**The Shurangama Sutra**

**VOLUME 8**

**CHAPTER 9**

**Exhortation to Propagate the Sutra**

B3 Propagation section.  
C1 Compares to blessings of offering to Buddhas.  
 **Sutra:  
  
Ananda, suppose someone were to fill up all the space in the ten directions with the seven precious things and then present them as an offering to Buddhas as numerous as motes of dust, with his mind set on serving and making offerings to them in thought after thought. Do you think this person would reap many blessings from making such an offering to the Buddhas?  
  
Commentary:**  
  
Ananda, suppose someone were to fill up all the space in the worlds of the ten directions with the seven precious things and then present them as an offering to Buddhas as numerous as motes of dust, with his mind set on serving and making offerings to them in thought after thought. There would be gold, silver, Vaidurya, crystal, mother-of-pearl, red pearls, and carnelian everywhere. He would then very respectfully hold them up as an offering to limitless, boundless Buddhas. He would be bowing and making offerings in every thought, without letting a moment go by in vain.  
  
Do you think this person would reap many blessings from making such an offering to the Buddhas? what do you think? TMs person has given such a tremendous quantity of the seven precious things as an offering to the Buddhas. Under these circumstances, will he obtain a great reward of blessings? What do you say?  
 **Sutra:  
  
Ananda answered, "Since space is limitless, the precious things would be boundless. In the past, someone gave the Buddha seven coins and consequently was reborn as a wheelturning king in his next life. As to this person who now fills up all of space and all the Buddhalands with an offering of precious things that could not be reckoned through endless eons, how could there be a limit to his blessings?"  
  
Commentary:**  
  
Ananda answered, "Since space is limitless, the precious things would be boundless. In the past, someone gave the Buddha seven coins and consequently was reborn as a wheelturning king in his next life." A wheel-turning sage king has a thousand sons. It is not known how many wives he has. A wheelturning sage king has awesome virtue. He has a vehicle that can take him around the four great continents in just a couple of hours. His vehicle is probably faster than any modern-day rocket. That is one of the treasures he owns.  
  
As to this person who now fills up all of space and all the Buddhalands with an offering of precious things that could not be reckoned through endless eons, how could there be a limit to his blessings? The person who offered seven coins to the Buddha attained the position of a wheel-turning sage king. Now this person gives an offering not of a mere seven coins, but of a quantity of the seven precious things that fills empty space and the dharma-realm. Even if one spent a limitless and inconceivable number of eons, one could never finish calculating his blessings and virtue. How could you say that his blessings have a limit? They have no limit.  
  
C3 Praising the merit of extinguishing evil.  
 **Sutra:  
  
The Buddha told Ananda, "All Buddhas, Tathagatas, speak words which are not false. There might be another person who had personally committed the four major offenses and the ten parajikas so that, in an instant he would have to pass through the Avichi Hells in this world and other worlds, until he had passed through all the Relentless Hells in the ten directions without exception.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
The Buddha told Ananda, "All Buddhas, Tathagatas, speak words which are not false. The Buddhas do not tell lies. There might be another person who had personally committed the four major offenses and the ten parajikas." The four major offenses are killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and lying. In the Shurangama Sutra, they are known as the "four clear instructions on purity," which you heard about earlier. The ten parajikas are the ten major Bodhisattva precepts. Parajika means cast out, for someone who commits these offenses is cast out of the sea of the Buddhadharma. These ten offenses cannot be repented of. If you want to understand them in detail, you can look up the first ten Bodhisattva precepts. So that, in an instant, he would have to pass through the Avichi Hells in this world and other worlds, until he had passed through all the Relentless Hells in all the worlds throughout the ten directions, he would have undergone suffering for his offenses in every single hell without exception.  
 **Sutra:  
  
And yet if he could explain this dharma-door for just the space of a thought to those in the Dharma-ending Age who have not yet studied it, his obstacles from offenses would be eradicated in response to that thought, and all the hells where he was to undergo suffering would become lands of peace and bliss.  
  
