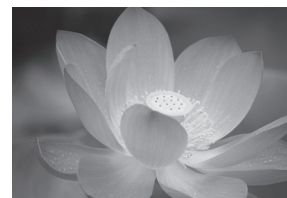
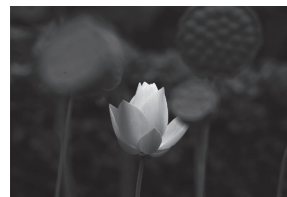


# HOW MY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE DHARMA HAS CHANGED

## 我與佛法的關係與轉變

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at the 10,000 Buddhas Hall  
on July 6, 2015

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韓親喜2015年7月6日講於萬佛殿  
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Tonight I would like to speak about how my relationship with the Dharma has changed over recent years, and some of the factors that have led to that change. First I will describe the period of time when I was living at CTTB. After that, I will describe the current period of time since leaving CTTB.

Before I came to CTTB, I lived a very comfortable life and one without any sort of discipline, or difficulty or challenge. I was able to maintain a practice, but what kept me going was a strong enthusiasm to practice, not discipline. My family didn't raise me to be disciplined in the sense that monastics at CTTB are disciplined, or even in the sense that many Chinese are raised to be disciplined. Growing up I had a certain amount of discipline, like I had to always finish my homework before going outside to

今晚要報告的，是關於這些年來我跟佛法關係的變化，以及導致這些變化的因素。首先敘述的是住在聖城的那段時間，然後會講述我搬出聖城之後的變化。

來聖城住之前，我一直過著很舒適的生活，沒有任何的紀律、困難或者挑戰。之所以能夠保持修行，是因為一股強烈的熱忱，而不是因為紀律。我的父母不會要求我遵守像聖城一樣的規矩，也不會像一般中國家庭那樣要求他們的孩子。成長過程中，我只需要守一點點的規矩，比如說：功課做好才能到外面玩，或者盤子裏的食物一定要吃完，每天晚上七點半要睡覺。但是總的來說，並沒有太多的規矩。

來聖城住了幾年之後，我意識到聖城對我的幫助。首先，我學會守紀律、守規矩。聖城教我如何早上三點半起床、如何參加一個精進的禪七、如何每天堅持自己的

play, I had to always finish the food on my plate, or I had to go to bed at 7:30 PM every night, but overall there wasn't much discipline.

After living in CTTB for a few years, I came to realize how CTTB was benefiting me. First of all, it taught me discipline. It taught me how to wake up almost every day at 3:30 AM. It taught me how to attend a rigorous Chan session, and how to follow a daily personal practice that consisted of yoga, meditation, and Sutra recitation, as well as CTTB's morning and evening ceremonies. In total that was more than 4 hours of practice a day. I no longer had to rely on mere enthusiasm to maintain a practice. Maintaining a consistent, daily practice became a part of my nature, it became a habitual force within my being. Even to this day, after having lived outside of CTTB for over two years now, I can always tap into that part of myself, which I gained while at CTTB, and in fact, I oftentimes do. So I was able to gain the very valuable benefit of being disciplined.

Another thing that I gained was an appreciation for undergoing difficulty and bitterness while practicing. When I came to CTTB, my understanding was that there was nothing beneficial to the Path that could come out of suffering, because the Buddha suffered for six years while performing austerities and once he realized that there was no benefit from that, he taught that we should avoid such meaningless suffering ourselves. However, when I came to CTTB, I would read passages where the Venerable Master would teach that there was benefit from bitterness and suffering. For instance, he would say: "To endure suffering is to end suffering; to enjoy blessings is to exhaust one's blessings."

When I would read how enduring suffering leads to its end, that seemed strange to me at first. I also remember encountering the same teaching when reading Ajahn Chah's teachings. I finally understood that by enduring suffering, we can strengthen our patience and relinquish the self, and from that, our suffering can decrease. So it was while at CTTB that I came to appreciate the benefits that come from patiently enduring suffering while doing a practice, and that was another thing that I gained while living at CTTB.

