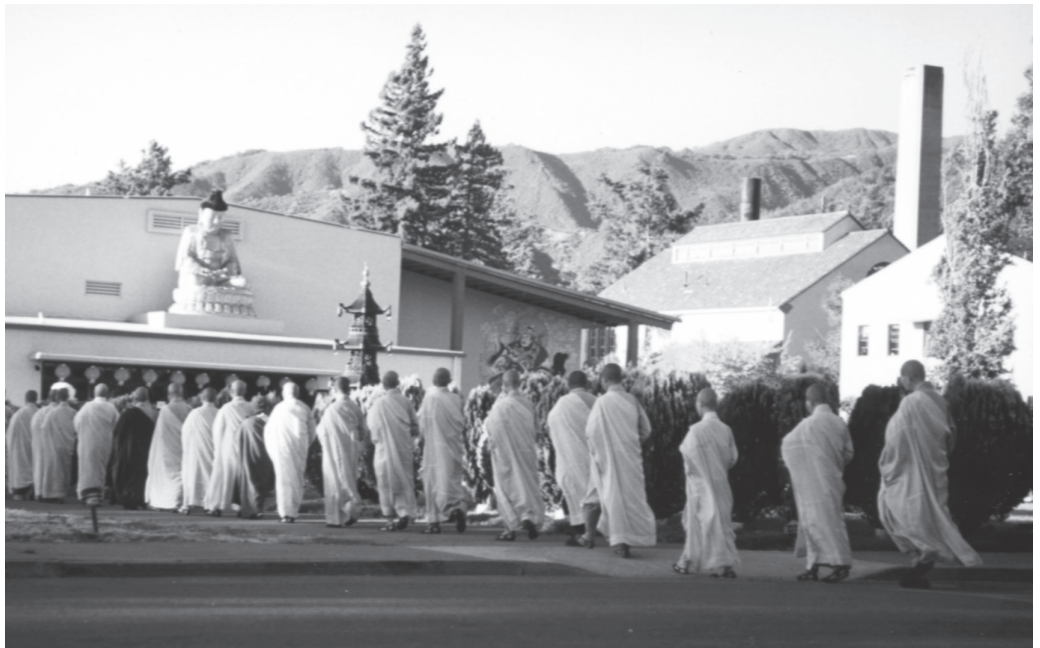


# WHY IS BOWING SO IMPORTANT?

## 為什麼拜佛這麼重要？

An Interview with Dharma Master Heng Shun  
at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas on April 24, 2016  
Chinese Translation by Yilin Jiang

恒順法師2016年4月24日於萬佛聖城的訪談  
姜亦琳 中譯



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Doing the *Great Compassion Repentance* once a week was a big deal for me personally, because it helped me get over a lot of difficulty.

於我個人而言，每週一次的〈大悲懺〉是非常重要的，因為它幫我度過了許多難關。

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**Question:** One of my questions related to repentance and also to the early days is, how did the Master teach you about repentance in general?

**Dharma Master Heng Shun:** My first experience with repentance with the Venerable Master occurred when I first came to the original Gold Mountain Monastery (15<sup>th</sup> Street in San Francisco's Mission District) in August 1974. At that time, we would do the *Great Compassion Repentance* every Saturday afternoon. And once a month we would also do the *Medicine Master Repentance Ceremony*, which is very long. It took three or three more hours, as I recall.

