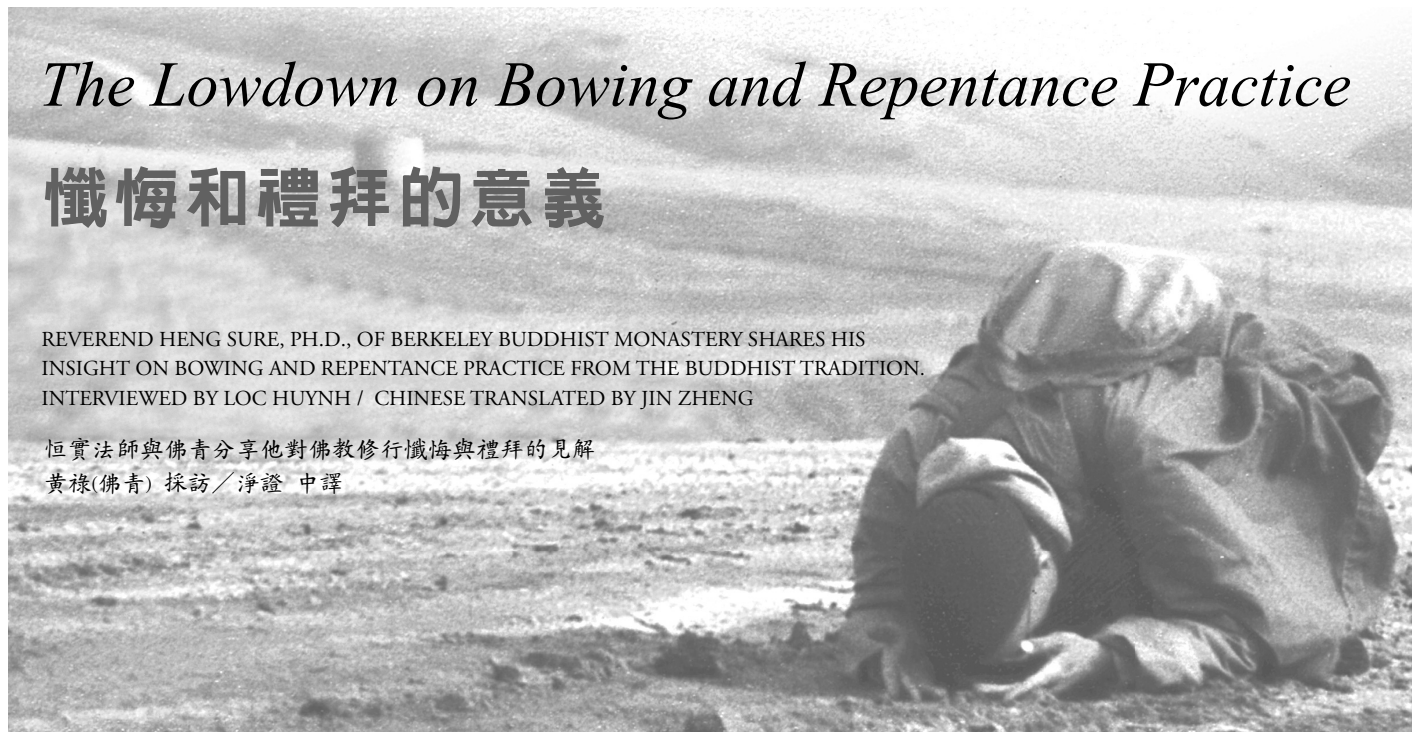


The Lowdown on Bowing and Repentance Practice

懺悔和禮拜的意義

REVEREND HENG SURE, PH.D., OF BERKELEY BUDDHIST MONASTERY SHARES HIS INSIGHT ON BOWING AND REPENTANCE PRACTICE FROM THE BUDDHIST TRADITION. INTERVIEWED BY LOC HUYNH / CHINESE TRANSLATED BY JIN ZHENG

恒實法師與佛青分享他對佛教修行懺悔與禮拜的見解
黃祿(佛青) 採訪／淨證 中譯



Since the third century CE to this day, bowing to the Buddha is the most common practice for Asian Buddhists. However, among Westerners, bowing practice, as compared with meditation, is not as well-known. Last summer, I had an opportunity to speak with Reverend Heng Sure, the director of the Berkeley Buddhist Monastery, and asked for more information about Buddhist bowing and repentance. In the late 1970s, Reverend Sure and a fellow monk did a three-year bowing pilgrimage for world peace along the coast of California. Their journey began in Pasadena and ended three years and 800 miles later at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas in Ukiah. And most astonishingly, their knees had already endured over a million bows....

