

Mind-Ground Buddha Recitation 心地念佛法門

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Foreword

These are my notes from talks I gave on buddharecitation as part of DRBU "spiritual exercises" class. The class is meant to unite theory and practice into a single experience. The students read sections of the Platform Sutra, or Pure Land texts, and sometimes Dharma talks from Master Xuyun and/or Master Hua prior to the class. That is



why longer quotes from these sources appear in the talks: the students are already familiar with them. This talk is given in the small Buddha Hall just before the students engage in recitation practice. It is intended to provide a philosophical context for this specific "Dharma door," as well as a pragmatic hands-on engagement with it.

As I note toward the end, everything I present for consideration comes from instructions I received from my own teacher over the years; any murkiness and mistakes are my own.

Context

When the water-clearing pearl is tossed in muddy water, The muddy water becomes clear.

When the Buddha's name enters a confused mind,
The confused mind attains to the Buddha.

前言

些經典,是因為學生們已熟悉其文。我們先在 小佛堂上課,之後學生會念佛,目的是讓學生 了解淨土法門的理論基礎,同時也實際參與練 習。

正如本文最後提到的,所有提供大家思考的 內容,都源自於多年來我從師父那裡學得的教 導。如有任何錯誤或不清楚的地方,那都是我 的過錯。

正文

清珠投於濁水,濁水不得不清。 念佛入於亂心,亂心不得不佛。 There is said to be a pearl that when dropped into muddy water, restores the water's purity. Reciting the Buddha's name acts like a "mind/heart cleansing pearl." Single-mindedly intoning the Buddha's name is like dropping a pearl into one's mind; by letting it slowly sink and settle, it can restore the mind's natural purity and stillness. And yet, as the great master Huineng reminds us, our essential nature is ever and always pure; our mind itself is fundamentally still. The *Bodhisattva-sila Sutra* says, "Our original, fundamental essential nature is pure." And upon his own awakening he exclaimed, "How unexpected! The essential nature is intrinsically pure." So why recite? Why use the pearl at all? Why use effort to cultivate?

It's true that our essential nature, our original mind, is whole and complete, pure. It is whole and complete, lacking nothing. But we fail to notice; or as my teacher would say, "we turn our backs on enlightenment and unite with the dust." We forget our original home; we let our mind drift and wander, and neglect its wondrous functioning. Again the Sixth Patriarch, Huineng, explains, "Good and Wise Friends, all people originally possess the wisdom of Bodhi and Prajna within them, but they cannot realize it themselves because their conditioned minds wander and become confused." The ground of the mind gets overgrown, wild and weed-choked. The water of our nature turns murky, polluted. Over time this dust storm of our own making becomes our default mode, habituated, so we can no longer clearly see our original face, or hear the true sound of our deep heart's core. So while there's no problem to begin with, through habit and neglect, we lose sight of "our original face." An ancient text says,

The human spirit tends toward purity, but the mind/thoughts disturbs it;
The human mind tends toward stillness, but desires entice it away.

If you can control desire, then the mind will be still;
If you can clear your thoughts, then the spirit will be pure.

Cravings will vanish, the three poisons disappear. . .

Recitation then is just an expedient method to cool desires and clear the muddy water; or to be still and let the dust settle. So you could say that in reciting the Buddha's name we "turn our back on the dust and reunite with enlightenment." But in fact there is actually nothing really going on. Getting to the place where nothing is going on, reciting as if not reciting at all, is the point of reciting.

 有珠它濁中會淨就「一,投的,恢。像淨種若入的水復念這淨寶將渾水便純佛顆心

據

說

"Sincerity" doesn't mean seeking for something with all your might, but rather not seeking for anything at all.

恢復純 至誠,並不是要竭力去求。
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念佛 些什麼,而是無所求。

實珠」,一心念佛,就如同將清珠投入 念佛人的心,隨著佛號的慢慢深入和安 定,心靈就能恢復本有的清淨和寂靜。 但是惠能大師卻提醒我們,我們的自性 本自清淨,本無動搖。《菩薩戒經》 云:「我本元自性清淨。」惠能大師開 悟時驚嘆:「何期自性本自清淨!」那 麼,為什麼還需要念佛?為什麼還要用 這顆寶珠?為什麼還需要努力修行?