Commentary:**  
And yet if he could explain this dharma-door of the great Shurangama Samadhi for just the space of a thought to those in the Dharma-ending Age who have not yet studied it, his obstacles from offenses would be eradicated in response to that thought. If in the Dharma-ending Age, for as short a time as the space of a single thought, this person could teach the dharma-door of the Shurangama Sutra to people who have not yet studied the Buddhadharma, his offenses would swiftly be eradicated. And all the hells where he was to undergo suffering would become lands of peace and bliss. All the suffering he was due to undergo in the various hells would become peace and happiness that he gets to enjoy. He would not experience any suffering at all.  
 **Sutra:  
  
The blessings he would obtain would surpass those of the person previously mentioned by hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of times, indeed by so many times that no calculations or analogies could express it.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
The blessings he would obtain would surpass those of the person previously mentioned. The blessings obtained by the person who explains the Shurangama Sutra surpass those gained by the person who fills empty space and the dharma-realm with the seven precious things and offers them to as many Tathagatas as there are motes of dust, respectfully serving and making offerings to them. If you can explain the Shurangama Sutra for people who don't understand the Buddhadharma, the blessings you obtain surpass those of the other person by hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of times, indeed by so many times that no calculations or analogies could express it. Your reward of blessings is so much greater that there is no way to figure out just how great it is.  
  
C4 Brings up the supremacy of two benefits.  
 **Sutra:  
  
Ananda, if living beings are able to recite this sutra and uphold this mantra, I could not describe in endless eons how great the benefits will be. Rely on the teaching I have spoken. Cultivate in accord with it, and you will directly realize Bodhi without encountering demonic karma.  
  
Commentary:**  
Ananda, if living beings in the future are able to recite this sutra and uphold this mantra, I could not describe in endless eons how great the benefits will be. If I were to speak in detail about the benefits of reading and reciting the Shurangama Sutra and reciting the Shurangama Mantra, I still wouldn't finish no matter how many great eons had passed.  
  
All of you should rely on the teaching I have spoken. Cultivate in accord with it, and you will directly realize Bodhi without encountering any demonic karma. Follow this method to cultivate, and you will straightaway be able to accomplish the Unsurpassed Fruition of Bodhi, without undergoing any further demonic karma.  
  
[January 1983]  
  
The Shurangama Sutra is a sutra that acts like a demonspotting mirror in Buddhism. All the celestial demons, externalists, and the li, mei, and wang Liang ghosts reveal their true appearance when they see the Shurangama Sutra. They have no way to hide and no place to which they can flee. And so in the past, when Great Master Zhi Zhe heard of the existence of this sutra, he bowed in the direction of India for eighteen years. For eighteen years, he used this spirit of utmost sincerity to pray for this sutra to be brought to China.  
  
Of all the greatly virtuous and eminent monks of the past, all the wise and lofty Sanghans, there was not a single one who did not praise the Shurangama Sutra. Therefore, as long as the Shurangama Sutra exists, the Buddhadharma exists. If the Shurangama Sutra is destroyed, then the Buddhadharma will also become extinct. How will the decline of the dharma come about? It will begin with the destruction of the Shurangama Sutra. Who will destroy it? The celestial demons and externalists will. They see the Shurangama Sutra as being like a nail in their eyes and a thorn in their flesh. They can't sit stilt and they can't stand steady; they are compelled to invent a deviant theory that says the Shurangama Sutra is false.  
  
As Buddhist disciples, we should recognize true principle. Every word of the doctrines in the Shurangama Sutra is the absolute truth. There isn't one word that does not express the truth. So now that we are studying the fifty skandha demons, we should realize even more just how important the Shurangama Sutra is. The Shurangama Sutra is what the deviant demons, ghosts, and goblins fear most.  
  
The Venerable Master Hsu Yun lived to be a hundred and twenty years old, and during his whole life, he didn't write a commentary for any sutra other than the Shurangama Sutra. He took special care to preserve the manuscript of his commentary on the Shurangama Sutra. He preserved it for several decades, but it was later lost during the Yunmen incident. This was the Elder Hsu's greatest regret in his life. He proposed that, as left-home people, we should study the Shurangama Sutra to the point that we can recite it by memory, from the beginning to the end, and from the end to the beginning, forwards and backwards. That was his proposal. I know that, throughout his whole life, the Elder Hsu regarded the Shurangama Sutra as being especially important.  
  
When someone informed the Elder Hsu that there were people who said the Shurangama Sutra was false, he explained that the decline of the dharma occurs just because these people try to pass fish eyes off as pearls, confusing people so that they cannot distinguish right from wrong. They make people blind so that they can no longer recognize the Buddhadharma. They take the true as false, and the false as true. Look at these people: This one writes a book, and people all read it. That one writes a book, and they read it too. The real sutras spoken by the Buddha himself are put up on the shelf, where no one ever reads them. From this, we can see that living beings' karmic obstacles are very heavy. If they hear deviant knowledge and deviant views, they readily believe them. If you speak dharma based on proper knowledge and proper views, they won't believe it. Speak it again, and they still won't believe it.  
  
Why? Because they don't have sufficient good roots and foundations. That's why they have doubts about the proper dharma. They are skeptical and unwilling to believe.  
  
