

大乘佛法與中國文化

MAHAYANA BUDDHISM AND CHINESE CULTURE

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BODHI FIELD | 菩提田

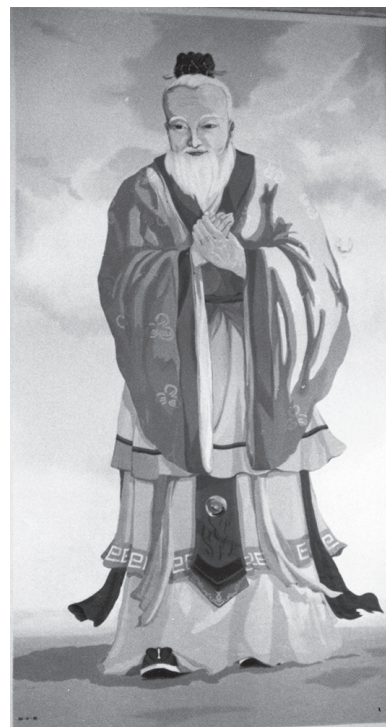
蒙上人慈悲加被，末學有幸應邀來聖城舉辦中國傳統文化講座，以自己力所能及的形式供養三寶。來到聖城，感覺所遇到的人和事，包括一隻鳥、一棵樹，無不是善知識，無不在為我說法，無不在慈悲地教化我。因此，末學藉此機會向上人，向所有的善知識，表示深深地感恩。

今年開設的是《詩經》講座，今晚結緣內容便是講座的序言部分。由於知見學識有限，所講有不如法及學術上的謬誤，敬請慈悲指正。

佛法生之於印度，這是毋庸置疑的事實。然而，佛陀最圓滿的教法——大乘佛法，於中國興

Through the blessings of the Venerable Master, I was invited to CTTB to give a seminar on Chinese traditional culture. This is one way I can use my ability to make an offering to the three Jewels. I feel that everything we encounter in the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, including the birds and trees, are wholesome friends who compassionately teach and speak the Dharma to me. Therefore, I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Venerable Master and all good and wise advisors here.

This year's seminar was held on the *Classic of Poetry*, and tonight I will be presenting to you the preface of the seminar. My knowledge is quite limited, so if what I say is incorrect or not in accord with the Dharma, please correct me.



起鼎盛，並由中國傳向全世界。這是另一個毋庸置疑的事實。

西元67年，因為漢朝皇帝夜夢金人的因緣，朝廷派出18名使者西行求佛。而此時此刻，一支馱著佛經的西方僧隊也正在朝著東方走來。兩支隊伍在茫茫大沙漠中神奇地相遇。由此，中國的第一座佛寺——洛陽白馬寺，第一部漢文佛經——《佛說四十二章經》，第一部漢文佛律——《僧祇戒心》，橫空出世。僅僅四、五百年間，大乘佛法如上善之水，潤澤整個廣袤的中國。

達摩西來，玄奘東去，上至天子，下至庶民，無不希求於法。前秦皇帝苻堅，為了迎得一位高僧，不惜發動兩場戰爭，這位高僧便是七世古佛的譯經師鳩摩羅什；梁武帝多次捐身佛門，虔誠求懺，一部《梁皇寶懺》，至今利益眾生。到了隋唐盛世，大乘教法在中國開宗立派有八大之多。廣演頓漸，普攝三根。

從社會文化學的角度看，此時佛教在中國已經沒有了「外賓」相貌，而成為中國文化不可或缺的重要組成。雖然中國不是個全民信佛的國度，但是佛教的影響無處不在。當時有首詩形容這種情況：

千里鶯啼綠映紅，水村山郭酒旗風。
南朝四百八十寺，多少樓臺煙雨中。

文殊、普賢、觀音、地藏，大乘四大菩薩，無不在中國顯示道場；中國雖廣，無一處沒有佛的身影。所以，當時在中國就流傳著一句話：「世間善言佛說盡，天下名山僧占多。」大乘佛法在這塊土地上臻於鼎盛，並且廣弘海外到日本、韓國、朝鮮、越南。現在又被上人慈悲地帶來美國。

