

Excerpts from Spanish Translation Group's Q&A with DM Heng Chih

恒持法師與西班牙語翻譯組問答摘要

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Editor's Note: Dharma Master Heng Chih, the most senior Bhikshuni of DRBA (Dharma Realm Buddhist Association), was invited to answer questions from the Spanish translation group of BTTS (Buddhist Text Translation Society) on the afternoon of September 5 in the DRBU (Dharma Realm Buddhist University) library.

The Spanish translation group includes people from Ecuador, Spain, Mexico, Argentina and Venezuela. On this day, there were seven people online and five people in the room attending. Bhikshuni Jin Deng was the moderator at DRBU library and helped with translation.

Q: What is the best way to cultivate, reveal our wisdom and propagate the dharma?

A: The best way is to do what you like to do – Recite mantras, meditate, work for the monastery, bow, chant – that is the best way. After you do what you like, you do it everyday. While you do it, you feel happy and you do not try to do more than it's possible for you to do in a day. Our wisdom opens naturally when we cultivate everyday and we do not make ourselves too stressed and we're happy about it. Gradually our wisdom opens. To help propagate the Buddha dharma – you could just do what I said, you could be a model for others. You could be a layperson who people see is happy. Everyday you do your dharmas, everyday you practice. That in itself without anything more can help propagate dharma.

When we propagate the Dharma, and someone like you asks could you speak, could you tell us about the Dharma, could you tell a story? You do not say, "Oh no, I couldn't, I'm not worthy". You say, "Oh yes, I can tell you a story." You take a list, you take

編按：法界佛教總會最資深的比丘尼恒持法師於9月5日下午在法界佛教大學圖書館，應邀答覆佛經翻譯委員會西語組成員的問題。

西語組成員遍布於厄瓜多爾、西班牙、墨西哥、阿根廷、委內瑞拉。當天有七位成員透過網路提問，另有五位在現場參加這場問答。比丘尼近燈師在法大圖書館負責主持，並協助口譯。

問：修行、開智慧與弘法的最佳方式是什麼？

答：最佳方式就是你喜歡的方式，例如誦咒、打坐、為道場服務、禮佛、唱誦等，那就是最佳方式。採取你喜歡的方式之後，就要每天去做。如此一來，你會感到快樂。而且不要超過自己每天能負擔的範圍，以免造成壓力。只要每天修行，我們的智慧自然就能開啓。我們也不要給自己太大的壓力，又能感到快樂，我們的智慧逐漸就能開啓。至於幫忙弘揚佛法，你可以照我所說的去做，你就能成為別人的模範，你將成為別人眼中天天快樂修行、落實佛法的居士。如此一來，就能幫忙弘揚佛法。

當我們弘揚佛法，有人像你這樣來問：可不可以給我們講佛法，說個故事？你可別答說：不行，我不夠資格。你應該說：好啊！我說個故事給你聽。你列出個清單，包括四聖諦、六波羅蜜。你知道的少一些都可以談，你想弘揚佛法，就得願意分享。因此下次有人要求你跟他們講佛法時，記得要說些話。

the four holy truths, the six paramitas, then you talk about the little that you know. You can at least talk a little bit. If you want to propagate the Dharma, you have to be willing to share. So next time someone asks you to tell them about the Dharma, you have to remember to say something.

Q: What is the self?

A: The self comes from our consciousness and it is totally fallacious. It is also who we think we are. According to Buddhism, it is totally a mistake – who we think we are.

Q: Is there not the beginning of the self?

A: Yes, there is a beginning according Buddhism, in the *Shurangama Sutra* – if you go to the fourth volume in English, you will find that something happens, we are fine; there is nothing wrong with us. For some reason, we move. When we move, first an object appears and the second thing that appears is the self. In Christianity they talk about the creation theory. In Buddhism we say nobody created us, we created ourselves. In the beginning – in the *Shurangama*, that is the beginning of the self. Sometimes we talk about three subtle marks, which is where the self starts.

Q: Is there an end to self?

A: Yes. You have to read the *Shurangama Sutra* – fourth volume.

When does that happen? When the self reaches emptiness, that is when the self is ending.

Then you have to read the *Sixth Patriarch Sutra*. It says you have to be careful about emptiness. You can get yourself stuck in a spot that is not really completely devoid of the self.