We only did the *Great Compassion Repentance*

問：我有一個關於懺悔的問題，還有，早期上人在一般情況下是如何教你們懺悔的？

順法師：我第一次向上人懺悔，是在1974年8月，我剛剛到最初的那個金山寺（三藩市米慎區15街）。那時候我們每週六下午都會拜〈大悲懺〉，每個月拜一次〈藥師懺〉。〈藥師懺〉的時間很長，我記得要花三個小時，或者三個多小時。

拜〈大悲懺〉我們只用中文，至於〈藥師懺〉，記得當時已經有

in Chinese. For the *Medicine Master Repentance Ceremony*, I remember we had an English translation and monks and nuns at that time just made up a tune to chant it. It was quite nice. Doing the *Great Compassion Repentance* once a week was a big deal for me personally, because it helped me get over a lot of difficulty. Having just come from Thailand where I was a novice monk in the Theravada tradition, the first year at Gold Mountain Monastery was very hard. It was difficult for me to make the adjustment to the Mahayana. I felt the *Great Compassion Repentance* helped me a lot. I felt that as each week passed by, my karmic obstacles slowly but surely became less and less. I don't think I would have made it without the help of the *Great Compassion Repentance Ceremony*.

Then sometime in the spring of 1976 when we were novice monks and had started doing the training before becoming Bhikshus (and Bhikshunis), we were doing a lot of physical labor because we were doing a major remodeling project on the original Gold Mountain Monastery, which included making it earthquake proof. So we would do 6-7 hours of labor every day in addition to all the ceremonies. The Master told us to take off an hour and a half in the morning—I believe it was from 7:30 to 9:00—and an hour and a half in the evening, 4:30 to 6:00 (I believe.) In those days we did the evening ceremony at 7:00, not at 6:30.

We would just do an hour and a half each time of alternate bowing while chanting “Homage to Shakyamuni Buddha” in Chinese. That was our main training practice for becoming monastics, which was done in addition to our normal daily ceremonies and other work for the temple. We had a similar schedule to what we have now of doing the main Morning Recitation Ceremony at 4:00. Afterwards we had two silent one-hour sits with a 20-minute walk in between. In the evening we had a one-hour meditation sit before the main Evening Ceremony, which was held at 7:00 to 8:00. The Master would lecture the *Avatamsaka Sutra* from 8:00 to 9:00 and then we would do a final Evening Ceremony from 9:00 to 9:30.

**Question:** So you said in the early days you bowed for an hour and a half in the morning and

了英文翻譯，比丘和比丘尼們就自己作曲唱誦，曲調很好聽。於我個人而言，每週一次的〈大悲懺〉是非常重要的，因為它幫我度過了很多難關。我那時剛從泰國過來，因為之前受的是南傳佛教的沙彌訓練，因此在金山寺的頭一年，對我來說異常艱難。轉換到大乘佛法，對我而言並不容易，我覺得〈大悲懺〉幫了我很大的忙。隨著每週的〈大悲懺〉，我的業障的確慢慢在減輕。如果不是〈大悲懺〉，我想我沒有辦法做到。

到了1976年春天，我們沙彌（沙彌尼）開始受訓準備成為比丘（比丘尼），那時舊的金山寺有一項大型整建工程，其中包含防震工程，我們要做很多的工。每天除了所有的佛殿功課外，還要做工六至七個小時。上人讓我們早上休息一個半小時，記得是從七點半到九點；傍晚從四點半到六點休息一個半小時。那些日子，我們晚課從七點開始，而不是六點半。

休息的這一個半小時，我們就是拜願，用中文唱「南無釋迦牟尼佛」。這就是我們戒期的主要訓練，是在所有日常功課和工作之餘，額外加上的部分。四點的早課和我們現在很相似，之後就是打坐兩支香，各一小時；中間有20分鐘的行香時間。晚上七點到八點的晚課之前，我們有一小時的靜坐，然後上人在八點到九點之間講《華嚴經》。九點到九點半，就是晚上的最後一堂功課。

問：您說早期您早上拜一個半小時，晚上也是一樣，基本上就是您的戒期訓練。毫無疑問的，還有其他事佔了很大的比

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The Venerable Master told us that we should repent of our karmic offenses from the past, including our past lives. He emphasized that we should be very sincere in our bowing. He said that we should just imagine whatever things we did wrong that we could remember in the current life and also repent of the things we did in past lives even though we may not remember them.

