

## Commemorating the Relocation of Snow Mountain Monastery:

An Interview with Dharma Master Heng Lai (Continued))

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## ——專訪恒來法師（續）

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### Plowing Deep into Western Soil

Q: For many years at Gold Summit Monastery, we have often come up to Snow Mountain to do community work, have retreats, or just come for a visit. The majority of the community is Asian, either from Vietnam, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Taiwan, Singapore, or China. Most of the practice or events in the monastery now are quite different from the early times when the Master taught the early disciples. From your own opinion and experience, how do you see the differences between the early days and nowadays -- how the Master set up different expedients to receive living beings?

A: When the Master started teaching at Waverly Place in San Francisco, it was only a tiny little place. His first disciples were Asian, of course, but then Westerners began to hear about the Master; they came, and became his disciples. Ron Epstein, Guo Rong, who was studying at the University of Washington in Seattle knew the Master. From things he said about the Master, word spread and people began to say, "Oh there's a sage who lives in San Francisco."

Eventually, Ron led others to find the Master. They told others, and more and more people showed up. No one found out about the Master through advertisements; the Master never advertised. People always found him by word of mouth. Many Westerners who learned about the Master were students in universities, some in Buddhist Studies. This was in the middle to late 1960s. People heard about a Chinese sage in San Francisco and they wanted to find him. They didn't know much; they just went to learn.

Only a few who came knew Chinese, and their language skills were rudimentary. Most who came did not know about Buddhism, other than what they might have studied in universities. So the Master started teaching. At that time he taught mostly Westerners,

### 在地深耕

問：這麼多年來，金峰寺的四眾弟子常常上山來做工、靜修或者參訪，其中大部份都是亞洲人，有從越南、香港、馬來西亞、台灣、新加坡、中國來的，而且廟上的許多活動或修行方式，跟上人早期教導弟子的有很大不同。以您的見解和經驗，如何看待這樣的差別，這種上人接引眾生的權巧方便？

答：上人剛開始在天后廟街時，那只是一個很小的地方，不用說當時的第一批弟子都是亞洲人。後來漸漸地西方人開始知道上人，乃至成為他的弟子。易象乾（果容）當時在西雅圖的華盛頓大學讀書，認識了上人。當從他口中描述關於上人的事跡傳開來後，人們才開始說：「哦，有一位聖人住在三藩市！」

後來易象乾帶著其他人來找上人，這些人再告訴其他人，然後越來越多人來。我們找到上人是因為口碑相傳，不是經由廣告，上人從來不賣廣告。六〇年代中期和後期，在上人座下學習的西方人多數是大學生，有一些是佛學系的。大家聽說有一位中國聖人在三藩市，因此都想來找他。他們對一些事情不太懂，所以想來學習。

那個時候，只有幾個人認識中文，而且都是初學者。大部分來的人都不懂佛法——不是那種在大學裏學到的佛法，因此上人開始教導我們。由於大部分是西方人，所以上人必須觀機逗教；我們就像小孩子，所以上人對我們要非

so he had to be very expedient. We were like little children; he had to be very patient with us. He gently instructed us, "Better not do it that way; try doing it this way."

Later, as more and more people came from China and Taiwan to study with the Master, the teachings and rituals became more traditional -- which didn't bother me. The Master explained that it was necessary to hold to the traditions because it was going to take about 100 years for people in the West to get used to the Buddhadharma.

Q: Did you get used to it?

A: Yes. I'm used to it. I may seem stupid because I don't know Chinese.

Q: Did the Master talk to you in Chinese?

A: The Master talked to me in my mind, if he needed to tell me something. I had no problem with it. All the sutras are in Chinese and they need to be translated. They're vastly profound, and it takes much skillful translation ability to convert the texts into English. You can't just literally translate sutras into English. That would be an extremely shallow approach, and the meaning of the texts won't come out properly. You need someone who truly understands the meaning of the words to convert them into English; it's an extremely difficult and long process. The same applies to transferring all the practices that are traditional in China; it takes a while to grasp their depth and meaning in English. So it just takes a while, you have to be patient.

