

溫哥華港的放生——

尊重生命，普遍饒益衆生

Liberating Life in Vancouver Harbor --- Respecting Life, Benefiting Living Beings

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Verse of Merit and Virtue by Great Master Han Shan :

*Just as people love to live long,
All beings love their life.
Liberating life is heaven's wish;
Liberating life fulfills Buddha's teaching.
Liberating life averts the three disasters;
Liberating life frees us from the nine accidents.*

*By liberating life, we gain longevity;
By liberating life, we enjoy prosperity.
By liberating life, we gain offspring.
By liberating life, we ensure happiness in the family,
By liberating life, we are free of worries;
By liberating life, we seldom fall ill.
By liberating life, we dissolve enmity.
By liberating life, we purify our karma.
Liberating life is Guan Yin's kindness;
Liberating life is Universal Worth's practice.*

*Whether we liberate life or take life,
Our retribution is as clear as a mirror.*

憨山大師放生功德偈：

人既愛其壽，生物愛其命；
放生合天心，放生順佛命。
放生免三災，放生離九橫，
放生壽命長，放生官祿盛，
放生子孫昌，放生家門慶，
放生無憂惱，放生少疾病，
放生解冤結，放生罪垢淨；
放生觀音慈，放生普賢行。
放生與殺生，果報明如鏡。

三災，就是刀兵災、疾疫災、飢饉災。九橫，就是得病無醫、王法誅戮、非人奪精氣、為火所焚、水中沉溺、為惡獸所啖、橫墮山崖、毒藥咒詛、飢渴所困。因為久修放生這種善業所得來的，所以才能壽命長；如果想壽命長，就要放生。

身為大乘的佛教徒，大乘菩薩都是行持菩薩道，修六度萬行。在六度萬行之中，以六度（布施、持戒、忍辱、精進、禪定、般若）為主；六度又以布施為第一。布施有三種：財施、法施、無畏施。

「放生」是需要有一些條件，首先要知道所放的生靈是什麼？是飛禽？是走獸？是海族？還是昆蟲？適合在什麼地方放生？觀察生態環境是非常重要的，這就是一種無畏施，使這些生靈遠離死亡的怖畏。破壞生態，無視於環保的重要，使生物互相生剋，而造成大批死亡和傷殘，這也是傷害生命的表現，還造成生態環境的破壞。

金佛寺位於加拿大溫哥華(Vancouver)；溫哥華市有太平洋門戶之稱，四面環水，是北美洲太平洋沿岸的最大天然良港。早期的金佛寺是在唐人街(Chinatown)，魚店就在隔壁，放生法會很自然就成為我們例行的活動；在2000年時，雖然從唐人街搬到現址，但二十年多來，每月的最後一個星期日早上的放生法會依然不變，也是專門放生海族，以便趕得及把漁民剛捕撈的海洋生物立刻送歸大海。

放生也就是「放我」，因為我和眾生是一體的，眾生也就是我；我也就是眾生。這就好像

當人與人之間必須透過了解與寬恕，才能化干戈為玉帛，否則會互相折磨。在中國農業社會時期，農夫收割稻穀時，會留下一叢稻穀給小鳥食用，這就是慈悲心，就是尊重生命。看到蝸牛毫無目的往街上慢行，逐漸吐盡唾液，我把牠輕移到有草坪之處，這就是我跟這蝸牛之間的生命有了一種延續；一個小小的動作，能使蝸牛重獲生命的甘泉，也無形之中，使我免於渴死在生命的沙漠裡。

往往我們很有心來放生，但又因為對生命的認識不夠，不尊重生命和不愛護生命，所以也很會殺生，這樣就無法做到普遍饒益眾生。世間上最寶貴者莫如生命，任何生命都應該獲得尊重。為什麼要放生？《華嚴經》〈十地品〉云：「於一切眾生有命之者，常生利益慈念之心。」這是可以增長我們的慈悲心，讓牠們得到自由。我們不殺生，這也是修慈悲心。

在《華嚴經》〈如來出現品〉云：「諸佛世尊，大慈救護一切眾生，大悲度脫一切眾生，大慈大悲普遍饒益。」無有一微塵非是菩薩捨身命處！諸佛世尊大慈救護、大悲度脫所有一切的眾生，大慈大悲普遍饒益所有的眾生。普遍饒益所有的眾生，這就是以慈心攝受利益一切眾生。

我們在魚店，從準備上市將被宰殺的這些比目魚(halibut)、鱈魚(ling cod)、石斑魚(rockfish)、螃蟹、蝦、蛤、牡蠣等等，挑選肥大的、有卵的，這麼一缸缸的把牠們買下來；出錢買這些待宰的海族就是財施。在《梵網經》上說：「若見世人

