

佛法與「外國人」

Buddhadharma and “Foreigners”

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「欸，外國人！」正繞佛、走我後面的佛友拍拍我肩膀，示意要我到流通處接待來訪的「外國」訪客。總是這樣，只要大家看到「外國人」，就不約而同對我說「外國人！」其實意思是「說英文的人來了」，要我快去。弄得我有一度以為「外國人」是我在道場的另一個名字，一聽到這三個字便東張西望。

去年拜梁皇寶懺時，有天上供，男眾法師還未到殿，身旁的佛友向人解釋，「那個『外國人』還在和法師們談話。」我當時忽有感而發：「說人家『外國人』！你還不是和他一樣是美國公民。」然後我幽自己一默：「只有我才是名副其實的『外國人』！」因我至今還是拿台灣護照，沒有綠卡。大家都莞爾一笑。

到底誰是「外國人」？在華嚴精舍，大部分時候，外型上清一色是亞裔，有來自台灣、大陸、越南、馬來西亞、法國、印度的，皆是黃膚黑髮。偶爾有來白種人，或印度人或非裔美人，在眾人中就顯得相當顯眼，他們就是多數人口中的「外國人」。雖大多說英語，可是英語也未必是他們的第一母語。

那「外國人」就是說英文的人嘍？若以語言而言，即使看來都是黃膚黑髮，也不一定都會講或會聽中文，別說越南人和印度來的華僑只能說英語溝通，要和在美國出生長大的華裔小孩講解佛法，基本上不用英文是不

“Hey, Foreigners!” I was circumambulating in the Buddha Hall when a Dharma friend behind me tapped my shoulder and in Chinese said, “foreigners” indicating that I should hurry and go to the Front Desk to welcome “foreign” visitors. It had become a routine that whenever people see “foreigners,” they would automatically say to me in Chinese, “foreigners!” What they meant is English speakers have come in the monastery, go and welcome them. After awhile, this became a habit. So, whenever I hear the three characters for “foreigners” in Chinese, I would turn my head and look around, as if “foreigners” had become my nickname in the Bodhimanda.

Last year, we hosted the Emperor Liang Jeweled Repentance. One day, when it was time for the Meal Offering Ceremony, the monks hadn’t showed up in the Buddha Hall, yet. A Dharma friend who stood beside me was trying to explain to people, “That ‘foreigner’ is still talking to the Dharma Masters...” Suddenly, I had an epiphany and said, “Why do you address him as ‘that foreigner’ when you yourself are an American citizen just like him,” then I playfully said, “I’m the one who is a ‘foreigner!’” The fact is I’m a Taiwanese citizen and I don’t have a green card. Everybody laughed at that comment.

So, who is a “foreigner?” In Avatamsaka Vihara, most of the time, the majority of the assembly are Asians: from Taiwan, Mainland China, Vietnam, Malaysia, France, and India. All are of Asian descent. Occasionally, some Caucasians, Indians, and African Americans would join the assembly, and they’d stand out in the crowd. They might be the “foreigners” that people refer to. They all speak English but English may not be their native tongue either.

If “foreigners” are the people who speak English and we categorize people linguistically, then those who look Asian should be able to speak and understand Chinese but that is not the case. For example, Vietnamese and Indian Chinese have to communicate in English; we also need to use English to explain the Buddhadharma to second-generation Chinese-

太可能的。

然而，當我以英文為來訪的大學生介紹上人的生平時，我卻透過他們的眼光看到他們心中的「外國人」：「我們道場的創辦人，宣公上人，1918年出生於中國東北，年19出家…；1962年攜正法西來…。」這群就讀華府市區內知名大學的年輕人，多在上人出生一甲子又一秩後出世，或來自美國各州富裕家庭，或來自歐洲及非洲的優秀學生，幾乎全是第一次參訪大乘佛寺。他們在上人涅槃後第17年春，來到可能是上人在美東唯一的塑像前，神情肅穆但猶疑地注視著這位身著袈裟、微笑端坐的陌生中國長者。對他們而言，這位「外國人」的生平背景、這所佛寺、及所謂「大乘佛教」，皆充滿了不可想像的異國異樣的神秘。

但翻開佛教歷史，弘法和「外國人」密不可分。如上人講述《佛說四十二章經》時，說到最初傳到中國的經，由迦葉摩騰、竺法蘭兩位尊者用白馬馱經到中國——當時是漢明帝永平十年，距今1945年。兩位尊者皆是中印度人，也是《佛說四十二章經》的翻譯者。兩位尊者及佛法在當時受到中國道教的強烈排斥及挑釁，彼此以神通鬥法護教。

