

### I. A Wanderer's Strange Experiences

**Prajna Murdaya:** This is an Oral History Project interview. We're here interviewing Dharma Master Lai. I wanted to start at the beginning. How did you come across the Master? What was your life like back then?

**DM Lai:** I never studied Buddhism at all. I'm not intellectually interested in religions in general. I used to be Catholic. I was in the Navy. Before that I was a cabin boy on a ketch (a charter sailboat) in the Bahamas; after that I went into oceanographic work. I was studying for a master's certificate so I could be a ship's captain. I started working for Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution on a six-month cruise that went to the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. This was 1968, although it

The Oral History Project



## 渡我出迷航的善知識

### The Teacher Who Saved Me from a Ship Gone Astray

比丘恆來 口述

SPOKEN BY BHIKSHU HENG LAI

編輯部 整理

COMPILED BY EDITORIAL STAFF

doesn't seem like that long ago.

The nature of the work was that you do tests, you do chlorine and you do water samplings, day after day, month after month. We did a lot of watchstanding, which means you have to look on the horizon for other

ships so they don't bump into you. Of course I didn't know at the time, but being at sea for a long time sets up conditions for a long *chan*, really.

At that time, I was going through all this *buatou* (話頭) thinking. I was thinking: who am I? What is this all about? What are humans? Fundamental questions that everybody sort of

asks if they ever have time with themselves alone. I got more and more into it, as time went on. I didn't know it at the time, but it became more and more like the "great doubt." I was wondering, what is going on? What is this? It was right at the tip of my tongue. There was something that needed to be resolved and I

just couldn't quite put my finger on it. It was getting beyond just thinking; it was getting beyond just intellectualizing about it. These four-hour watches, twice a day, were helping a lot, because you just stood there; you were not allowed to do anything. You were not allowed to talk. You were supposed to be looking for other ships; you were looking at the horizon all the time. It's called watch-standing. It's your job. You can't do other things and be distracted so you just keep focused on this problem.

So it was going on and on, finally. . . about three months into the cruise, we were in the Gulf of Lyon in the Mediterranean, near south France. It was the mid-watch. It was the middle of the night and it just all came together; everything just fit. . . but it was a physical thing. It wasn't an intellectual come-together, "Ah," where you have an idea and you solved it. It had some of that aspect to it, but it was physical too. I could actually feel it. My entire thinking stopped. It just stopped for a very short time, but it was enough to really have a profound effect psychologically and fundamentally, on the way I perceived everything at that time. I wanted to run in and grab the mate; he's the person who runs the watch. They have first mate, a second mate, and a captain. I was standing with the second mate and I was going to grab him and say, "Look, look." But it was one of those things that you just can't explain to anybody. It was just for me alone, but the first impulse I had is go and get everybody else involved; I wanted them all to have that experience.

Not knowing what to do after that, I went through all kinds of psychic things happening; it was just very strange. I couldn't sleep that night but I was able to wander all around the ship. I was able to leave my body; it was almost natural. It wasn't odd; it felt very natural just going from your body. I could go into one

compartment after another and listen to people talk and sort of join in there. I was more interested in their psychic state than what they were doing or saying. I was all over the ship for a couple of nights.

And then that kind of faded out. This whole experience lasted maybe a week. I didn't see a lot of fireworks; I didn't see any Guanyins coming down from heaven or anything like that. I didn't have any visuals. But I was very disturbed by it. I didn't have anybody to talk to about it. I didn't have a Teacher to go to and sit down with. That was very unsettling. I didn't know who to talk to.

The ship had a small library. It was only a 210 foot long ship, a small oceanographic ship; it was the Atlantis, the one that found the Titanic. So we had a little library; it was just a small compartment. They had some books on religion, psychology and so on. They also had a book on yoga. I started to read through that. I wasn't interested in yoga so much as I was interested in the philosophy behind it. In the back of the book, the teacher gave some instructions on meditation.

But I didn't have anybody to talk to about my experience at all. Now I had a lot of intelligent people around of course, a lot of scientists, but they were all oceanographic types and the whole trip was funded by the National Science Foundation. These were people from MIT and places like that. But there was nobody who could deal with this. So I knew I had to go find somebody. Then I read the yoga book, which recommended that you need to go find a teacher sometime in your life. So I started doing that. That's what got me looking.

