

# WHAT COUNTS AS PURE LAND PRACTICE?

## 什麼是淨土法門？



A talk given by Bhikshuni Heng Chih on September 16, 2015  
Chinese Translation by Lan Huang, Huali Yuan and others

比丘尼恒持講於2015年9月16日  
黃藍、袁華麗等人中譯



Editor's note: The following excerpts are taken from the "Mechanisms of Practice" September 16, 2015 class co-taught by Dharma Master Heng Chih and Doug Powers. The topic of the evening was Pure Land practice. Dharma Master Chih pulls from a famous Chinese commentator, Master Ouyi (1599-1655) in her comments.

編按：以下段落，摘自2015年9月16日恒持法師和鮑果勒居士合教的「修行的原理」課程。當晚的主題是淨土法門，持法師講解了藕益大師（1599-1655）著作中的一部分。

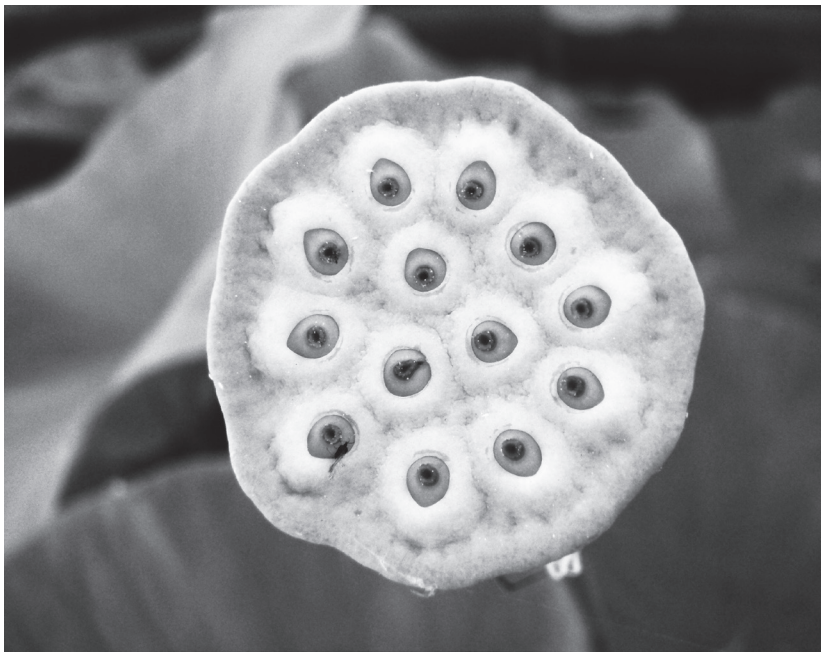
### • The Foundation of Pure Land Practice: A Profound Confidence

In Pure Land practice, the first thing we have to do is trust ourselves. This basically means that we acknowledge that we have a capacity to be a Buddha and that we have a mind that is neither the physical heart nor cognitive thought. It's not that mind, not the sixth consciousness. We trust beyond the sixth consciousness and the emotions of the heart—that we have a "true mind." It has no beginning, no end, no boundary. So, we have to believe in ourselves and that's not easy. In the Theravada tradition they have a metta practice in meditation. Have you ever used it? The first thing you have to do is like

### • 修習淨土法門的基礎：深刻的信心

修淨土法門，首要條件是要相信自己。這就是說我們相信自己有成佛的能力，相信我們的心既不是這個肉團心，也不是我們的思維——不是那個第六意識。我們相信第六意識以外，情緒以外——我們還有一個“真心”。它無始無終，沒有邊際。所以我們必須相信自己，當然這並不容易——南傳佛教中有慈心禪，你們試著修過嗎？第一個步驟就是你先要喜歡你自己。這可能要花一段時間，然後你才能開始去喜歡其它東西。

所以你必須對自己有這種信任和信心，雖然我現在昏沈，困惑，顛倒，迷惑，但一念心的轉變，我也可



yourself, and it may take a while before you can move on to liking something else.