上人要我們懺悔前生乃至過去生的業障，他強調我們拜佛時必須非常誠心。並說我們要去觀想這一生所做錯的事情，以及懺悔往昔所做的，儘管我們已經不記得了。

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then did the same in the evening. And that was basically your training for being a monastic. Of course there are other things that were a big part of it, no question. There's a lot of other stuff?

**Dharma Master Heng Shun:** For those who were going to be receiving the Bhikshu precepts and Bhikshuni precepts, that was what we did in addition to our normal daily schedule.

**Question:** Fundamentally, why do you think bowing would be that important?

**Dharma Master Heng Shun:** The Venerable Master told us that we should repent of our karmic offenses from the past, including our past lives. He emphasized that we should be very sincere in our bowing. He said that we should just imagine whatever things we did wrong that we could remember in the current life and also repent of the things we did in past lives even though we may not remember them. Much later, in the early 90's, the Venerable Master told me personally to recite Samantabhadra Bodhisattva's Repentance Verse every day.

**Question:** Did you ask the Master why?

**Dharma Master Heng Shun:** No. I assumed it was from bad karma in my current life as well as past lives. Again, I remember that he would always emphasize how important it was to be very true and sincere in repenting.

**Question:** What does it mean to be sincere?

**Dharma Master Heng Shun:** In Chinese there's an idiom for when you do something wrong and you feel that you really want to change and never do it again. You're extremely sincere. It's "痛改前非" which has the idea of changing your past offenses thoroughly and with deep sorrow. The character 痛 has the meaning of doing it thoroughly but it also has connotation of doing it with sorrow or pain. It implies a profound earnestness and feeling of remorse. With this feeling you are moved to want to change. You repent from the deepest part of your being. You genuinely want to change. And you have a deep feeling of remorse that will motivate you to change. It's not negative at all. When I studied Abhidharma in Thailand, I learned the two most important moral kushala citta (wholesome states of mind) is feeling of remorse and repentance. The idea is that you reflect on something you did wrong, you realize that it was wrong, and then you want to change.

**Question:** Penance is also a sacrament in the Christian tradition, so it's pretty universal.

**Dharma Master Heng Shun:** Yes, my grandparents on my father's side are from Poland and my mom's parents are from Greece. My father was a very

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All of us have created a lot of good and bad karma in our many past lives, let alone this life. However, you could still look upon bowing as a spiritual practice in which you are developing your concentration or samadhi. You are focusing your mind on this practice while at the same time engaging in the physical movements involved in bowing.

我們每個人過去生中都造過善業，也造過惡業，更不用說這一生。然而，你仍然可以將拜佛當成一種心靈的修行，培養自己的專注或是定力。拜佛的時候，一方面身體在運動，另一方面內心專注於拜佛。

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例，其他的是什麼？

**順法師：**對要受比丘、比丘尼戒的人來說，就是除了日常的功課與工作，額外加上的部分。

**問：**根本上來講，您為什麼覺得拜佛那麼重要呢？

**順法師：**上人要我們懺悔前生乃至過去生的業障，他強調我們拜佛時必須非常誠心。並說我們要去觀想這一生所做錯的事情，以及懺悔往昔所做的，儘管我們已經不記得了。之後在90年代初期，上人教我個人每天讀誦〈普賢菩薩懺悔偈〉。

**問：**您有沒有問上人為什麼？

**順法師：**沒有，想來是因為今生和往昔所造的惡業。而且我記得上人總是強調，懺悔時的誠心是很重要的。

**問：**誠心意味著什麼？

**順法師：**中文有一句話形容一個人做錯了事，真心想要悔改，永遠都不再犯，這句話叫「痛改前非」；也就是內心非常悲傷，希望徹底改掉以前的過錯。「痛」這個字，有徹底去做的意思，同時也有抱著悲痛的心情去做的含意，也表示是一種很深的慚愧心。因為這個慚