Here at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, we will be setting up the Shurangama Platform, so it will be ideal if some of you bring forth the resolve to read the Shurangama Sutra every day for one or two hours. You can study it daily just as if you were studying in school and memorize it so that you can recite it by heart. If you can recite the Shurangama Sutra, the Dharma Flower Sutra, and even [the Avatamsaka Sutra](http://cttbusa.org/avatamsaka/avatamsaka_contents.asp) from memory, that will be the very best. If someone is able to recite the Shurangama Sutra, the Dharma Flower Sutra, and the Avatamsaka Sutra from memory, then it will mean that this is still a time when the proper dharma exists in the world. Therefore, in such a wonderful place as the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, everyone should bring forth a great Bodhi resolve to do these things. It's not that we are competing with others. We should be outstanding, rise above the crowd, and do these things.  
  
In the past, I had a wish: I wanted to be able to recite [the Dharma Flower Sutra](http://cttbusa.org/lotus/lotus_contents.asp) and the Shurangama Sutra from memory. In Hong Kong, I have a disciple who can recite the Shurangama Sutra from memory. I taught him to study the Dharma Flower Sutra, but in the end he probably didn't finish memorizing it which is very regrettable. In such a fine place as we have here, each of you should bring forth a great resolve to study the Buddhist sutras and precepts, the Shurangama Sutra, the Dharma Flower Sutra, the vinaya in four divisions, and the Brahma Net Sutra, until you can recite them from memory. That would be the best, for then the proper dharma would surely remain here for a long time.  
  
C5 Concludes with the dharma bliss experienced by the great assembly.  
 **Sutra:  
  
When the Buddha finished speaking this sutra, the bhikshus, bhikshunis, upasakas, upasikas, and all the gods, humans, and asuras in this world, as well as all the Bodhisattvas, those of the two vehicles, sages, immortals, and pure youths in other directions, and the mighty ghosts and spirits of initial resolve all felt elated, made obeisance, and withdrew.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
When the Buddha finished speaking this sutra, all the great bhikshus; all the bhikshunis; upasakas, a Sanskrit word that means "men who serve closely," that is, laymen who draw near to and serve the Buddha; upasikas, women who serve closely; and all the gods; humans; and asuras in this world. By now you all know what asuras are; they have the biggest tempers and they love to fight. One of my disciples says his dog is an asura. Well, maybe he himself is an asura as well! But I believe that after you all have heard the Shurangama Sutra, you will become Bodhisattvas, and no longer have the temper of asuras. As well as all the Bodhisattvas of other lands; those of the two vehicles, the soundhearers and those enlightened by conditions; sages; immortals; and pure youths, who enter the path of cultivation in their youthful innocence, in other directions; and the mighty ghosts and spirits of initial resolve all felt elated, made obeisance, and withdrew.  
  
Now that we have finished hearing this sutra, no matter what kind of beings we are, whether we are gods, humans, asuras, hellbeings, hungry ghosts, or animals, we must bring forth the Bodhi resolve. We must all practice the Bodhisattva Path. We must all be Bodhisattvas. Do not continue to create the causes for becoming other kinds of beings. We must create the causes for becoming Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and we must realize the fruitions of Bodhisattvahood and Buddhahood. Shakyamuni Buddha made predictions for us and for all living beings long ago.   
  
It is said,  
  
"People who recite 'Namo Buddha' just once will all accomplish Buddhahood." Not to mention reciting it many times, if we simply say "Namo Buddha" once, in the future we will definitely become Buddhas, although we do not know when.  
  
By listening to the Shurangama Sutra, we have come to understand a lot of Buddhadharma. There is inconceivable merit and virtue in this. That's why it was said that the merit and virtue of filling the space of the ten directions with the seven precious things and making an offering of them to the Buddhas is not as great as that of explaining the Shurangama Sutra. Now that we have finished explaining the Shurangama Sutra, your suffering has come to an end and my toil has also ended. Why? Because we don't have to work so hard. In the future when you practice the Bodhisattva Path, there may be more suffering, but you will endure it willingly; it will not be forced upon you by others. You yourself are willing to accept those troubles.  
  
Therefore, we should make the Bodhisattva resolve and practice the Bodhisattva Path. I hope that everyone who has heard the Shurangama Sutra lectured will make a Bodhisattva resolve. I'll say it again: no matter whether you are a god, a human being, an asura, a hell-being, a hungry ghost, or an animal, you must all resolve to become enlightened. Don't be confused anymore. One who is enlightened is a Buddha, and one who is confused is a living being. Now we all hope to become enlightened a little sooner.