Loc: Would you describe the purpose and benefits of a bowing practice?

Rev. Sure: **Bowing**, like other Dharma practices, can be considered a technology. **It's actually a method for changing one's consciousness.**

And because it's a Dharma practice, it works by using the body. It is true that Buddhism emphasizes the mind; however, we often use the body to get to the mind. A renowned Chinese monk from the Tang dynasty, Master Cheng Guan, explained that bowing reduces pride, teaches us respect, and increases our goodness. Bowing awakens these qualities within, affecting our conscious state and view of ourselves and place in the world. The technology of bowing, from his ancient description, is precise. He considers bowing as a medicine, an antidote for pride. It also teaches respect because when we bow, we are physically down on the ground and this potentially allows a feeling of reverence to emerge in our heart. Bowing increases goodness because the "self" shrinks. Things that we do with a reduced sense of self, and we're not talking about low self esteem, but things we do without the big "ME" in the middle, tend to turn out better. Bowing is the first of the ten practices recommended by Samantabhadra

自 三世紀以來，禮佛是亞洲佛教最普遍的法門。但是在西方社會中，禮拜則沒有打坐普及。去年夏日，我採訪了柏克萊寺的住持恒實法師，並請求法師闡釋佛教的禮拜和懺悔法門。於一九七〇年代末期，實法師和一位同修曾沿著加州海岸線三步一拜祈願世界和平。他們的行程，由洛杉磯帕薩甸那 (Pasadena) 至瑜伽鎮(Ukiah) 萬佛聖城，歷時三年，全程八百餘哩。更令人震驚的是，他們的膝蓋已經承受了超過一百萬次的禮拜了.....

黃祿：法師可否開示禮拜的意義和益處？

實法師：禮拜和其他佛教的法門一樣，可以被視作是一門技術，是一種改造心識的方法。這個修行法門運用了我們的身體。

雖說佛教是個注重心識的宗教，但我們也常常運用身體以通達心靈。唐朝高僧澄觀大師曾開示，禮拜諸佛能降服我慢，滋養

誠敬心，增長善根。禮拜能喚醒這些潛在於內心深處的善根，熏修我們的意識，自我觀及與其相應的世界觀。

澄觀大師在久遠前，就對禮拜這門學問做了很精確的分析。禮拜是一帖良藥，一帖對治我慢心的良藥。禮拜也能啓發誠敬心；因為禮拜的時候，我們把身體投伏到地上，使恭敬的心念有機會增生。因為禮拜能減少我們對自我的執著，是以禮拜也就能增長我們的善根。當我們不以一顆執著於「自我」之心做事時，我們得到的結果往往會比較好。「禮敬諸佛」也是普賢菩薩所發的十種廣大行願中的第一行願。禮拜是一門基礎法門，與布施和持戒一同奠定修道的人生。

黃祿：所以佛教特別強調降伏貢高我慢心……

實法師：在佛經裏，菩薩不管果位多高都還向佛陀頂禮。也就是說，**任何修行人，在未成佛以前，也都繼續禮拜。**

在美國，牛仔文化給了我們自力更生、獨立自主的個人意識，而產生一種「不向任何人叩頭」的態度，漸而演變成：「我們無須聽取其他國家的意見，我們不需要任何盟友等等。」在這個高度開發的世界裏，種種的機械踐踏著地球和其他生物。我們砍伐森林、挖掘地球資源，並佔為己用，還自以為殘殺其他生靈和啖食他們的身體，是我們與生俱來的權利。這些不明智的態度，就是因為我們不能降伏自我，以致不能與地球上廣大的眾生和諧地共存。