愧心，所以我們想要改過自新，打從心底的想要改變，真的想要改變。這完全不是負面的思想。當我在泰國學習阿毗達摩（論藏）時，我學到兩個最重要的善心所——慚和愧。就是反省自己的錯誤，承認這個錯誤，然後想去改掉它。

**問：**贖罪，在基督傳統裡也是一種神聖的事，所以這很普遍。

**順法師：**是的，我祖父母是從波蘭來，我外祖父母是從希臘來。我父親是非常虔誠的羅馬天主教徒，我也理解在基督教傳統裡，贖罪有多重要。

**問：**懺悔有沒有什麼儀式？

**順法師：**我之前提到戒期的拜懺（現在萬佛城每天早課後，清晨五點也有



devout Roman Catholic so I am aware of the importance of penance in the Christian tradition.

**Question:** Are there any rituals that are performed while doing the repentance ceremonies?

**Dharma Master Heng Shun:** The repentance ceremony that I mentioned we did for our monastic training (which is also currently done at the City of 10,000 Buddhas every morning at 5:00 after the main Morning Recitation Ceremony) is chanted out loud. In that case we're reciting the Buddha's name out loud, "Homage to our fundamental teacher Shakyamuni Buddha," and then we bow. While one side is down bowing the other side is chanting out loud. Then they bow down and our side rises up and does the chanting while they are bowing. "Homage to our fundamental teacher Shakyamuni Buddha" is chanted in Chinese by the side that is up. So it is alternating between bowing and chanting while standing. The *Great Compassion Repentance* ceremony on the other hand, has a lot of other things. You're worshipping the Bodhisattvas and you're reciting together as a group, which includes chanting various types of bad karma that you have created in the past that you are now repenting of.

My first experience ever with repentance was actually with the abbot of my monastery in Thailand in 1974 before I came back to America to study with the Venerable Master. When I had first read volume one of the Master's biography, I was a novice monk in Thailand. When I left to study with the Master in the United States, I could not just leave my teacher in Thailand as a novice, because I had not completed all the training to become a fully ordained Bhikshu. So I

這個功課)，就是大聲地唱誦。我們大聲唱誦「南無本師釋迦牟尼佛」，然後拜下去。當佛殿一邊拜下去時，另一邊就開始大聲唱誦；另一邊拜下去時，我們這邊就站起來。站起來的那邊，要用中文把「南無本師釋迦牟尼佛」唱出聲來。所以，這種儀式就是拜佛和站著唱誦兩者不斷輪流著。另外一種，像〈大悲懺〉，就包含很多的法門儀式。你不只禮拜菩薩，也和大眾一起唱誦——包括唱出自己過去所造種種惡業，如今皆悉懺悔。

我生平的第一次懺悔，是1974年和我泰國寺廟的方丈和尚，那時我還沒到美國跟著上人學習。第一次讀到上人事蹟第一冊的時候，我在泰國還是個沙彌。當要離開那裡來美國跟隨上人，我不能以沙彌的身份這樣離開泰國的師父，因為我還沒有完成受訓成為比丘。我只能還俗，放棄沙彌所受的戒。還俗的儀式上，我同時受了終生的八關齋戒。儀式裡我歸還所穿的僧袍，曼谷寶伏寺的方丈和尚則用巴利文說：「如果我做錯了任何事，請原諒我。」我也對他如是說。這就是一種懺悔。



had to disrobe and give up the monastic vows of a novice. During the same ritual of disrobing, I took the Eight Precepts permanently. In this ritual that we did in which I gave back my robes, the abbot of the monastery (Wat Bovornives) said, “If I had done anything wrong, please forgive me” in Pali. I said the same thing, so there was this aspect of repentance.