確實如此,吾人的本性、自性清淨無瑕,圓滿無缺,本自具足。只是我們不認識,或者像師父說的「背覺合塵」,我們忘了本有的家,任由心漂泊遊蕩,忽視了真心的妙用。六祖惠能大師大說:「善知識,菩提般若之智,世人本自有之。只緣心迷,不能自悟。」我們的心地雜草叢生,自性如濁水一般,可是無始以來我們習慣並且接受這個自己造成的沙塵暴,因此無法再認清自己的本來面目,也無法聆聽來自心靈深處的直對性與忽視,我們不認識「自己的本來面目」。古籍中曰:

夫人神好清,而心擾之; 人心好靜,而欲牽之。 常能遣其欲,而心自靜, 澄其心而神自清。 自然六欲不生,三毒消滅……

念佛正是遣欲、澄心的方便法門,可以說念佛讓我們得以「背塵合覺」,但 事實上什麼也沒有。因此,念佛的要訣 就在為而無所為,念而無所念。 is at the heart of the direct teaching, the mind-ground Dharma door. Reciting in this way is 'no-thought' recitation; totally engaged but nowhere attached. Total single-minded recitation leaves no room for thoughts to set up, no place for desires to take hold.

Why? Because there is actually nothing that can be gotten and not one thing the mind can really attach to. The illusion of 'me' and 'mine' is shattered through this simple method of reciting the Buddha's name. This is just the meaning of the Sixth Patriarch's central teaching: "let the mind be unattached, clinging

to nothing." Completely focused recitation, total immersion, allows the mind to let go of everything else; and just in that letting go, cravings vanish and the three poisons disappear.

These scattered thoughts and fleeting desires are empty in themselves; they have no nature of their own. They evaporate, dissolve, when we give them no place to dwell, just as boat sails go slack when there's no wind to fill them. They return to emptiness, where they came from. So reciting sincerely in this way secures a pure place of no-dwelling, a bodhimanda (lit. 'ground for awakening'). What we call "false thoughts" and "grasping wants" just rise up and fall away like fallen leaves in the wind. They cannot gain a foothold because when the mind is unmoving and unmoved, there's no place "where dust can alight." We recite and calmly observe the rise and fall of conditioned dharmas. They come and go of themselves. It's as if we've posted a "no vacancy" sign on the threshold of our mind.

More importantly, however, is not what one recites, but how one recites. My teacher told us to recite with a mind that seeks nothing. "At the place of seeking nothing, there are no worries. Everything is ok; no problem." Simply reciting while seeking nothing leaves not even a hairline crack for falseness to enter. This is not repression; it is just letting go. Repression is hard; letting go, soft. Thoughts and desires are not squelched or embraced; they are simply ignored. By bringing awareness back to single-minded recitation, they rise and fall by themselves.

The way my teacher taught me to recite is this: You can imagine the pearl sinking down into your *dan tian* (a spot 2 inches below and 2 inches behind the navel). The mind cleansing pearl slowly sinks down to this spot; your breath, your sound, your attention, all converge in this place. The recitation begins here, returns here, and is sustained here. Walking, standing, sitting, even in sleep, you never leave this place, never depart from this. He would say:

Walking, standing, sitting, even lying down, Do not separate from this. If you separate from this, Before your eyes, you'll go amiss.

The efficaciousness of this practice lies not so much in the name of the

Our true nature never leaves us for a minute, we just turn our backs and neglect it.

其實自性從未離開,我們 只是轉身無視它的存在。 念佛要念到相應,不在於我們的「有所為」,反而是「有所不為」。摒除雜念、欲望、恐懼、幻想,專一其心來念佛(就是佛經中所謂的「一心不亂」),當下這一念就是無漏,就是不造貪癡諸業。無業,無妄,無報,就像一片萬里無雲的晴空。這個法門可說是「學習減法人生」和「體會無的妙用」。就是六祖大

