

Walk the Way at Your Own Pace: Pointers on Cultivation 自行其道—修行指標

Excerpts from an interview with Bhikshu Heng Lai
conducted at Buddha Root Farm, 2016
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Question: During a retreat, like a Ch’an session, there are ups and downs, and sometimes in a down, things are really hard. It happens in normal life, too. My experience is that sometimes it’s valuable just to stick with the practice and just to push through. I’m wondering how to know when it’s wise to do that, to say, like the Buddha said, “I’m just going to sit here until I wake up,” versus saying, “Okay, I need to pull back a little bit and get some decent rest.”

DM Lai: It’s something that really only you know. You just said it, “Well, I’m gonna, pull back a little bit and get some decent rest.” Okay, go ahead, who’s going to stop you? You know, do what you want. Now, there are certain people who go around “browbeating”



問題：參加法會例如打禪七的時候，個人身心狀況經常起起伏伏。遇到低落的時候，一切都變得很難熬，日常生活中也會發生這種情況。我的經驗是有時堅持下去，咬緊牙關熬過去就很值得。我想知道什麼情況堅持才是明智的選擇，就像佛陀在菩提樹下「不開悟絕不起坐」，什麼情況該對自己說：「好吧，現在需要放鬆一點，好好休息一下。」

來法師：答案只有你自己知道。你剛才不是說了：「現在要放鬆一點，好好去休息一下。」好啊，就去做去。誰能攔著你呢？做你想做的。有些人喜歡「咄咄逼人」，例如早期有一位出家人，上人說我們前世曾經是兄弟，他總是逼我出家，不停地問我：「你什麼時候出家？你什麼時候出家？你什麼時候出家？」我總是回答：「呃……我不知道……。」後來當我決定要出家，心想師父一定會很高興。但

you. Like one of the early monks for instance—Shr Fu said we were brothers in past lives—he would always browbeat me to leave home. He would keep asking, “When are you going to leave home, when are you going to leave home, when are you going to leave home?” I would say, “Eh...I don’t know...” Finally, when I got around to asking the Master for permission to leave home, I thought, “Shr Fu is going to be so happy.” I asked Shr Fu to for permission to leave home and the first thing he says is, “What do you want to leave home for?” [Laughs] “Who told you to come up here and ask to leave home?” All this time I thought the Master would want me to leave home... “Well, why should I want you to leave home? Why do I care if you leave home or not? It’s up to you. It’s up to you to leave home!”

Then he told me about Venerable Master Hsu Yun. He said,

“You know this Master Hsu Yun that you like?”

“Yes, Shr Fu.”

“You know, he didn’t become enlightened until he was fifty-six years old.”

“Yes Shr Fu.”

“Before that, there was a time in a monastery, where they had a Ch’an, and he sat that Ch’an in full lotus and did not move from his spot for two weeks. He did that for one reason: so that people would gain respect for the Buddhadharma, so that they would see that there were real cultivators. He wanted to give face to the Buddhadharma. He was making people respect it. But he was suffering that whole two weeks. He was not able to go into samadhi because he hadn’t awakened yet. He suffered day after day, but he did that for others.”

“You want to have a Bodhisattva mind? That’s a Bodhisattva mind. He didn’t even have the joy of entering samadhi; he didn’t have the joy of enlightenment. He just had his worldly mind and he put up with it, and he did it with the heart of a Bodhisattva. That’s a Bodhisattva.”

Then he goes, “Can you do that?” [Laughs]

I said, “Well, I don’t know Shr Fu...I’ll try...”

“You’ll try...Oh, you’ll try...Oh...”

But he would just tell us, “Everybody, try your best. Just try your best.” That’s what he always told us. “Try your best.”

Question: I wonder if you have anything to say about keeping your determination, your vigor? Do you have any advice on that topic, especially for people who are not living in monasteries but also don’t feel part of the outside world exactly?