粗陋如我者，雖會講英文，但神通可一竅也沒通。好在今日來者是客。這群學生，有天主教、基督教、回教、錫克教、印度教、東正教、更有無信仰者，視我這個「外國人」是同一國的，不會和我鬥法，一較高下。等繞佛快結束時，大家眼光一齊朝我射來，有如盼到沙漠中的綠洲，期待我消解他們在陌生環境中的不安扭捏。於是我帶領他們至小教室，開始我們的問答時間。

照例我會先解釋一下佛教名詞。雖然學生們大都是因學校修的通識教育課程來寺參觀，但思及這也許是他們這一生甚或多劫中，與佛法僅有的邂逅，我們總是盡力深入淺出灌注佛法概要，散播菩提種子。然後我解釋為何稱上人是「攜法西來第一人」？因他首次在西方建立了僧團。緣起於1968年夏天《楞嚴經》的講修班：「當時有一群西雅圖來的大學生，和你們一樣的年輕人，想要學習佛法…。」我清楚地看到他們的眼裡閃著訝異，對這位「外國人」起了親切感。

Americans. Basically, it is impossible for them to communicate with each other without using English.

However, when I give a brief sketch of the Venerable Master's biography to university students who visit the monastery, I see the "foreigner" through their eyes, "The founder of our organization and all of our branch monasteries, the Venerable Master Hua was born in Northeast China in 1918...When he was 19 years old, he left home and became a monk.... In 1962, he came to the West to propagate the Proper Dharma...." The students come from one of the well-known universities in the District of Columbia. They were born 70 years after the birth of Master Hua. They're from well-to-do families across the country; some are exchange students from Europe and Africa. Usually, this is their first time visiting a Mahayana Buddhist Monastery. I usually take them to the back of the Buddha Hall to look at the statue of Master Hua; he sits in a lotus position with his robe and a precept sash—this is probably the only life-size statue in the East Coast. The students would respectfully and hesitantly gaze at the statue of this "foreigner" who likewise looks gently back at them, with a smile. From their point of view, the background and life of this "foreign" elder, this monastery, and so-called Mahayana Buddhism, all appear to be incredibly exotic and mysterious!

Yet, if we were to look at Buddhist history, the propagation of the Buddhadharma and foreigners are interlinked. For example, when Venerable Master Hua explained the *Sutra in Forty-Two Sections Spoken by the Buddha*, he said, "This was the first Sutra that was transmitted to China. The two Honorable Kashyapa-matanga and Gobharana brought this Sutra to China from India on a white horse...." It was the tenth year of the Yung-Ping period of Emperor Ming in the Han Dynasty, i.e. 67 A.D., 1945 years ago. The two venerable monks were from India; they translated the *Sutra in Forty-Two Sections* into Chinese. At that time, Buddhism and the two monks faced intense oppositions and attacks from the Taoists and was forced to compete in spiritual contests to protect their religion.

I am a boorish and unrefined person, aside from knowing how to speak English, I don't have any spiritual penetrations. I am glad I met these students who came to visit today; they are from different religions: Catholicism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, Hinduism, and Eastern Orthodox, and some are atheists. They see me as this "foreigner" who is on their side so we won't have any spiritual contest. At the end of the circumambulation, everyone was desperately looking at me, hoping that I could end their discomfort from this strange environment. So, I brought them to a small classroom on the side of the Buddha Hall where we could start our question and answer period.

Usually, I start my explanation with some basic Buddhist terminologies: What is the Triple Jewel, cause and effect, samsara, reincarnation, karma, etc. Most students are required to visit a Buddhist monastery as part of their school requirement. For the majority, this is probably their first and only encounter with Buddhism so we always try our best to explain some

「上人是中文和經文一起教授給學生的，你們說是不是很難、很不可思議啊？還親自洗菜、燒菜、作飯、燒茶，希望多些時間給弟子好好學習。」學生們都點點頭，露出或敬仰、或不可置信的表情。「之後，1969年有5位美籍青年剃度出家，佛教西方弘法史上劃下了新頁。」他們的眼睛再次閃著光采！

每當講到上人來美初期的艱辛，自己也不免動容。自覺眼角有些潮濕，我扶扶眼鏡框，清了清喉嚨，說：「你們有沒有問題？」有個金髮男學生舉手，眼色狡黠地問，「你們相信有鬼嗎？」我輕笑了一下，總有一兩個不按牌理出牌的問題。記得上人回答過這個問題，因此我按上人的意思回答：「我們相信有佛，當然也相信有鬼。」接著我介紹《十法界不離一念心》。

我從剛剛他們在佛殿參與的功德迴向開始，解釋功德是法財，正如世間財，是要去「賺」去「積」的。而身體不是真正的我，只是暫住的房子。所以命終時，法財賺得多又積得多的，下一輩子便可以換到更大的房子、更好的設備、更好的鄰居和社區，比如說天人法界，或證果成阿羅漢、菩薩等等。如果虧錢了，要搬到小些、設備差些的房子，到較差的社區如畜生界；更有甚者，如破產，房子就沒了，變成無家遊民，就是鬼界。更不幸的，作奸犯科的話，得進地獄像進監牢般受果報了。「這樣，明白了嗎？」