殺畜生時，應方便救護，解其苦難。」把將被烹煮宰的海生物給解救了下來，免其恐懼，讓牠們統統還歸於大海，這是很大的功德，這也才是真正的無畏施，也正是普遍饒益眾生。

金佛寺在這二十多年來一直遵守著溫哥華海洋漁業署(Fisheries and Oceans)的條規。每個月放生海產的金額或數量，之前差不多可以放到1,000至2,000加幣的海產；2003年到2006年可以放到2,000至3,000加幣上下的海產；從2007年可以增加到700磅，700磅的海產大約要4,000至5,000加幣左右。在2007年底，溫哥華海洋漁業署辦事員幾次來金佛寺實地勘查之後，從2008年開始准許放到1,400磅。所以，金佛寺也是溫哥華區唯一可以放生這麼多磅海洋生物的寺院。

溫哥華海洋漁業署(Fisheries and Oceans)表示可以放的海族種類有：大比目魚(halibut)、比目魚(flounder)、鱈魚(ling cod)、鮫魚(bullhead)、鰈魚(rock sole)、檸檬魚(lemon sole)、石斑魚(rockfish)、老鼠斑魚(greenlings)、牛頭魚(cabezon)、海鮎(butter)、螃蟹(crab)、大蝦(prawn)、小蝦(shrimp)、蛤(clam)、小圓蛤(littleneck)、太平洋牡蠣(Pacific oysters)。

每個生命的個體，因緣雖然是無常，但生命體都是平等的！從佛法的基本精神，如何認識自己的心性，就得先從尊重生命開始，進而觀照生命、關懷生命；對於萬物有這樣的慈悲心，才能真正令一切眾生都離苦得樂。佛法不是口頭禪，更不是形而上的理論，而是在日常生活中必

The three disasters are war, disease and hunger. The nine accidents are incurable disease, the death penalty, being drained of vitality by a non-human entity, being burned by fire, being drowned, being devoured by an animal, falling off a mountain, being put under a spell, hunger and dehydration. People who practice liberating life consequently enjoy long life. If you wish for longevity, then you need to liberate life. As Mahayana Buddhists, we know that Bodhisattvas practice the Bodhisattva Path which consists of the Six *Paramitas* and Myriad Practices. Within the Six *Paramitas* and Myriad Practices, they mostly focus on the Six *Paramitas* (giving, upholding precepts, patience, vigor, *samadhi* and *prajna* wisdom); within these Six *Paramitas*, giving comes first. There are three kinds of giving: the giving of wealth, the giving of Dharma, and the giving of fearlessness.

There are some requirements to liberating life. First, we need to know the kind of animals we want to liberate. Do they fly in the sky, run on the ground, or swim in the sea? Are they insects? Where is the appropriate place to liberate them? It's very important to select a proper environment; this is a form of giving fearlessness, to assist these animals to evade death. If people don't care about the environment, the animals will prey upon each other and suffer injury and death. Then one is hurting life and damaging the environment.

Gold Buddha Monastery is located in Vancouver, Canada. Known as the gateway to the Pacific Ocean Vancouver is surrounded by water and is the largest natural harbor of the Pacific Ocean in North America. In the early days, Gold Buddha Monastery

Slowly put the oysters back into the ocean.
親手把牡蠣之類投入海內放生



was located in Chinatown, next to a fish market, so naturally liberating sea creatures became our frequent activity. In the year of 2000, we moved from Chinatown to the current location, but for more than 20 years, on the last Sunday of the month, the liberating life ceremony has been held without fail. We still liberate sea creatures, so we can send the sea creatures just caught by the fishermen back to the ocean immediately.

Liberating life is liberating ourselves, because living being and we are as one. A living being is just myself; I myself am a living being. People can get along if they are able to understand and forgive, but otherwise they suffer together. In China, farmers leave some grains for the birds to eat during the harvest season; this shows their kindness and compassion and their respect for life. When I see a snail crossing the street, I will move him to the lawn; this is the continuation of life between the snail and myself. From this action, the snail's life is saved and I feel like I have avoided death from dehydration in the desert of life.

Often, we want to liberate life, but we do not understand the

animals adequately. Then we end up not respecting and not caring about life and possibly taking life instead. Because of our ignorance, we fail to benefit living beings. The most precious thing in the world is life. Any type of life should be respected. Why liberate life? The Ten Grounds Chapter in the *Avatamsaka Sutra* says, "Towards all beings endowed with life, generate kind and beneficial thoughts." This can increase one's kind and compassionate intentions to free them. To refrain from killing is also to practice kindness and compassion.