DM Lai: We’re all in a kind of monastery. The problem with being in the regular world, outside monastery, is that it’s full of distractions. It’s chock-full of distractions—it’s nothing but distraction, that’s all it is. It’s constant distraction and that’s the difficult part of being out there. That’s the real essence of it. You’ve got just about everything imaginable to distract you, from your cellphone on up. Everybody now is in the Cloud, right? They’re all on social media and this and that. That’s their

是當我求師父讓我出家時，師父的第一句話竟然是：「出家幹什麼？」（笑聲）「誰叫你來出家？」很長一段時間我都以為上人希望我出家。「為什麼我要讓你出家？你出家不出家，跟我有什麼關係？這是你自己的事，你自己決定要不要出家！」

然後他告訴我虛雲老和尚的故事，他問我：「你知道你喜歡的那位虛雲老和尚嗎？」「是的，師父。」「你知道嗎，他一直到56歲才開悟。」「是的，師父。」「在那之前，有一次他在一個寺廟打禪七，雙跏趺坐了兩個禮拜都沒動。他這麼做只為了一個原因——讓人們對佛法起恭敬心，讓他們看到世界上還有真正的修行人。他想令佛法增輝，令世人尊重佛法。其實那兩個禮拜他都在受苦，因為他還沒有開悟，所以無法入定。他每天都在受苦，但是為了別人，他還是堅持這麼做。」

「你想學菩薩發心嗎？這就是菩薩發心。他甚至沒有入定的禪悅，沒有開悟的快樂，只是個凡夫忍受一切的辛苦。但是他發菩薩心這麼做，這就是菩薩。」然後師父問我：「你做得嗎？」（笑聲）我說：「呃……師父，我不知道……我會努力……。」「你會努力……。喔，你會努力……。」

但是他會告訴我們：「盡你最大的努力，盡你最大的努力就好。」他常常這麼對我們說：「盡你最大的努力。」

問題：如何保持修行的決心和精進力？特別對於那些不住在道場，但又覺得和外面世界格格不入的人。

來法師：從某種意義來說，我們都在道場裏。對於不住在道場、身處塵世的人來說，真正的問題是外面世界的干擾太多了。外面的世界別無他物，全是干擾，令人窒息的干擾。這種持續的干擾是在外面修行的困難處，這是問題的核心所在。一切你能想像到的，都能干擾你，最簡單從你的手機開始。現在每個人都在「雲端」，對吧？一群人在社交媒體裡搞東搞西，這就是他們生活的全部。甚至走路也不看路，全部埋頭看手機，不是撞到東西，就是被車撞啊什麼的。

這確實是個問題，因為這些干擾讓人沒辦法專心修行。在干擾中掙扎的日子，是沒辦法修



whole life. People even walk down the streets now without looking where they're going; they just have their phone in their face. They're bumping into things and getting run over by cars and all kinds of stuff.

That is a real problem, because that distraction is keeping you from focusing on cultivation. You can't cultivate that way; you can't build up your mindfulness if you're going to be in the throes of all kinds of distractions. That's the key issue.

So, you should always try to find a quiet place for yourself. Even if you can't do it—if you have to do your studies or your job or whatever—still try your best. Always try to find a quiet space either in your home, your apartment, or wherever you live where you have a place to sit and to decompress. That's the reason for monasteries, really, even back in the old days. Now it's even ten times, a thousand times more distractful to live out in the regular community. But even back in, say, the Tang dynasty, it would already be very distracting to go into any major city. There is all this stuff going on, making it hard to keep reciting Amitabha or something and to be focused. You have to deal with things. So you just try to keep yourself in the present.

Now a sage will be able to go into those kinds of environments and have enough samadhi power not be turned by them. But we don't have that samadhi power. So, how do we get it? You just keep working on it when you can. Find a spot, find a time, set it aside and say, "This is my quiet time. This is my special time. This is my cultivation time." And also, during the day when you're working, start building on being mindful of whatever you're working on. Don't try to not work on something when you need to work on something. If you're in school you have to study what you need to study. Just try to bring yourself into the present as much as possible, keep working on

行，沒辦法提起正念的，這才是關鍵的問題。

所以你應該經常給自己找一個安靜的地方，即使做不到——例如必須上學或者上班什麼的——還是要盡最大的努力做到這一點。常常要在自己的住家、公寓或者住的地方，找個安靜的地方打坐放鬆。這也是為什麼要蓋道場的原因，即使古代也是這樣。古代的社會，例如唐朝，任何大城市同樣充斥著各種干擾；比起當時，現代生活的干擾更是數十倍、數千倍。各式誘人擾人的事物不斷翻新，使得無論念佛、念咒或是保持專注都變得很难。這是我們必須解決的，辦法就是努力讓自己活在當下。