Even though he was such a highly regarded monk (he was one of the five Somdets of Thailand at the time, and later became the Sangharaja—Supreme Patriarch of all the monks in Thailand—for a period of over 35 years). He had already been a monk for 40 or more years (and he was the teacher of the king of Thailand before he took the throne) and I was young and had only been a novice for a couple of months. Yet, he said those words of repentance to me. I still remember that. It was so surprising (and humbling) to me. That repentance was an important part of that ritual.

**Question:** What about if people come—let’s say they attend this ritual and they don’t feel they have anything to be sorry for?

**Dharma Master Heng Shun:** If a person doesn’t have faith or believe that they have created karmic offenses in the past or in past lives, then they could just bow as a spiritual practice. I remember sometime after Gold Mountain Monastery had moved to Chinatown from the Mission District in San Francisco (the move occurred in the summer of 1986 and the completion of the remodeling and official opening occurred on Chinese New Year in 1987). I was the Master’s attendant. My mom was going to be visiting. The Master told me that when my mom came I should encourage her to bow to the Buddha in the main hall. Bowing in this circumstance is not repentance. He gave me specific instructions on how I could encourage her to bow.

He actually told me to mention three things or benefits of bowing. I only remember the first two now. He said, “First, tell her that it’s good exercise. Second, tell her that it develops one’s humility.” So in that case, one is not bowing in repentance, but more as a spiritual practice that brings about these kinds of mundane benefits. We could call that using “skill-in-means” to encourage people to bow.

A person may not necessarily believe that they did unwholesome things in past lives, yet this is an important part of the Buddha’s teachings. All of us have created a lot of good and bad karma in our many past lives, let alone this life. However, you could still look upon bowing as a spiritual practice in which you are developing your concentration or samadhi. You are focusing your mind on this practice while at the same time engaging in the physical movements involved in bowing.

I have one student who really enjoys bowing and finds it quite beneficial. He’s able to concentrate on bowing, while doing the physical movements involved in this practice. Since he loves to engage in physical exercise, he gets a lot out of bowing. It’s not necessarily the same as focusing on a specific meditation topic while sitting in meditation, but the bowing does have a meditative, calming effect. Thus the bowing is a valuable meditative practice.

**Question:** The reason I ask is because I think repentance is quite

儘管他是這樣的一位高僧（當時泰國的五位尊宿之一，之後成為泰國所有僧眾的僧王，歷時35年多），僧臘超過40年（泰王繼位之前，就是由他所教），而且當時的我還很年輕，只做了幾個月的沙彌，但是他對我所說的那些懺悔的話語，至今依然在心。對我而言，那是多麼驚訝（還有謙卑）。懺悔，在那個儀式中是很重要的一部分。

**問：**如果有人來參加法會，但是他們不覺得有什麼可懺悔，那怎麼辦？

**順法師：**如果有人信念還不具足，不覺得自己過去或過去生造了惡業，那他們可以將拜佛當成一種精神上的修行。金山寺從三藩市米慎區搬到中國城後，（1986年夏天搬過去的，1987年的農曆新年裝修完工，正式對外開放），有一段時間我擔任師父的侍者。有一次母親要來拜訪，師父告訴我母親來的時候，要鼓勵她去大殿拜佛，那並不是懺悔。上人具體詳細地教我，該怎樣鼓勵她拜。

事實上，師父告訴我可以跟她說拜佛有三種好處，但我現在只記得頭兩個。師父說：「第一，告訴她這是個很好的運動；第二，告訴她這可以讓人學習謙卑。」因此在那種狀況下，不是因為懺悔而拜佛，更多成是當成一種心靈上的修行，以此獲得這些現實生活上的利益。這可以說鼓勵人們拜佛的一種「善巧方便」。

一個人也許不一定要去相信自己過去生曾經造過惡業，但這卻是佛陀教義中很重要的一環。我們每個人過去生中都造過善業，也造過惡業，更不用說這一生。然而，你仍然可以將拜佛當成一種心靈的修行，培養自己的專注或是定力。拜佛的時候，一方面身體在運動，另一方面內心專注於拜佛。

