

新春勵志——修行為什麼？

New Year's Resolutions: Why Do We Cultivate?

節自宣化上人百日禪開示

Excerpts from the Venerable Master's lectures during the Hundred-day Chan Session

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「無情歲月增中減，有益佛法苦後甜」，什麼最無情呢？這個時間最無情，不論你是誰，和你也不客氣，誰也不能把時候停留下、和你多聚會一個時候。今天過去了，你再找今天就沒有了。你以為多一歲是增，而你活的時候就減少了，你在這個世界的時候就少了，這叫無情歲月增中減。「有益佛法苦後甜」，這個佛法是最有益的，但是你要先修苦行。

我們每個人迴光返照，問一問自己，我們學習佛法，依照佛法來修行，為的是什麼？有人說：「因為佛法是一種學問，我願意增加我的學問，所以我學習佛法。」有的人說：「我學習佛法是想要修行，所以我要學佛法；因為我不學佛法，我不知道怎麼樣修行。」這兩種人說的都有一點道理，可是只是有一點點道理，不是完全的。什麼是完全的呢？修行為的就是要得到真正的自由、得到真正的解脫。

什麼叫真正自由？有人說：「我知道我們的國家就是一個自由的國家，父母不管小孩子，小孩子也不要聽父母的，所以自由自在，願意如何就如何，這就是自由。」這叫誤解自由。真正的自由，先要不自由。你要先要自由，以後的就不自由；你先要不自由，以後才能有自由。我所說的這個「自由」，和你所知道的「自由」是不同的。

怎麼樣先不自由呢？先要修行，要學習佛法，要循規蹈矩，不要為非做歹，要「擇善而從，不善而改」，找到好的就去做去，有不好的就要去改。依照佛法去修行，修行到無拘無束、無罣無礙、無人無我、無自無他、無大無小、無內無外、無始無終這個境界，返本還原，找回我們本來的面目，得到真正的自由。真正自由是我願意活著，就可以永遠活著；我願意死，隨時都可以死，生死自由！有人說：天地間一切萬物是天主造的，天主他也不能管我。這個時候不單他不能造我，而且我能造天主，我能造化這個天地，我能造化這個虛空，我能造化

“Merciless time withdraws as it increases; the beneficent Buddhadharma is first bitter then sweet.” What is the most merciless thing? Time is the most merciless because it listens to no one. No one can stop time or ask it to stay for a while. Once today has passed, you will never be able to find it again. You think that to pass another birthday is to increase, but the time you have left in your life has decreased, and the time you have left in the world has decreased. This is “Merciless time withdraws as it increases.” “The beneficent Buddhadharma is first bitter then sweet”: the Buddhadharma is the most beneficent, but you must first cultivate the bitter practices.

Each of us should ask ourselves, why do we study the Buddhadharma and cultivate according to it? Some people say, “Because the Buddhadharma is a kind of knowledge, and I want to increase my knowledge. That is why I study the Buddhadharma.” Other people say, “I study the Buddhadharma because I want to cultivate; if I don't study the Buddhadharma, I won't know how to cultivate.” Both kinds of people are partly right, but neither is completely correct. What is completely correct? The reason to cultivate is to obtain true freedom and true liberation.

What is true freedom? Someone says, “I know our country is a free country. The parents don't take care of their kids, and the kids don't listen to their parents. That's why it's a free country; freedom is to be able to do whatever you want.” This is to misunderstand the meaning of freedom. To be truly free, you must begin by not being free. If you are free first, then in the future you will not be free. If you start by being not free, then in the future you can be free. The “freedom” I am talking about



這個大覺！

今天，我們講一個笑話，講什麼笑話呢？我說這個世界、這個天地間，大的東西就吃小的東西，好像人就吃牛、吃豬、吃比人小的、吃比人愚癡的，總而言之，大的就吃小的，好像中國有一句話，說：「大魚吃小魚，小魚吃蝦米，蝦米吃軟泥。」這句話雖然很平淡，但是的確是這樣子。你把大魚肚子剖開，裏頭有很多小魚，這是牠吃的，魚吃魚。有人說：「沒看見人吃人呀！」因為大家是同類，人知道不可以互相吃，所以不像魚那麼惡，就魚吃魚。