Many people say, "You have to gather more Westerners and have them to follow the teachings." The only way you do that is by using expedients in an appropriate way. Many Westerners who might be interested in Buddhism are like children. Usually Westerners want to meditate, and they think that's all there is to Buddhism. They don't want to do much. They don't want to learn all the traditions because it's difficult for them.

Most of the Master's early Western disciples were university students. Guo Rong earned a Ph.D.; Heng Kuan went for a Master's Degree; Heng Ching and his brother Heng Shou were university students; and there were some who studied world religions. That's how they approached the Dharma. My own experience was different; I didn't come through the school system. I'm not a good example of that.

### Welcoming People and Spreading the Teachings Step-by-Step

Q: How do you plan to develop the new location for Snow Mountain Monastery? Do you have any plans for it to be a practice center or retreat center – to draw in people from different corners.

A: My idea is to keep it simple. For instance, there could be meditation retreats here. If people are interested, we can teach them about meditation. I'd like to get a library set up here with Western books and titles in English. Of course, we can also have

常有耐心，他會很溫和地教導我們：「最好不要那樣作，試著這樣作看看。」

之後，越來越多人從中國和臺灣來跟上人學習，教法和儀式也變得比較傳統，對此我並不介意。上人解釋說傳統是需要的，因為大約要一百年的時間，西方的人們才會熟悉、習慣這些佛法的內容。

問：您習慣嗎？

答：是的，我很習慣。雖然我可能看起來很笨，因為不懂中文。

問：上人是用中文跟您交談嗎？

答：如果上人要告訴我一些事情，他會在我的心裏說，這方面我沒有問題。所有的經典都是中文，所以需要翻譯。經典的義理博大精深，需要有好的翻譯來將它們翻成英文，不能單從文字上來翻譯，這樣會流於膚淺，而且不能把經文的義理正確地翻譯出來。這份工作，需要有真正懂得文字意涵的人來做，這是非常困難也很耗時。接受中國傳統的修行方式也是如此，我們需要一段時間去領會它的深度和義理。所以這需要時間，必須要有耐心。

很多人說：「你們要接引多一些西方人，讓他們能依法修行。」那麼唯一的辦法，就是方法要對機，因為很多對佛法有興趣的西方人，還是像小孩兒一樣。他們喜歡打坐，也以為這就是所謂的佛教。他們不願意做太多，不想學這些傳統的教法，因為這些對他們來說太難啦！

上人早期的西方弟子，大部分都是大學生，例如果容是博士，恒觀是碩士，恒靜和他的兄弟恒守是大學生，而這些人當中有的是研究世界宗教的。這是他們親近佛法的因緣，但我不是這樣。我不是經由學校體系出來的，我不是一個好的榜樣。

### 逐步接引

問：您計畫如何來發展雪山寺這個新的地方？有計畫將它變成修行或靜修中心，接引來自十方的眾生嗎？

答：我的構想是保持它的純樸，例如可以作為禪修中心。如果人們有興趣，我們可以教他們打坐。我也希望有一座圖書館，以英文書籍為主。當然，圖書館裏會有中文的書，但更需要有適合西方人看的，給有興趣來到這兒並對佛法好奇的人讀。對西方人而言，一下子就給

Chinese books, but we need Western books for Western people who come here and are curious. With Westerners it doesn't work to try to hand them a sutra right away. That's a mistake. I think they should be allowed to take things step by step, like baby steps. Give them something like a Dharma talk by the Master or a pamphlet about how to meditate. Give them very simple books at first. They shouldn't be expected to dive into sutras until later on. It takes a lot of practice and understanding before one is ready to start looking into sutras. For the average Westerner who comes, we must learn to allow them to take things a step at a time -- keep it simple.