開悟證果的聖人無論身處任何環境，都有足夠的定力不被環境所轉，但是我們沒有那種定力，該怎麼辦呢？就是把握機會培養定力。找一個角落，找一個時間，對自己說：「現在是我安靜的時間，是我專屬的時間，是我修行的時間。」回到工作崗位，同樣也要練習專注於正在做的事情上。做一項工作時，不要想著如何可以不用做；如果你是學校的學生，那就努力學習你該學的。盡可能讓自己活在當下，持續在這上面用功夫——這也是修行。應用書上所學，把心安住當下，不要盡想著明天或者昨天，持續這樣練習就對了。慢慢地，你會看到效果，同時做事的效率也會提高，因為你不是整天做白日夢，而是保持清醒，專注於當下。

問題：對於那些希望更投入修行的人，他們想知道如何深入以及深入的速度？就像游泳，他們已經涉水，但是不知道哪裡可以游泳，哪裡不行。您可以提供一些方向嗎？

來法師：快或慢都是自己決定的。關於是否準備好這個問題，皈依上人以前，我已經在金山寺住了很久很久，我可能是拖最長時間才皈依的弟子。（笑聲）我就是這樣！每個人都有他自己的步調。最重要的就是不要讓別人給你造成壓力，或是被

that—that's a form of cultivation, too. Use every trick in the book to bring yourself into the present and try to stay away from thinking about tomorrow and yesterday. Just keep working at it. It'll start giving you results. Also, you become really effective at what you're doing because you're here, you're focused on it. You're not daydreaming—you're there, you're dealing with the present.

Question: Could you give some directions for people who are interested in going deeper in their practice but are wondering how deep to go and how fast to go? There are quite a few people who have their toes in the water but are not sure where it is safe to swim and where it isn't.

DM Lai: People set their own pace. It's about pacing yourself. Say, "Okay, am I ready for this?" I lived at Gold Mountain for a long time before I finally took refuge. I think I was the only person to be around Shr Fu that long and not take refuge. [Laughs] That's how slow I am! Everybody has their own pace. The big thing to be aware of is don't let others pressure or don't feel pressured by other outside influences concerning this matter. This is between you yourself, and the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. This has nothing to do with anybody else. It's none of their business. When you're good and ready, you'll be good and ready. When you're not good and ready or you're not sure whether you're good and ready, then you could just try things out a bit.

For example, you could do a retreat if you want to dig yourself in a little deeper. You could do the three-week repentance ceremony—they're very effective. Or do a Ch'an in the winter. Say, "This year I'm going to do this and that. Let's see if I can do that, and whether I want to go further or not." Even if you don't become awakened—and most people don't have a great enlightenment experience in those retreats—you're still getting all kinds of benefit, especially from a long Ch'an or a big recitation or bowing session. You'll start feeling tingly all over and very light and at ease. If you really work hard, you'll feel almost light on your toes when you walk. Usually that happens with me about halfway to three quarters of the way into the session. Things are starting to tingle, things are starting to happen. You're starting to rattle your true nature awake.

It's always up to you, just remember it's always up to you to do that kind of stuff and you shouldn't be influenced by somebody telling you you should do it. They don't know anything. Why are they telling you to do something? Unless it's a true knowing advisor, like if the Master himself told you

旁的事物影響而感到壓迫。修行是你和佛菩薩之間的事情，跟任何其他人都沒有關係，沒他們的事。當你準備好了，你就準備好了；當你還沒準備好或者不確定是否準備好，你就嘗試一下不同的事情。

譬如當你想更加探索自我，你可以來打七，或者三個禮拜的萬佛懺，效果會非常顯著，冬季禪七也可以。你可以參加這一個法會，還有那一個法會，看看自己做不做得得到，還有夠不夠條件更進一步。即使法會結束後也沒有開悟——當然大部分的人不會有什麼大徹大悟的經驗——但是你仍會得到不同的法益，尤其是經過一個長的禪七、佛七或者拜懺法會。你會漸漸感到法喜和輕安，如果你夠誠心努力，你會感覺到連走路都腳步輕盈。對我來說，這種情形一般會出現在法會已過半或者四分之三的時候，事情漸漸開始動了起來，開始有了變化，也開始撥醒沉睡的自性。

這完全取決於你自己。記住：這種事情，完全取決於你自己，你不應該因為別人告訴你該做什麼而受影響。他們根本不清楚，他們為什



then you'd better pay attention. But somebody else, what do they know? They don't know anything! If I told you, "Oh, you should do this and that practice," or "you should just throw that out of your backpack." You should just think, "What does he know? He doesn't know anything."

