



*It Is Hard to Encounter
a Good Spiritual Teacher:
My Teacher,
the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua
(continued)*

畢生難遇的 大善知識

我的師父 宣公上人

Spoken by Dr. Ron Epstein 易象乾教授 口述
Compiled by Editorial Staff 編輯部 整理

VI. Repent in public

Victor: I thought that was something he really advocated, repenting. Can you describe that and what that's like?

Epstein: What would happen would usually, but not always, be this: people would do it along with requesting Dharma. Just the way Dharma is requested now, people would light incense and circumambulate and bow, and before requesting Dharma, they would bow three times to the Master, kneel, put their palms together. Doing their public repentance meant saying from the heart what they had done wrong that they wanted to repent. Some people would repent about very specific things that had happened, and other people would do a review of their whole lives, everything they had become aware in practice that they were ashamed of and publicly tell everybody all those things and repent. Repenting includes bowing before the Triple Jewel, genuinely feeling that what you've done is wrong, harmful to yourself and others, and vowing to never do it again (as the Sixth Patriarch says). It is very powerful Dharma. Unfortunately, it's very rarely practiced publicly at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas now.

Victor: How do you understand his teachings on repentance? How do they work on people?

六、公開懺悔

鄭偉德：我覺得上人非常提倡懺悔。能不能描述一下？

易象乾：一般情況下是這樣的（但並不總是這樣）：人會先請法，就像現在的請法儀式，燃香、繞佛，然後禮拜；在請法之前，會向師父禮拜三次，然後跪下，雙手合十。做公開懺悔，意味著發自內心地講出自己所要悔改的過錯。有些人會為已發生的某些特定事情懺悔，而其他人則會檢討整個的生命歷程，舉凡自己已意識到而羞於公開的行為，一切都懺悔。懺悔包括跪在三寶前，真誠地思維所作的錯事，思維對自己和他人的傷害，並且發誓永不再犯（就像六祖大師所講的）。這是非常有力的法門，但不幸的，這在今天的萬佛城已經很少見了。

鄭偉德：你如何理解上人這種懺悔的教育呢？怎樣用在人身上呢？

易象乾：這好像是淨化或是絕食，是清除

Epstein: It's like a purging or fasting. It's a way of cleaning out your mind. There's so much of what hangs us up clogging our minds, because we are not willing to admit what we are responsible for, what has been harmful to ourselves and others. We either cover up, the covering dharma is one of the afflictions, or not admit our faults, blame other people, and try to justify ourselves, "This is not my fault." A basic Buddhist teaching is taking responsibility. Another basic Buddhist teaching is that we all have the ability to change. Repentance, whether it's done formally or informally, is a prerequisite for real practice on the path of the Buddhadharmā. I think that is something that is absent from most of American religion, which in Buddhism is a formal Dharma.

VII. Buddhism in the West is as the light of dawn

Victor: You mentioned that you guys started *Vajra Bodhi Sea* after the Shurangama Session. Can you tell us some of the other developments that came out of the Shurangama Session?

Epstein: I think the big outcome was that there was a core group of people who were devoted to practicing the Buddhadharmā under the Venerable Master's guidance. The young westerners, who went through this intense three months or so, had really created a foundation for practicing and understanding, the beginnings of a foundation anyway. Out of this a number of things occurred. One of the most important was probably five people going forth from the home-life and becoming Bhikshus and Bhikshunis, to start an American Sangha of fully ordained monks and nuns. Other than this group in the United States, there were just non-celibate American priests, married Japanese priests, married Tibetan priests in the Tibetan tradition. There was no Sangha in the traditional sense of the Sangha, so this was a real important beginning.

