

SELF-CULTIVATION

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自我修行

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What is self-cultivation? Self-cultivation is such a broad concept; there is not a dull moment if one is really cultivating. Why am I saying that? It is because every thought that comes to our mind likely will be followed by an action, which will tie to the law of cause and effect.

In Buddhism, cause and effect is the main principle that is why holding the precepts is essential. We harvest what we sow. Some people may argue about evil people being rewarded with high positions and wealth which they do not deserve. Well, let us take an example. You have a pack of wild flower seeds and sow them in your garden in the spring. In the early summer you will have some wild flowers come up. More pop up as the weather gets hotter and with the moist of the soil when there are some monsoon rains. By early fall you will have a full, brilliant wild flowers garden. Some may come back the following year, some may not, and some may pop up a couple of years later.

A similar principle, applies to our actions. Like the wild flower seeds, when the conditions ripen the retribution will take place. Chapter Three of the *Sutra of the Past Vows of Earth Store Bodhisattva* explains the retribution in great detail. Therefore self-cultivation is a constant practice in mindfulness. Regardless of what others do, if we do something wrong we will reap the retribution accordingly.

I guess most of us have heard this saying, “If you want to know what you did in your past, see what is happening to you today, and if you want to know what will happen to you in the future, watch what you are doing today.” Often when we do not understand Buddhism, we see something which we think is not fair. One may see an evil

什麼是自我修行？這是一個廣泛的概念，一個人如果真正在修行，時刻都會保持警覺。為什麼這麼說？因為我們的每個心念都會變成行為，最終落在因果上。

佛教裡，因果是最根本的定律，也是持戒的基礎。種什麼，就收穫什麼。有些人會說，有些壞人的權大、位高、財富多，這些根本不應該屬於他們。關於這個問題，可以舉個例子來說：春天在花園播下一包野花種子，到了初夏有一些花就會長出來；當天氣越來越熱，雨季讓土壤更加濕潤，就會開出更多的花。等秋天來時，整個園子就是花海一片。有些花也許要等一年才會開，有些或者要等上幾年，有的可能就不開了。

這道理可用來解釋眾生造的業，就像這包野花籽，因緣成熟，果報就現前，《地藏經》卷三描述了很多眾生的業果。因此，自我修行就是時刻保持正念，無論其他人怎麼做，如果我們做錯，自己一定嚐到果報。

很多人應該聽過：「欲知前世因，今生受者是；欲知來世果，今生做者是。」沒有學佛的時候，看到不符合世間邏輯的事情，就會認為不公平，例如前面提到的壞人有好報。也許這個人前世供養過三寶，也許救濟過貧苦，我們沒有看到所以不知道。



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person rewarded with goodness. This evil person perhaps has done many grand offerings to the Triple Jewel and has given plenty to the poor in his past lives. We don't see it so we don't know. Everything is fair if we truly understand the law of cause and effect.

Self-cultivation is self-reflection. Before I studied Buddhism I was pretty deluded. How so? Such as chasing after material pleasures: food, clothing, housing, cars, yearly vacations, having friends' gatherings just to pass the time, and wasting resources; all these sort of meaningless and unwholesome doings. I did not have a meaningful direction in my life; and my understanding of virtue was very shallow.

Since encountering Buddhism I have changed for 180 degrees, particularly after listening to the Master's instructional talks about not wasting anytime. He urged people to cultivate diligently; taking vacation is wasting time, especially during the summer months when many fatal accidents happen on the roads. If we are satisfied with what we have and work hard in our practices, investigate the Buddha's teachings, this way we can attain wisdom and blessings. We learn from the sages and become wiser, and when we practice the sages' paths we gain blessings.

The Master always taught us to take losses; he said that taking losses is actually taking advantages. There is also a verse that goes,

*Just as the farmer plants his rice paddy
by retreating backwards down the rows,
with head bent,
he sees the sky reflected in the water.
Purity of the six sense faculties leads to the Way.
I realize that retreating (from the world of senses)
is advancing (in cultivation).*

Similarly in cultivation, if we yield to others and keep practicing vigorously, which includes being insulted, scolded in public, slandered, even being hit, when our patience and mindfulness are mastered, we will receive good news.

Self-reflection is being patient, holding back on our opinions and actions, respecting others' standards, and always giving the benefit of the doubt to others. Thus we can control our temper much more easily. In translation sessions I have learned a lot from the participants: their patience, their attitude of yielding, and their respect for others' opinions.

