

# 冬季禪七—— 萬佛城的期末考

## The Winter Chan session—Final exam at CTTB

### 【前言】

今年聖城的禪七，可謂盛況空前！男女眾禪堂皆大爆滿，一位難求，創下未曾有之記錄。如來寺男眾禪堂出家眾區讓出三分之一的位子，讓更多人有機會進禪堂修行。在佛殿的女眾禪堂，湧進了約一百五十人；不僅在佛殿後面從三排增加到五排座位，中央的跑香區也加進十二個位子，但也因此在跑香時造成「大塞車」。

往年佛七、禪七因正逢冬季及雨季，整天陰雨連綿，又冷又濕，今年則大相徑庭。除了清晨依舊寒冷之外，過午則陽光普照，猶如春天。禪堂內精進氣氛亦大異往年，不管是老參或初參，都是鬥志昂揚，大家穿著厚厚的冬衣，在禪堂內咬緊牙關，忍寒、忍痛、忍痠、忍麻、忍饑、忍渴，忍受種種身心的疲累及考驗。正如上人在禪七中最常開示的一句話：「不經一番寒徹骨，焉得梅花撲鼻香？」

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### Foreword

The CTTB Chan session this year was exceptionally grand, setting record attendance with both men and women's Chan Halls fully packed. The monastics on the men's side had to avail an additional one-third of their area to properly accommodate the overflowing capacity, while the women's side accommodated over 150 practitioners by expanding their meditation area from three rows to five with 12 additional seats in the center area, which resulted in excessive "traffic jams" during walking meditation.



Apart from the usual cold winter mornings, the Buddha recitation and Chan session this year was unusually absent of the annual dampness and rain. Instead, the afternoons were spring-like and sunny. In the Chan Hall, the atmosphere was also different from the past years. Whether they were old cultivators or newcomers, all attended with vigorous morale. Wearing their thick winter attire, everyone gritted their teeth to endure the cold, pain, sourness, numbness, hunger, and thirst, bearing all sorts of physical and mental weariness and tests. Just as the Venerable Master often said, "Without passing through the bone-chilling coldness, how would we smell the sweet fragrance of plum blossoms?"

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# 冬季禪七——萬佛聖城的期末考

## The Winter Chan Session—

## Final Exam at CTTB (continued)



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Compiled by the Editorial Staff

### 【男眾禪堂】

在男眾禪堂，今年有兩大特色。一是從中國大陸來打禪七及佛七的人越來越多，而且年輕人偏多，甚至有特地從中國飛過來的。有位從浙江來的年輕人，天天默默用功，在報告心得時說，他練習打坐只有十個小時，但在二十一天的禪七，只錯過三支香，其毅力與忍耐力，著實令人讚歎；一分耕耘，一分收穫，這三週禪七的磨練，讓他獲益良多。

有些是住在美國的中國華僑，大多是年輕的留學生，他們在中國就已知曉上人和萬佛城，心裡非常景仰，但千山萬水阻隔，只有嚮往的份。現在來美讀書，寒假哪兒都不去，趕緊來探訪心儀已久的聖城，淺嘗禪味。雖然來去匆匆，但只要繫上緣，這些求法若渴的年輕人，隨時都會再回來修行的！

第二個特色是晚間聽上人《虛空打破明心地》的開示後，開放給大眾問問題。今年發問的人特別踴躍，在問答之間，妙問妙答甚多，對參禪打坐的助益很大。尤其是從紐約哥倫比亞大學來的老教授海斯，已連續四年飛到聖城打禪七，這是他每年充電的良機，今年他參加了後兩個禪七。身為大學教授，早習慣美國學生問種種問題，老教授幾乎天天都會問問題，有時還不只一個問題。有次

### Man's Chan Hall

There were two notable aspects at the Men's Chan Hall this year. First, there was an increase in attendance from China, especially the younger generation, for the Chan and Buddha recitation sessions. Some even flew in directly from China. A gentleman from Zhejiang province very quietly applied a remarkable feat of effort, completing the entire 21 day session while missing only three incense periods. During the reflection session, he indicated that he had only practiced sitting meditation for ten hours in the past. People thus praised his perseverance and patience. As it is said, "You reap what you sow." This gentleman will benefit greatly from his persevering endurance and training.