Also the Buddhist association that the Master started when he came to the United States went into a new phase and it was reorganized. It was typical of the way the Master worked. He had a meeting so we could discuss the reorganization. Before that, it was the Buddhist Lecture Hall 佛教講堂, which had been the name in Hong Kong, under which it had been incorporated in Hong Kong. He said, maybe that's not appropriate and we should change the name. He asked us, what name we should have. We had a long discussion, for maybe an hour, of what name it should have. I remember that at one point he said, we should call it the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association. We all said, "Oh no, no, that's way too big. We can't handle that." We finally settled on Sino-American Buddhist Association, because that seemed to represent what was going on there. There was a young group of Americans, and there was a group of the Venerable Master's Chinese disciples, mostly from Chinatown. We were all very harmoniously working together from different cultural perspectives, studying with the Venerable Master. So that seemed to, in our limited vision at that time, be appropriate. When that name obviously became too small

雜念的方法。在腦海中有很多障礙使我們牽掛，因為我們對那些損人害己的行為，不願承認所應承擔的責任。我們要麼就掩飾（覆藏法煩惱之一），要麼就不承認自己的過錯而批評他人，試圖為自己開脫：「這不是我的錯！」佛教的基本教義，就是負責任；另一個基本教義，則是我們都有能力去改變。懺悔，無論是正式的還是非正式的，都是在佛法道上真正修行的先決條件。我想這是目前美國宗教所缺少的一環，而這在佛教當中確是正式的修行方法。

七、西方佛法露曙光

鄭偉德：你們在楞嚴法會之後創辦了《金剛菩提海》雜誌。能介紹一下楞嚴法會其他的一些成果嗎？

易象乾：最大的一個成果，應該是有一群核心人物在上人的指導下開始獻身於佛法的實踐了。西方的年輕人，在這裏度過了三個多月，已經建立起修行和理解佛法的基礎——總之，一個基礎的開端就是了。因此，就有很多事情發生了，其中最重要的，是五位西方人出家成為比丘和比丘尼，開美國有受具足戒的僧團之先河。除了這個僧團，美國當時只有一些非獨身的美國牧師，一些已婚的日本出家人，或者是藏傳的已婚藏僧，而沒有傳統意義上的沙門；所以這件事情是非常重要的——一個開始。

上人來美國之後所成立的佛教總會，也進入了一個新的階段，並重組。這是上人典型的運作方式，他舉行了一次會議專門討論中美佛教總會的重組問題。在那次會議之前，道場沿用在香港的名字，叫做「佛教講堂」，這是在香港註冊登記的法人組織。上人說這個名字可能不合適，我們應該改。他問我們應該起個什麼名字？我們討論了很長時間，差不多有一個小時，就為了能起個合適的名字。我記得上人提到一點，說我們應該起名為「法界佛教總會」，我們都說：「不好，不好！那太龐大了，我們擔不起來！」我們最後把名字定為「中美佛教總會」Sino-American Buddhist Association，因為這個名字更能體現那裡當時的情形。那裡有一些年輕的美國人，也有一些多數是來自唐人街的上人的中國弟子；我們這些人有著不同的文化

for later developments, it was changed to the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association.

But the Venerable Master would never tell people what to do. I can't remember, in all the years, I can't think of a single time where he ordered me around and told me: you do this. Sometimes he would make suggestions, but most of the time he would wait until I asked him. Then he would offer advice. If I felt uncomfortable with it, it was almost always okay not to take it. Although most of the time I was always very grateful for it and took his advice. Most of the time, I could handle what he had to say. He was not at all authoritarian in his personal dealings with people. He could be very fierce in his teaching method, but he would only be fierce with people who could take it. He would never be fierce with people who couldn't. For example, Dharma Master Heng Sure would get publicly scolded all the time, more than anybody else, because he could take it.

If the Master would just look at me in a certain way for three seconds, my mind would recoil and I would ask myself what I do wrong. How much greater of the effect of the rare occasions when he publicly scolded me! Probably the reason why I am still around is because he never went beyond what I was able to personally handle in my own personal cultivation. He would look at each person's own capacities and teach him/her according to his/her capacity, what they were able to handle. It is always much more than what we think we can handle. I think almost all of us had a much more limited sense of what we were capable of doing than the Venerable Master did. I think that's one of the beautiful teachings of the Buddhadharma. It awakens people to their real potentials; we are future Buddhas.