So you have to have this trust, this faith in yourself, that even though I'm drowsy and confused, upside-down, deluded, I can, with a simple change of mind, obtain rebirth in the Pure Land, because my mind is capable of the perfections of the Pure Land. Basically, Master Ouyi says that we create with our minds this world we're in and all that goes with it. If we can do that, why couldn't we create the Pure Land? That's basically what it's asking.

It says in the Pure Land Sutras as well as in the *Lotus Sutra* that even if your mind is scattered, even if you're not paying attention, even if you're saying the Buddha's name and you're driving and you're listening to the news at the same time and there are four people talking the car...even if you're scattered like that, you plant a seed with your recitation. There is the beginning of something that can sprout into your being able to go to the Pure Land to become a Buddha. If we focus on it, at least through certain times of the day, then how could we not? Of course we should be able to get there.

#### •Pure Land Practices

Let me tell a story about one of the monks who was here for 28 years and went back to lay-life. He had a lot of self-doubt. It was his self-doubt that eventually led him to disrobe. But he was a good monk. You see, the first step in metta practice, trusting yourself, is very important.

One time he was about to go to Canada. Before he went, he asked if he could do a repentance. In the old days, when Shifu was around, you could do what was called Baizhong (literally, "tell the whole assembly"): a public repentance. You know how we are all the hero of our dreams

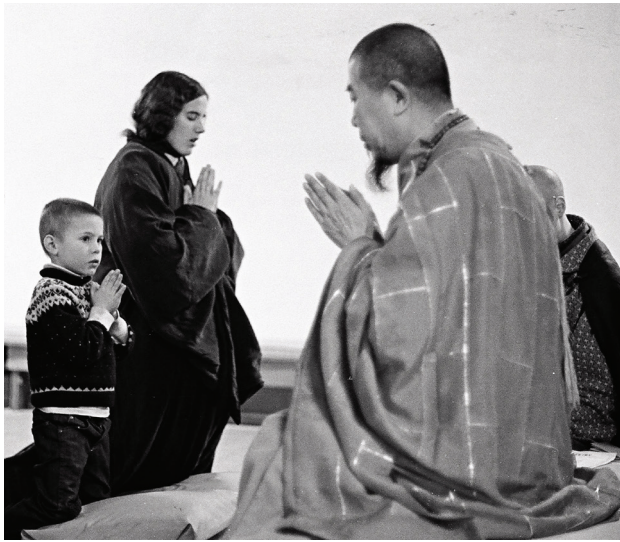


以往生到極樂世界，因為我的心有達到極樂世界種種完美的潛力。藕益大師的意思是我們用我們的心創造了我們所生活的世界，一切唯心造。如果是這樣的話，我們為什麼不能創造極樂世界呢？這基本上就是我們需要做的。

在淨土經典裏還有《法華經》裏都講到，即使你的心是散亂的，即使你沒有特別注意，即使你在念佛的時候，可能你在開車、聽新聞，還有四個人在車裏講話……，即使你的心這樣散亂，你念佛時也種下一個種子。這個種子就是一個開始，它會發芽，未來你就可以去極樂世界，在那裏成佛。那如果我們很專心地念佛，至少每天某些時間內，我們怎麼不會往生淨土呢？我們當然可以往生淨土。

#### 淨土法門

我來講一個關於在這裏修行二十八



and tend to put all the ugly things way down inside and just forget about them. But what happens when you're around someone like the teacher we had, Master Hsuan Hua, is that they surface. Maybe he pulls them out, or maybe he creates a situation where we pull them out ourselves. And then you're stuck with them: there they are. And so we would come to the point where we would want to repent of them. It is taught that you can repent for past mistakes and they're done for, they go away. So this is what he, Heng Tso, wanted to do. A lot of us did it. I myself did it several times: it is a magical time. You would have to get the Master's permission, although he did not necessarily know everything you would say.

