

比丘近恭
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體驗生命的無常

An Experience of Life's Impermanence

I have listened to the Buddhadharma for a long time. I thought that I understood the words, but it turns out that I have not fully grasped the meaning. Here is one passage that I do not understand. It is Section 38 from the *Sutra in 42 Sections*. The Buddha asked a shramana, how long is the human life span? The reply was, a few days. The Buddha said this disciple has not yet understood the Way. He asked another shramana, how long is the human life span? The reply was, the space of a meal. The Buddha also said this disciple has not yet understood the Way. He asked another shramana, how long is the human life span? The reply was, the length of a single breath. The Buddha said, "Excellent. This disciple understands the Way."

I am sure that you have all heard the story of three men who got together every year. One was 60 years old. One was 70 years old. One was 80. The 60 year old said, "When we meet every year, I wonder if I will live another year and be able to see you again." But the 70 year old said, "When I take off my shoes and go to sleep at night, I wonder if I will live to the next day and be able to put my shoes on again." But the 80 year old said, "Every time I breathe out, I wonder if I will be able to breathe in again."

At the end of the day we recite this verse:

We are like fish in an evaporating pond.

What joy is there in this?

*Be mindful of impermanence and
take care not to be lax.*

Now one day about two and a half months ago, I made up a list of projects that I wanted to complete that day. It was 8:00 in the morning, and I expected to put in a full day's work. There were telephone and Internet projects. There were door and lock projects. I did not write down to begin reciting the name of Amitabha. I did not plan to start reciting the Buddha's name at that very moment so that when I died about half an hour later, I would be mindful of the Buddha. I took my list and walked

我聽聞佛法已經很長時間了，覺得自己已經懂這些道理了；可實際上我還沒有完全了解其中的意思。在我不懂得的其中之一，就是在《佛說四十二章經》第三十八章，佛問沙門：「人命在幾間？」對曰：「數日間。」佛言：「子未知道。」復問一沙門：「人命在幾間。」對曰：「飯食間。」佛言：「子未知道。」復問一沙門：「人命在幾間。」對曰：「呼吸間。」佛言：「善哉！子知道矣。」

我確信大家都聽說過一個故事，就是講有三個老年人，每年都聚會，一個是60歲，一個是70歲，最後一個是80歲。60歲的老人說：「我們每年聚會時，我老是想著明年我還能不能再看望你們？」可是70歲的老人卻說：「我每晚把鞋子脫掉睡覺時，就想著我明早能不能還活著把鞋子再穿上？」80歲的老人就說：「每次我呼吸出去時，我就想著我能不能再呼吸進來？」

當每天結束時，我們都念：「……如水少魚，斯有何樂？……但念無常，慎勿放逸。」

兩個半月前的一天，我正拿著一張紙，上面列著當天我要做的事情，所以早上8點鐘，我就想用這一天來做這些事——網絡、電話，還有門和鎖等等的事情；可是，名單上我沒有寫要念阿彌陀佛名號的事。所以，我沒想我應該在那個時候念佛；半小時後我要昏死時，我就沒有觀想著佛的名號。我拿著這張紙開始上樓梯，可是一走到上面，忽然覺得頭昏；突然間我的呼吸變得很急促，於是在最上一級樓梯上坐了下來，沒有力氣繼續走了，就躺到地上，連坐起來的力氣都沒有了。

過了一分鐘，我感覺沒有那麼無力了，

up a flight of stairs. As I reached the top of the stairs, I suddenly became dizzy. I was suddenly breathing very rapidly. I sat down on the top step. I was too weak to continue. I lay down on the floor. I was too weak to even sit up.

But after a minute, I did not feel as weak. I got up and was able to walk another 30 paces. Now I was weak again and had to sit down and then lie down again. But after another minute, I got up again and walked another 30 paces. This time I did not lower myself to the ground so I could rest. I passed out and fell on the floor. A few minutes later, I regained consciousness. I was too weak to get up this time. At that time I did not think that I would ever take another step in this life. Only then did I start to recite Namó Amitofo, Namó Amitofo. I expected to die very soon.