Some visitors were also overseas Chinese, mostly students studying abroad here in the U.S. They originally learned about the Venerable Master and CTTB when they were in China and could only admire from a distance. Now studying in America, they took this great opportunity to visit CTTB to experience Chan rather than tend to other diversions during the winter break. Even though some came and left hastily, as long as the affinities had been tied, these young men eager for Dharma will eventually return to cultivate.

The second notable aspect this year was the Q&A after listening to the Venerable Master's 1976 Chan session instructional talk "Smashing Empty Space to Reveal the Mind Ground." Many brought up productive questions enthusiastically, receiving equally productive answers that would aid in meditation. Professor Hayes, an old Columbia University professor in New York, has participated in the CTTB Chan session for four consecutive years. This year he attended the last two weeks to recharge himself. As a college professor, he is more accustomed to answering questions from students.

聽到上人說我們人不開悟就像在黑房子裡見不到光，參禪時就像拿個錐子在牆壁上鑽——鑿穿了，光就透進來了。老教授就問：「我們怎麼知道外面有光？」有位法師回答，修行人對法要有信心。老教授雖然如是問，最後還是說，他就是來這裡找答案的！

有位居士問：「坐禪是不是可以消業障？」法師回答說：「你把業障拿出來，我再教你怎麼消。」惹得大家會心一笑。由於末法眾生根器的問題，痛是當前一般人打坐最大的障礙，也是最迫切想克服的問題。當居士問到打破痛關之後是不是就不痛了？法師回答說：「不是不痛！你打破了一關，還會有另外一關，痛幾乎是無止境的。之所以不痛，是因為你參禪的念力、定力超越了痛，用功有進步了。」

### 【女眾禪堂】

「今年這個禪七大家受了很多辛苦，也沒有得到什麼快樂；不過雖然辛苦，能鍛鍊你的忍耐心，這就是一個最快樂的一個事情。鍛鍊你能忍痛、能忍苦，能忍你這種所不能忍的，這都是功不唐捐，一定有你的好處的。在禪堂裡這叫鍛鍊金剛不壞身，令你的身體能堅固，能八風吹不動，這就是好處。」這是上人一九七六年在金山寺禪七結束時的開示，也是女眾禪堂第一天晚間播放的開示。

如同上人所說，禪堂是受苦的地方，也沒有什麼快樂可言，可是年年仍然有人願意進禪堂接受鍛鍊，尤其今年參加的人數暴增很多，即使到最後一週，仍維持一定的人數繼續堅持。很多居士放棄玩樂的機會，利用假期到萬佛城裏忍著冷、忍著痛來參禪，足見有人用功用得相應，在忍耐中體驗出修行的好處，誠如上人所言：「雖然辛苦，能鍛鍊你的忍耐心這就是一個最快樂的事情。」

同往年一樣，今年能在禪堂長坐的仍由老戒比丘尼獨佔鰲頭。有些新戒的比丘尼及一兩位沙彌尼後來居上，也可以長坐兩三支香不起身。居士方面，今年禪堂出現好多張年輕的面孔，其中四、五位的表現也不錯。今年禪堂的氣氛在大家的經營下，顯得比往年熱絡。

However, this senior professor became the student and would ask questions almost every single day; more than one question sometimes. Having once heard the Venerable Master's instruction in which "people not awakened are like sitting in a dark room without seeing the light. Investigating Chan is like drilling on the wall with a chisel. Once the chisel penetrates the wall, the light will come through," he asked, "How do we know there is light outside?" A Dharma Master replied, "A cultivator should have faith in the Dharma." Even though the professor asked such a question, he said he came for answers.

Another layman asked, "Can meditation help to eradicate karmic obstacles?" The Dharma Master replied, "I'll teach you how to eradicate karmic obstacles if you show them to me." The assembly smiled in understanding. Due to the faculties of living beings in the Dharma Ending Age, pain is primarily the largest obstacle in meditation. When a layman asked if there wouldn't be any more pain once the barrier was penetrated, the Dharma Master replied, "It's not that there will be anymore pain. Once you break through one barrier, there will be another one. The pain is almost endless. The reason you don't feel pain is because your strength in contemplation and strength of Samadhi concentration in Chan investigation surpasses the pain. You progress in your application of efforts."

