywhere and everywhere simultaneously.

So, likewise if we purify our minds and sincerely practice the teachings of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas, we can draw near to them and experience the light and presence of these great dharma beings. We can become close to them and further our cultivation with these good dharma friends. ❀

也成功地創立了華嚴宗及其理論。

現在，我們試著藉由研究《華嚴經》來認識佛陀的教義；《華嚴經》的經義反映出佛陀的境界。學習《華嚴經》的第一步就是理解這部經的架構和思想體系。為了能夠對《華嚴經》有全面性的理解，建議從《華嚴經》的經本、譯本、《華嚴經疏》和《華嚴疏鈔》著手。

佛陀成道最初之三七日間說演說這部《華嚴經》。正如文字是以字母或漢字為基礎一樣，一切法都不離〈十地品〉，這段經文也闡釋成佛的特定條件。在演說這部《華嚴經》的過程中，佛陀並不是通過聲音或言語來傳法，而是藉由放光將法傳到菩薩的心，讓諸佛菩薩體解佛陀悟道的覺斯玄妙。佛對菩薩的傳法有別於我們常人所知道的方法。《華嚴經》無窮的真實義理不僅遍照這個世界，也周遍法界；也可能在一切處同時具顯。

因此，如果我們能自淨其心，虔心修習佛菩薩的教法，我們就能更接近、去感受佛菩薩的光明和能量。我們可以更親近他們，並跟隨諸佛菩薩來精進修行。❀



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