Another way in which living at CTTB helped me in my practice, was that it helped me understand the Dharma more clearly. Before coming to CTTB, my understanding of Mahayana Buddhist doctrine was still developing. In general my understanding wasn't clear. Attending all the classes at CTTB helped clarify my understanding of Mahayana Buddhism. However, my understanding is still very limited. It's so miniscule it's not even worth considering.

Another thing I gained while living at CTTB, was I came to learn about the beneficial practice of name recitation and bowing. Before coming to CTTB, I didn't know much about those practices or really appreciate them. My practice was very limited. Now I always enjoy bowing sessions, and name recitation has become a central aspect of my practice.

修行，包括瑜伽、打坐、誦經，當然還有參加早晚課，加起來總共四個多小時的功課。我對佛法的修持，不再像以前只是靠一股熱忱，而是成為自性的一部分，變成內在的一種慣性力量。即使到今天，搬到萬佛城外住了兩年，我依然能觸及我在聖城發掘出的那部分自我。我相信這是守紀律帶來的寶貴利益。

聖城帶給我的另一份利益，就是珍惜修行的困頓和艱苦。在沒來聖城之前，我認為吃苦對於修行是沒有利益的，因為佛陀修了六年苦行之後，了解到修苦行並沒有什麼好處，所以他教導我們要遠離無益的苦行。但是當我來到聖城，讀了上人的開示，上人則告訴我們吃苦的好處，比如他常說：「吃苦是了苦，享福是消福。」

剛聽到這種道理，我覺得很奇怪，並且想起泰國高僧阿姜查也講過類似的教誨。後來我終於明白，忍受修行的痛苦能增強我們忍辱的力量，還會消除我們的我執。如此一來，我們的苦就會逐漸消除。因此，住在聖城我學會感恩吃苦的好處。這便是我在聖城得到的第二個利益。

另外一點，就是對佛法的了解更為清楚。沒來聖城之前，我對大乘佛法教義的認識僅僅停留在開始的階段，可以說是模糊不清的。直到參加聖城開設的課程，這些課程幫助我更清楚明白大乘佛法，雖然還是相當有限，甚至微不足道。

還有一點，就是認識持名念佛跟拜佛的好處。沒來聖城之前，我並不知道也不珍惜這個法門，可以說接觸的法門非常有限。現在我很歡喜拜願、拜懺，而且持名念佛也變成我修行的一項主要功課。

最後一點就是，在聖城住的時候，我學會感恩為出家人服務的機會。剛來的時候，除了指派的工作，我還常被要求做一些額外的事情。雖然還是會去做，但是心裏寧可做別的事情，所以當時是比較懶惰的。然而隨著時日的增加，我認識到能夠為僧團服務是一個很寶貴、很難得的機會。這不僅可以幫助我們去掉我執，而且也是種福田的機會。一個人可能經過好幾個大劫，也沒有機會去種福田。因此有了這樣的認識，每當被派去為僧團服務，我都十

Finally, while living at CTTB, I gained something very beneficial, which was the lesson that I should be thankful whenever an opportunity arises for me to do work for the Sangha. When I first came here, when I would be asked to do extra work beyond what had already been assigned to me, although I would agree to do it, in my mind I would think how I'd rather be doing something else instead. So I had a lazy attitude. After some time had passed, I finally came to the realization that doing work for the Sangha is a precious and rare opportunity to not only renounce the self, but also to plant merit in a field of blessing. A being could go eons without getting the opportunity to plant merit in a field of blessing. So after I came to that realization, whenever I would be asked to do extra work for the Sangha, I would rejoice in the opportunity. The dirtier and more disgusting the work, the happier I would get, because I knew it was helping me to renounce the self and create merit.