### Woman's Chan Hall

"Everybody had suffered quite a bit during the Chan session without obtaining any joy this year. Even though it is hard work, being able to train your patience is the happiest thing. Train yourself to endure pain, bear suffering, and tolerate the unbearable. You will never waste your effort in vain, and gain benefits eventually. This is called 'smelting the Varja indestructible body' in Chan Hall. That will help to solidify your body, so you will not be moved by the eight winds. That is the benefit from it!" This was Venerable Master's instructional talk at the end of Chan session in 1976 at Gold Mountain Monastery. This was also played in the Woman's Chan Hall in the first evening.

The Venerable Master once stated that the Chan Hall was a place we suffered with no joy at all. Regardless, there are still people willing to enter the Chan Hall to receive training every day, particularly this year with the increased attendance. Up until the last week of the session, there were still many people persisting to the end. Much of the laity gave up their chances for fun, but instead spent their holidays at CTTB to bear the cold and pain to investigate Chan. It was obvious that people had benefited from their efforts and experienced the advantages from cultivation. As the Venerable Master said, "Even though it is hard work, being able to train your patience is the happiest thing."

As usual, the senior nuns were outstanding, being able to sit for longer periods in the Chan Hall this year. Even some newly admitted nuns and a few novice nuns were able to sit through two or three incense periods. Within the female laity, there were quite a few young faces with acceptable

最難能可貴的，可能要屬七十八歲高齡的果益居士。今年女界的禪堂每天有十四支香，老居士每天固定坐八支香，自從九一年以來，她沒有一年缺席過。說起打坐心得，她說打坐幫助她更了解經典中的義理，今年身體也感覺比往年舒服輕鬆。林愛森居士則表示感恩節期間的禪三是她生平第一次參加打坐，那一次的經驗令她對因打坐產生的巨痛心生極度恐懼，當三週禪七接近時，她害怕得不知該如何面對即將到來的考驗。最後是上人的一句：「想修行就一定要打坐！」給了她勇氣，幫助她咬著牙撐過難關——到第三個禮拜時，她甚至可以連坐兩支香都不放腿。

在柏克萊大學攻讀梵文博士的Lauren Bausch，一面與疼痛搏鬥、一面想調伏妄想，這番的掙扎與痛苦，讓她幾度懷疑自己這樣「自討苦吃」到底為了什麼？然而在身心交迫至極，一陣短暫輕安所帶來的解脫和自在，卻激發了她要繼續深入禪修的決心。

在女眾法師方面，從一九九五年冬季禪七開始，年年參加而且一支香都不缺的一位法師表示，若不是藉著禪七給自己充電，她的身體早就垮了；雖然如此，她坦言經過十七年的努力，最難調伏的仍是那顆妄想紛飛的心。

今年禪堂的人數特別多，打呼出現的次數及頻率似乎也較往年增加，因此巡香師打起香板來也毫不留情。香板擊落的聲音響徹禪堂，有些人為此而戰戰兢兢，惟恐香板落在自己身上。有些則非常讚賞這種方式，因為迅雷不及掩耳的巨響，能肅清瀟灑在禪堂裏濃厚的睡意。不過據說香板下來的時候，只是聲音很大，可是打在身上一點都不痛。

同樣是聲音，人們的反應卻不盡相同。正巧禪七期間上人給了這麼一段開示，上人說打坐的期間，有人下氣，有人打呼，想要不聽見任何聲音是很難的：

「…你若盡向外去找聲音，再清淨的地方，沒有外音有內音，沒有內音還會有電波動的音。虛空裡頭每一粒微塵在那飄動著都有聲音，因此想找一個沒有聲音的地方是很難的。這個聲音你不能說它不好，你若一說它不好就有煩惱，有煩惱就不能用功了。禪堂裡頭

performances. Although not everyone was meditating vigorously, the atmosphere in the Chan Halls this year was still more enthusiastic than before.