學生們都滿意地點點頭。話匣子談開了，問的問題也多了。比如，為什麼有人披棕色的「布」，而有的人沒披？在三尊佛像間有兩尊小些的肖像，那是誰？在佛教中，男眾走在女眾前是一定的嗎？然後有個來自義大利的黑髮男生，非常困惑地問我，「你們不是不喝酒嗎？為什麼我剛剛看到供桌上有供酒？」

「酒？」我一愣，隨即覺得啼笑皆非。「那不是酒，是我們聖城產的有機葡萄汁。不過因聖城在加州產酒區附近，可能瓶子來自一樣的工廠吧。」學生們都哄笑起來了。「我們人很容易被外相所迷惑，不是嗎？」於是我隨機教育，佛教是修心地法門的。

我們的心，上等佛心，下同含識，八萬四

basic Buddhist concepts and perhaps plant a few Bodhi seeds. I explained the reason why Master Hua was the first Buddhist patriarch in the West because he was the first to establish a Western Buddhist Sangha. The Western Sangha started from the *Shurangama Sutra* Summer Session in 1968. "At that time, there was a group of college students who were just like you. They wanted to learn about the Dharma. I could definitely see the look of surprise in their eyes and a sudden warmth toward this "foreigner."

"Venerable Master taught the students the sutras and Chinese. What do you all think? Wasn't it amazing? In addition, the Master also cook, clean, and make tea for everyone so his students could spend more time studying." Students all nod with an expression of admiration or amazement "In 1969, five young Americans shaved their head and became monastics. This began a new chapter in bringing Dharma to the West." Once again, I could see a light in their eyes. Every time, I talk about the hardships that the Master had to endure when he first came to the United States, I couldn't help myself and tear up a bit, and I had to take off my glasses to wipe them away. I then cleared my throat and asked, "Does anyone have any questions?" A blond male raised his hand and slyly asked, "Do Buddhists believe in ghosts?" I chuckled a little as this is one of those frequent questions that students always ask. I remember that Venerable Master Hua had already answered this question in the past so I used the same answer, "Of course. If we believe in the existence of Buddhas, then we believe in the existence of ghosts." Afterward, I introduced The Ten Dharma Realms Are Not beyond a Single Thought by the Venerable Master.

I started by using an example of the Dedication of Merit and Virtue Ceremony that they had just done in the Buddha Hall to explain. Merit and virtue are blessings like worldly wealth. Our body, contrary to what we believe is not our true self. It's like a house that we temporary dwell in. Therefore, at the end of our life, depending on the blessings that we've accumulated and earned, in our next life, we can get a bigger and better furnished house, live in a better neighborhood and society, such as the world of the devas, Arhats, and Bodhisattvas, etc. If we don't have enough blessings, we're going to get a smaller and badly furnished house, in a bad neighborhood. It's like we're in the Animal Realm, furthermore, if we go bankrupt, lose our house and become homeless, it's like we're in the Hungry Ghost Realm. In the worst case scenario, if we commit a crime, we'll go directly to the prisons of the Hell Realm. This is the karmic retribution of our offenses. "Do you understand? The students all nodded their heads in agreement. Because the discussion was open, more questions were asked. For example, who do some people wear the brown sash and some do not? Who are the two small statues next to the three big Buddha statues on the altar? Is it a rule that men walk before women?

Then, a dark-haired Italian male student with a confused look asked me, "I thought Buddhists don't drink wine. Just now, I saw wine being offered?" "Wine?" I was so taken aback by the question that I didn't know whether to laugh or to cry. "That's not wine. That's organic grape juice produced at

千的法門都歸趣於心地的修持。人身難得，無論白種人、黑種人、黃種人、紅種人，無論男女長幼、或不同國籍、或不同文化，這些世間差異僅是表面的不同，只要找到溝通的管道，便可發現之間更多的同質性。有時甚至語言溝通也嫌多餘，只要誠心，單憑心意即可相通。話又說回來，若心為偏見或我執所障，即使同文同種也難溝通，比如很多時候最難溝通的是自己的家人，不是嗎？大家皆領首同意。

因要上供了，我讓學生們出教室一起上供。然後登記要用齋的人入齋堂，和大眾一起誦臨齋儀及三念五觀。不用齋的人即在佛殿參觀，我在一旁隨時回答他們的問題。學生們都顯得比剛來時輕鬆自在，以孺慕之情看著上人的塑像。希望今天我與這群學生的結緣能讓他們認識這位「外國人」，這位來美屢變土田說大法的「外國人」。

