

今生妳不該為人母

“You Are Not Supposed to Be a Mother This Life!”

比丘尼恆持法師 2002年3月7日星期四晚講於萬佛城大殿

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I'm very stubborn—Shifu knew it, too. In the first 20 years after I left the home-life, I did not see my parents, and for 17 years, I did not see my son. Today I will speak about my relationship with my family as a left-home person.

What Are You Thinking?

I was at the Buddhist Lecture Hall in San Francisco Chinatown on Waverly Street. During that time Shifu spoke the *Heart Sutra*, the *Vajra Sutra*, the *Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra*, and other sutras. I don't remember what homework we were doing on that particular day. In the middle of the

day, there was a resting period. At that time, people who came to the temple were all Americans; we were all basking in the sun on the balcony, so it was very lively. Because the fourth floor's balcony faced Chinatown, we could hear the Chinese opera, hollering peddlers trying to sell their wares, and other noises in the background. There was a lot of noise on the balcony. Because it was a break time, everyone was talking to each other. At that time, I was deep in thought—perhaps you didn't know that then I was already married and had one son—I was thinking, “I'm already a mother, already a wife—to change careers now, that's kind of...?” At that time, I didn't know the concept of “karma”, although I had already listened to sutras, but I didn't quite understand then why I myself became a wife and then a mother.

At that time, I couldn't let go of

that thought: I should have made a decision quickly that I must really be a mother. Who would have known that Shifu walked over—he had a small room in the back. Normally when we took breaks, he wouldn't necessarily come out; but that day, he came out of the room and walked over to me. No one noticed because there were many people on the balcony and the place was very lively. At that time, I couldn't speak Chinese, and Shifu never revealed his English skills to us, so I didn't know if he knew English. But on that day, he spoke two English words, “What thinking?”—what are you thinking?

It was a critical moment: I was about to retreat from the resolve to cultivate. When Shifu asked me, I couldn't open my mouth, so Shifu said in English, “You are not supposed to be a mother this life.” It is precisely this statement: You are not supposed to be a mother this life—in this life, you shouldn't be a mother. With that one statement, I became a Bhikshuni, for 33 years now. It was not easy! I cared very much for my child and he was still quite young. That was the first time.

How I Missed My Younger Sister's Visit

The second time was at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. I think people all have the same notion, which is to cross over and rescue our own family and friends. So I also thought so too. My younger sister, her husband, and their daughter at the time lived at CTTB's cottage for lay people. Over there, her daughter often played with Terri's (Nicholson's) daughter. On the day that my sister was moving in but before she arrived, Shifu said to me, “Guo Xiu!

我非常剛強，師父也知道，我出家後的頭二十年，沒見我爸媽，十七年沒見兒子。我今天講講自己做為出家人，和家裏的關係。

妳想什麼？

那時我在在三藩市中國城天后廟街的佛教講堂。師父在那兒開講《心經》、《金剛經》、《法華經》等經典。不記得那天我們是做什麼功課，當中有段休息時間——那時來的都是美國人——我們都在陽臺上曬太陽，很熱鬧。因為第四層樓的陽臺就在Chinatown（中國城）那邊，可以聽到Chinese Opera（平劇）、賣東西的叫喊聲；陽臺上聲音不少，因為在休息期間，大家就互相談話。我當時就在那兒想——你們或者不知道，我那時已結了婚，有一個兒子——我就想，「已經做媽媽了，已經做太太了，現在改行業，豈不是……？」那時我也不太懂得「業」，雖聽了經，還不是很了解為什麼自己做了太太，做了媽媽。

當時我放不下那個思想，應該趕快做決定，我實在應該是做媽媽的。誰不知那時師父就走了過來，他在後邊有一個小房間，本來我們休息時他不一定出來，但那天他出來走到我那邊；沒人注意到，因為陽臺上人多，很熱鬧。那時我還不會講中文，師父的英文也不露給我們看，所以我不知道他會不會講英文，不過那天他講了兩個英文字，「What thinking」妳想什麼？

當時正在緊要關頭，我正要打退堂鼓，當師父問我時，我沒法開口；師父就用英文說了一句，「You are not supposed to be a mother」，就是這一生妳不要做

媽媽，這生不是妳做媽媽的時候。那一句話，就讓我做了33年比丘尼！好不容易啊！我非常關心我的孩子而且他還很小。那是第一次。

錯過妹妹來訪

第二次是在萬佛聖城。我想大家都有同感，就是總想度自己的親友，所以我也這麼想。我妹妹和她先生及女兒，那時就住在萬佛城cottage（居士林）那邊，她女兒那時常常跟Terri（易果參居士）的女兒玩！那天正是我妹妹一家要搬進來的日子，但還沒到，師父就說了，「果修！三藩市那邊有一個客人，是比丘。他發生了什麼什麼事，現在住醫院了，我想派妳到那邊去，妳可以負責照顧。」你們不要誤會，我不是在那個比丘的房裏照顧他，我是去幫他處理一些個事情。