The most laudable person in the Chan Hall this year was the 78 years old laywoman, Guo-Yi. With 14 incense periods in the Women's Chan Hall this year, Guo-Yi attended eight of them each day. She hasn't missed a single Chan session since 1991. She claimed meditation helped her to understand sutra meanings and principles and felt more physically comfortable and relaxed this year. On the other hand, for Laywoman Christine Lin, she reflects on this, her very first Chan session during the Thanksgiving weekend, as being horrified by the shocking pain that is experienced from sitting meditation. When the three-week Chan session was approaching, she was too fearful in dealing with the upcoming test. However, the striking words from the Venerable Master, "To cultivate, you have to meditate," helped build up her courage to break through the barriers. By the third week, she was able to sit through two incense periods without releasing her lotus posture.

Lauren Bausch, a doctorate candidate in Sanskrit at UC Berkeley, frequently struggled with pain and discursive thoughts. The struggle and pain made her wonder why she *put her fingers in the fire*. While pushed to the extremes physically and mentally, the freedom and comfort from the brief moments of ease helped her to derive the resolve to further investigate Chan.

A nun that was never absent for a single incense period since 1995 indicated that her body would have collapsed a long time ago if she didn't get recharged from the Chan Sessions. However, she did admit that the discursive thoughts were the most difficult to subdue after seventeen years of effort.

The number of people in the Chan hall has increased compared to last year. As such, the number of people who snored during the Chan session has gone up as well, and the proctor had no hesitation to clap the incense board harder than usual; this caused a mixed reaction from the crowd. Some thought the boards would fall on them while others really appreciated the thunder like sound, chasing away the heavy sleepy feeling in the Chan hall. It was further said that the incense board though sounds loud when clapped, but in fact would not hurt when knocked on people.

People have different reaction towards the sound. Just as the Venerable Master eluded, in the midst of the Chan session, some farts, some snores, it is very difficult to maintain strict silence. He said,

"If you constantly look outward for sound, then even in an extremely serene and pure place with no external sounds, there will be an inner voice. And where there is no inner voice, there will be sounds from electrical waves. Every single mote of dust in empty space will make a sound when floating in the air. It is almost impossible to find a place without a sound. Therefore, you should not speak ill of sound. As soon as you complain, affliction arises. Once afflicted, you can no longer apply effort. We should try our best to minimize the sounds. When it exists, we should not dislike it. If you can remain calm where there are sounds, you truly acquire Samadhi power. If you are not turned by outer states, then movement and stillness become one."

我們要儘量把它做得沒有什麼聲音，但是一定有聲音時，我們不能討厭這個聲音。你要在有聲音的地方還能靜下來，這才真正有了定力；能到不被外邊境界所轉的時候，這就是動靜不二！」上人這段對聲音的開示，不僅教人化煩惱為菩提，更道出參禪的要旨。

### 【結語】

禪堂是選佛場，像一座大冶洪爐，所以並不是每個人都可過關斬將。有些人熬不過兩天就丟盔棄甲，打退堂鼓；有些人後繼無力，因此半途而廢；能堅持到底的，當然就功不唐捐了，或者定力增加，或腿功進步，或疼痛減少，或法門相應等，頗是一番苦盡甘來的景象。上人常說：「受苦是了苦，享福是消福。」在禪堂所受的苦只是小苦，但卻可了卻生死的大苦。三月三十日起，聖城將舉行一週的基礎禪七，歡迎大家回來共修！

Not only does the Venerable Master's instruction on sounds teach us to transform affliction into Bodhi, it also addresses the essential meaning in investigating Chan.

### Conclusion

The Chan Hall is an arena of Buddhas selecting. It is like a giant furnace that requires a great amount of perseverance to endure the heat. Those who have persisted to the end will have never wasted their efforts. They would progress in Samadhi power, strengthen their physical skill, reduce pain, or even get a step closer to their Dharma practice. It is quite the phenomenon when revealing the sweetness after bearing the bitterness. The Venerable Master often said, "To bear the pain is to end the suffering; to live in comfort is to lessen the blessings." The pain we undertook in the Chan Hall is just minor suffering, but it helps us to end the major suffering of birth and death. Beginning March 31st, a one-week Chan session will take place at CTTB. We welcome everyone to return and join us in the cultivation of Chan.