師說的「無念」,是頓教、心地法門的核心。這樣無念而念,佛號遍一切處,亦不著一切處。一心念佛,雜念、欲望也就無處容身了。

為什麼?因為本來無所得,本來無可染著。「我」和「我的」錯覺,被簡易直截的念佛法門給破除了。這正是六祖大師教法的中心思想:「心不染著,是為無念。」全然專注在念佛之中,心中放下一切;一切放下時,欲望消滅,三毒潛蹤。

這些雜念和反覆的欲望,沒有真實的自性,當體即空,失去了停駐的處所,當然就消散於無,就像沒有風來充盈,船帆也隨之鬆弛一樣;它們從空而來,又回歸於空。所以專一其心的念佛,等於成就一個清淨無著的菩提道場(覺悟之地),所有的「妄想」和「執著」就像風中飄起、落下的樹葉,找不著立足之地。因為當內心寂靜、不為境所搖動之時,是無處「惹塵埃」的。所以我們念佛,靜觀有為法的生滅去來,就彷彿在心的門頭貼一張「無空位」的公告。

更重要的,不是念什麼,而是怎樣念。 師父教我們要用無所求的心來念,「到無 求處便無憂,Everything is ok,沒有問題。」平 常心念佛,心無所求,妄想就無法趁虛而入。 不是壓制,而是放下;壓制是強硬的,而 放下是柔軟的。對於雜念和欲望,我們不 壓制也不接受,僅僅是不去注意它們。讓 覺照力回到一心念佛,雜念和欲望也就自 生自滅了。

師父教我的念佛方法是:想像這顆清水 珠往下沉到丹田(肚臍下2英寸,向內2英



Buddha or Bodhisattva being recited, as in the reciter of the name. It is mind more than the mouth; the heart more than the sound. Master Hua would say: "When you recite to the point where inside and outside vanish, where not a single discursive thought arises, then you and the Buddha are one, not two." Again Huineng tells us:

This must be practiced with the mind; not merely recited by the mouth.

Verbal repetition without mental cultivation is like a fantasy, a hallucination, like dew drops and a lightning flash.

If, however, while the mouth recites, the mind practices, then both mind and mouth are in accord.

One's own essential nature is Buddha;

apart from this nature there is no other Buddha.

When single-minded, everything is efficaciousness; when scattered, there is nothing. Only when there is utmost sincerity can a response occur; and 'sincerity' doesn't mean seeking for something with all your might, but rather not seeking for anything at all.

Strictly speaking, buddha-recitation is false, but we use the false to fight the false; or as the *Avatamsaka* says, "we use the false to find the true." Master Xuyun made this point clearly in his instructions on meditation practice. He said there is no fixed Dharma; every method is a medicine only to be given when appropriate to cure a particular illness. No illness, no medicine. Reciting, meditation, bowing, memorization and so forth came about only because "the ancestors and masters were compelled to devise a 'poison-against-poison' method to teach their followers' because the followers could not simply "see through things, and put them down."

Master Xuyun explained that disciples were even taught,

寸的位置)。隨著它的下沉,包括你的呼吸、聲音、注意力,所有一切都 匯集在這個地方。從這裡開始念,然 後又回到這裡,不停地持續在這裡。 行住坐臥,甚至在睡夢中,你都不要 離開這個地方,從不離「這個」。所 以師父說:

行住坐臥,不離這個; 若離這個,當面錯過。

念佛感應與否,主要取決於念佛的 人,而不是念的名號。在心不在口, 在意不在聲。上人說:「你能念到內 外一如,一念不生,你就與佛合而為 一了。」六祖惠能大師也說:

此須心行,不在口念。 口念心不行, 如幻如化,如露如電。 口念心行,則心口相應。 本性是佛,離性無別佛。

專一則靈,分歧則弊;至誠懇切, 才會感應道交。至誠,並不是要竭力 去求些什麼,而是無所求。

究竟來說,念佛也是妄,但我們 要以妄治妄。正如《華嚴經》說的「 藉假修真」,虛雲老和尚在「參禪的 先決條件」中也有同樣的開示。老和 尚說,法無定法,因病予藥而已,無 病就不需藥。之所以有念佛、打坐、 拜佛、背誦種種法門,是「祖師們不 得已,採取以毒攻毒的辦法」,因為 「學人的根器陋劣,做不到看破、放 下」。老和尚對弟子們這樣形容:

「……咬定一個死話頭,咬得緊緊,剎那不要放鬆。如老鼠啃棺材相似,咬定一處,不通不止,目的在以一念抵制萬念,這實在是不得已的辦法。如惡毒在身,非開刀療治,難以生效。」

But the direct teaching tells us that the pure land is not some distant realm or time, but in the here and now, on the very ground right under our feet.