I went and visited the usual stuff that was going on in the 60's; all these strange little things were happening in the hippie days. Some were just *waidao* (外道) who were just cashing in; some people were semi-serious cultivators. You just

didn't know. So I tried various practices, but I just couldn't seem to find anybody that I respected enough to study with. There were just too many people.

## II. That's My Teacher!

I was going with a girl up north for a while, who was a friend of Loni Baur [the former Bhikshuni Heng Yin]. Loni had just become a *shamini* [novice nun] at that time. They had been friends for a while at the University of Washington in Washington State. Loni kept writing these letters to Beth, my girlfriend, explaining how excited she was, and she just went on and on about Shrfu. I thought, this kind of rings true here. Nobody knew anything about Shrfu or anything that was going on. Waverly Place was this tiny little place... just a handful of people knew about Shrfu; it wasn't like a guru thing where you have all this other stuff going on around.

I started getting interested and eventually got to meet Shrfu through her. We finally went down to San Francisco and found Loni and she introduced me to Shrfu. Even before the visit, I saw Shrfu standing out on the street. I think Beth had seen him before and met him at one time. "There he is." Shrfu stood there on the corner, with a big grin on his face, looking at me. I said, "What's this?" I didn't know what was going on. We were just driving through Chinatown. A day or two later, we went up and met the Master. He just kept grinning at me when he saw me. As soon as I saw the Master, all the things I saw on the ship started to crop up again, started to wake up a little bit. There was something very real about this person. There was no phony advertising going on.

I went and listened to the lecture that night but it didn't make sense. . . I don't understand Buddhism even to this day. So I was kind of in and out. I really couldn't get hooked into it; I didn't un-

## 一、遊子的奇遇

般若：此為口述上人教化專題訪談記錄。從最初說起，來法師您是如何和上人結緣？您當時的生活狀況又是如何？

來法師：以前我從未接觸過佛教，一般來說，我對鑽研宗教也不感興趣。我曾經是天主教徒，也曾在海軍服役。在那之前，我曾在巴哈馬群島的一條包租的船上做服務員；離開那工作之後，便進入了有關海洋學的相關行業。我後來修碩士學位，是為能夠成為船長；因此我到林口海洋研究院工作，並加入一個為期六個月的航程。那次去了地中海以及黑海一帶；那是 1968 年，感覺上好像沒有多久，但事實上已有相當一段時間了。

我們工作的性質，就是做測試與實驗，採氫及水的樣本；日復一日，月復一月。因此我們常常站哨，就是注意看海平面四週是否有其他船隻，以免被撞上。當然，我那時只知道在海上待了很長的時間；但那段時間，其實已經種下禪定的前因了。

當時，我有過很多話頭之類的思維。我想著：「我是誰？這些到底是什麼？人又是什麼？」一些人們獨處都會想的基本問題。時間越久，我也就越投入；那時我還不明白，不過它越來越像「大疑」。我想：到底是怎麼一回事？這是什麼？有一種話到了嘴邊卻又不知如何說的感覺。覺得需要解開疑惑，但又不知從何開始；那時不只是想，甚至超出了理智推論的範圍了。每天兩次每次四小時的站哨幫了很大的忙，因為除了站在那兒看之外，什麼也不許做，連話也不能說；你只能看



其他的船隻，你成天就看著海平面，這叫站哨。那是你的工作，你不能做其他事而分心；所以你就專心在這些問題上了。

每天就是這樣，終於——我想那是在一天深夜，我們已航行三個月了；我們到了地中海靠近法國南部的獅子灣(Gulf of Lyon)。我站哨站到一半，夜半之中，突然所有的事情都融會貫通了，所有的事情都有了合理的解釋——但那是機能性的自然反應，不是智能上的領悟；「啊！」你解開了一個疑問。有些那樣的想法因此產生了，但那也是機能性的，我可以清楚地感覺到。我全部的思緒頓時停了下來。雖然只停了很短的時間，但那已經足以對我的心理上及本質上有非常深刻的影響，影響我當時理解每樣事物的方式。我想要跑去找大副，他是掌管站哨的。船上有大副、二副、船長。我當時正與二副站哨，很想抓著他說：「你知道嗎？你知道嗎？」可是那實在是一件無法對任何人解釋的事情，只有我自己能體會；但又很衝動地想要讓每一個人都參與，希望他們也都體驗那個經驗。