So the moment came for Heng Tso to do his public repentance. He expressed his usual kind of self-doubt again. You know, "I'm not good, good for nothing; I can't really..." But he had the courage to say out loud all the things he'd done wrong. Whenever such a repentance started, those of us who sat around and listened, would know with the very first sentence that this guy or girl was going to tell it like it was, and that it wasn't going to be easy. It wasn't going to be easy for them to say and it wasn't going to be easy for us to hear—and THAT was very magical. When I was the protagonist, when I was the one doing it... wow! I can't even describe what that was like to get rid of that burden. And the other thing is that everybody knew: they knew your worst thing, which is what spouses or good friends are supposed to be able to do, they're supposed to be able to know the worst thing about you and still support you. But in a public repentance you say them to the entire assembly and if you are honest and true, everyone will support you.

So, Heng Tso did that, he told all of us his worst things. And then he said, his conclusion was: "So I'm not good for anything



年，後來還俗的一個比丘的故事。他對自己有很多懷疑，正是對自己的懷疑導致他最終還俗，但他曾經是一個好比丘。所以在慈心禪中，對你自己的信心是非常重要的。

有一次他要去加拿大。在他走之前，他問上人他是否可以懺悔。過去師父還在的時候，你可以白眾（意指告訴大眾），是一種公開懺悔。你知道我們都是自我幻想中的英雄，我們習慣把所有不光彩的事情隱藏起來，並且嘗試忘掉。但是當你在上人身邊的時候，這些東西都會顯露出來。或許上人將醜事舉出來，也或者是他創造了機緣讓你自己能把醜事察覺出來，然後你就被醜事難住了一一不知如何是好，直到某一刻，自己最終想要去懺悔。師父教導我們，可以懺悔過去做過的錯事，它們就會消失。所以這就是恒佐想要做的事情，我們很多人也曾經這麼做過。我個人這樣懺悔過幾次—很奇妙的過程。雖然師父不一定知道你所有想要懺悔的，但是你需要首先得到師父的同意。

然後恒佐就開始在大眾面前懺悔，他又一次表達了自己常有的對自己的懷疑，比如「我不行，我什麼都不行；我真的沒有用……」，但是他有勇氣清楚地說出他犯過的錯誤。每次這樣的懺悔開始前，我們坐在那裏的聽眾，從懺悔者開口的第一句話，就知道這個人會如實懺悔，這是很不容易的。對於他們，懺悔出來不容易；而對於我們，聆聽也是不容易的一這正是奇妙之處。當我是懺悔者，這樣做懺悔的時候……天啊！簡直無法描述那種如釋重負

else; I am going to practice Pure Land.” Shifu, our teacher, rarely praised anybody. I only have one praise in my book for my whole life with Shr Fu. [Laughter from audience and a chuckle from Dharma Master Chih.] That night that monk got his praise. That night Shifu said from his high seat for all of us to hear, “Shan zai, shan zai, shan nanzi. Very good! Very good! Good man.” We were all just shocked. [Laughter.] We didn’t hear that very much. Shifu gave a little commentary. He said, “For someone of your age, a young American, to be to be able to pick this up, to trust Amitabha and trust yourself and do this practice: incredible!”

Heng Tso then asked a very good question, he said, “What are the Pure Land practices?” Obviously, holding the name of Amitabha is a central Pure Land practice. Great Master Ouyi taught not to do anything else, to just concentrate on reciting the name. But Heng Tso asked, “How about the *Great Compassion Repentance*? Does that count?” “Yes,” Shifu said, “because Guanyin is on the right of Amitabha in the Pure Land.” He further asked, “How about the *Great Compassion Mantra* or even the *Shurangama Mantra*?” Actually, if you go into the *Shurangama Mantra*, you’ll find lines that refer to Amitabha in the West over and over again. The *Universal Door Chapter* that we recite and bow to during Guan Yin sessions also counts as a Pure Land practice. The Master confirmed, one by one, that these can be counted as Pure Land practices.