The "Appearance of the Thus Come One" chapter in the *Avatamsaka Sutra* says, "All Buddhas, World Honored Ones, rescue and protect all living beings in their great kindness, and liberate all living beings out of great compassion; they benefit all beings through their great kindness and great compassion." There is not a single mote of dust where the Bodhisattva has not given up his life! All Buddhas, World Honored One, out of tremendous kindness and compassion, help, rescue, and cross over all living beings. Their great kindness and compassion pervasively benefits all living beings.

須確確實實去行持，無論是一株草、一朵花、一棵樹，也不忍把它折斷；或者一個小瓢蟲、一隻螞蟻、一隻蚊蟲，甚至一條小魚苗、一粒魚卵，也不傷害牠、不惱害牠——這就是慈悲心，這就是普遍饒益眾生。

比起很多放生的生命體，一般海族是不適合放生，因為牠太脆弱了。從魚店挑選一缸缸的魚類海族，在每月的最後一個星期日早上九點三十分之前，一定要運載到金佛寺門口，我們不只是在很短時間準備幾個超大的塑膠桶，裡面還要趕緊安裝好空氣唧筒，儘量做到週全完備，否則會造成放生前有些海族生物的死亡。

金佛寺還在唐人街時，數十位男居士往往都得把這一桶一桶的海族生物等，直接抬入佛殿內；自從搬到現址，這一桶桶就抬到佛寺大門前，因為一進門左側就是佛殿。我們先起「楊枝淨水讚」，誦念三遍〈大悲咒〉，以甘露水為這些海洋生物來灑淨的同時，這些潑刺刺生猛的海魚不斷拍著桶子裡的水，螃蟹和蝦子也不斷的擺動，好像知道這一天是重生之日。 ❷待續

In the fish market, we buy halibut, ling cod, rockfish, crab, shrimp, clam, oyster etc. which are about to be killed and sold. We pick the big ones with eggs. We buy them by the container. To pay money to buy these sea creatures is to practice the giving of wealth. The *Brahma Net Sutra* says: "If we see people killing animals, we need to rescue them, to liberate them from suffering." To free living beings

destined for slaughter, to free them from fear, to return all of them to the ocean, is a greatly meritorious deed. This is a true gift of fearlessness. This is to extensively benefit living beings.

For more than 20 years, Gold Buddha Monastery has been following the regulations of the Fisheries and Oceans Department in Vancouver. In the beginning, we bought 1,000 Canadian dollars' worth of sea creatures. Starting from year 2000, we can liberate about 3,000 Canadian dollars' worth of sea creatures. From year of 2007, we increased to 700 pounds, worth about 4,000 to 5,000 Canadian dollars, of sea creatures. At the end of 2007, the Fisheries and Oceans Department in Vancouver has visited Gold Buddha Monastery a few times. Then starting in 2008, they approved us to liberate up to 1,400 pounds of sea creatures. Therefore, Gold Buddha Monastery became the monastery that can liberate the most sea creatures in the Vancouver region.

The Fisheries and Oceans Department indicated that we can liberate the following ocean creatures: halibut, flounder, ling cod, bullhead, rock sole, lemon sole, rockfish, greenling, cabezon, butter, crab, prawn, shrimp, clam, littleneck and Pacific oysters.

Although the causes and conditions of each life are impermanent, every life is equal! Based on the basic teaching of the Buddhadharm, we learn to understand the nature of our mind. First, we learn to respect life, then we learn to contemplate life and care for life. By applying the mind of kindness and compassion to everything, we can help all living beings leave suffering and enjoy happiness. The Buddhadharm is not just a conversation topic, not

just a theory, it is an action that we need to uphold and practice in our daily life. Regardless of whether it is a blade of grass, a flower, or a tree, we don't want to break it. Whether it is a worm, an ant, a fly, a fish, or a fish egg, we don't want to harm or disturb it. This is the mind of kindness and compassion. This is to widely benefit all living beings.

Many types of living creatures can be liberated, but some sea creatures are unfit to be released into the sea because their lives are too fragile. After we buy fishes and sea creatures from the fish market, we must deliver them to the doorstep at Gold Buddha Monastery on the last Sunday of each month before 9:30 a.m. Within a short time we need to place these sea creatures in some super-sized plastic containers and install oxygen pipes. We do all the preparations to ensure that no sea creature dies before the liberating life ceremony.

When Gold Buddha Monastery was still located in Chinatown, many laymen often placed the containers with the sea creatures directly into the Buddha Hall. Since we moved, the containers are placed at the front door of the monastery because the left side is the Buddha Hall after we enter the door way. First, we sing the Praise for Purifying the Water and recite the Great Compassion Mantra three times, then sprinkle the purified water on these sea creatures. The fishes swing their bodies and splash the water, the crabs and shrimps also make lots of movement. It seems like they know this is the day that they will be liberated.

❷ To be continued