

A Discourse on the Vimalakīrti Sūtra

Preface

The Mahayana enlightenment cannot go beyond the scriptural teachings. If claiming “enlightenment different from the Buddhist scriptural teachings is still the Chan realization,” then such enlightenment is a false awakening. Such enlightenment must have already deviated from the essence of Buddhist Chan enlightenment. The meanings of the Buddha’s sacred teachings precisely clarify the content of Chan School’s awakening.

The *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* is like a demon-revealing mirror in the Buddhist teachings that exposes all falsely awakened masters. None dares cite this sutra to verify their own “enlightenment.” Those who hold erroneous views regarding the six consciousnesses (S: *vijñāna*) theory, such as the proponents who follow the view of Prāsaṅgika¹ Madhyamaka and the Svātantrika Madhyamaka², all avoid scrutinizing this sutra or misinterpret it to make the meaning of the scripture deviate from its original intent and suit their erroneous views of the six consciousnesses. Therefore, they intentionally explain the correct principles of this scripture using the state of consciousness and replace them with the doctrine of the six consciousnesses. They behave like this due to their false awakening and inability to employ the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*’s principle to validate themselves.

Unknowing is bodhi as it does not perceive the entrances. In addition, “knowing is bodhi as it knows the mental activities of all sentient beings.”³

While the identical True Mind (bodhi) is mentioned in the above quote, on the one hand, it is stated that the Mind is ignorant and unaware, not subject to the six entrances. On the other hand, it is stated that, in fact, the Mind understands the seven consciousnesses of sentient beings and the workings of the mind. This quote leaves those who follow the view of Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka and the Svātantrika Madhyamaka and those who mistake the mental state of thoughtless and pristine awareness⁴ for the Chan enlightenment perplexed. Thus, they often reject the teachings or intentionally distort

¹ 應成派中觀

² 自續派中觀

³ 「不會是菩提，諸人不會故。」又言：「知是菩提，了眾生心行故。」

⁴ 離念靈知

the meanings of this sutra to confirm their own “enlightenment.”

In light of the foregoing, no matter how refined one’s consciousness may be through cultivation, it cannot surpass the consciousness of the *samādhi* on neither perception nor non-perception⁵. This state is the most subtle consciousness in all three realms. Once a practitioner surpasses this state, no consciousness exists. As the conscious mind cannot pass the verification of the Dharma principles in this sutra, those who mistakenly interpret the teachings can only explain the scripture in divergent directions based on the conscious mind.

However, the sutra actually refers to the innate purity and meritorious characteristics of the eighth consciousness, *tathāgatagarbha*⁶, which the scriptural texts prove to be “not void⁷” but truly existent. It is permanent and originally dwells in the state of nirvana. If practitioners interpret scriptural texts based on consciousness, they cannot avoid major demerits from distorting the teachings. Nonetheless, they all assert that their misinterpreted scripture is what the Buddha taught, which makes them slanderers of the Buddha because the Buddha’s teachings and principles have never been the same as their interpretations of these.

Therefore, this sutra is extremely essential for self-verification by Chan practitioners who have attained enlightenment, and an important sutra that deluded practitioners eagerly seek to misinterpret. This proves the importance of gradually fostering the principles and meanings of this sutra for those seeking enlightenment to *prajñā* Chan in the Chan School.

With the aforementioned reasons in mind, and after the detailed and truthful public lectures have taken place, all these discourses will be compiled into written text to be published in the colloquial and easily understood language. The intention is to benefit Chan masters and all Buddhist learners by enabling them to establish the correct view and understanding of the pursuit of enlightenment and of having an authentic awakening to *prajñā*⁸.

People who seek to understand the *prajñā* Chan in the Chan School should first thoroughly read both *The True Meanings of Vijnana-Aggregate*⁹ and *The Correct*

⁵ 非想非非想定

⁶ 第八識如來藏之本來清淨性與功德性

⁷ 非無

⁸ 真實悟入般若正理

⁹ 《識蘊真義》

*Meanings of the Agama Sutras*¹⁰. Only after truly getting rid of our self-views can we use the detailed explanations in these books to ultimately realize the true nature of the Dharma realm, the True Mind, *Tathāgatagarbha*, thereby generating the wisdom pertaining to *prajñā* reality. This is the Seventh Abiding stage of non-retrogression¹¹, where one becomes a non-retrogressive bodhisattva and enters the inner gate to extensively practice the six *pāramitās*¹² after achieving awakening to the True Mind.

Hence, without eliminating the self-view and contemplating Chan, Chan practitioners will never attain true enlightenment. All Chan masters and Buddhist learners should pay attention to this.

正

Buddha's son Pingshi

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at Zhugui Mountain Residence

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¹⁰ 《阿含正義》

¹¹ 第七住位不退

¹² 內門廣修菩薩六度萬行；