不錯！我是非常剛強，但是師父說什麼我就聽什麼；他要我去哪兒，我就去哪兒，所以我就沒見到我妹妹。她來時，我已經走了；我妹妹覺得莫名其妙，「你們佛教徒到底是怎麼回事？我來看妳，妳卻跑到三藩市去！」那次她在萬佛城住一個禮拜，我也在三藩市住一個禮拜。

兒子出家未能觀禮

第三次，我兒子果童要出家，上人對我說：「果修，有二個儀式要做：一個是落髮，一個是放生。妳去帶放生。」

去臺灣辦佛學院，姐妹二度錯過

第四次，也是我那個妹妹，她做了Quaker（教友派教徒）；那是基督教的一派，跟佛教一樣很喜

歡打坐。她那時好像是在一個大學裏，也是Quaker's school（教友派的學校），她寫信請師父去講演，由西部到東部。你們記不記得，還請了廖鳳鳴，就是以前的恆道，和門翼屏（以後出家為恆庵）她們都去了；我也想去，是我妹妹的大學嘛！妳知道那一次師父派我去哪嗎？到東淨寺，去臺灣（花蓮）幫忙佛學院，所以我不能去東部看妹妹，也不能去參加那個活動，因為我得去臺灣：這是第四次。

舊人讓新人

第五次是為爸爸的事；我說過我有二十年沒看到我的父母了，家有大事聚會我也不能回去。你們要知道，你剛來時我們都會哄著你們--師父那時也哄著我們--但是來了一段期間之後就不哄了，自己要想辦法了。師父也說：「你們新來的人要知道，等後來的人來了，我就不管你們了，你們要讓那些後來剛進來的人。」師父那時用的方法就是如此，所以你看，我最早來，到最後卻很少有機會接近師父，因為新來的人接近師父了。

所以那一天我聽到爸爸心臟病發作，死了又被救回來的消息後，也沒敢直接去跟師父講，必須要經過師父的侍者，一個沙彌尼；我必須要告訴那個沙彌尼我爸爸的情況，拜託她轉告師父。那時我們在萬佛城晚上聽涅槃經，上人用主觀智能推動力，我們要先背經文，還要先用第二語言，再用本國語解釋。當晚誰要背經、解釋，事先不知道。

我這麼多年沒看到爸爸，情感應該比較看淡了，是不是？

We have a guest in San Francisco, a Bhikshu. Something happened to him and he's in the hospital now. I want to send you over there so that you take responsibility for caring for him." Don't you misunderstand: I didn't take care of the Bhikshu in his room, but I helped him to take care of some matters.

Indeed, I'm very obstinate! But whatever Shifu said, I would listen to him; wherever he told me to go, I would go. So I didn't see my younger sister. When she arrived, I had already left; my sister was confused, "What's going on with you Buddhists? I came here to see you, but you went over to San Francisco!" That time, she lived for a week in the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, and I also lived in San Francisco for a week.

How I Missed My Son's Leaving-Home Ceremony

The third time, my son Guo-Tong was going to enter monastic life. The Venerable Master said to me, "Guo Xiu, there are two ceremonies we need to perform: one is head-shaving for entering monastic life, another one is liberating life. You go and lead the liberating-life ceremony."

DM Chih and Guo Tong 持法師和果童



How I Missed My Sister for the Second Time: Establishing a Buddhist Seminary in Taiwan

The fourth time, it was also the same younger sister who became a Quaker. Quakers are a Christian sect that has some similarities to Buddhism in that they also like to meditate. She was living and working in a Quaker community and school on the East Coast, and she wrote a letter inviting the Venerable Master to lecture there. Do you remember that she also invited Liao Fong-Ming (who was Heng Tao) and Meng Yi-Ping (who left the home-life and become Heng An); they all went with the Venerable Master. I also wanted to go too: after all, it was my sister's university! But do you know where the Venerable Master sent me? To Eastern Purity Monastery (Dong-Jing Monastery) in Hualian, Taiwan, to help establish a Buddhist seminary—so I couldn't go back to East Coast to see my younger sister and couldn't participate in that event either, all because I had to go to Taiwan. This was the fourth time.