頓教法門指示我們的,淨 土不在遙遠的某個時空 裡,它就在當下眼前。 ... to hold a meaningless hua t'ou as firmly as possible [in their minds], without loosening their grip even for the shortest possible moment, in the same way as a rat will [stubbornly] bite the board of a coffin at a fixed spot until it has made a hole. The aim of this method is to use a single thought to oppose and arrest myriad thoughts because the masters had no alternative. It was like an operation which became imperative when poison had been introduced into the body.

Reciting the Buddha's name is poison fighting poison; fire fighting fire. Here in California when there is a terrible forest fire, the fire crews lay down an opposing line of fire that cuts off the fuel from the oncoming inferno to stop it from spreading. Reciting works much the same way: the 'fire' or single-minded reciting cuts off the fuel of the mad mind's burning.

So hold the name with no other thoughts: no past, no future, no yesterday, no tomorrow; my teacher would say "recite until you disappear...until there are not even "me" or "others." You needn't analyze or even visualize, or struggle to "make sense" of it like it was a riddle. Just lose yourself in the recitation until the reciter and the recitation become indistinguishable. The point is to contain the blaze; to cool the burning mind. "When the mad mind stops, that very stopping is Bodhi," says the *Shurangama Sutra*. And at the place of seeking nothing, right then and there is the Pure Land.

The Sixth Patriarch once asked his disciples if they would like him to bring the Pure Land right before them in an instant so they could see it with their own eyes. "Wow, yes, make it appear!" they shouted. Then he said:

All of you here, a person's own physical body is the city [of the Pure Land], and the eyes, ears, nose, tongue [and physical body] are its gates. The city is thus made up of five outer entrances, and an additional inner gate—the gate of consciousness. The mind is the ground; and one's nature is the king. The king dwells on the mind-ground, and as long as the essential nature is present, the king is present. But when the nature departs, there is no king. When the nature is present, the body and mind are well cared for, but when the nature leaves, the body [and mind] fall apart. Buddhahood is realized within the essential-

念佛就是以毒攻毒,以火滅火。在加州只要發生森林大火,消防人員會在火情周圍燃上大火,進行一場可控制的燃燒,藉此阻斷大火燃料,防止火情蔓延。同樣道理,藉由一心念佛之火,斷絕妄心燃燒的燃料。

因此,一心念佛,不想 過去,不想未來,沒有昨 天,沒有明天。師父說念佛 要念到把自己都忘了,無人 無我。念佛的時候,不是去 分析、想像,或者像解謎題 似地去理解,而是忘我,念 到能念(的心)和所念(的 佛)一如。就是借助念佛來 控制火焰,冷卻熾燃的妄 心。《楞嚴經》說:「狂心 若歇,歇即菩提。」無求之 處,即是爭土。

六祖大師有一次問他的弟子,是否願意立刻親睹西方極樂世界?弟子各各驚嘆,當然願意!請和尚慈悲令他們得見。六祖大師於是說道:

「大眾,世人自色身是 成,既耳鼻舌是門。必是門。 是門。心是地上,性在 所內。王居心地上,性在身上 性去身心中 性去身外求,自性迷。 是眾生,自性覺即是佛。」

這是心地念佛法門,專 一其心的目的是去除染污煩 惱,恢復本有佛性。內在的 佛,其實就是我們一直專念 的佛,而不是其他什麼佛。 說有一個臨終往生的淨土, 這是一種權巧方便。頓教法 nature; do not seek for it outside yourself. Confused, the self-nature is a living being; enlightened, the self-nature is a Buddha.

