



# Living and Learning in Community

## 團體生活的珍貴之處

A Talk Given by Yuen-Lin Tan at the Buddha Hall of CTTB on November 27, 2017

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譚芊芊 中譯

I graduated in May from the DRBU M.A. program. I'm now volunteering for DRBU as the residential coordinator for the Sudhana Center, helping to take care of the men's dorm there.

Just to give everyone a brief update on what's going on at the Sudhana Center, we now have a group of 7 students, 2 staff, and 2 teachers. This is a lot more people than we had before. This semester we have been working on a few different projects to build up the place for students. I will talk briefly about some of these projects.

One of the things we started this semester was to have a meal program for the guys there. The place is quite far from CTTB, and we also wanted to slowly try to find a way for DRBU to support the students' meals and not have to burden the Sangha. So, this semester we started to experiment with that by starting a small meal program. It has been really wonderful, and so far it's going smoothly. We get a lot of ingredients from the CTTB organic farm and from kind donors. The students have a schedule and we take turns, signing up to do different jobs—cooking, cleaning. We serve dinner six days a week, lunch three days a week, and breakfast every day.

Fortunately, amongst the guys there, a few of them are very good cooks so we've



我今年五月從法界佛教大學碩士畢業，目前在法大擔任義工，幫忙管理善財參學中心的男眾宿舍，打點學生的食宿調度。

目前住在善財參學中心有七位學生、兩位工作人員以及兩位教師，人數比從前多了不少。這個學期，為了讓此處成為學生的活動中心，我們陸續推動了一些新的專案，以下簡單介紹其中幾項。

其中之一就是學生的膳食計畫。因為距離聖城比較遠，同時希望法界佛教大學有能力提供學生的伙食，不要增加聖城法師們的工作量，因此這個學期試辦一個小型的膳食計畫，運作得非常好、非常順利。烹煮的食材多半來自附近有機農場和善心捐贈人，學生輪流煮飯、清潔。現在每天早、晚餐以及一週三天的午餐都由這個計劃供應。

幸好有幾位男生挺懂得烹調，大家也吃得挺滿意的。我雖然沒有結婚，但是這個膳食專案讓我感覺自己像個媽媽，尤其學期剛開始時，我花不少時間去買菜，因為消耗量總是出乎意料地驚人，我也因此積攢了一大疊的買菜收據。

been eating well-cooked meals. One thing about this meal program is that although I'm not married, I've experienced a bit of what it's like to be a mom. Especially at the beginning of the semester, the number of times I went shopping for food was considerable. How fast the food goes is amazing. I ended up having a big pile of receipts from all the shopping trips.

In addition to having a way to feed people, we realized that students who live at CTTB have easy access to the Buddha Hall and all the different spiritual practices that goes on there. We thought we should do the same at the Sudhana Center. This semester we started having a daily schedule – morning and evening ceremony, half an hour of universal bowing in the morning. We also have half an hour of meditation in the morning and 45 minutes in the evening. All these practices are optional.

It's interesting because everything was brand new and everything had to be set up. We even had to request the bowing cushions from here. I remember going to one of the buildings where old bowing cushions are stored, choosing ones in good condition, and carrying them back. As we did not have a Sangha member to be the cantor until recently, we had to use recordings for the ceremonies. We put them on an iPad, and basically played them and followed along.

One thing I find inspiring is that our students clearly are here not just to study, but also to cultivate and improve themselves. For example, during the recent Guan Yin Session, even though the professors only required them to do a few days of the retreat, some stayed until the last day. Same for the three-day Thanksgiving Chan: a few of them took part in it voluntarily. I also found out that for winter break, some of the guys intend to try the Amitabha Session and Chan Session.

This attitude is very positive. We can also see the students' sincerity in how they approach their work. Many of them do what's called 'service scholarship' to help support their education. Because the Sudhana Center right now has so few people, you could say it was like how CTTB was in the early days. We have to do a lot of the work. One of the students has a general contractor license and is skilled at handyman work. They have been taking on all kinds of jobs like repairing things, installing security cameras, landscaping, and fixing windows.

One reflection I have is that living together in this type of community where we interact very closely – cooking together, working together, having meals together – this is like having a teacher. In the first few weeks when I was there and new to the job, at times I felt a bit overwhelmed. When many people are living together for the first time and are under stress, of course, afflictions will arise. I was wowed by how much affliction there was.

I now have a different view and feel that in terms of education at DRBU, the classroom is only one part of it. Everything the students are going through outside the classroom is also an important part of their education, and how they can apply the principles that they learn into daily life. Actually, living together in a community like this is a very good way to do that. I started studying a book on building intentional communities called "Creating a Life Together" and would like to read a few quotes from it.

