



佛根地歸隱記

Retreat at Buddha Root Farm

朱力安 文/譯 Written and translated into English by Zhu Li'an

能自喧囂塵世中覓得一周時間來叩問心性，原是難得；能與志同道合者一道，又蒙高人指點，就更是機緣巧合了。八月一日至五日，我在佛根地體驗了一周明心見性的歸隱生活，感慨良多，在此訴諸筆墨，略加記述。

奧勒岡州龜山之上的佛根地確是清淨之地，不染纖塵。長年人跡寥落，只有一人一狗相伴。山裡的花開了又謝，無人過問。「最難耐的是寂寞，最難拋的是榮華」，這一點從老犬銀子身上便可見一斑。因有朋自遠方來，牠分外歡喜雀躍，然而我們終歸要走，離別時牠又分外惆悵了。

佛根地在深山之中，齋堂在山下，禪房在山腰，營帳還在其上。夜裡伸手不見五指，抬頭仰看，可見滿天星斗，星河璀璨。過夜用的帳篷就搭在山路旁的大樹之間，減去手電之後，帳篷裡一絲光亮也沒有，耳邊更是萬籟俱寂，只聽得自己的呼吸和鄰人的鼾聲，正是王維的「人閑桂花落，夜靜春山空」。

每日早晨五點到山腰的禪房做早課，依

Rarely do you have the luxury of having a whole week to realize your nature in this tumultuous world; rarer still to find good company and wise counsel when you do have this luxury. Rather coincidentally, I had such an affinity through a weeklong Buddhist retreat at Buddha Root Farm. I would like to pen my thoughts and feelings here.

Buddha Root Farm sits atop Turtle Mountain in Oregon. It is a secluded place and seldom has visitors. For years, there has been only one man and one dog taking care of it and keeping each other entertained. Wild flowers dotting the fields bloom and wither without being noticed. "Most difficult to endure is loneliness; most unbearable to part with is splendor." This saying can be seen in Silver the dog, for he became quite different from his usually languid self when seeing friends coming from afar. Yet all good things must come to an end—when we left, melancholy was inevitable for him.

The cafeteria is at the foot of the mountain, the Chan Hall halfway up, and our tents even higher. At night when extending your palm you cannot see your fingers, yet if you raise your head, you can take in the splendid starry heavens. Our tents were set up among trees. When flashlights die, there is not a single beam of moonlight penetrating the tent and you are surrounded by absolute quietness, if not for the sound of your own breathing and the occasional snoring of your tent-mates. Just as the poet Wang Wei wrote, "Sweet laurel blooms fall unenjoyed; vague hills dissolve into night void."

We get up at five o'clock and walk down to the Chan Hall to

《萬佛聖城日誦儀規》誦楞嚴咒、大悲咒、十小咒、《般若波羅蜜多心經》、藥師讚、普賢十大願王、三皈依，末後是韋陀讚和禮祖等。誦經禮佛原是要洗去雜念，而不慣早起的我卻只是藉此洗去睡意。之後便是近一小時的打坐，初學乍練之人難免不得法，參閱宣化上人的《參禪手冊》後，對蓮花坐和人體氣機有了幾分了解。開始盤腿端坐，不堪其苦，閉上眼睛，妄念紛飛，無從入定。漸入佳境則是後來的事情了。

打坐到七點，聽得法師手中鈴響兩聲後，便該下山用齋了。

猶記得有一次早課和打坐後，略為耽擱了一下，走出禪房時，下山的路上已闕無一人，當時天色欲曙，我踏著黃綠雜糅的草，沿著車行留下的轍痕獨自下山。山路不寬，勉強可容兩車並行。道路兩旁是高大的松、杉和紅木，野花簇簇，霧靄正



濃，白白地壓在樹梢上，彷彿爬上樹就能摸到霧。草葉上還帶著晨露。我沉醉此間，流連四顧，忽見樹影婆娑搖曳，猛一抬頭，才發現初升的太陽正從雲霧中透射出金色的光芒，不覺心胸為之一蕩。之後是一座小橋，橋下溪水琤琮。走下山的時候，眾人已經開始早齋了，鳥雀兀自在林間啁啾。

早齋過後再回禪堂聽講座。講座每天早午晚三場，分別由諸位法師講省庵大師的《勸發菩提心文淺釋》。恒實法師開壇第一講，談省庵大師生平。講到省庵大師恍

do morning recitation. We chant the Shurangama Mantra, Great Compassion Mantra, Heart of Prajna Paramita Sutra, Praise to Medicine Master Buddha, Universal Worthy's Ten Great Vows, Three Refuges, Praise to Vajrapani Bodhisattva, Bowing to the Patriarchs etc., according to the Daily Recitation Handbook. Recitation is meant to wash away one's impure thoughts, yet for me, the session at this hour was merely a struggle against my own sleepiness. After this we had a meditation session for nearly an hour. As a new practitioner, I could not quite get the trick of it. Only after reading the Chan Handbook by Venerable Master Hua did I have some basic understanding of the lotus position and the chi (energy) circulating in one's meridians. The physical pain distracted me, wild thoughts befuddled me, and samadhi was far away from me. I did come to appreciate mediation later, but that is quite another story.