那麼這個天地它吃什麼？天地就吃人。這個人生了、長了、老了、又死了，死了埋到地裡頭，被地吃了，天地吃了這個人。那什麼又吃天地呢？「空」。這天地太大了，所以「空」來吃它，好像那個石頭太硬了，給風刮刮，石頭它也就小了，這都是虛空吃這個天地。那什麼吃虛空呢？這個覺、大覺！「空生大覺中，如海一漚發」，你看空很大了，但是比較覺悟那個「覺」字，空就好像是在大海裡頭一個泡沫那麼大，所以最大的就是這個「覺」。

你看我們每一個人，像個人似的，人那個臭皮囊裡頭，不知道有多少菌、沒有數量的菌，天天喝你的血、吃你的肉，不過你自己不知道，等到這個菌都養大了，你也就死了，你被這個菌給吃掉了。今天我們講這麼個笑話，這個不管是真是假，你想想，無論是以科學、哲學研究，這都有道理在裡頭。用化學試驗，你看這一個人身上真是有多少細菌，那些都是在吃人呢！那小東西又吃大東西，小蟲子吃大蟲子，大蟲子又吃小蟲子，互相吞食。現在這個細菌吃我們，我們將來也變成菌又吃這個菌，互相輪迴著吃；你吃我、我吃你，我吃你、你吃我。什麼時候是中斷的時候呢？就是你得到真正自由、真正解脫了，這些個問題都會沒有了。

☞待續

is different from the “freedom” you know.

What does it mean to begin by not being free? First we must cultivate and study the Buddhadharma. We should follow the rules and observe propriety, and not do harmful and illegal things. We should follow the maxim, “Follow what is good, and change what is not good.” If we find something good, we should do it; and whatever is bad we should change. Cultivate according to the Buddhadharma, until we reach the state of being unlimited and unimpeded, without self and without others, without large and without small, without inside and without outside, without beginning and without end. By returning to the source and finding our original selves, we will obtain true freedom. True freedom means that if I wish to live, I can live forever; if I wish to die, I can die any time. That’s freedom from birth and death! Some people say that the myriad things of the heaven and earth are created by God, but God cannot rule over me. Not only can he not create me, I can create God and the heaven and earth. I can create empty space; I can create Great Enlightenment!

Today, I will tell a joke. What joke is this? In this world, between heaven and earth, the big things eat the small things. For example, humans eat cows and pigs. They eat what is smaller and stupider than humans. It is like the Chinese saying, “Big fish eat small fish; small fish eat shrimp; shrimp eat mud.” Although this may seem to be a very simple saying, what it describes is indeed the case. If you open the stomach of a big fish, you will find many small fish in there. Fish eat fish. Some will say, “But humans don’t eat humans!” We’re all the same species, so people know that we can’t eat each other. That’s why we’re not as bad as the fish, eating each other.

So what do heaven and earth eat? Heaven and earth eat people. When humans are born, grow, age, and die, they are buried in the earth. So we are eaten by the earth. Then what eats heaven and earth? Empty space. Heaven and earth are too vast, so they are eaten by empty space. It’s like a very hard stone that is eventually whittled down by the blowing of the wind. That is how empty space eats heaven and earth. And then what eats empty space? It is enlightenment—Great Enlightenment! “The emptiness created within great enlightenment, / Is like a single bubble in all the sea.” Empty space seems very large, but compared with enlightenment, empty space is the size of a bubble in a great sea. So enlightenment is the largest of all.

Take a look at each of us. We look like people, but inside these stinking skin-bags, there are immeasurable microbes that are drinking our blood and eating our flesh every day, only we don’t know about it. When these microbes have grown to maturity, it is our turn to die; we are eaten by these microbes. This is today’s joke; you should think about it regardless of whether it is true or not. Whether you look at it scientifically or philosophically, there is truth in it. If you use chemical experiments, you can look at the number of microbes in the human body. All of them are eating humans! The small things eat the big ones. The little bugs eat the big bugs, and the big bugs eat the little ones; they eat each other. Now these microbes are eating us, but in the future we will also become microbes and eat microbes. We are in this cycle of mutual eating: you eat me, I eat you; I eat you, you eat me. When can we stop this? When we are truly free, truly liberated, all of these problems will be gone.

☞To be continued