Everybody is different, everybody has a different cultivation and a different trigger, too. There's going to be something that'll trigger you awake someday and it's going to be totally different from everybody else. Like Master Hsu Yun, he had that cup of tea poured on him; that woke him up, that was his trigger, that was the straw that broke the camel's back. That was it. Everybody's different. Everybody will have another event or something very intimate that has to do with them and their causes and conditions that'll make them wake up to their situation.

Buddhism and Science—A Few Thoughts

Science today is like the priest of yesterday. In this modern day era, everybody respects scientists, but people don't respect priests and monks. We, they think, are still in the dark ages, you know? We're just a bunch of superstitious idiots. Now everybody just looks at scientists as the great gods. They bow and light incense to the altar of science.

Buddhism is both. It's old and new together. It's not one bit afraid of science. Some other religions are. Buddhism embraces it: "Come on science, keep going, you're too slow!" [Laughter] For example, science hasn't discovered yet that there are different levels of consciousness. Everything is still the sixth consciousness according to science. They're trying to solve the entire question of the universe and how it came into being through the sixth consciousness. It ain't going to happen, folks. You gotta wake up your deeper consciousness; you've gotta get your seventh and your eighth going before you're going to understand it. You see the interconnections of it.

Shr Fu used to tell us, he used to laugh—this was in late '69, the year that we landed on the moon—he used to laugh about people landing on the moon. He said, "You want to go to the moon? Sit in samadhi you'll be there in the space of a thought. I already walked around where they landed, there's nothing interesting there." Then we say, "Shr Fu, what about Mars?" He says, "I've been there too, that's also kind of boring." He goes, "If you can open up your mind to your true self you'll be able to go anywhere in this universe in a space of a thought. You don't need a rocket ship." ❀

麼要告訴你該做甚麼呢？除非是一位真正的善知識，比如說如果師父親自告訴你，那你最好應該注意。但是其他人，他們知道什麼？他們什麼都不知道！如果我告訴你：「噢，你應該修這個、修那個。」你應該直接把我的話當耳邊風。你應該想，他知道什麼？他什麼都不知道。

每個人都不一樣，每個人都有不同的修行方法和機緣。或許對你而言，有些事可以激發你開悟，但是對他人而言，因緣全然不同。就像虛雲老和尚，他是因為杯子的熱茶潑到手上而開悟的，這是他開悟的誘因，是壓倒駱駝的最後一根稻草。就是這樣，每個人的因緣不同，總之都會有某個事件或者有切身關係的事物因緣，使他們開悟。

關於佛教和科學的一些想法

今天的科學，就像昔日的牧師。現代社會每個人都尊重科學家，不怎麼尊重牧師和出家人。對他們而言，我們就是一群停留於黑暗時代迷信的蠢蛋。現在每個人都把科學家當神，對著科學的神龕焚香膜拜。

然而，佛法是兩者兼具，新舊並存，它一點都不害怕科學，其它的一些宗教或許會害怕。佛教是喜歡科學的：「科學你走快一點，你太慢了！」（笑聲）譬如科學至今尚未發現不同的心識層面，科學範疇所研究的一切，其實都還停留在第六意識中。科學家試圖解決宇宙的問題，以及宇宙是如何由第六意識形成的。這個研究方法是不可能有答案的，因為你需要喚醒更深層的心識，要深達第七識、第八識才能理解這些，才能看到它們之間相互的關聯。

師父總是告訴我們，也總是嘲笑——那是69年晚期，人類登陸月球那年——他總是嘲笑那些登月的人，他說：「你想要登月？打坐入定，就能夠在一念間進入太空。我已經在他們登陸的地方繞一圈了，那裡沒有什麼意思。」然後我們問：「師父，那火星呢？」他說：「我也去過，那裡也很無聊。」師父繼續說道：「若能夠打開心量，見到真如自性，你就能夠在一念間到達宇宙的任何地方。你根本不需要火箭飛船。」 ❀