那次之後，我不知道要怎麼辦；我有了很多次超自然的經歷，非常的奇怪。那晚我睡不著，我能夠離開我的身體，在船上逛來逛去；那幾乎是天生本能的，一點也不奇特，感覺是很自然的。我可以在船艙間來回穿梭，聽大家談話，並多少參與他們的對話。我對他們的精神狀態比他們在說什麼或做什麼更有興趣，更切實地說，就是想知道他們在某事上到底在想什麼；我從一處逛到另一處。因此整艘船都

給我逛遍了，我這樣做了好幾晚。

這幾種狀況只持續了大約一星期。我沒有看到一堆煙火，我沒有看到觀音現身下凡之類的；我什麼也沒看到，

它只是一種現象罷了！然後它有點消退了，事情就是這樣。我為此而相當的困擾，沒有人可以談那件事，這讓我有點心神不寧。我說沒有人可以談，是真的一個人都沒有；我沒有一個師父可以找，並坐下來談。那是一種非常不安的感覺，我不知道有誰可以談。

船上有一個小圖書館。那艘船只有 210 英尺長，是一條小小的海洋研究船，就是找到鐵達尼號(Titanic)的那艘船，叫大西洋號。我們有一個小圖書館，是一個小船艙。圖書館裏有宗教、心理學之類的書，也有一本瑜珈的書。我開始看那本書，我對瑜珈所含的哲理沒那麼有興趣。在書後面，有老師講一些打坐的方法。

而我完全無人可談。當然，那時我身邊有很多很聰明的人，很多科學家；但他們都是海洋研究學家，而且那次的航程是國家科學基金出資的。船上有從麻省理工學院及類似的地方來的人，但沒有人可以處理這樣的事；所以我知道我需要去找別人。讀完那本瑜珈的書之後，作者建議在人生旅程中，你必須去找一位師父；於是，我便開始尋找。

當時 60 年代是嬉皮時代，有很多奇奇怪怪的小事情發生。有一些是外道，只是想趁機撈一筆；有一些是半認真的修道者，你很難分辨。我試了一些，我找不到一位值得我尊重的人，好去跟隨他，那時





The Master with his monastic and lay disciples on the roof of Buddhist Lecture Hall in 1970.  
一九七〇上人與出家及在家弟子於佛教講堂屋頂

候有太多人物了。

## 二、他就是我師父！

後來我和一個女孩貝絲去北邊待了一陣子，那女孩是朗妮的朋友；朗妮現在住在 瑜伽市，但她曾經是 比丘尼 恆隱師，她那時剛做沙彌尼。她們在華盛頓州的華盛頓大學時就是朋友了，她常常寫信給我的女朋友，描述她有多興奮，她不斷地談著有關師父的事。我當時想，這聽起來好像是真的；因為沒有人知道師父的任何事，也沒有人知道是怎麼一回事。威富利是一個很小的地方，沒幾個知道師父；它不是像個專業導師的處所，周遭充斥著很多人事與物。

於是我開始感興趣，後來也因為她而終於見到了師父。我們最後去三藩市找到了朗妮，由她介紹我認識師父。在去拜訪的路上——其實，我以前就看過師父站在街上；貝絲告訴我：「他就是我師父！」我想，貝絲在那之前就見過師父一次了。師父滿面笑容地站在街角看著我，我問：「這是什麼？」我當時不知是怎麼一回事。我們只是開車經過，穿過中國城；一兩天之後，我們上樓去拜訪上

人。他看到我時，只是對我笑。但那時 ... 當我一見到方丈時，那些船上發生特異的事又再度浮現了，開始有些清醒了。這個人感覺很真實，沒有虛假的廣告，他是真正的善知識。

那晚我去聽經，但聽不懂；即使到今天，我還是不了解佛教。我斷斷續續的去聽經，我無法開竅，無法了解淨土法門或是任何佛教；我的智力、理智上沒法接近教義，我沒有辦法理解，不開竅。但是師父完全是以心印心，毫不介意，他是依據當時的狀況在教課。我又參加了一個講修班，我們在法會裏靜坐；我不太記得了，那是楞嚴法會，要讀經、打坐，打坐、走香，我們就做那些事。那裏所有的新僧侶都是很聰明的人，他們大部份來自大學，他們是被佛法吸引來的；有些也是由於自身有超自然的體驗，或是兩者都有。因此他們對於佛經真的很有興趣，他們學習得很快速，不尋常的快；他們學中文，還有其它的東西。天啊！我什麼也學不會，我就像一個白癡；我不知道我在做什麼，但是我還是坐在那兒聽經學習。