Now as I recited, I did not see an image of the Buddha. I saw the image of Guanyin Bodhisattva, the same image as the one on the stage behind me. I thought, my recitation does not match this image. So, I started reciting Namó Guan Shi Yin Pu Sa, Namó Guan Shi Yin Pu Sa.

Some people came by and called an ambulance for me. I passed out again. The people with me said that I stopped breathing and my pulse stopped. Obviously, I was not entering the second dhyana. I was turning blue and dying. Suddenly I started breathing again. Later I stopped breathing again. My pulse stopped again and I started to die again. Suddenly I started to breathe once more. The ambulance arrived and the paramedics gave me oxygen. They took me to the hospital. Four days later, I was able to walk out of the hospital on my own power.

This talk is about impermanence. However, I am going to talk a little about some medical matters and then return to the subject of impermanence. That day, I had a pulmonary embolism. Pulmonary embolism is just two fancy Latin words for lung and blood clot. For some reason doctors speak quite a bit of Latin, maybe there is a good reason for it. For example, “myocardial infarct” sounds much less alarming than a “heart attack.” But I will not speak any more Latin for you. I want to frighten you. I want to frighten you into reciting the Buddha's name.

I had a blood clot that travels in the arteries to the lungs. In fact, I had quite a few blood clots that lodged in my lungs. The blood clots block the flow of blood to the lungs. The blood is prevented from getting oxygen. Nothing in a human body works without oxygen. At first I was breathing rapidly to try to get more oxygen. At the same time, I was dizzy and weak from the lack of oxygen. Later, due to lack of oxygen, my lungs and heart were having difficulty working.

Could this happen to you? Yes, it could. In this country, 600,000 people get a blood clot in their lungs every year. One in ten or 60,000 people die from that blood clot in their lungs every year. If you get a blood clot in your lungs, you will not have any

就站起來走了三、四步；可是馬上又感到沒有力氣了，就又坐下來，並且躺了下來。又過了一分鐘，我又站起來走了三、四步；這次我都來不及坐下，就暈倒在地上了。過了幾分鐘我又醒過來了，可是這次我太虛弱，坐不起來；那時我覺得連一步也走不了，所以我開始念「南無阿彌陀佛」、「南無阿彌陀佛」……，覺得自己一定是快死了。

但在我念佛時，我沒有看到佛像；我看到的是觀世音菩薩像，就跟我身後臺上的這尊像一樣。我想，我念的「阿彌陀佛」跟這個像不相應，於是我就開始念「南無觀世音菩薩」、「南無觀世音菩薩」……。

這時來了幾個人，叫了救護車，我又暈倒了。後來這些人告訴我，當時我已經沒有呼吸了，脈膊也停了。我這不是進入了第二禪；我臉色變青，是要死了。後來我又開始呼吸了，過了一會又停了；脈膊也停了，我又快要死了。後來，我又覺得我開始呼吸了，救護車也來了，救護人員讓我吸氧氣，把我帶到了醫院；過了四天我才能自己走出醫院。

我現在想講的是無常；可是，我想先講到醫院後的事，再回到無常的話題。那一天，我被查出來是肺栓塞。肺栓塞是用高深的術語來講，其實就是肺部的血凝成了塊。不知為甚麼，醫生常用拉丁術語，我相信一定有他的原因。舉例，像 myocardial infarct（心肌梗塞）；心肌梗塞就是心臟病爆發，但你聽到心肌梗塞就不覺得那麼驚嚇。但我現在不說這些拉丁文名，我就是想嚇唬你，好讓你念佛的名號。