I hope to have a meditation hall or a combination multipurpose assembly hall on the property to hold fifty to one hundred people, not too big. Maybe build another building to be used as a dorm for either men or women who want to stay on the property. We can have women in one place, here, for instance, and men can stay in another building. And some sort of dining facility. Most of the time, this place would be used during summer time when many people come. Winter time, it's very quiet, we might have just a couple people here, at least for now. In the future...who knows?

We can use this location as a summer time place, where we can hold summer sessions and things like that. Let's just keep it to small retreats. We'll have to obtain some kind of variance with the county to be able to do that. I don't want to build a big fancy temple building, pagodas and that stuff. I think we can keep it very low-key and simple. Simple architecture for the place, that's my idea. I also want to build an Arhat Trail, like the one at Gold Coast Dharma Realm (GCDR).

Q: How big do you want the Arhat trail to be?

A: I like the ones in GCDR. Rosaline Kang had Arhat images shipped from China. They are made from granite. We could have wood or stone, something that could stay outside all the time, just natural. We don't want to build houses for them, they'd be outside. That's the idea anyway. Do a nice Arhat path because there's already a trail, all we have to do is just establish it. That's in the future. Just an idea.

### Being Taught in Dreams

Q: Having followed the Master for so many years, do you have dreams of the Master? Has he come to you and talked to you?

A: Yes, the Master and I have communication. Sometimes in a dream the Master is giving me instructions. I usually have that kind of dreams with the Master giving instructions, "Okay. Put that there and build that over there." Do this, do that, that sort of instruction. That's what I usually get. He doesn't say, "In the future, you'll get this and that." He gives me basic stuff -- like, "Work on that and see if you can do this," that kind of thing. So it's that kind of relationship with the Master—it's usually in a dream-state.

☞To be continued

他們一部經去讀，這是很不恰當的做法。他們就像嬰兒學步一樣，需要一步一步來，所以先給他們一些簡單的書，例如上人的開示或如何坐禪的書籍，晚一點再讓他們接觸經典。因為深入經藏以前，需要具備相當的修行和理解。我們要學著幫助來到道場的西方人，循序漸進地來學習，也就是盡量保持純樸、簡單。

我希望有一個禪堂或是一個多功能堂，可以容納五十至一百人。還要有一棟宿舍，讓男女眾可以分開住，例如女眾可以住在現在這棟房子，男眾就住在另一棟新蓋的，另外還要有一個齋堂。這裏通常夏天會有很多人來，冬天就很安靜，也許只有兩三個人，至少目前是這樣，將來就不知道了。

我們可以將這裏做為夏天的場所，夏天的時候可以舉辦法會，做一些小型的共修活動。但是得先確定，這種作法有無違反政府的相關規定，我不想蓋一座氣派的大殿、佛塔或是其他的建築，我們盡量保持低調、簡單。簡單樸素的建築，這是我的理想。我也想蓋一條羅漢道，就像澳洲的金岸法界一樣。

問：這一條羅漢道您希望多大？

答：我喜歡金岸法界的那樣。那些十八羅漢的材料是黃雪玲居士從中國運來的，都是花崗岩。這裏我們可以用木頭或石頭，一些適合戶外的天然材質，這樣就不需要再去加蓋房子，他們可以是露天的。總之，這還只是個構想，因為已經有一條現成的小徑，只需稍微建造一下就可以了。不過這都是將來的事，現在只是個構想而已。

### 夢中教誨

問：跟隨上人那麼多年，您有夢見過上人嗎？他有沒有來看您，和您說話呢？

答：有的，我們彼此有溝通。有時上人會在夢中指示，夢裡上人通常會對我說：「可以。這個放那邊，在那個地方可以蓋個房子。」做這個，做那個，這些類似的指示。他不會說你將來會得到這個、那個。他只給我基本的東西，從那裏開始下功夫，看我能做到多少。我和上人的關係，常常是在夢裡的境界。

☞待續