When we live in a small community we should care for each other and also watch over each other. Some individuals are so independent that they are somewhat lacking in compassion for others. On the other hand, some



事實上，從因果的角度來看，沒有什麼是不公平的事情。

自我修行就是自我覺察。還沒學習佛法之前的我很愚痴，忙着追求物欲的享受——美食、衣服、房子、汽車、度假和朋友聚會，這些不是浪費時間，就是浪費資源，總之都是沒有意義、沒有好處的事。人生欠缺有意義的目標，對道德的理解也很膚淺。

然而自從遇到佛法，我有了180度的轉變，尤其是聽到上人的開示，教我們不要再浪費時間。他催促我們要用功修行，度假只是浪費時間，尤其暑假經常發生很多交通事故。如果能夠知足、認真修行和學習佛法，我們就能得到福報和智慧。學習聖人所學的，能增加我們的智慧；修行聖人所行的，可以積累我們福報。

上人經常教我們吃虧，他說吃虧就是占便宜。有一句偈頌也說：

手執青秧插滿田，
低頭便見水中天，
六根清淨方為道，
退步原來是向前。

修行也是這樣，如果能夠讓人，自己用自己的功，即使當眾被人指責、譏諷、羞辱甚至打罵，都能甘之如飴、如如不動，這樣修行就有好消息了。

自我覺察首先要能忍耐，把自己的觀點、自己想做的事忍一忍，先尊重別人的看法標準，聽聽別人怎麼想，這樣就比較容易控制自己

individuals constantly need support from others; otherwise they would throw a temper tantrum when they failed with their commitments. So, self-cultivation is to reflect on the thought: am I practicing the Middle Way? Have I been self-centered with my own goals, my own responsibilities, my status, and forgot about giving to others? Or have I been relying on others' help and support all the time?

The Master gave us a very good instruction when he said, "Do not get upset when others trouble you, but never trouble others." CTTB is a sagely place, a Pure Land in the mundane world, so whatever community work we do will not go in vain, it only helps to increase our virtue and reduce our karmic obstacles, thus paving a good path for our way to realization. Of course we have to have the Dharma-selecting Eye. If a situation negatively affects the community's well-being then it should not be tolerated. For example, our community has strict precepts and rules to maintain the purity of the spiritual practices and protect the sagely environment; if people violate the community's strict precepts and rules, corrective action should take place.

Self-cultivation is to develop a wholesome character. In order to do that



the environment is very important, in order to have the Dharma, wealth, companions, and a place to live are also necessary. If there is food but no Dharma, we will have no direction while walking our path; it will be like a lost ship floating aimlessly in the ocean. If there is only Dharma but no food, cultivators will die from starvation before they attain their volitions. If there are neither Dharma nor food, no one can cultivate there. In CTTB, we have both, bountiful food and Dharma everywhere. We are really fortunate to encounter the Master and his Buddhism.

The Master said before we attain Buddhahood we should perfect ourselves as humans. So he emphasized education. He established Instilling Goodness Elementary School, Developing Virtue High School, and Dharma Realm Buddhist University. The mission of the University is: "To provide an opportunity for all people to pursue the highest goals of human existence." The Master also set down a vigorous and balanced ritual for cultivators

的脾氣。在翻譯小組，其他成員的耐心和退讓、尊重其他人的意見，都讓我學到很多。

在聖城，我們共住一個社區，應該彼此關心照顧。有些人很獨立、很自我，甚至對他人缺乏慈悲心；有些人則是一直需要別人的照顧，如果得不到這些關愛，就會發脾氣。因此，自修就是要觀照自己的念頭：我是否行在中道？我是否太過以自我為中心，只想著自己的目標、自己的責任、自己的情況，而忘了替他人著想？或者我始終都依賴別人？

上人給我們一個很好的開示，他說當別人來麻煩我們的時候，我們不要覺得煩，但我們不要給別人添麻煩。聖城是個寶地，是濁世中的一塊淨土，因此無論為這個地方做什麼工都是功不唐捐，都是增加自己的福報，消除業障，讓自己修行的路走得容易些。當



然我們也要有擇法眼，如果有些事情會影響大眾的利益，那絕對沒有妥協的餘地。比如說，聖城是個戒律規矩嚴謹的地方，目的是要維護這裏修行人的清淨，如果有人違反了這個團體的戒律和規矩，都應該立刻得到糾正。

自修，是要培養高尚的品格。培養高尚的品德，環境是很重要的；修道，法、財、侶、地是必備的四種東西。如果只有食物，沒有法，修道的路上會失去方向，就像迷失在海洋的浮舟，一點目標也沒有。如果只有法，沒有食物，修道人還沒實現他的目標，就已經餓死了。如果兩者都沒有，什麼都不

to discipline their practices in both wisdom and blessings. We listen to and investigate the Buddha's teaching at least twice a day during lunch and the evening lecture. Our wholesome roots are being nurtured daily. In addition to the Dharma lectures and Dharma talks, in the worship hall there are thousands of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and many sages' images which constantly remind us of their caring for living beings and their great vows, their selfless practices, and their realizations.