This is mind-ground Buddha recitation. It is a total mindfulness whose aim is the elimination of defilements/afflictions (*klesa*) and the recovery of one's own Buddha-nature. This Buddha within is actually the Buddha we are to be mindful of, not some other Buddha. Provisionally we imagine the pure land 'out there' and at the end of life. But the direct teaching tells us that the pure land is not some distant realm or time, but in the here and now, on the very ground right under our feet. Huineng says,

Ordinary deluded people, unaware of their essential nature, do not realize that the Pure Land

is within themselves. So, they long to be born in the East, and they long to be born in the West. To the enlightened person all places are the same. As the Buddha said, "No matter where you are, you are always happy and at ease. Good Sir, if the ground-of-the-mind is free of anything unwholesome, the West will not be very far away. If you invoke the Buddha's name yet still hang on to unwholesomeness, it will be hard to gain that rebirth [in the Pure Land].

Mind-ground recitation is a direct way to "return to the root and go back to the source;" or, "to leave the dust and unite with the buddha of our own nature." The 'dust' is everywhere enveloping; a state of beclouding I call the "six-six-six sickness." The six faculties (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, touch, and mind) cling to the six sense-objects (sights, sounds, smells, tastes, sensations, and mental imaginings), limply held together with the glue of the six consciousnesses (awareness turned upside-down and dreaming). In the *Platform Sutra* chapter we read for tonight's class, the Sixth Patriarch reverses the six-six-six sickness. He says,

Just purify your original mind so that the six consciousnesses go out the six [sensory] "gates," yet remain undefiled and do not intermix with the six "dusts" [sensory objects], coming and going freely, penetrating without obstruction. This is the Prajna Samadhi, freedom and liberation. This is the practice of no-thought. . . The mind is everywhere engaged but is nowhere attached.

We would completely drown in a sea of meaninglessness if we had no way to "stop" (zhǐ 止), unplug, and "contemplate" (guān 觀) - see through it. Reciting the Buddha's name lets us stretch our heads above the waves for a minute, and catch our breath. And in that stopping, in just the simple almost child-like clear, calm reciting, our true nature returns. It never leaves us for a minute, we just turn our backs and neglect it. So *niàn fo* 念佛 (mindfully reciting) is quite literally, re-calling; calling

We are not so much asking a Buddha to come rescue and reward us, or even seeking for rebirth in a Pure Land, as we are reminding ourselves to rely on our own Buddha, and return to our own inherent pure land.

我們不是祈求佛陀的拯救 和恩典,或者求生淨土, 而是不斷提醒自己:自皈 依佛,歸依自性佛,回到 本有的唯心淨土。 門指示我們的:淨土不在遙遠的某個 時空裡,它就在當下眼前。所以六祖 惠能大師說:

「凡愚不了自性,不識身中淨土, 願東願西,悟人在處一般,所以佛 言,隨所住處恒安樂。使君心地但無 不善,西方去此不遙;若懷不善之 心,念佛往生難到。」

這種心地法門的念佛,是返本還原、背塵合覺的捷徑。塵無處不包圍,這種迷惑的狀態,我稱之為「六一六一六病」。六根(眼、耳、鼻、舌、身、意)攀緣六塵(色、聲、香、味、觸、法),六識又把它們黏著在一起(顛倒夢想)。今晚讀的《六祖壇經》裡,六祖大師教我們遊轉六一六一六病,他說:

「但淨本心,使六識出六門,於六塵中,無染無雜,來去自由,通用無滯,即是般若三昧。自在解脫,名無念行。…… 用即遍一切處,亦不著一切處。」

如果不用「止」讓自己抽身,不用 「觀」看清事相,我們會完全被無意 義的生活所淹沒。念佛讓我們有機會 伸出頭,稍稍吸口氣。在「止」的那 一瞬間,如赤子般純潔平靜的念佛, 讓我們回歸自性了。其實自性從未離 開,我們只是轉身無視它的存在。所 以,正如「念佛」這兩個字的意思, 就是要我們憶念,召喚我們返本還 原,再見本地風光。我們不是祈求佛 陀的拯救和恩典,或者求生淨土,而 是不斷提醒自己:自皈依佛,歸依自 性佛,回到本有的唯心淨土。

「善知識,各自觀察,莫錯用心, 經文分明言:『自歸依佛』,不言『 歸依他佛』。自佛不歸,無所依處。 今既自悟,各須歸依自心三寶。」 us back to the root, our source. Or as the poet puts it, "to the wind and light of our original home." We are not so much asking a Buddha to come rescue and reward us, or even seeking for rebirth in a Pure Land, as we are reminding ourselves to rely on our own Buddha, and return to our own inherent pure land.