傲慢心的另一面，就是自我隔離和寂寞感，所以無論走到哪裏，我們都不會有歸屬感。因此

從人類文化的觀點來看，我們確實需要一個能解除這種寂寞感的一種方法。

黃祿：在加州公路上三步一拜了三年，是否拉近了您與路上遇到的人們之間的距離？

實法師：在路上，我越禮拜就越覺得自己與眾生息息相關。每一次的禮拜，都使我更加感受到人的臉都有相似之處，使我對遇到的人有一種親屬感。我消除了自己對於人我互相隔離的觀念，隨之我發現人們對我的態度也因此改變。

我覺察到在外表之下，人與人之間、人與動物之間，乃至與所有眾生之間，都存在著一種深厚的親屬關係。在第一張由太空中拍攝到的地球照片，我們看到一顆微小的藍彈珠似的球體，懸置在無盡漆黑的宇宙中。由這些照片，我們覺察到所有的生物，就像在同一艘救生艇的人一樣。我們共享同樣的水，同樣的溫度，同樣的氣候。我們是一家人：有些披毛戴角，有些披鱗展翅。我們膚色不同，語言不同，但卻同樣是由地、水、火、風所組成的。

禮拜把這些道理自然的展現出來。**隨著每一拜，我執慢慢地消失了。**我希望在未來繼續禮拜，把「自我」完全消除。大多數人不會想去禮拜，因為那是多麼漫長無聊的事啊！人們常問我：「你從中得到什麼呢？」通常小孩子很快地就會跟著我們拜，而感到禮拜是一件多麼棒的事啊！大人則得經過一段較長的時間，才會願意嘗試。但是如果他們能在剛開始的幾拜之後，繼續堅持下去，他們就會感到「把頭低下」是一件多麼美好的事，

它就像流水滋潤枯木般地，滋潤我們的心靈——這是個非常有效的方法。

黃祿：我的一些朋友剛從萬佛城參加法會回來，他們在那兒拜了三個星期，您能為我解說這個法會嗎？

實法師：每年春季，萬佛城就會有一個三週的禮拜法會，名為「萬佛寶懺」。在這個法會中，我們依著一萬一千一百一十一尊佛的名號禮拜。這個法會的依據是《佛說佛名經》。

三個星期裏，一天八個小時，與六百個人隨著音樂的起落同時拜懺，的確是件非常能淨化心靈的事。參加過的人都知道，法會的第一天你會覺得拜得快要死了，我們的我執、我慢實在不願意就這樣子被降伏。第二天，你不再懷疑——你知道你死定了。第三天，抽象地說，我們真正死了，我執投降了而順應我們。但在第四天之後，可以這麼說，你重生了，之後再繼續禮拜就覺得很輕鬆了。

黃祿：拜懺對身心有什麼樣的影響？

實法師：拜懺的目的，是把我們過去所造的惡業提呈到意識中。禮拜促使血液循環到人體的上半身—尤其是腦部—這顯然能釋放出深藏在心中的記憶和念頭。坐禪的功用則不同，因為坐禪是靜止的，能使血液循環逐漸緩慢下來。**禮拜時，我們的頭和心擺在同一水平線上。**身體裏流動的血液與運行的能量，能夠刺激並淨化身、口、意業在我們意識裏所留下的痕跡。在拜的時候，各種記憶和念頭會在心裏浮現出來，而這些念頭有時是很令人恐懼或尷尬的。它們的出現，是因為禮

(Universal Worthy) Bodhisattva, one of the four revered bodhisattvas of Mahayana Buddhism. Bowing is a foundational practice, along with generosity, and ethics, for preparing someone for a spiritual life.

Loc: Buddhism does emphasize reducing arrogance and pride.