我有一個學生很喜歡拜佛，因為他發現這對他很有幫助。他的身體在拜佛，他的心就專注在拜佛上。他是個喜歡運動的孩子，所以拜佛這個法門令他受益甚多。拜佛雖然不像打坐時專注於話頭上，但確實能產生靜心觀照的效果，因此可以說是一種很有價值的禪修。

**問：**我為什麼會這樣問，是因為我覺得

difficult. The more arrogant you are, the harder it is to feel sincere. It takes quite a while to burn through that arrogance or defensiveness saying, “That wasn’t really my fault” or “I didn’t really do anything” or “That was so and so who did that.” And the level of courage and honesty that it actually takes to feel sorry and to actually get this level of sincerity that you mention, sometimes I think it comes over a long period of time.

**Dharma Master Heng Shun:** I agree. As I mentioned before, when I first came to Gold Mountain in 1974, doing the *Great Compassion Repentance* once a week, took a long time to adjust to. At that time I did not have any of the kind of understanding of this practice that I have now. So now, after 40 plus years, it is sometimes difficult for me to realize how difficult it may be for new people to accept, because this is something that I have taken for granted now for several decades.

**Question:** You mentioned the physical aspect of bowing. You said that it is really a thing you do with your body. What connection do you think there may be with the fact that this whole ritual is designed to bring about some sort of transformation through repentance? What role does the body have to play in it?

**Dharma Master Heng Shun:** When I think about bowing or worshipping the Buddha, I always think of the Venerable Master’s commentary on the last chapter of the *Avatamsaka Sutra, The Practices and Vows of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva* (Chapter 40). These are lectures that he gave back in 1969 when he had just begun to teach Americans. Therefore, his audience was people who were just beginning to study Buddhism. In those lectures he mentioned seven types of bowing to the Buddha. He said that even Chinese in the beginning didn’t want to bow when Buddhism first came to China. And now Americans don’t want to bow either. It is just like what you mentioned before about

懺悔其實不容易。一個人越貢高，就越難做到誠心。要改掉像「那不是我的錯」、「我真的什麼也沒做」，或者「那件事是某某人做的」這類的貢高我慢、自我辯護，是需要一段時間的。而要做到您所說的那種悔痛和誠心，我想要相當長的一段時間才能具備足夠的勇氣和誠實。

**順法師：**是的，我同意。就像前面說的，當我1974年第一次到金山寺，我花很長的時間來調整自己，習慣一週一次的〈大悲懺〉。那時我對這個修行方式，完全沒有像現在的這種理解度。40多年後的今天，有時我會發現自己很難體會對一個新人而言，要接受這種方式有多困難，因為幾十年來，我已經將之視為理所當然了。

**問：**您提到拜佛在身體方面的意義，因為這個法門確實是須要透過我們的身體去完成。那您覺得這個跟藉由懺悔產生的一些轉變，兩者有什麼關聯嗎？身體扮演什麼角色？

**順法師：**每當想起禮敬諸佛，我就會想起上人在《華嚴經》最後一品〈普賢菩薩行願品〉（第四十品）的開示。那時是1969年上人剛開始教化美國人，因此聽眾都是初學佛法的。開示中師父提到了七種禮佛的方式，他說佛法剛傳到中國時，中國人也不願意拜佛，就像現在美國人不願意拜佛一樣。原因就是您之前提到的，貢高我慢，不願意低頭。因此我認為，禮佛和懺悔更重要的意義是折服我們的驕慢心，學習謙卑。

至於身禮拜如何影響心禮拜，我並不清楚。我想，把頭叩在地上這種如此謙遜的做法，其實是很重要。一個人能將自己身體最高的部分，懷著對佛陀的敬仰，彎下身來放在地上，這在心理方面已經發揮極大的作用。

我記得1989年，有出家人、在家人一共20至25位，跟隨上人到臺灣弘法幾個星期。當時我是上人的侍者，行程將近尾聲之際，我問上人我是否可以從臺

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我想，把頭叩在地上這種如此謙遜的做法，其實是很重要。一個人能將自己身體最高的部分，懷著對佛陀的敬仰，彎下身來放在地上，這在心理方面已經發揮極大的作用。

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how people have this kind of conceit and don't want to humble themselves in this way. So I think that this development of humility is a more important aspect of bowing and repentance.