大乘佛法為何最終選擇中國作為它的圓滿廣弘之地？

正如聲聞小果難以聽受大乘一樣，佛法作為人類的最高智慧，它需要選擇一塊堪能承載的福田來播種耕耘。而在當時，已然高度發達的中國文化，正足以為大乘佛

The fact that the Buddhadharma originated in India is indisputable. The Mahayana teaching, which is the Buddha's most perfect teaching, was taken to China and greatly flourished, and spread to the world from there. This is also beyond a doubt.

In 67 CE, the emperor of the Han dynasty had a dream about a person whose skin was golden in color coming from the west. Because of this dream, the emperor sent an expedition of eighteen people to travel west and search for the Buddhadharma. At the same time, there was a team of monastics who were carrying sutras and traveling east from India. The two expeditions miraculously met in the middle of the vast desert. Consequently, Luoyang City's White Horse Monastery, the first Buddhist monastery in China, was established, the Buddha Speaks the *Sutra in Forty-Two Sections* came to be the first sutra translated into Chinese, and the Buddhist vinaya was also translated into Chinese for the first time. In the span of four or five centuries, Mahayana Buddhism, like water, nourished the entire country of China.

Bodhidharma came from the west and Dharma Master Xuanzang traveled to India from the east. From the emperor to ordinary citizens, every person sought the Dharma with a passion. In order to invite Kumarajiva, who had served as the translator of the sutras spoken by every one of the past seven Buddhas, Emperor Fujian of the Former Qin even engaged in two wars. Emperor Wu of Liang entered monastic life multiple times and also contributed to the writing of *The Jeweled Repentance of Emperor Liang*, which continues to benefit all beings to this day. By the peak of the Sui and Tang Dynasties, Mahayana Buddhism had developed into eight different schools, which proclaimed the direct and gradual teachings, gathering in living beings with three levels of capacities.

From the perspective of culture studies and sociology, at this point, Buddhism in China no longer appeared "foreign," but had become an indispensable part of Chinese culture. Although China is not entirely a Buddhist country, the influence of Buddhism is omnipresent. A poem describing this scene says:

*A thousand miles along the Yangzi River,
orioles chirp joyously among the red of the peach blossoms and the green of the willow trees.*

*In the villages on the riverbank and the towns on the mountainside,
the banners of the wine-sellers flap in the wind.*

*Of the four hundred and eighty monasteries built in the southern dynasties,
How many are still standing, masked by the drizzling and the rain.*

The four great Bodhisattvas of Mahayana Buddhism, Manjuśrī Bodhisattva, Guanyin Bodhisattva, and Earth Store Bodhisattva, all established their monasteries in China. China is a vast country, but the Buddha's influence can be seen everywhere. A verse that was quite popular at that time says: "All wholesome words have been spoken by the Buddha; all the famous mountains have been occupied by Buddhist monastics." Mahayana Buddhism reached



its peak in China and also spread to other countries such as Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. Now the Venerable Master, with compassion, has brought it to the United States of America.

Why did Mahayana Buddhism come to choose China as a place for its propagation?

Just as it is difficult for śrāvakas and cultivators of the smaller vehicles to hear and accept the Mahayana teachings, as the highest wisdom of human beings, Buddhism would require a place that had sufficient fields of blessings to carry its weight. Chinese culture, which was already highly developed at the time, served as an environment that was more than conducive for the survival and flourishing of Mahayana Buddhism. In addition, the entry of Buddhism enhanced and enriched Chinese culture, giving the people in this land a definitive path to liberation.