而且師父會進來教課。那時有一些小鴿子，是要放生的。我們那時在中國城一座三層樓的很小的地方，一層樓就是一戶。那兒有一個小陽臺，小鳥就是從那放生。但是那些鴿子並不飛走，他們就留在那附近；他們很喜歡師父，常在那兒停留。師父逗弄鴿子玩，他們總是停在師父的肩上，想要吃些好東西。師父把東西放在一個罐裏，但那是個長罐子；鴿子要探頭下去，才能吃到東西。師父常用這告誡我們：這有多貪婪！然後他會說鳥為什麼是鳥。他一邊對著鳥說，一邊看著我，然後笑。我想：這是怎麼一回事？就這樣，講修班開始了。

大約上課兩星期左右，他們說：「師父要辦皈依。」他們說任何人想參加都可以，所以我就報名了。但那時，恆謙(當時的 大衛·福斯)是一個新剃度的和尚。他說：「你們這些想皈依的人！這是一件很嚴肅的事，這是你們以後這輩子的事！」他不斷的說皈依是有多麼嚴肅。我看著牆上的一幅大的虛老和他失去手指的相片，我想：「這些人是極度的嚴肅，這可不是嬉皮的玩意兒，他們討論的是生死大事，他們是很認真地要修行。」



我開始耽心。我說：「糟了！我不要皈依的，他們會要我的一生。」我開始緊張，終於我去找了那時的一位僧侶果寧（恆靜），說：「我要退出皈依的申請，我還沒有準備好。」他說：「不用擔心，」他試著緩和狀況：「沒有問題的！」我說：「對不起，真的非常對不起！」我坐了一陣子，妄想紛飛。我跳起來，去敲師父的房門。另一位比丘恆性問：「你會打擾師父的，有什麼事嗎？」

那時師父開了門，說：「沒關係，進來，進來！」他非常的親切，說：「坐下，坐下！」我說：「師父，很抱歉打擾你，我不能皈依。」「沒問題，沒問題！不需要道歉，不需要！」師父很親切地說。我說：「我還沒準備好，我沒有足夠去做的決心。」師父說：「不要耽心，沒有問題！」並說：「去休息一回，待會再回來，不用去參加儀式。」

我休息了一會兒便離開了。我開始在中心打混、聽課。我喜歡禪，因為不需要唸經、拜佛這類我沒有感覺的東西。但那裏的人完全相反；他們沒有任何信仰，他們也沒有好的老師。他們的老師並未開悟，我可以感覺的出來。他們只是做著表面形式化的禪，他們只是擺架子，以為自己就是禪師一樣。我心想你們什麼都不懂；真正的禪師是很自然的，他們是沒有這些空談的。雖然我很喜歡禪房的陳設佈置，簡潔清爽，令人感興趣；但那些人對我而言，卻完全沒有吸引力。他們看起來真的讓人印象深刻；他們管理的方式，幾乎就像個軍營一樣，但事實上內部並不實在。師父完全超越他，我知道我得要回去。

那時他們正要搬到米慎街一個舊工廠改建成的金山寺。我記得朗妮寄給我一個便條，便條寫著：「你最好還是回來這兒！」我說好。我回去，師父只說：「喔！喔！」他把上課當成

大事，他正在上課，並且要我在他上課時坐他身邊（就像他坐在上面這兒），然後叫我：「你坐這兒，你坐這兒！」我覺得很尷尬，但我還是坐完了整堂課。

待續

derstand Pureland Buddhism or any kind of Buddhism. Of course everybody that was there at that time was very smart. All the new monks were very smart people. Most of them were drawn through the college system; they were drawn in intellectually. Some through direct spiritual experience too or a combination of both. So they were really into the sutras; they were learning as fast as they could. They were learning Chinese. I couldn't pick up any of it. I was a complete idiot. I didn't know what I was doing. But I sat through it all.

Shrfu would come in and lecture. At that time, we had these miniature pigeons, released during a liberating life ceremony.