Rev. Sure: Bodhisattvas in the Buddhist sutras, no matter how high their position, all still bow to the Buddha. That is, **everyone up to the stage of buddhahood still make bows.** In America our cowboy culture gave us the “self-made man,” the independent individual, who says, “I don’t kowtow to no man.” That can become, “We don’t listen to no country, we don’t need no allies, etc.” The developed world has machines that tromp over the earth and other species. We consume and cut down forests, dig up minerals, and somehow feel it’s our given right to kill other creatures and eat their bodies. Those unwise attitudes result from an inability to humble the self and live in harmony as part of a larger community of living creatures on the planet. The flipside of pride and arrogance is isolationism and loneliness; we do not feel at home wherever we go. Hence, as a culture, we can definitely use a method that can ease this sense of loneliness.

Loc: Did bowing for three years on the California highway deepen the connection you have with people along the way?

Rev. Sure: The longer I bowed the more connected I felt. With each bow I gradually saw a certain sameness in people’s faces; I felt a kinship with the people I met. I stopped feeling separateness and, with that change in my perception, people’s responses to me changed too. I saw that underneath the exterior, there is a profound family

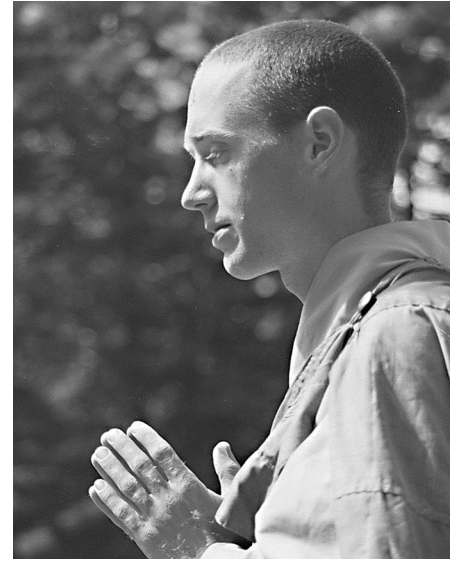
relationship shared among people, animals, and living things. The first pictures of the planet earth taken from space showed a tiny blue marble in an inky black universe that stretches on forever and ever. Looking at those photos, we realized that all creatures are like people in a lifeboat together. We share the water, temperature, and climate. We are a family; some in furs; some with horns; some have wings and scales. Our skins are different colors and our mouths speak different languages, but we all share the same elemental makeup of earth, air, fire, and water.

Bowing shows you this organically. **With each bow, the self slowly disappears.** In the future I hope to keep bowing to “finish the job.” Most of us don’t think to bow; it’s so slow and boring. People often asked, “What are you gonna get out of that?” Kids get bowing right away. It feels good to bow. Adults often take longer to try it out. For adults, if they can get through the first couple bows, often it feels so good to lower the head; it feels as nourishing to the spirit as water on dry plants—it’s very healing.

Loc: I have some friends who just got back from a three-week bowing repentance session at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. Can you tell us more about this event?

Rev. Sure: Every spring the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas (CTTB) convenes a three-week bowing session called the Ten Thousand Buddhas Jeweled Repentance. During this event at CTTB, we bow to the names of 11,111 Buddhas. This Dharma practice is based on the sutra *The Buddha Speaks the Sutra of the Buddhas’ Names*.

Bowing together in ritual movement with 600 people, moving to music for eight hours a day creates



a powerful catharsis. Those who have tried this ceremony know that the first day, you think you’re going to die from so much bowing. The ego really resists being lowered so much. On the second day, you don’t doubt it; you know you’re dead. On the third day, metaphorically speaking, we really die, the ego has given up and gotten with the program. But after the fourth day, we’re reborn, so to speak and bowing becomes effortless from that time on.

Loc: What kind of effects does bowing in repentance have on the body and mind?

Rev. Sure: Bowing a repentance liturgy is designed to bring to consciousness the negative things that we may have committed in the past. Bowing changes the blood flow to the upper body, particularly to the brain, and it seems to dislodge memories or thoughts that may be buried in the mind, or in our kinetic memory. Seated meditation doesn’t function the same way because sitting is stationary and our blood circulation slows down. **When we bow, we place the head on the same level with heart.** The flowing blood and changing energy stimulates and washes clean the effects in the psyche of deeds we have done with our body,

拜這個動作鬆弛了肩膀、脊背和胸口的肌肉，同時也刺激到我們的胃和橫膈膜，而這些肌肉也收藏著「肌肉記憶」。所以，我們的習氣或是被隱藏、壓抑著的思緒，都會在禮拜的時候呈現出來。