While living at CTTB, my practice was twofold. It included study and cultivation. I studied the Buddhist texts and attended classes here, and I cultivated Buddhist practices. My focus on study was so I could gain an understanding of the Buddha Dharma, and my focus on practice was so that the understanding I gained could become a deep part of my nature. Studying texts would develop prajna, cultivation of practices would develop samadhi, and all the while I would try to uphold the five precepts. So my practice consisted of precepts, samadhi, and wisdom. I think that way of going about my practice was very beneficial and it helped me a lot.

However, since leaving CTTB, I have learned that there were some important elements missing from my practice. I've learned that the Bodhisattva Path is more than just precepts, samadhi, and wisdom. It also requires being selfless, generous, being attentive to other people's needs, and quick to help them based on those needs. After leaving CTTB, my main teachers were no longer the Buddhist texts or teachers of Buddhist classes; rather, my main teachers became the Bodhisattva Precepts, as well as friends and family, who taught me by example.

Prior to taking the Bodhisattva Precepts, it was easy to keep my focus inward. To uphold the five precepts, all I had to do was consider my own actions, without a need to contemplate others. The Bodhisattva Precepts have forced me to be more aware of others. For instance, in the Bodhisattva Precepts, it's more important that I don't sell intoxicants to others than that I not take them myself. Therefore, the welfare of others is a higher priority than my own purity.

Here are some other examples that show the major difference between the five precepts and the Bodhisattva Precepts: Unlike in the five precepts, in the Bodhisattva Precepts I have to be mindful of the Three Jewels, my parents, teachers, elders, monastics, the sick, the poor, even my obligations to the government. Therefore, the Bodhisattva Precepts force my attention to go outwards and to be aware of other living beings and my duties towards them. That has been a major lesson for me. It has shown me just how important empathy, compassion, selflessness and generosity are. The

分歡喜。越是骯髒、人家不喜歡的工作，我做起來越歡喜，因為我知道這正是去除我執、增長功德的機會。

因此住在聖城的時候，我的修行包含兩部分：學習和實修。我研習佛教的經典，並且參與課堂上課，同時也跟大眾共修。學習，增加我對佛法的認識；行持，則將佛法的認識內化為自性的一部分。學習經典可以開發我的智慧，修行可以增長我的定力，同時我也試著受持五戒。因此，我的修行包括了戒定慧三部分，我覺得這對我很有幫助。

搬出萬佛城在外面住的這段期間，我意識到自己的修行欠缺一些重要元素，那就是行菩薩道的時候，不只是戒定慧，還必須無我、慷慨、關心別人的需要，並且盡快幫助他們。因此離開聖城之後，我的老師不再只是佛經或者佛學課的老師，還有菩薩戒的精神、家人以及朋友，他們以身作則教育著我。

沒有受菩薩戒之前，往內觀照對我來說很容易。為了守持五戒，我必須管好自己的行為，不太需要去注意別人，但是菩薩戒要求我必須注意到旁人。例如從菩薩戒的角度來說，不賣酒給別人，比自己不喝酒更重要。因此，別人的福祉比自己的清淨更重要。

還有其他的例子顯示五戒跟菩薩戒的不同。依據菩薩戒，我必須憶念三寶、父母、師僧，還有病人、窮人，甚至對政府的義務責任。因此，菩薩戒幫助我把注意力從自己的安樂，轉移到別人的安樂，以及我對他們的責任。這對我是很重要的一課，它讓我了解同理心、慈悲心、無私，還有慷慨的重要。菩薩戒幫助我斷除以前的壞習慣，改變自己的行為，以及跟這個世界互動的模式。

另外，家人與朋友也成為我重要的老師。2012年12月我成家了，我的太太來自一個慷慨、善良、有愛心的中國家庭。當我們的第一個孩子誕生之後，我的岳父母日以繼夜地來幫忙照顧我們的兒子。任何一個養過小孩子的人都知道，照顧新生兒是一件很困難的事情，需要很多的耐心。譬如半夜三點，你很累，可是小孩還在大哭，此時我的岳母總會在旁一直協助我們。從我太太娘家，我學習到無私、布施，而且不管多麼困難或者勞累，仍然把別人



Bodhisattva Precepts have cut through my previous bad habits and forced me to change how I act and interact with the world.