From the perspective of philosophy, Taoism's theories on purity and non-action are capable of supporting the Mahayana's teachings of prajna wisdom. The Confucian principle "Benevolence is a virtue of the exemplary person" laid the foundations for Bodhisattva practices. Mengzi's theory of the

inherent wholesomeness of human nature and Wang Yangming's philosophy that all people can become Yao and Shun were both Chinese cultures' interpretations of the Buddhist principle that all sentient beings possess the wisdom of the Tathāgata. The Confucian theories about Taiji from the Song and Ming dynasties are a perfect match with the teachings of the Huayan School.

In terms of daily life, Mahayana teachings also correspond to the core values of Chinese people. For example, the *Sutra on Earth Store Bodhisattva's Past Vows*, which the Venerable Master referred to as "Buddhism's sutra on filiality", is closely intertwined with the importance of filiality in Chinese culture. Since the practice of giving to the poor and helping those in need is very popular in China, *Guanyin Bodhisattva's Universal Door Chapter* gathered in limitless people who had sufficient wholesome roots of goodness. During the northern and southern dynasties, a period of disunity, constant war left the country in a dangerous situation, and many people experienced firsthand the principles of suffering, emptiness, and impermanence. As a result, the Pure Land practice became very popular, and thus the saying "in every household there is Guanyin; in every home Amitabha" came into being.

Buddhism served to complete Chinese culture, while Chinese culture greatly contributed to the flourishing of Mahayana Buddhism, also causing the birth of many new characteristics in Buddhism and enabling it to be propagated on a much wider basis.

Think about it — how practical would it be if we tried to propagate the Buddhadharmā in the United States of America, not with the forest tradition or Baizhang's pure disciplines that CTTB practices today, but with the tradition of going on alms round that the Venerable Ānanda used in the *Sūrangama Sutra*?

法提供法生法傳的園圃；佛法的傳入也昇華和豐厚了中國文化，給這塊土地上的眾生指示出一條究竟、解脫之路。

從哲學的角度看，道家的「清淨無為」，堪能容受大乘般若智慧；儒家的「仁者君子之德」，為菩薩道的行持打下了道前基礎；孟子的「性善說」，王陽明的人人「皆可成為堯舜」，正好是「眾生皆具如來智慧相」的中國化闡釋。至於宋明時期之儒家「太極」學說，則契合了華嚴教理。

從社會生活的層面上看，大乘教法最為契合中國人的價值觀。《地藏菩薩本願經》與中國的親孝觀絲絲入扣，被上人稱為「佛教裡的《孝經》」。中國人崇尚周濟貧弱，《觀世音菩薩普門品》則應機接應無數善根之人；南北朝時期，當戰亂不止，國土危脆，人人體驗到人間苦、空、無常之際，淨土法門應機而生，出現「戶戶觀音、家家彌陀」的壯觀。

佛法圓滿了中國文化，中國文化也為大乘佛法的興盛、發展作出了貢獻，從形態上產生許多新的特色，對於佛法在更大範圍內的傳播與弘揚，起到了重要的作用。

試想，如果不是叢林制度、百丈清規，

也即是今天我們聖城的修行模式，而仍然採用《楞嚴經》中間阿難尊者那種挨家挨護托鉢乞食的方式，要想在美國弘揚佛法，可行度有多大？

禪宗公案裡面，有個問題被反覆提及—「如何是佛祖西來意？」從佛法傳播的視角來參這個話頭，你會驚訝地發現：大乘佛法經由中國來保存、興盛、發展和弘揚，絕非偶然。

佛法在印度的流佈，是由北向南，在世界是由東向西。等到大乘佛法，其中包括金剛乘，完全傳入中國，佛法在印度西域便進入衰落。業力之大，怵目驚心，不可思議。

西元1193年，伊斯蘭大軍開進印度，佛教的最高學府那爛陀寺，數千僧人因為不願意改變信仰而無一倖免，倒在血泊之中。佛法至此在印度湮沒。崇信佛法的西域各國，包括樓蘭古國，神奇地消失在流沙之中；而與此同時，中國卻高僧雲集，說法譯經。中國歷史上多次大規模的佛經由梵譯漢，成為世界文化交流史上最壯觀的一幕。