黃祿：什麼可以使禮拜不會變成一種純機械式的動作呢？

實法師：如果我們是因懺悔而拜，那我們可以用《華嚴經》的一段偈頌：

往昔所造諸惡業，皆由無始貪瞋癡；
從身語意之所生，一切我今皆懺悔。

這樣每一拜，都能幫助我們正視和放下過去的記憶。禮拜的力量，是來自生理、心理及心靈上各種因素的結合。基本上，拜懺法門使到我們有機會說：「是的，我做錯了，我覺得很慚愧。我以後不要再犯同樣的錯誤了。」當我們真正意識到所犯的過錯，而能夠真心懺悔，這些惡業就不再壓抑著我們的意識，而妨礙心靈的成長。宣公上人曾這樣形容這個過程：「大事化小，小事化無。」

但是如果不用真誠的心來拜，那就不會這麼有效果了；以真誠心拜懺，就能淨化我們的內心。佛菩薩說法就是為了幫助眾生離苦得樂，最終脫離生死的輪迴。拜懺這法門，就是來幫助我們改變、轉化我們的心。

黃祿：請問「空」的教義，與拜懺之間有什麼樣的關係？

實法師：我執的存在，是因果律中關鍵的一環。如果沒有一個「我」了，那惡業也就無所著落了。隨著每一拜，「我執」會漸漸地被掏空——注意，這裏我把

「空」字當成動詞來用。慢慢地，我們就能改變以「我」為中心的觀點。想想，如果沒有惡善的造作者，乃至在本質上，這個造作者根本就是不存在的，那麼業報又從何而生？如果我們能夠懺悔宿業，慢慢地就能夠扭轉善惡的平衡：罪業減少了，功德也就增加了。

我們如果真想要改過、效法佛陀，想要把煩惱轉變成菩提，改變我們的人生方向，那麼禮拜與懺悔就是一個很好的方法。禮拜雖然看起來又笨又無趣，但它卻真正能淨化心靈。

黃祿：剛接觸佛法的人，和無法參加法會的人，如何修懺悔法門？

實法師：當我還是學生時，我根本就沒有興趣反省自己的言行舉止。當時只想多經驗一下人生，越刺激越好。當事情發生的時候，我很少會想：「這次撞得灰頭土腦的，是因為我做錯了。」我當時的心態是：「噢！好痛！真是倒楣！」然後就吃粒止痛藥，或是喝酒麻醉自己。

我根本就不懂得迴光返照、改變自己，而這是對自己有好處的。想要踏出「反聞自性，迴光返照」的第一步是不容易的。但是當我們開始去做的時候，進而明白因果的道理，我們就會理解到原來我們所承受的果報，正是自己所行所作促成的。因為「種什麼因，就結什麼果。」

迴光返照的下一步，就是學習如何從被動的「理解」進而能自我控制。透過反省，我們能夠用一個規範來了解我們的行為。佛法告訴我們「十惡」和「十善」——一套道德的準繩。十惡業，告訴我們諸惡莫作：

身：我們的身體能造作三種惡業：殺生、偷盜、及邪淫。十善業則教導我們，不但要戒除殺業，還要仁慈心對待一切眾生；不但要戒除盜業，還要常行布施，並珍惜我們所擁有的一切；不但要戒除邪淫，還要對我們的眷屬忠貞，並珍惜自己的身體與精力。世界各大宗教都一致認為，邪淫會造成感情混亂和悲傷。再者，陷入混亂的感情糾紛，會使你的心情難以平定、精神無法集中，而無法得到內心的寂靜。