My answer to when does it end is anytime we want it to. We have to work at it, but anytime we want it to, we can be done with it. That is why I stay a Buddhist because that is very interesting to me. I could at any moment, right now, I could get rid of myself.

Q: Is the law of cause and effect the most important teaching of the Buddha?

A: What do you think?

Q: I believe it is the most important teaching of the Buddha. When I am aware in everyday life about the law of cause and effect then I feel better and feel that real compassion is born. If I pay attention to the beginning of my thoughts of action, then I will be aware of the law of cause and effect in my everyday life. So yes, I believe it is the most important teaching of the Buddha.

A: You answered your question very well. That is true for you but it may not be true for everybody. Buddhism is like that, if it works for you then that is the best one for you and you should do exactly what you are doing.

Q: If I put it (the law of cause and effect) into practice on an everyday basis as the most important teaching, will it benefit my inner work?

A: Yes, it will and I think you answered that as well when you talked about what you learned from cause and effect about compassion and about your own self and how to interact with other people. It is working for you, so yes, you can take it as most important and it will benefit you. You may find that you move on and find something else important later on but that

問：什麼是我？

答：我來自我們的意識心，（我）是完全謬誤的，同時也是我們自己認為的自我。照佛教的看法，我們自己認為的自我完全是個錯誤。

問：我是否有個起點，或者沒有起點？

答：是的，佛教認為我有個起點。《楞嚴經》第四卷中提到，當我們一動念，首先出現一個物體，接著我就出現了。基督教有「創世紀」理論，佛教則說是我們創造我們自己，而不是別人創造了我們。《楞嚴經》裏說，這就是我的開端。有時候我們談到三細相，那就是我的開端。

問：我（相）有沒有結束的時候？

答：有的。你得看《楞嚴經》第四卷。我相什麼時候結束？當證到空相，我相就沒了。然後你要看《六祖壇經》，裏頭提到你對空相要小心。你可能會陷到一個點上，並沒有完全空掉我相。

我個人對我相何時結束的答案是：任何時候，只要我們願意。當然我們得要努力，但任何時候只要我們想要，我們就可以空掉我相。這就是我為什麼一直是佛教徒的原因，因為這對我而言，真是太有趣了。我可以在任何時候，就是當下，空掉自己。

問：因果律是不是佛陀最重要的教誨？

答：你的看法呢？

問：我相信這是佛陀最重要的教誨。當我每天意識到因果律時，我會感覺好得多，並發出真正的慈悲。如果我注意自己對行為起心動念的起點時，我就會在日常生活中意識到因果律。因此，我相信這是佛陀最重要的教誨。

答：妳答覆自己的問題答得很好，這對妳而言是真的，但不見得每個人都如此。佛教正是如此，只要於你對機，就是最適合你的，你就該照著做下去。

問：如果我每天落實因果律，將之當作最重要的事，對我的內在修行有幫助嗎？

答：有幫助的。我想當你談到你從因果律學到慈悲、我相、以及如何與他人互動時，你也同時答覆了你自己的問題。既然這對你適合，你就可將因果律當作佛陀最重要的教

does not matter. Now if cause and effect works for you, you use cause and effect.

Q: I'm afraid I cannot study *Shurangama Sutra* well because I don't understand Chinese.

A: No! When I came to Buddhism I did not know Chinese people, Chinese language, nor did I not know what a Buddhist sutra was. I certainly didn't know what the *Shurangama* was and the first thing the Master taught was the *Shurangama*. Because in it, there are some things the Buddha did not really say anywhere else. One of them is the seven destinies. In the seven destinies, the Buddha goes into great detail to explain why we might be in a given destiny, but he also tells us we won't be there forever.

I used to be a Methodist, a Christian, and I would go into the library and read all the different commentaries on the Bible looking for answers to questions. And what I learned mostly is anything that happens is forever. When I came to Buddhism, I learned that Christianity is called "eternalism" because everything is forever. So you think about it, you live one life and then you go to heaven forever or hell forever. And in this one life, the way Christianity sees it, as I understand it, the domestic animals are here for us to use – to eat, to exploit and it will always be that way in this world. I have been teaching at university for many years now and I check with students who are not Buddhist and they verify that is the way it is. You get one life and then you get to heaven or hell forever and yes, everything that's here is for us to use and exploit as human beings.