The portrait of the Master in the lobby of the University is so full of insight for the future. It strikes me as a vision of a long-term goal instead of an instant success or failure. The Master had an incredible vision for the future of Buddhism in America, as he once said he was here to make living Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. If we follow the Master's instructions and uphold the pure rules of the CTTB, we will see the light of sagehood. Sometimes when I run into difficulty in making decisions I always refer back to the CTTB's basic rules and the three great principles.

The Master's Dharma Jewel has been helping me to become a much more tolerant person. By controlling my temper, I have become more yielding. I think twice before I allow my preconceptions to get the best of me. When I was a layperson, I was very opinionated. "My way or the highway." It hasn't been easy for me to walk the spiritual path with its many struggles. However, now I can find inner serenity. Buddhism helps me uncover my intrinsic nature and develop a wholesome character. It gradually reduces my greed, anger, and delusion. It strengthens my observance of the rules, precepts, mindfulness, and wisdom in making decisions.

Sometime ago, a Dharma speaker had mentioned Chan Master Bai Zhang in the Tang Dynasty who had set twenty pure rules for his monastery in the forest. The first rule was that the forest monastery will prosper when everyone practices harmoniously. Another Dharma speaker mentioned that from the *Udana (Inspired utterances) Sutra*, the Buddha told his disciples that when they are together, there are only two things they should do. First, they should investigate the Dharma. Second, they should constantly observe the noble silence when they are not investigating Dharma. From listening to other people's Dharma talk we gain knowledge and then can practice it. This way we increase our own knowledge, create good karma and strengthen the community's well-being.

So to me, self-cultivation is like grinding a rough iron rod into a fine needle. ❀

用談了。在聖城，我們這兩樣都有，處處都是豐富的飲食和法食。因此我們真的很幸運，可以遇到上人和他所教導的正法。

上人說：「人道盡，佛道成。」因此上人注重教育，創辦了育良小學、培德中學和法界佛教大學。法大的宗旨就是給所有人一個機會，追求人生存在的最高目標。對於想修行的人，上人也設定一份動靜均衡的課程，幫助修行人福慧雙修。我們每天至少有兩次聽法的機會，分別在午齋和晚上的聽經，藉以滋養我們的善根。除此之外，大殿裡成千上萬的佛像、菩薩像、聖人像，時刻都在提醒我們他們對眾生的慈悲和願力、他們無私的修行，以及他們最終的證悟。

例如法大接待廳的那幅上人肖像，上人對未來高瞻遠矚的神情，提醒我要有一個長遠的目標，不要在乎眼前這些即時的成敗。上人對美國佛教有他不可思議的願景，他說他來這兒是要造活佛、活菩薩。因此，如果跟着上人的教導，守好聖城的規矩，我們就會看到聖人的光芒。有時候我遇到困難、難以決定時，聖城的家風和三大宗則，就是我最好的參考依據。

上人的法，幫助我變得寬容很多，比較能控制自己的脾氣，也比以前懂得忍讓。在毛病習氣跑出來之前，我會多想一想。回想起以前的世俗生活，我很固執己見，不按我的方法做就免談。的確，修行這條路對我來說並不容易，有很多掙扎，但是現在漸漸可以發覺自己的寧靜。佛法幫助我找出本有的自性，養成一個良善的人格，慢慢地減少自己的貪瞋癡，更專注地修行戒定慧。

不久前有一位講法者提到唐朝的百丈禪師，這位禪師制定了二十條叢林清規，第一條就是「叢林以無事為興盛」，大家可以和諧共修。另一位講法者也提到，《自說經》裡佛陀告訴弟子：「比丘啊，你們在一起的時候，應該只做兩件事，就是互相談論法，和遵守神聖的沉默。」從別人的講法中，我們可以學到很多道理，然後付諸實踐，這樣就能不斷增長知識，積集善業，讓道場更為興盛。

因此對我來說，自我修行就是這麼一個鐵杵磨成針的過程！❀