當時是有一個血塊，塞住了我的動脈，阻礙血液流到我的肺裡。事實上，有很多血栓在我的肺裡，這些血栓阻礙了血液流到我的肺部，讓我得不到氧氣。人如果得不到氧氣的話，身體就不能活動。所以，當時我一開始呼吸變得很急促時，就是想要得更多的氧氣。我又感到虛弱要暈倒，也就因為我得不到足夠的氧氣，我的心臟和肺部都很難運動；因為沒有足夠的氧氣。

這種情況有可能發生在你的身體上嗎？有的！在這個國家，每年大約有60萬人在肺部形成血栓；每10個人中就有一個，也就是有6萬人死於肺血栓。如果你出現肺血栓這樣的疾病時，不會有什麼癥兆的；即使在發作之前一分鐘，也沒有癥兆，沒有預警，你突然就覺得虛弱、暈旋、呼吸急促。

symptoms, not even one minute before it occurs. You will not have any warning. Suddenly you will be very weak and dizzy and short of breath.

Even after this happened, I still do not fully understand impermanence. Realizing that I was about to die and would not live longer than another half an hour, is not the same as seeing through the illusion of a life and letting go of everything. I used to think of my death as something that was inevitable. I would get weaker year by year. I would get older and it would be harder and harder to get over each illness that I had. One day I would get ill and never recover. Perhaps in twenty years or ten years or maybe even five years it would happen.

The chaplain in the hospital knew that I had been close to death. And he gave me an explanation of why I did not die. He said that God was looking after me. God saved me from dying. God had a purpose for me. Now I think this chaplain was very close to the truth. But I think that the Venerable Master was the one looking after me. I think that the Venerable Master saved me from dying. I think that the Venerable Master has plans for me in my remaining years. I hope that I can repay him by doing my best for Buddhism in the time I have left.

I see impermanence more clearly now, but I still do not comprehend it fully. So I have some advice for you. Experience is learning from your own mistakes. Wisdom is learning from other peoples' mistakes. So learn from my mistakes. Always put reciting the Buddha's name on your list of projects to do every day. When you recite, recite as if it is your last hour and you will need to be mindful of the Buddha to get to the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

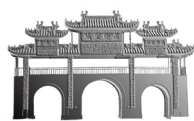
One hour will be your last hour. When that hour begins, it may not be obvious that that hour is your last. I hope you will be reciting the name of Amitabha in that final hour. Amitofo.

在這件事情發生之後，我還是沒有完全懂得無常。感覺到自己快要死了，半個小時之內就會死去，還是跟「看破生死，是把一切都放下」是兩回事。我以前想，死亡是不能躲避的，我每年會變得更虛弱，漸漸老去，很難恢復身體上的疾病，最後會因為病得太重，不能恢復了；但這種情況可能會在20年或者10年，或者5年後發生。

在醫院時，醫院所屬的牧師告訴我，說我那時離死亡非常接近。他解釋為什麼我沒有死的原因，是因為上帝在看護我；上帝把我從死亡中救拔出來，因為上帝還有事情要我做……。這位牧師所講的，跟我的實際情況非常接近；只是，我想看護我的是上人。是上人，把我從死亡中救拔出來，因為上人還有事情，要我在我的餘生中去做；我希望用我的餘生為佛教盡力，好好地報答他。

現在，我能夠更清楚地看到無常了，可是我還沒有全部了解。我給大家一個提議，就是「經驗是從自己的過錯中學習到的；可是智慧，卻是從別人的過錯中學習到的。」所以你們從我的過錯中學習吧！在你每天該做的事情名單中，把念佛這件事列上。你在念佛時，就當作這是你生命的最後一個小時了；你必須用心念，才能到達西方極樂世界。

這一個小時，其實很有可能就是你生命中最後的一個小時；那個小時開始時，你不一定會很明顯地知道那個小時就是你最後的一小時。所以，我希望大家在最後一個小時，能夠念「阿彌陀佛」的名號。阿彌陀佛！



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