

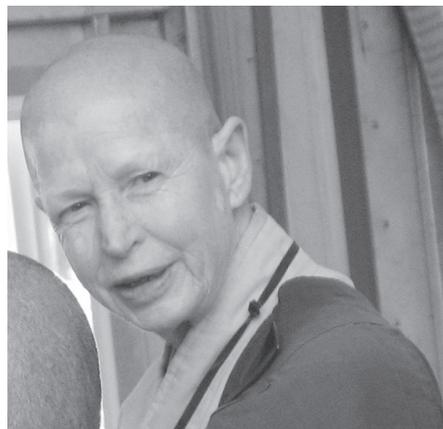
Lifetime Chinese Class

受用終生的中文課

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A talk given by Bhikshuni Jin Rou on April 30, 2011
in the Buddha Hall at CTTB

比丘尼近藏 中譯 Translated into Chinese by Bhikshuni Jin Cang



Tonight, I will talk about my experience with the Venerable Master that changed my life. When I first came to CTTB, the Master was teaching the *Nirvana Sutra*. He told everyone, "I won't be here much longer, so I'm going into retreat. I don't want anyone to talk to me on the road or bow to me, because I have things to do. I've been training all you monks and nuns for years, now I want you to take care of the new people and train them. If anyone has questions, you answer them." The only time I talked with the Master was in class.

There wasn't one Chinese class at CTTB at that time, so the Master told the nuns, "You should have a Chinese class and teach Gwo Bei Chinese." My very first teacher, after a week, said, "You'll never learn Chinese. I'm going to quit." And she did. My second teacher said, "I'm going to teach you a program called *Learn to Speak Chinese Perfectly in 10 Easy Lessons*. If you don't learn to speak Chinese in 10 lessons, I have other things to do."

She recited like a bullet, and I recited after her. Her hands flashed like lightning across the blackboard dusting it with hundreds of Chinese characters. No matter how hard I tried, my characters looked like chicken scratches compared to hers. She told me to write all the characters 10 times for homework and memorize them. Well, I wrote characters day and night and truly liked it, but I never learned the tones. After ten lessons, she was off to better things, and every new female who came to CTTB was my Chinese teacher.

No matter what kind of book I was studying or what method the previous teacher was teaching, the new teacher would say, "Oh, that book you have is no good. You have to get a new book. That method is old fashioned. I have a new method." And so I would start chapter one with a new teacher, and when she would quit, the new teacher would

今晚我講一個關於上人的故事，也是改變我一生的故事。剛來萬佛聖城的時候，上人正在講解《涅槃經》，上人對大家說：「我在這兒的時間沒有多久了，要去閉關，所以你們在路上見到我不要跟我頂禮，也不要跟我講話，因為我有很多事要做。你們這些出家人，我已經訓練你們很久了，希望你們可以去訓練新來的人。如果人家有問題，你們可以回答。」這是唯一一次和上人在課堂上交談。

那時候聖城沒有中文課，所以上人跟女眾法師說：「妳們應該開一堂中文課，教果北（我出家前的法名）中文。」結果我的第一位中文老師，一個禮拜後跟我說：「妳永遠都不可能學會中文的，我不教了。」她真的就辭職了。接著我的第二個中文老師，她告訴我：「我有個課程計劃叫『十堂速成班』，只要十堂課，妳就可以講非常流利的中文。如果十堂課以後妳還是不會講中文，我也沒辦法了。」

上課的時候，她念的速度就像機關槍一樣，然後我要跟著她念；她的雙手閃電般閃過整個黑板，寫下了數百個中國字。不管我多麼努力地學習，跟她比起來，我的中文字還是寫得跟塗鴉一樣。老師要求課堂上教的每個中文字，回家都要寫十遍，而且要記住。我都照做了——日夜地練習，我也很喜歡這份回家作業，但我就是學不會那中文的聲調。十堂課以後老師就不教了，因為她還有其他更重要的事要做。之後每一位新來到聖城的女眾，都擔任過我的中文老師。

每一次，無論之前老師用的是什麼課本或是教學方法，新來的老師都會說：「哦，妳用的那本書不好，要換一本新的。以前那個教法是舊式的，我有個新的教法。」於是我就跟著新老師，從新課本的第一課學起。當她不能繼續教我，來的新老師又要我買另一本新的課本，然後我又從新課本的第一課學起。這樣過了好多年，我終於上到第二課。錢包裡的錢少了，書

have me buy a new book and start with chapter one again. This went on for years, until I finally got to chapter two. By then, I was short on money but rich in Beginner's Chinese books. If you need a beginning Chinese book, ask me. I have a huge stack. Some are certainly collector's items by now.