Buddhism is different. We might be an animal – that is a shock – or we might go to the hells, or we might be a god or we might be a guardian angel, a protector. Buddhism says in our passage of migration through lives, we might be any of those things. What is different is that Buddhism says it will only be for a while. How long? As long as we deserve it. If it is a good thing, then we have lots of blessings, money, lots of food, and lots of enjoyment. But only as long as we deserve it. And if it's a bad thing – let's take terrorists for example who seem for no reason at all to kill themselves or kill other people, they too will only be that way as long as they deserve and then they're going to become something else—hopefully, eventually, something good. Buddhism is saying we can make choices and we have the potential to always get better. And nothing lasts forever when it comes to our karma. Just that section alone is something that people who are not Buddhists ought to read, let alone Buddhists. I am so glad I got to read it when I was young.

Q: How do we diminish or get rid of the skandhas?

A: In the *Shurangama Sutra*, there is a section called "The 50 skandha demons". The Buddha never spoke it anywhere else. He did not even speak it because he was asked. He spoke it because he knew we would not even know to ask. That section does answer your question. How do we diminish or get rid of the skandhas. It comes through meditation.

誨，這將對你很有利益。修行路上繼續前進，你可能會發現其他重要之事，但沒關係。現在因果對你的機，你就用因果。

問：我不懂中文，我擔心不能好好研究《楞嚴經》。

答：不是這樣的。我剛開始學佛時，我不了解華人，不懂中文，也不知道佛經是什麼，當然更不曉得《楞嚴經》。但是上人最先教我們的，就是《楞嚴經》，因為這部經裏佛陀所講的一些義理，是在別處所未曾說過的。其中之一就是七趣，佛陀詳細解釋了七趣，告訴我們為何會投生那一趣。但佛陀也說，我們不會永遠在那一趣。

我原來是美以美教會的基督徒，我到圖書館去查閱聖經的各種不同註釋版本，希望從中找到能夠解決我許多疑問的答案。我學到的是，任何發生的事，都是永遠不變的。但我學佛後，得知基督教是永恒主義，因為任何事都是永遠不變的。人活完這輩子後，可以上天堂或下地獄，永遠待在那裏。在這一一生中，基督教的看法，根據我的理解，家畜永遠在畜牲道，被人食用、利用，在世上永遠如此。我在大學教書多年，問過非佛教徒的學生，他們都說正是如此。你活了這一世，然後上天堂得永生或下地獄不得超生。世上其他眾生都是給人食用、利用。

佛教則不同，我們可能是動物—這很令人震驚—或者我們可能下地獄，我們也可能是神，或護法神。佛教指出，在我們生生世世輪迴中，我們什麼都當過，但都是暫時的，時間多長呢？長到我們可享受或該受的業結束為止。如果是好的業，我們會擁有很多福報、財富、食物、享樂，享完為止。如果是惡業，例如恐怖份子，幾乎毫無理由地自殺或殺害別人，他們也一樣，惡業受完就會變成別的，當然最終希望他們走上善道。佛教說我們有所選擇，我們有潛力不斷向上。談到業報，無論是好是壞，都不會永遠如此。光是這一段，就值得所有非佛教徒閱讀，何況是佛教徒，我非常高興自己很早就有機會讀到這些。

問：如何減少或破除五陰？

答：這是佛陀在楞嚴經裏談到五十陰魔，而在別的地方從未提及。佛甚至不是因為有人問起而談，佛談到這段是因為知道我們根本就不懂得要問。在這段中，就談到你的問題：如何減少或破除五陰，那就要靠打坐。如果你看《楞嚴

If you look at that section of the *Shurangama Sutra* and if you look at the beginning of each skandha and the very end in the text, it will tell you what the skandha is like in the beginning and in the end. The text will tell you, once a skandha is gone, what ability you will have or what level you have reached. You can study that. The Master's commentary indicates that even if you have broken through those skandhas, that is not total enlightenment. That is all I am going to say about that. It is an extraordinary section, and we who study Buddhism should read it. I am happy I got to read it early on in my studies.