My other major teacher since leaving CTTB has been friends and families. In December of 2012, I married into a Chinese family—a very generous, kind-hearted, loving, and caring family. After my wife and I had our baby, my parents-in-law worked tirelessly to support us and our newborn baby. As anyone who has ever had children knows, taking care of a newborn is very difficult and requires a lot of patience. For instance, at 3 AM when you're overtired, your baby is still crying aloud. Yet, my mother-in-law was there to assist us every step of the way. From my wife's family I learned about selflessness and giving, and putting others' priorities over your own priorities, no matter how difficult and tiring it can be.

In addition to my family, my friends have been my teacher since leaving CTTB. Ever since informing friends that my wife and I were going to have a baby, our friends have been incredibly generous towards us. We have received so many gifts from friends since having our baby. There was even one case where we received a gift from someone whom I had never even met before. She was merely a friend of my mom's. After receiving so many gifts and observing the tremendous amount of generosity from our friends, it has made me feel really ashamed for being so stingy my whole life. Words cannot express the gratitude that I've had after observing this. Although I am grateful for the gifts and the kindness of others, what I'm truly grateful for is having such loving, caring, and generous friends and family. Such friends and family are hard to come by. They are not only friends and family, they are my good and wise advisers, whom I hope to emulate myself.

As I've learned, the Bodhisattva Path is more than just doing Buddhist practices and studying texts. It's about changing how we interact with others. It's about constantly considering others' needs and putting their needs above our own. It's about making sacrifices for the benefit of others. Since leaving CTTB, this is what I'm now trying to focus my practice on.

The Venerable Master said, "Take a loss and yield the advantages to others. Don't care to help yourself out, but only want to help others. Take abuse and suffer discomfort in order to make others happy. Welcome and draw in living beings with kind compassion." Since leaving CTTB I have observed living examples of this in my own life. Such living examples have made the Sutra texts come to life for me as I have observed the acts of Bodhisattvas and tried to learn from them. Hopefully someday those virtuous traits will come naturally to me in the same way that it does for them. ❀



的利益需要放在比自己更重要的位置。

除了家人，離開聖城之後，朋友也成為我的老師。自從宣布即將有孩子的喜訊，朋友們對我們特別的慷慨。我們收到許多的禮物，甚至一位從沒見過面朋友，她只不過是我媽媽的一個朋友。收到這麼多的禮物，以及朋友們滿溢的慷慨，我為自己以前的小氣吝嗇感到很慚愧，同時也無法表達心中的感激之情。他們的禮物以及好意固然令我感激，但我真正感恩的是，能夠擁有這樣充滿愛心、關心和慷慨的朋友與家人，這是不容易遭遇的。他們不僅是朋友和家人，同時也是我的善知識，我希望自己也能跟他們一樣。

正如我所了解的，菩薩道不僅僅是做功課和學習經典，菩薩道是改變我們與他人互動的方式，也就是時常顧及別人的需要，並且優先於自己的需要；也就是犧牲自我，成就他人的利益，這也是我離開聖城後的修行重點。

上人說：「屈己待人，就是叫自己吃虧，叫旁人得到好處，得到利益。就是對自己很受委屈，委屈到好像很不自在的；待人呢，令人很歡喜的。慈心接物，用這個慈悲心來接引一切眾生。」自從離開聖城以後，我從生活中觀察到許多這樣鮮明的例子。這些例子，賦予了佛經經文的生命，因為我試圖向這些菩薩道的行者們學習。希望有一天，這些德行也能從我的身上散發出來，就像我的老師們現在一般。❀