Getting bored with studying chapter one over and over, I stopped going to Chinese class. But then one night during lecture, the Master said, "Gwo Bei, how's your Chinese? You're too greedy doing other things and not studying." My mind split open like a book. I'd never had felt so shattered and transparent. All my greed was exposed to everyone. I quickly tried to cover it up, but couldn't. The Master's words went deep and left a groove in my life for change. For the first time in my life, I admitted how selfish and lazy I was, not only for not studying Chinese, but for everything. Seeing myself in this way was like waking up from a dream, because of one thing the Master said. He had a way of doing that, saying one tiny something, but pointing at the whole.

By the way, I'm now on chapter four in Chinese, making great progress.

People ask me how I survive in a Chinese community. Here is a little story to give you a clue. When I was a novice at the branch temple in West Sacramento, I was assigned to work in the kitchen. One day the novice I was working with told me to peel some apples. She picked up a Chinese cleaver and began to peel her apple, and I picked up a tiny paring knife and begin to peel my apple. I peeled my apple in a perfect ring and held it up for her to see. It was beautiful. She held her apple up too and it was perfect and beautiful as mine.

Quickly, she grabbed my apple and scrutinized it, turning it round and round and looking at it upside-down. Then she said, "Bu hao," which means "no good". I asked, "What do you mean? It looks the same as yours." She handed me a Chinese cleaver, laid an apple on a cutting board and motioned for me to peel it with that cleaver. By that time, everyone was looking at me, so I swallowed my pride and started to chop off the peel, like the Chinese do. Chop! Chop! When I finished, there were apple peels on the floor and apple sauce stuck to the wall, and a tiny bit of an apple left. The novice picked it up, and after inspecting it, gave me a big smile. "Hen Hao!" (Very good.)

At one time, I was asked to be kitchen manager at CTTB, which was a great surprise to me and a greater surprise to the Chinese cooks. Actually, it turned out fine. I quickly learned to do what everyone else told me to do. The staff even had kitchen meetings without inviting me, so I didn't have to make any decisions. How richer could my life be without the give and take of living in a community with other cultures?

櫃上的「基礎中文」課本，却多了很多。所以如果有人需要初級的中文課本，請來找我，有一大疊可以給你，而且有些已經是絕版的典藏書。

後來因為一直都在學第一課，所以我覺得非常無聊，也就不再去上中文了。結果有一天晚上聽經時間，上人就說：「果北，妳的中文學得怎麼樣啊？妳太貪心了，都在做別的事情，沒有認真學中文。」上人講的時候，我的身體就像書本被打開一樣，從未有過的震驚與透明。頓時，所有貪心的問題都擺在眾人面前；當下想覆藏，却做不到。上人的這番話，從此在我生命留下一道深刻的痕溝。那是有生以來，第一次承認自己是多麼的自私與懶惰，不只是學中文這件事，而且是每一件事。這番檢視自我，猶如大夢初醒一般，這都是因為上人點醒。上人有一種方法，就講一件微不足道的小事，而點出所有的問題的癥結。

現在已經讀到課本的第四課，所以我有進步了。

有人問像我這樣一個美國人，是如何在中國人的團體裡生存？這裡有個小故事，可以供大家參考。當我還是沙彌尼時住在沙加緬度的分支道場，當時被分派到廚房裡工作。有一天，同夥的一位沙彌尼要我削蘋果。她拿一把很大的中國菜刀削蘋果，我就拿一隻小水果刀開始削我的蘋果。我繞著蘋果外圍一圈圈地把皮削下來，然後拿給她看，因為削得真的很漂亮。同樣地，她也拿著她的蘋果給我看看——削得跟我一樣，太完美了！

突然間，她搶走我的蘋果，上下左右轉來轉去看著，然後說：「不好。」我問她是什麼意思？我們兩顆蘋果看起來一模一樣。她交給我一把中國菜刀，然後把一顆蘋果放在切菜板上，比劃著要我用菜刀削這顆蘋果。這時在場的每個人都看著我，於是我克制著自尊心，開始像中國人削蘋果地「切」這個蘋果。切、切、切，等我把這個蘋果削完，其實是切完，地上到處都是蘋果肉、蘋果皮，牆上甚至還黏著蘋果醬，這顆蘋果被削得只剩下一點點。這位沙彌尼拿起蘋果來看一看，給我一個很燦爛的笑容，說：「很好！」

有一段時期，我被叫去作萬佛城的廚房典座。對我來說這是很驚訝的事，對那些在廚房工作的中國伙伴來說，她們更是震驚！事實上，最後結果還算不錯。我很快就學會去做別人要我做的事，甚至連廚房會議也不用參加，所以也就不須要做任何決定。因此住在一個不同文化的團體裡，如果不能互相遷就瞭解，日子怎能變得更多彩多姿呢？