想想美國人還是比中國人溫和一些，當年達摩祖師這位「外國人」在中國被打落牙齒和血吞的一幕，至少沒有在西方上演。不知道以後西方會不會出一位像神光祖師般至誠為法斷臂的修行人？一切皆是因緣吧！再想我自己，和佛法的因緣也始自美國這片土地。即使和上人錯過了，我還是深受他老人家畢生辛苦弘法的恩澤。套句英文俚語，「遲了」總比「永遠不曾」要好。上人抵達美國時，我還沒有出

不論種族文化、男女長幼，佛法的大門永遠為有緣的人開著。
圖為2011年阿靈頓高中參訪華嚴精舍。
Regardless the difference of culture, gender, and age, the door of Buddhism is always open for those with affinities to enter. This picture is the visit of Arlington High School to Avatamsaka Vihara in 2011.

the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas; the City is located near a vineyard in California. Maybe the bottles came from a factory in the area.” The students all burst into laughter. “Isn’t it so easy for us to judge a book by its cover.” Then, I took the opportunity to further explain the Dharma. Buddhism teaches that everything is made from the mind.

Our mind is equal to the Buddha and identical to all sentient beings. There are 84,000 dharma doors and all of them lead to the cultivation of the mind. It’s difficult to obtain a human body. It doesn’t matter what race you are: White, Black, Yellow, or Red; male or female, young or old; regardless of your nationality or culture, all these are worldly differences that are just surfaces. All we need to do is find a way to communicate with each other, and we will find a lot more similarities than differences. Sometimes, even language can become an obstacle. As long as there is sincerity, all sentient beings can communicate with their mind. On the other hand, if we have biases or attachments because of our ego, it can hinder our communication even among people of the same nationality and language. For example, most of the time, we find that the most difficult to talk with are our own family members, right? Everybody nodded in agreement.

Since it was almost time for the Meal Offering Ceremony, we all left the classroom to attend the Ceremony together. Those who wanted to stay for lunch entered the Dining Hall with the assembly. We chanted the Verse for Taking the Meal, the Three Recollections and the Five Contemplations. Those who didn’t want to have lunch stayed behind for a tour of the Buddha Hall. I stood to the side just in case they have more questions. The students seemed to be more relaxed. They looked at the statue of Venerable Master with admiration. I hope that the time I’ve spent with them and the connection that we had could make the students understand this “foreigner,” a little better. This “foreigner” who came to change this place and propagate the Dharma.

In comparison, Americans are somewhat more gentle than the Chinese. When the first Indian Patriarch, Bodhidharma came to China to propagate the Dharma, he was hit in the face; two of his teeth were knocked out and he had to swallow both blood and teeth. At least in the West, nothing like that happened. I don’t know if in the future there will be sincere cultivators like the second patriarch, Shen Guang, who cut off one of his arms to seek the Way. It all depends on causes and conditions. Thinking about my own experience, my affinity with the Buddhadharma also started from this new land. Although, I didn’t get a chance to meet the Venerable Master when he was alive, I still benefited a lot from his propagation of the Dharma in the West. There’s an English idiom that says, “better late than never.” I wasn’t even born when the Venerable Master first arrived in the United States. Although, we’re of the same race, speak the same language, and even have a passport from the same country, I didn’t know anything about the Buddhadharma until after his Nirvana. 17 years ago, I didn’t know



生。雖然和上人同文同種，甚至拿一樣的護照，但一直到上人圓寂後，我才開始接觸佛法。17年前，我對佛法僧渾然不知，和這群「外國人」沒兩樣。

望著上人在佛殿後結跏趺坐，神態慈祥，俯視群生，一如照片上50年前初抵西土時的安然。當年上人踏進了美國，此地的水流風動從此不同以往。50年不算短，但相對於釋迦文佛出世傳法的3000多年，也不算長。和諸佛菩薩一樣，上人來自佛國，來度化我們在娑婆世界的眾生，這些諸佛國度外的「外國人」。

誰是「外國人」呢？

從佛法上說，分二種：來度人的，和被度的。✿

anything about the Triple Jewel. I was no different from these “foreign” students who visited today.

In the back of the Buddha Hall, Venerable Master sits in a lotus position, with kindness and compassion, he observes all living beings. His appearance is as kind as he was in the picture fifty years ago when he first arrived in Honolulu. Ever since Venerable Master set foot in America, the land, the water, and the wind are no longer the same. Fifty years is not short, yet when you compared it with the birth of Shakymuni Buddha coming into this world three thousand years ago, it is definitely not long.

Just like the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, the Venerable Master also came from the Buddhalands. They came with the intention to liberate all living beings in the Saha World, these “foreigners” of the Buddhalands.

After all, who is a “foreigner?”

According to the Dharma, there are two kinds of beings: those who came to liberate and those who are to be liberated. ✿

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