口：口會造作的四種惡業，包括妄語、兩舌、惡口、綺語。所以佛法教導我們戒除以上這些惡語業。

意：惡的意業包括貪、瞋、癡。癡，指的是邪見——不能看到事實的真相，而相信虛假的道理。

十善業，我們能用以衡量自己行為的法則。如果我們的行為與十善業所教導相吻合，那我們的行為必將產生善果，而享有一個我們想要的人生。

黃祿：那萬一我們犯了錯怎麼辦？

實法師：當我們犯錯的時候，第一步就是要意識到因果的運行，要明白我們正創造一個自己所要承受的世界。第二，迴光返照，揪出我們那些習慣性、未經大腦思考、愚癡的行為。第三，在認清自己的過錯之後，我們才能夠予以改過。然後發願改過自新，把惡行變成利益世界的善行。這樣我們就踏上了修行的道路，大公無私地用自己的生命利益一切眾生。這條修行的道路，將會使我們遇到許多善友，一同成就無數的善行義舉。

mouth, and mind. While bowing, memories and thoughts of all kinds come to mind, thoughts that may be terrifying and embarrassing. They arise because the act of bowing relaxes the muscles from the shoulders, the small of your back, and the chest; it exercises the stomach muscles and the diaphragm, which also hold muscle memory. Attitudes buried or repressed thoughts we can no longer “stomach” naturally return to awareness during bowing.

Loc: What prevents your bowing from just becoming purely mechanical?

Rev. Sure: If we are bowing in repentance, we can use a verse from the *Avatamsaka Sutra*:

*For all past bad karma,
Created by beginningless greed,
anger, and delusion,
And created by my body, mouth,
and mind,
I now repent and reform entirely.*

Each bow helps us confront and let go of memories. The power of this technology comes from a combination of physical, psychological, and spiritual elements. Essentially the repentance allows us to say, “Yes, I made a mistake and, yes, I won’t do it again; I’m sorry.” When negative memories arise and are repented of, they lose their power to block our consciousness and impede our moving on to healthy spiritual growth. Venerable Master Hua described the process as, “Big disasters becomes smaller disasters; small ones disappear.”

Bowing without an attitude of sincere repentance will not be as effective; bowing with sincerity helps clean up our stuff inside. The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas taught the Dharma to help people like us to leave suffering behind and ultimately, to gain freedom



from birth and death. The method of repentance helps us change and transform our minds.

Loc: How does the doctrine of “emptiness” apply to repentance?

Rev. Sure: The self works like a hinge pin on the structure of karma. If the view of self is gone, then there is no place for offenses to land or to stick. By emptying out the self with each bow, and here I’m using empty out as a verb, “to empty out,” gradually we can actually change the outlook of the Self, the big “me” in the center. If the thing that does good and bad deeds is not entirely in charge, if the agent that does deeds is gone, and ultimately doesn’t exist, then how much the less do the offenses themselves exist? And if we can then repent of the mistakes we have made, then slowly we turn the balance sheet around. Offenses are reduced; merit and virtue increases.

If we are determined to change and become like the Buddha, and want to transform afflictions and change the direction of our life, then repentance and bowing are good methods to do so. Bowing is slow and dull but it

works to clean the mind’s closets.

Loc: How can people new to Buddhism or people who cannot attend long retreats apply the Dharma of repentance?

Rev. Sure: When I was a student, I was uninterested in reflecting on what I was doing. As a student I wanted experience—the more action the better. And when things happened to me, I was unlikely to say to myself, “Oh, that bang on the head was the result of something I did.” My attitude was, “Ouch! Darn! Bad luck!” Then I’d take an aspirin or drink the pain into oblivion.

I didn’t have a clue that I might benefit by reflecting and changing my behavior. It’s not easy to take that first step: to listen to myself and think things over.

But when we start to practice, and if we get some instruction in the principle of cause and effect, we can understand that things that happen to us are repercussions set in motion by our own behavior. What happens to us is the harvest of seeds we planted.

The next step is to learn how to move from passive understanding to conscious control. Upon reflection we make sense of behavior by comparing with a standard. The Dharma teaches about the Ten Evil and Ten Good Deeds, a set of ethical standards; the Ten Evil Deeds guide us to refrain from creating unwholesome karma with the body, speech, and mind.

Body: Three mistakes with the body include killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct. Instead of killing, the Ten Good Deeds exhort us to be kind to all creatures. Instead of stealing, we are guided to be generous and to appreciate what we have. Instead of sexual misconduct, we are encouraged