為什麼大乘佛法選擇中國？為什麼包括達摩祖師在內那麼多西來的高僧大德，歷盡千難萬苦，要留在中國譯經？其中鳩摩羅什受極大苦的故事想必各位耳熟能詳。今天我們當「事後諸葛亮」，得出答案很輕鬆：中國政權和文化上的大一統局面，最適合佛法的保存和流傳，中國方塊文字三千年無間斷，中華文化是世界古文明中唯一沒有被中斷的文明。然而在2000年前，能預知此答案的只有佛祖。

在座者都熟悉上人來西方傳法的不可思議的殊勝因緣。在此過程中我們看到：被西方人稱為偉大「宗教改革家」的上人，在開演佛法的同時，言傳身教中國文化—親自教授《論語》，著《水鏡回天錄》，邀學人來聖城講中國傳統文化，舉辦懷少節、敬老節…。為什麼？

學子窺測聖意，認為他老人家絕非因為出生中國而自戀於中國文化，而是在為大乘佛法的西來耕種福田。厚德方可以載物，大乘佛法這棵藥王樹有它自己的水土，不知中華文化者，難以明大乘義理。此中奧義，並非大乘學子人人明白，而師父上人，洞若觀火！

A popular koan in the Chan School asks, “What is the intention of the Buddha’s coming to the west?” From the viewpoint of the propagation of Buddhism, if you look into this topic further, you will come to the surprising discovery that it was not a coincidence that Mahayana Buddhism grew, flourished, developed, and found its preservation in China.

In India, the Buddhadharma spread from north to south, and globally travelled from east to west. By the time Mahayana Buddhism, including the Vajrayana School, had been completely transmitted to China, Buddhism in India went into drastic decline. The karma involved must have been very great.

In 1193 CE, Islamic armies invaded India, and in Nālandā, Buddhism’s highest educational institution in India at the time, several thousand monastics were killed because they refused to convert to Islam. Since then, Buddhism in India never recovered. Various Buddhist kingdoms, including the ancient country of Rouran, disappeared into the dunes of the desert. At this time, however, in China, many virtuous monastics were speaking the Dharma and translating the sutras. In Chinese history, there were quite a few undertakings of sutra translations from Sanskrit to Chinese. It can be considered a big accomplishment for cultural exchange in world history.

Why did Mahayana Buddhism choose China? Why did so many virtuous monks from the West, such as Patriarch Bodhidharma and Kumarajiva, choose to stay in China to translate the sutras despite having to undergo all kinds of difficulties? The answer is actually very simple: the environment of the Chinese cultural and political sphere was most conducive to the preservation and survival of Buddhism, as the Chinese writing system has survived for three thousand years, and Chinese culture is the only ancient culture that has lasted to the present day. Two thousand years ago, the only person capable of knowing all of this was the Buddha.

I believe that all of you are familiar with the stories about the Venerable Master bringing the Buddhadharma to the West. As someone known in the West as a great religious revolutionary, the Venerable Master taught the Dharma and Chinese culture at the same time – he personally lectured on the *Analects*, wrote *Water Mirror Reflecting Heaven*, invited numerous scholars to CTTB to give lectures on Chinese traditional culture, and established Honoring Elders Day and Cherishing Youth Day. Why?

If I would venture to guess the Venerable Master’s motives, I do not think that he did so just because he was born in China and narcissistic about his own culture. Instead, he was planting a field of blessings for Mahayana Buddhism’s arrival in the West. Only people with great virtue can carry all things and all beings. If we would compare Mahayana teachings to a great medicine tree, it would require a certain kind of water and soil in order to thrive. Likewise, it would be extremely difficult for those who do not understand Chinese culture to understand Mahayana Buddhism. Even though we learn Mahayana Buddhism, not everyone understands the depth of its importance; however, the Venerable Master saw it as clear as day.