Good and Wise Friends, each of you examine yourself. Do not go about this incorrectly. The sutra [Avatamsaka] clearly says you should return and rely on your own Buddha, not with some other Buddha. If you do not return to the Buddha within, there is nothing you can rely on. Now that you have awakened yourselves, each "of you take refuge with the three treasures of your own mind."

One final point. "Progress" in mind-ground practice can often seem like the opposite: going backwards. It is like the *Daodeqing* says, "The way out into the light often looks dark/ The way that goes ahead often looks as if it went back. . . To remain whole, be twisted! To become straight, let yourself be bent. To become full, be hollow. Be tattered, that you may be renewed."

Using effort does not immediately result in euphoria or wonderful bliss-out states like seeing a Buddha, or visions of bathing in lotus ponds in some idyllic paradise. Instead what mostly comes up at first is a lot of garbage: feelings of anger, lust, jealousy, envy; or doubts, fears, fantasies; or sometimes irritation, pettiness, competitive urges, arrogance, fault-finding, cravings galore, or just plain boredom. But actually, any and all of this garbage is a response! It means the reciting is working, is successful. This too, is in fact "seeing the nature."

The Sixth Patriarch says that our fundamental nature "gives rise to the 10,000 things." Buddhas and demons, humans and animals, heavens and hells all come from the nature, from this mind. The nature is non-dual, or as the Sixth Patriarch says, "the non-dual nature is the buddha nature." This means that right within the ordinary mind we find the Buddha; right within our troubled emotions we find clear awakening.

The text says "the afflictions themselves are bodhi." My teacher compared "afflictions" and "bodhi" to water: a single substance able to appear in two forms, either as ice or flowing water. The afflictions are ice; the unimpeded flowing water, bodhi. If when reciting, our afflictions appear, this is just our frozen bodhi. Single minded recitation melts them back into bodhi. The Sixth Patriarch puts it this way:

Good and Wise Friends, ordinary people are themselves Buddhas, and affliction itself is bodhi. In one past moment of confused thought you are just an ordinary person. If the very next thought is awakened, you are a Buddha. Previous thoughts clinging to sensory states are afflictions; and succeeding thoughts unattached to states is bodhi.

There is a chan verse that goes like this:

Where there are people, There are flies—
And buddhas too. �

最後要提一點,修行上的「進步」經常看起來像退步,就像《 道德經》說的:「明道若昧,進道若 退……。曲則全,枉則直,窪則盈,敝 則新。」

當你用功的時候,不見得會立刻 出現種種欣妙的境界,比如見佛, 或者看到在極樂世界的蓮池中沐 浴。相反地,很多心裡面的垃圾, 例如憤怒、情欲、嫉妒、羨慕、疑 慮、恐懼、幻想,有時候是起煩 惱、小心眼、競爭比較、貢高我 慢、挑人毛病、貪得無厭或者只是 無聊等等,都會一一浮現出來。但 事實上,每一個垃圾都是感應!這 表示念佛的作用見效了,實際上這 正是「見性」。

六祖大師說,自性「能生萬法」。佛、魔、人、畜、天堂、地獄都來自於自性 自心。自性是不二的,就像六祖大 師說的「無二自性,即是佛性」,這表 示在凡心裡找到佛,在煩惱中見到清 淨的覺性。

經文說「煩惱即菩提」,師父把「煩惱」和「菩提」譬喻做水,一樣的水可以呈現兩種不同的形態: 凝固的冰、流動的水。煩惱就是 冰,暢流的水就是菩提。念誦時出 現的煩惱,正是我們凍結的菩提; 一心念佛,就能讓它再融化為菩 提。六祖大師這樣解釋:

「善知識,凡夫即佛,煩惱即菩提。前念迷即凡夫,後念悟即佛;前念著境即煩惱,後念離境即菩提。」

有一首禪詩這樣說:

「有人的地方,就有蒼蠅,還有 佛。」 魯