Q: It is very good for us in Mexico to read the *Shurangama Sutra* because there is so much violence and because of the difficult time we are experiencing here. Is it good to recite the *Shurangama Mantra*?

A: Yes. You should know your country is not the only one undergoing violence. You are not alone. The mantra is good for the world. The Master said as long as anybody can recite it from memory, then the world is not going to fall apart. He said when that could not be done, when no one can recite it from memory, there will be many "people" who are not really people. They are other entities who have the ability to take on human form and cause a lot of chaos among people. The Master said when a government falls apart – we have a lot of that in the Middle East and Europe right now, then chaos reigns until a new government can get control. During that chaos, a lot of entities will take on human form and help cause the chaos. They aren't really people. But when the *Shurangama Mantra* is in people's hearts and they can recite it, the *Shurangama* strength will keep that from happening. Without anybody reciting the mantra, then chaos can happen. When it happens, it makes the process of changing a government even harder. Even if you cannot recite it from memory, it is good if you recite it.

You ask me about Mexico – Mexico, America, Canada, Europe, Australia – anywhere you do it, even if you don't know it by heart, it's going to help. And if you can learn certain parts of it by heart and use those, that can help even more. Not only do you help Mexico but you help reduce the conflict between Mexico and America. Or to put it in another way, you help there be positive bonding between Mexico and America when you recite the mantra. Do you believe me?

Q: I recite the mantra but do not understand the all Sanskrit words. Can reciting the mantra only still help?

A: When we first learned, we did not know Sanskrit and I did not know the Chinese, I only knew the sounds. Yes, the Master said, it can help, Later he explained it all.

At the end of this Q & A session, one of the Spanish group members on-line said that she would like to see DRBA establish a branch monastery in Mexico. Another member requested that the Dharma Master to lecture the *Shurangama Sutra* in Mexico because this is the first Sutra the Venerable Master Hua spoke for his western disciples in the United States. Also lecturing the *Shurangama Sutra* in a country without the Buddhadharma will help spread the proper Dharma in that country. ❀

經》五十陰魔，就會看到五陰起始與將盡之際的情況，以及破除五陰後能達到什麼境界與功夫。如果你看上人的淺釋，說到即使破除五陰，也還不是完全證悟。我要說的就是這些，這是很特別的章節，研究佛法的人都應該看，我很高興我很早就已經讀到這個部分。

問：在墨西哥能研讀《楞嚴經》對我們來說是很好的，因為這裏充斥暴力，我們面臨的時代又非常困難。持誦〈楞嚴咒〉好嗎？

答：是的。要知道不是只有你的國家正面臨暴力，你們不是唯一的。〈楞嚴咒〉能利益全世界。上人說，只要有人能背〈楞嚴咒〉，世界就不會毀滅。否則很多衆生就會現出人形，但其實不是人，它們會造成人間很多混亂。上人說過，當政府分崩離析時，正如現在中東和歐洲許多國家的情況，就會一直亂下去，直到新政權能掌握局面為止。在政局混亂之際，很多衆生就會現出人形，助長混亂，這會使政權的改換更加困難。當有人會誦〈楞嚴咒〉時，咒的力量就能防止這種情形發生。沒人誦〈楞嚴咒〉時，這種情形就會出現。

你問我墨西哥，其實包括墨西哥、美國、加拿大、歐洲、澳洲，無論你去哪裏，只要能念〈楞嚴咒〉，就算不能背熟，也能利益當地。或是你背一部分，懂得怎麼運用它，更可以發揮它的利益。這樣你不但能幫助墨西哥，還能減少美墨衝突。或者可以說，你誦〈楞嚴咒〉，能幫助墨西哥與美國維繫彼此正面的積極關係。你相信嗎？

問：我不懂梵文，光是誦咒有用嗎？

答：當我們剛開始學時，我們不懂梵文，我也不懂中文，我只會發音。上人說，還是有用。上人是後來才逐句解釋〈楞嚴咒〉。

問答告一段落時，在墨西哥上線的西語組成員之一表示，希望以後墨西哥能有法總的分支道場。另一位成員請求法師到墨西哥開講《楞嚴經》，因為這正是上人在美國為西方弟子正式講解的第一部經。西語組成員認為，在沒有佛法的地方開講《楞嚴經》，將有助於在當地推廣弘揚正法。❀