As far as how the physical aspects of bowing affect the psychology of bowing, I'm not sure. I think that by putting your head down to the ground in such a humble way is really important. You're putting the highest part of your body, your head, all the way down to the ground, in reverence and veneration to the Buddha. This has a big impact on you psychologically.

I remember in 1989 about 20 to 25 monks, nuns, and laypeople had accompanied the Venerable Master on a lecture tour in Taiwan for several weeks. Near the end of the visit in which I served as the Venerable Master's attendant, I asked him if I could go to India to visit the Buddhist holy sites, from Taiwan. The Master consented and told me to have two other monks go with me.

Both of them loved to study and learn various kinds of Buddhist rituals. Several months prior to our journey to Taiwan, we had held a Bhikshu-Bhikshuni Ordination at the City of 10,000 Buddhas. One of the "certifying" monks for ordination was a monk who had run a youth hostel in Bodhgaya (where the Buddha became enlightened) for nearly 30 years. He had told us that if we ever wanted to visit the holy sites to contact him and he would arrange for everything during our visit. Thus I had contacted him from Taiwan and just as he promised, he took care of us from the time we arrived at the airport in Calcutta until the time we left about ten days later. Now, I remember that we were walking down a dirt road in Bodhgaya.

At that time in 1989, Bodhgaya was like a village. It was pretty underdeveloped. Our monk host was walking down the road with us, and then all of a sudden one of his students comes and grabs his ankles with both of his hands and touches his head to his feet on the ground. Then it suddenly hit me. "Oh, this is what our bowing is all about." It's an ancient practice from the time of the Buddha (or even earlier), where you take the highest part of your body, your head, and put it down on the lowest part, the feet, of the teacher. It's a way of showing veneration and respect. And this does not need to be done to a great spiritual master; rather, one can show this kind of veneration to a spiritual person. I realize that to do that takes a lot of humility. So I think that this feeling of humility is the key to bowing. ❀



灣去印度參觀佛教聖地。上人同意了，並且讓兩位比丘陪我一起去。

這兩位比丘都很喜歡學習不同的佛教儀軌。在去臺灣之前的幾個月，我們在萬佛城傳授比丘、比丘尼戒。其中一位傳戒的證明師，在菩提伽耶（佛陀證悟的地方）開一家青年會館將近30年。他告訴我們，如果有一天我們想去參觀聖地，可以和他聯繫，他會替我們安排行程中的所有事情。我在臺灣聯絡上他，就像他承諾的那樣，從抵達加爾各答機場，直到離開印度，前後總共十天，全程都是他在照顧我們。現在我都還記得，當時走在菩提伽耶的泥土路上。

1989年的菩提伽耶，就像一個小村莊，尚未開發。那位法師和我們一起走在泥濘的路上，忽然他的一個弟子走過來，跪在地上，雙手握住他的腳踝，用頭觸碰他的雙腳。這個情景瞬間敲醒了我：「喔，這就是禮拜。」這是佛陀時代（或者更早）一種古老的方式，將身體至高的部分——你的頭，放到身體的最低點——師父的腳上。這是一種表達恭敬的方式，這並不限定只是對一位偉大的精神導師，這可以是對任何一個修行人表達我們內心的恭敬。我也因此明白，這確實需要很大的謙卑心才做得到。我想就是這種謙卑的態度，才是拜佛的關鍵所在。 ❀