Older Disciples Let Newcomers Take Their Place

The fifth time had to do with my father. I said earlier that for 20 years I didn't see my parents—even when there was an important family meeting, I did not join it. You have to know that when you first came here, the Venerable Master would spend time to take care of you. In the same way, the Master also spent time taking care of us. But after a period, he would stop doing so, and you would have to think of ways to take care of yourself. Shifu also said, "All you newcomers must know that after other new people come after you, I won't be able to take

care of you. You have to let the other newcomers to take your place." Shifu's method is such, so you see, I was one of the earliest, but later on, I had very few opportunities to be near Shifu because the newcomers were the ones who were able to be near Shifu.

So that day when I heard that my father suffered a heart attack, died and was revived, I didn't have a way to tell Shifu directly and had to go through Shifu's attendant, a *shramanerika* [novice nun]. I had to tell that *shramanerika* about my father's condition and ask her to relate the news to Shifu. At that time in the evenings at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, we listened to the *Nirvana Sutra*. The Venerable Master taught using the method of developing inherent wisdom. We must first memorize the sutra. Then we must explain the passage, first in our second language (in my case, Chinese) and then in our native language (in my case, English). We didn't know in advance who would be picked to recite the sutra from memory and explain the sutra.

Since I hadn't seen my father for so many years, my feelings and emotional attachments should have become quite slight and significantly less, correct? Not so. Because of my feelings, I ran to Joyous Giving House's Buddha Hall, reciting nonstop the sacred name of "Namo Guan Shi Yin Bodhisattva," seeking help from Guan Yin Bodhisattva. Indeed, the Venerable Master did not neglect me; he sent a Bhikshuni to tell me, "Are you going to die with your father?" Shifu knew my personality, so that statement was sufficient! Hence, I went back to prepare my memorization of the passage of *Nirvana Sutra*. That evening, Shifu came into the classroom, walked

over to me and asked, “How is your father?” I nodded; the heavy weight and depth of some 20 years of father-daughter relationship and love did not permit me to raise my head—I simply sat there with my head lowered. The Venerable Master said, “Sincerely recite Namó Amitabha Buddha.” I couldn’t reply—I was in such deep grief, but I thought to myself, “I don’t want to recite Amitabha Buddha’s name—I want to recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva’s name.” [note: My thinking was that by reciting Amitabha Buddha’s name, I would be admitting that my father might die, whereas if I recited Guan Yin Bodhisattva’s name, I would be hoping my father could live.] Although I had said nothing out loud, Shifu then accorded with my wish,

saying, “Recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva’s name then.” I did not return home to see my father. But I did recite Guan Yin Bodhisattva’s name as sincerely as I was able, and my father lived for seven more years.

After this inconceivable experience, my faith and confidence increased. So in my personal causes and conditions, I feel that it is best to leave family members behind when one decides to cultivate the Way.

也不是，結果那次我跑到喜捨院的佛堂，不停唸「觀世音菩薩」名號，去跟觀音菩薩求救，果然上人沒有忘，就派比丘尼跟我說：「妳是不是要跟爸爸一起死啊？」師父知道我的個性，知道

那句話就夠了！所以我就去準備背《涅槃經》。晚上師父一進來，走到我身邊問：「妳爸爸怎麼樣？」我點頭，二十年父女之情重得使我不能抬頭，就趴在那裏。上人說：「妳誠心念阿彌陀佛。」此時心裏很難過，答不出話來，心想：「不要念阿彌陀佛，我要念觀音菩薩。因為假如念阿彌陀佛，爸爸可能會死；要是念觀音菩薩，希望他活過來。」師父看透我的心，就說「那妳念觀音菩薩好了！」我沒回去看爸爸，後來父親多活了七年。經過這次不可思議的事，增長我的信心。所以在我個人的因緣中，離開親人修行是好的。



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〈楞嚴咒〉包括五方五部五佛，降伏世界五方之魔，非常重要。大家要認真學習，莫空過光陰。我所寫的偈頌像世俗歌詞一樣的淺顯，但其意義是很深的。

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This enables those beings to attain the three kinds of “Non- Retreat”. They are Non-Retreat in Thought, Non-Retreat in Position, and Non-Retreat in Practice.

The lord of the house of the Lotus Flower Division. This is referring to the Lotus Flower Division of Amitabha Buddha in the west. The house is the Land of Ultimate Bliss. Above the lord or host was Accomplishment Buddha of the Karma Division in the north. The host here is Amitabha Buddha.

The Shurangama Mantra includes the Five Buddhas of the five directions and the five divisions. They subdue and vanquish the demons in the worlds of the five directions. Therefore, the Shurangama Mantra is extremely important; everyone should very earnestly study it. Don’t waste time and miss this opportunity. These verses I write are like simple songs—easy to read. However, the meanings are deep.