VIII. Quickly bring forth bodhi resolve

Victor: It seemed like he always inspired you guys to a bigger vision than you thought you were capable of.

Epstein: All the time. Every time we had session, he would encourage us to work really hard. He'd say, at this session, somebody's going to *kai wu* 開悟, become awakened. We all wanted to -- this was not idle talk -- have some kind of awakening. So often, not only in United States, but also in China, in Japan, the countries of East Asia, you have teachers that say, in the Dharma Ending Age, nobody can cultivate right, so we have to use expedient methods and you can't expect too much. But the Venerable Master was never like it. He says, "We're going to make this the proper Dharma Age. If you cultivate it according to the proper Dharma, the proper Dharma Age will be here." "Don't make me wait for you," he'd say that over and over again. "I want you all to get enlightened as soon as possible, so I don't have to wait for you." As a matter of fact, in the evening ceremony, where it says 悉發菩提心, 'we should all resolve our minds on Bodhi,' very

背景，非常融洽地在一起工作，跟著上人修行。這只是我們當時有限的認知，以為中美佛教總會似乎是最合適的；然而後來的發展，那個名字顯然顯得太小了，於是又將名字改為「法界佛教總會」。

但是上人從不會告訴人應該去做些什麼。我不記得——在這麼多年裏，我想不起有任何一次，說是上人命令我去做什麼。有時候他會建議，但大多數他會等我們去問他，然後建議。如果我對那個建議覺得不舒服，那麼我完全可以不照著去做；雖然絕大多數時候都是心懷感激，並按照上人的建議去做，我大多數都可以辦得到。上人並不是以絕對權威的方式來待人。然而，有時他教化的方法會非常嚴厲，但只對那些可以接受這種方式的人；而對於不能接受的人，他則從來不嚴厲。比如恆實法師經常被上人公開責備（比其他人的次數都多），這是因為他可以接受這種方式。

如果上人以某種表情看著我超過三秒鐘，我就會迴光反照，問自己是不是做錯了什麼。幾乎沒有什麼時候上人會公開責備我。我之所以還在這兒，可能是因為在個人修行裡，他從未超過我自己所能承受的極限。上人因材施教，應病予藥。我們總是遠遠超過自己可以達到的程度。我覺得我們大多數人對自己潛力的認識，都遠遠不及上人對我們的認識。我認為這是佛法中令人神往的一處教義，讓我們覺醒我們真正的潛力，認識自己其實就是未來佛。

八、速發菩提心

鄭偉德：似乎上人總是激勵你們去擴大視野，比你們更能認識你們自己的能力。

易象乾：的確經常如此！每次法會，上人都會鼓勵我們要精進修行；他總是說，在這次法會中，會有人開悟。我們都想有某種程度的開悟——這一定不是虛言。經常有一種講法，不僅僅是在美國，在中國、日本和東亞的一些國家，那些老師會說，現在是末法時期，沒人能正確地修行，人只能夠使用方便法門，並不能期望太多。但上人從不這樣。他總是說：「我們要把它變成正法時期！如果你按照正法修行，那麼你就是在正法時期。」「別讓我等你們！」上人把這句話說了一次又一次。「希望你們都能儘快開悟，我就不等你們了！」實際上，做晚課時，我們會念到「悉發菩提心」；記得好像是在楞嚴法會

early on, I think it was the Shurangama Session, he said we're going to change this. It shouldn't be 悉發菩提心; it should be 速發菩提心. 'quickly, quickly, quickly.' "I don't want to wait for you." He didn't want us to think of awakening as something lifetimes off. He wanted everybody to confront their attachments and let go of them in this life.

Victor: I remember reading his lectures, he was always saying, "In this session, there will be people who will become enlightened." Did people get enlightened at those sessions?