We would sit till seven o'clock, when the Dharma Master rang the bell twice, signaling that it was time to go down the mountain for breakfast.

How well I remember the time I was delayed after morning recitation and the mediation session, and when I walked down I found no one but myself. This was before dawn. I walked on the grey and yellowish grass, along the deep grooves left by car wheels. The road is not wide, barely allowing two cars to drive side-by-side. It is a road cutting through the woods; to both sides, there are tall trees—pines, firs, redwood—and clusters of unnamed flowers. The mist was still thick and it hung so low that I felt I could almost reach out and touch it if I climbed up a tree. Heavy dew lay on the grass. Lingered in the woods, I was mesmerized by the scenery. Suddenly, I sensed the swinging shadows of the trees. I looked up and saw the clouds silhouetted against the newborn sun. In a minute, the sun broke through the clouds, giving out its golden brilliance. I was overjoyed to capture that moment. Walking across the wooden bridge over the gurgling stream, I arrived at the cafeteria, where the others had already started eating. Birds were still chirping in the woods oblivious of our activity.

After breakfast, we returned to the Chan Hall for lectures. Every day, there were three sessions of lectures, during which *Exhortation to Resolve Upon Bodhi* by Great Master Xing An was taught by the Dharma Masters, each being responsible for one or two chapters. Rev. Heng Sure gave the inception lecture of the series, introducing the life and works of Great Master Xing An. When talking about Master Xing An's awakening and his exclamation, "I have awakened from a dream!" Rev. Heng Sure hummed the theme song of the Harry Potter movie. We visualized ourselves sitting in a theatre where a fantasy-journey was about to begin. He then woke us up and explained that when a movie ends, the audience invariably awakens from the dream of the movie; yet few people can awaken from the dream of our existence. For five days in a row, Dharma Masters covered the topics of Buddha's Kindness, Our Parents' Kindness, Our Teachers' and Elders' Kindness, Donors' Kindness, Living Beings' Kindness, The Suffering of Birth and

然契悟，說「我夢醒矣」一節時，法師哼起了《哈里波特》的主題曲，引我們想像看電影的場景。人生如夢，而在電影院裡則是夢中做夢，電影結束時，眾人往往能自夢中夢裡醒來，但人生這場大夢，能覺醒的只怕寥寥無幾。一連五天，由不同法師講了念佛重恩、念父母恩、念師長恩、念施主恩、念眾生恩、念生死苦，尊重己靈和懺悔業障等章節，不同法師，風格迥然各異。

不時有龜、熊、鹿、龍、兔和貓等動物闖進講堂，讓聽眾錯愕不已。原來是恒實法師拎著布偶，用腹語講解禪機又是博聽眾一笑。一個半小時的講座後，到了瑜伽和太極時間，之後又是半小時的打坐。打坐完畢已是近午時分，眾人在禪堂前列隊，跟著僧眾和居士下山，和著磬聲和木魚一路稱念「南無觀世音菩薩」，菩薩聖號在山間迴蕩，久久不去。

齋菜相當精美可口，午齋過後，法師輪流講述心得。印象較深的是近梵法師講的「一粥之緣」的故事，一個和尚想在某寺廟掛單，怎奈無論如何強求也只得一粥之緣，皆因前世在修寺廟的時候偷懶，只搬了兩塊磚頭，因此緣淺福薄。大眾聽完，會得其意，紛紛報名幫忙刷鍋洗碗，不敢閑著。

下午從一點半到三點半有三場打坐，之後又是講座和答疑時間，繼續講解《勸發菩提心文淺釋》。周三和周四下午安排了兩次可選戶外活動，一次是溫徹斯特沙丘遊，另一次是觀肯塔基瀑布。聽潮觀瀑，別有一番情致。

阿姜古納教授散步冥想法，他平日總是樂呵呵地，笑起來如同孩童般天真。有一次我問他「何以笑口常開？」，他說：「我有時也悶悶不樂，不過那是我忘記佛法的時候。」說完又自笑個不停。

晚膳之後是晚課，誦禮佛大懺悔文和彌陀讚等。回憶起我第一次做晚課正是前往奧勒岡州佛根地的前一天，當時我初次拜訪萬佛聖城。穿過金碧輝煌的大門，已被其氣派震懾。內裡無比開闊，佔地四百餘英畝，儼然一座城池。就在當天晚課時見識到大殿內的萬尊金佛，而更讓我驚詫



Death, Reverence for Our Spiritual Nature and Repenting of Karmic Obstacles and Reforming, each having his or her unique style.