To be honest with you, I am not somebody who holds Amitabha’s name all the time. My practice has been to hold mantras and meditate. When I meditate I use the topic “Who is mindful of the Buddha?” Where does that topic come from? For people who hold the name, during the day, you are mindful of the Buddha. Somebody who is really good at this holds the name all the time, whatever they’re doing—sweeping the walks, eating, sleeping, cooking; they are always saying Amitabha’s name.

But when you go into the Chan Hall, you don’t. You don’t sit there and say “Namo Amitabha, Namo Amitabha, Namo Amitabha”. You ask yourself, “Who says ‘Namo Amitabha?’” When you’re practicing in that way, you look for the self, the false self. That is my Amitabha practice. It is the reverse of reciting his name; instead, it consists of looking for who. Truthfully, that is the way I’ve done it. But I have also recited I don’t know how many times the *Universal Door Chapter*, bowed I don’t know how many *Great Compassion Repentances*, recited the *Shurangama Mantra* and the *Great Compassion Mantra* who knows how many times. If we go by how Master Hua answered Heng Tso that day—and that is indelible in my mind and probably for anybody else who heard it—those all count as Pure Land practices. ❀

的感覺。另外一件事是，我們都知道唯有夫妻或者好朋友，才能夠了解你最糟糕的一面，卻仍然支持你；但是這種在大眾面前的懺悔，如果你是真心的，每個人都會護持你。

恒佐做到了，他告訴了我們所有他最糗的事情。然後，他聲稱他的結論是：「因此，我其他的都不行，我會去修淨土法門。」師父，我們的老師，很少稱讚任何人。我一輩子也只在我的書裏得到過師父的一次誇獎。那晚，這位比丘受到了師父的讚嘆。師父在他的法座上，用在場所有人都聽得到的聲音說：「善哉，善哉，善男子！」我們都嚇到了，因為我們很少聽到這樣的讚美。師父接著說：「像你這樣年紀輕輕的一個美國人，能懂得這個法，相信阿彌陀佛，相信你自己，並且修行這個法門，真是不可思議！」

然後，恒佐問了一個非常好的問題。他問：「什麼是淨土法門？」顯然，持念阿彌陀佛的名號是淨土法門的核心。藕益大師教導不要做別的，只要專一持名。但是恒佐問：「那〈大悲懺〉呢？算是淨土法門嗎？」「算，」師父回答，「因為觀音菩薩在極樂世界阿彌陀佛的右邊。」恒佐又問：「那〈大悲咒〉或者〈楞嚴咒〉呢？」實際上，如果研究〈楞嚴咒〉，你會一次又一次發現提到西方阿彌陀佛的句子。我們在觀音七念誦和禮拜的〈普門品〉，也算是淨土法門。師父一個接著一個地肯定這些都是淨土法門。

老實說，我並沒有時刻都念阿彌陀佛的名號，我的法門一直是持咒和打坐。當我打坐時，我參話頭「念佛是誰」，這個話頭從哪裏來的？修行持名念佛的人，一整天心裏都是在念佛。真有功夫的人，時時刻刻都在念佛，不管他們在做什麼—掃地、吃飯、睡覺、做飯，他們常常念著阿彌陀佛的名號。

但是當你踏入禪堂，你就不念了。你不會坐在那裏念「南無阿彌陀佛，南無阿彌陀佛，南無阿彌陀佛」，你不會這麼做，你會問自己：「誰在念佛？」當你這樣修行時，你在找那個我，那個假我。這就是我的阿彌陀佛法門，與持他的名號相反，我是在找「誰」。老實說，這是我修行的方法，但是我也念了不知多少遍的〈普門品〉，拜了不知多少次的〈大悲懺〉，誦了不知多少遍的〈楞嚴咒〉和〈大悲咒〉。如果按照師父那天對恒佐的回答—深刻印在我心裏，也許也在其他聽到的人心裏—所有這些都算是淨土法門。❀