Epstein: What is get enlightened? We say *kai wu* 開悟, but what does mean? There are all kinds of awakenings, there are small awakenings and big awakenings. I don't know. Maybe people had big awakenings and were very quiet about it. There certainly were small awakenings. Even though we didn't understand the distinctions, then, I think, he encouraged us to try our best. He used to always say, try your best. As long as you try your best, everything is okay. If you completely messed up, as long as you tried your best, it was okay.

Victor: So you were mentioning people leaving home and forming the organization as the vision . . .

Epstein: We renewed the association as the Sino-American Buddhist Association. We started the Buddhist Text Translation Society. There was a lot of translation activity; there were very heavy meditation activities. The Venerable Master lectured at least once a day, 365 days a year, on the sutras. And also on Sunday afternoons, and sometimes on Saturday afternoons. I remember that when we didn't think we could do any more, he would do more. For example, a lot of laypeople would go out to work, so the Master scheduled daily classes at 5:15. Right after there would be meditation, then at 7, there would be evening recitation and sutra lecture. After sutra lecture, people would do more reciting. The reciting after lecture was some of the Master's disciples. It started with the recitation of the *Diamond Sutra* in English. People were really vigorous. I remember he had us all teaching classes and languages, and said we should all learn different languages. In addition to everything that was going on, there were French classes, Sanskrit classes, Japanese classes and English classes. He taught the verses on the patriarchs, in addition to the sutra lectures. There was never a free moment. It was really hard to find some time to get your false thinking going.

It was a real pressure cooker. But he was there when things boiled over, to handle it, to get things back on track. It was a lot more intense for the monks and nuns than it was for somebody like me, as a layperson. At that time I was a graduate student. I had a family. Although it wasn't so intense for me, you just get out of it what you put in.

☞ To be continued

上，上人說我們應該改變這種講法。不是「悉發菩提心」，應該是「速發菩提心」，快、快、快！「我不想等你們！」他不希望我們認為開悟是一輩子也不可能完成的任務，他希望每個人對治自己的執著，然後在這一生就放下！

鄭偉德：我記得讀上人的開示，他總是說：「在這次法會中，會有人開悟。」是不是真的有人在法會中開悟了呢？

易象乾：什麼是開悟呢？我們講「開悟」，但「悟」又是什麼呢？悟有各種各樣，有小悟，也有大悟。我並不知道。也許有人大徹大悟但三緘其口，小悟鐵定會有的。即使我們分不清其中的區別，我覺得，他是在鼓勵我們盡自己最大的努力。他總這麼說：只要你盡力去做，那就對了！只要盡力了，即便做得一團糟，那也足夠了！

鄭偉德：你提到有人出家，並逐建立起整個願景的組織……

易象乾：我們把道場重新註冊登記為「中美佛教總會」，還成立了佛經翻譯委員會；有很多的翻譯活動，也有很緊湊的打坐。上人三百六十五天如一日地堅持每天晚間至少講一次經，有時在週日下午或者是週六下午也有。我記得我們堅持不下來時，上人還想做得更多。舉個例子，很多在家居士需要外出工作，上人就把課程時間定在傍晚五點一刻，之後則是打坐；在七點，會有晚課和講經。在講經之後，大家會接著再念誦；參與這個念誦的人，是上人的一些弟子。記得是從念誦英文版的《金剛經》開始的，每個人都很精進。記得上人還讓我們教各種課程和語言，並且說應該學習各種不同的語言。除了排定的日常課程之外，還有法語班、梵文班、日語班和英語班。上人會在講經之餘，又教一些他為祖師寫的偈頌。我們從來沒有閒下來的時候，根本沒有機會去打妄想。

是一個真正的壓力鍋！但是每次東西沸騰了，上人總會在那兒處理，並把東西導回正軌。事情對於比丘和比丘尼來說，比對於像我這樣的在家人更加吃力。那時我還是個研究生，有自己的家庭。雖然這對我來說並不那麼有壓力，只是得到所付出的。

☞待續

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