From time to time, turtles, bears, deer, rabbits, cats, and even mighty dragons barged into the Chan Hall, taking us all by surprise. It turned out to be Rev. Heng Sure doing puppet shows to illustrate the Dharma or to simply evoke a hearty laugh. After the one and a half hour lecture came the yoga and taiji sessions, followed by another half an hour's meditation. Already noon, we formed a procession led by the Sangha heading for the cafeteria. People chanted "Na Mwo Guan Shr Yin Bodhisattva" to the sound of the bell and wooden fish, leaving echoes of the Bodhisattva's name lingering in the mountains.

The vegetarian food was rather tasty. After lunch, Dharma Masters took turns sharing their experiences. I was most impressed by Dharma Master Jin Fan's "The Affinity of A Mere Bowl of Porridge," which is about a visiting monk's weak affinity with a monastery that lasted only the time of a bowl of porridge, for in his previous life, when helping to build a monastery, he was lazy and only lifted two bricks. As a result, his relationship with the monastery could not go any further. Grasping the Dharma Master's implication, we vied to help out, lest the tragic fate of the poor visiting monk befall us.

From half past one to half past three, we had three sessions of meditation. After that again came the second lecture session and Q&A time. We had two optional outdoor activities on Wednesday and Thursday afternoon, one visiting the Winchester Dunes and the other viewing the Kentucky Falls. Listening to the sound of waves and watching the waterfall added





不已的是自由行走於萬佛聖城內的無數孔雀。牠們拖著光鮮的翎毛，在城內閑庭信步，毫不畏人。一說孔雀象徵智慧，一說孔雀象徵純潔，更傳說孔雀吃毒草而不死。那天晚課過後，我問一位居士可否四處走走再看看孔雀，他順手一指身後一棵參天大樹，說孔雀已經飛到樹上歇息了。恍然大悟，這就是鳳棲梧啊！

在最後的晚會上，每個人都要描述一個自己印象深刻的畫面。我想起的則是我和恒實法師的清談。我說，這番歸隱，我很受觸動，還不確定我對人生意義的追尋可以就此止步，亦不確定我的世界觀是否就此定格。法師淡淡一笑，說道，慢慢來，這次歸隱只是一個開頭，嘗一嘗而已。

這一嘗確實讓人欲罷不能！

【編按：作者朱力安，來自中國廣州，大學本科翻譯，來美留學一年。偶然機緣，得聞佛根地將有佛法研習營，欣然而來，如獲至寶！】

quite a different flavor to this retreat.

Ajahn Gunavuddho taught us walking meditation. He is so jovial and always wears a smile as innocent as a child's on his face. Once, I asked him where his perpetual joyfulness came from. He said, "There are times when I am not cheerful; that's when I have forgotten the Buddhist teachings." So saying, he burst into laughter again.

In the evening recitation after supper, we chanted "Eighty-Eight Buddhas Repentance Ceremony," "Amitabha Praise," and others. It reminded me of my first visit to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas the night before I came to Buddha Root Farm. Passing through the golden Mountain Gate, I was quite taken by the grandeur of the monastery. CTTB covers over 400 acres. It is a little city indeed. The same night in the main hall, I paid homage to the 10,000 golden Buddha statuettes. I was more amazed by the countless peacocks, dragging their fair tails and strolling idly in CTTB, though. Some say peacocks symbolize wisdom, some say they symbolize purity; legend says that peacocks can survive poison. After evening recitation, I asked an Upasaka whether I could walk around and see the peacocks. He pointed to a tree behind him and told me that peacocks had already flown up the tree for the night. I then realized the truth of the legend: phoenixes sleep on Chinese parasol trees.

The last night, everyone was asked to describe a snapshot—a most memorable image you will be taking away with you. I thought of my conversation with Rev. Heng Sure. I told him that I was deeply touched by this retreat, yet I was not sure that my quest for the meaning of life ended here or that I have definitively settled my worldview this way. He smiled and said, "Take your time. This retreat is only a teaser."

And a very tempting teaser indeed.

[Editor's note: Li'an Zhu, the author of this essay, comes from Guangzhou, China. He studied translation as an undergraduate and has been studying in the United States for a year. Having incidentally heard of the retreat at Buddha Root Farm, he gladly came and participated with great delight.]