We were in this tiny flat on the third floor in Chinatown. It had a little porch and the

bird releasing ceremony was held out there. But these pigeons hung around. They liked Shrfu a lot. He was always teasing and playing with them. They were always sitting on his shoulder; they'd always want some goodies. And he'd always have them in a jar but it'd be a long jar, and they'd come down to try to get the goodies, but they'd have to really reach down, real far to get one. He'd always teach with this: look at how greedy these birds are. Then he explain why birds become birds. But as he was doing that and talking to these pigeons, he'd always be looking at me and laughing. So I thought, "What's up with this?" Then we started having this session.

About two weeks into the session, it was announced, "Shrfu will accept people who want to take refuge." Then they said that anybody who wants to sign up can sign up. So I signed up. But then, Heng Chien, the new monk on the block, said, "Okay, you people who want to take refuge, this is serious business. This is for the rest of your life." He talked on and on about how serious it was. Then I gazed at this big picture of Hsu Lao [Ven. Master Hsu Yun] on the wall with his missing finger. I thought: these people are deadly serious. This isn't like a hippie game; they're out here for life and death. They seriously want to cultivate. I was getting really worried. I said, "I think I blew it. I shouldn't want to take refuge. They want your life." I started getting real nervous, and finally I went up to Gwo Ning, one



鴿子總是圍繞在上人附近，想要吃些好東西。上人在解釋這二隻鴿子是他唐朝時代的出家弟子時，落淚了。

Pigeons were always sitting around The Master; they'd always want some goodies. The Master shed tears as he explained that these birds had been his left-home disciples during the Tang Dynasty (around 750 A.D.) in China.



of the monks, and said, "Look, I have to withdraw my refugee application. I'm not really ready yet." He said, "Don't worry about." He tried to mellow me out, "It's not a problem." I said, "I'm really sorry." I sat in meditation for a while. I got more false thinking going. I jumped up and went to Shrfu's room and knocked on his door, and Heng Xing, the other monk, said, "What are you doing bothering Shrfu for?"

At that point Shrfu opened the door and said, "Don't worry, come in, come in." He was really friendly. "Sit down, sit down." I said, "I apologize, Shrfu, for bothering you but I can't take refuge." "No problem, no problem. No need to. No need to." Shrfu was just real nice. "I'm not ready. I don't have enough get-go to do it, enough resolve." He says, "Don't worry, no problem." He says, "Go take a break. Come back later. No need to go into the session."

I took a break for a while and left. Then I started going to another center and listening to lectures. I liked meditation because I didn't have to do any reciting, bowing, all these things I didn't have any real feeling for. But those people were just totally the opposite. They didn't have any belief; they didn't

have a good teacher. Their teacher wasn't enlightened. I could just feel it. They put on these airs, like they were masters. I thought, you guys don't understand anything. The real masters are totally natural. They don't have these phony airs about them. I liked the layout of the place and how simple and clean it was. But the people there just weren't doing anything for me. On the outside they looked really impressive, and the way they ran it was almost like a military camp. But internally they didn't have it. Shrfu had it all over him. I knew I had to go back.

At that time, they were moving over to Gold Mountain on Mission Street, in the old factory. So I think Loni sent me a note that said, "You'd better get back here." That's what she put on her note. So I went back and Shrfu made a big deal out of it. He was giving a lecture and he made me sit next to him. He was sitting up here and he said, "You sit here, you sit here." It was really embarrassing but I sat through it anyway.

✂ To be continued

# 我的生命從魔手搶回來了！

## My Life Was Saved from the Devil's Hand

一九七三年九月廿七日美籍比丘尼恒隱寫於金山寺

American Bhikshuni Heng Yin, written at Gold Mountain Monastery,  
September 27, 1973

On September 19, 1973, I met a great devil and almost lost my life. Fortunately Master Hsuan Hua, with great compassion, used his boundless powers to conquer the devil and I took back my life.

It all started when I was having lunch at Gold Mountain Monastery.

All of a sudden, my stomach began to growl and became so painful that I could hardly stand up. At the stairs I fell down and an awful smell burst forth from my mouth. My whole body felt cold like ice. My hands and feet became numb, my eyes could not see and I could not move. At that point, I thought

I was going to die.

During this lifetime, for the last 20 years of my life, I have been amazed at meeting the Master Hsuan Hua and being taught to be truthful, to be compassionate and to be kindhearted. To be born in this world, we should be beneficial to the world, but I don't have any virtue. Now I have met the king of hell, which I regret, but it