The book says,

"The close and frequent interactions with other community members about how

除了提供色身所需的食糧，我們也考量到法身的所需。居住在萬佛聖城的學生能夠很方便地參加佛殿的功課，因此我們希望善財參學中心也能如此。這個學期我們有了固定的日課——早課、晚課、早上半小時的拜願，還有早上半小時和晚間45分鐘的打坐。這些都讓學生自由參加。

有趣的地方是，這裡一切都是百業待興，甚至連拜佛用的拜殿也是從聖城請回去。記得那時我們去放舊拜墊的那棟樓，挑揀一些比較好的帶回中心。唱誦也是跟著iPad上的錄音檔唸，因為直到最近才有法師來帶領我們做功課。

讓人欣慰的是，法大的學生到這裡不僅僅只為求學，也想在這裡好好修行，提升自己。例如最近的觀音七，雖然教授只要求大家參加幾天，很多同學都全程參加；感恩節的禪三也是如此，學校雖然放假，依然有幾位同學隨眾參加。接下來的寒假，我知道已經有人準備參加佛七和禪七了！

同學們的態度很積極，做事也很誠心。許多同學為了獲得學雜費補助，參加了一個「服務助學金」專案。善財參學中心現在人很少，可以說就像早期的萬佛聖城一樣，有很多工作要做。有一位同學有加州建築執照，很擅長做技工活。同學們也分擔著各式各樣的工作，例如修理東西、安裝監控攝影機、維護景觀和修理窗戶。

這種吃飯在一起、工作在一起、吃飯也在一起的團體生活，成員互動密切又頻繁，對我而言就像自己的一位老師。剛開始的幾週，有時我感覺壓力很大。許多人初次共同生活，共同面對壓力，煩惱不禁油然而生。連我自己也很驚訝，竟然有這麼多的煩惱。

但是現在我有了不同的看法和體會。法大的教育不限於課堂，課後生活也是教育的重要一環，幫助學生在

we'll live and work together tends to evoke some of our worst and most destructive behaviors. And potentially, it can heal them.”I call this the “rock polisher” effect.

Rather than suffer helplessly, we can use community as a powerful opportunity for personal growth. The process of sharing resources and making decisions cooperatively in community—and no longer being able to get away with our usual behaviors—is a wake-up call to the soul. Community offers us the chance to finally grow up.

Now I would like to share a couple of lessons that living in a community and serving the community has taught me over the past few months. First, I realized that in order to do my job I have to respect



the Buddha nature in all the students. I need to remember that everyone has the same awakened potential and everyone is growing gradually on the path. People can change and they can change quickly – nothing is fixed. I find this a very useful contemplation to serve everyone equally without prejudice.

In order to practice this principle, I have to not hold onto fixed views about people, and not let any negative experience I have with them cloud my perception, or influence what I think about them. I need to always try to remain open to how we're interacting and what we're experiencing in the present. And to be as open and aware as I can in each moment, not letting my own views or others' views influence what I think about someone.

Another lesson that has come up a lot relates to how we perceive people. The question is what we take to be real. Maybe the best way to explain this is to consider a common scenario. Say there are two people who have some unresolved tension in their relationship. As a neutral third party, we may see a bit more clearly what is going on between them. Basically, person A has a number of theories or interpretations in his mind about person B—he thinks this, he thinks of me this way, he's doing this because of that, he has this and that intention.

日常生活中實踐所學的道理；像這樣吃住都在一起的團體生活，正是很好的教材。最近讀一本書，討論如何構建有意識的團體，書名叫《Creating a Life Together (共同創建生活)》，想和大家分享裡面的幾句話：

書中說，

「在團體中與其他成員密切而頻繁的互動，一起生活，一起工作，往往會激發出我們最糟糕、最消極的一面，然後又潛移默化地治癒了它們」，我稱此為「磨石效應」。

與其無助地受苦，何不讓團體生活成為個人成長的有力機會。在團體生活中，因為要與他人合作共享資源以及制訂決策，使得保護許久的習氣毛病無所遁藏，這種過程反而能喚醒我們的覺知良能。團體生活最終讓我們有了成長的機會。

現在想分享經過這幾個月，我在團體中生活和服務所獲得的幾點啟示。第一，我必須尊重一切眾生的佛性，才能稱職地完成我的工作。我必須記住每個學生都有覺悟的潛能，都在修行的路上漸漸成長。人是會改變的，也可以變得很快，沒有什麼是一成不變的。這樣的觀照，能夠有效地幫助我摒除偏見，平等地服務每一個人。

為了躬行實踐這個道理，我必須避免對任何人有所成見，避免任何不愉快的經歷蒙蔽我的認知，或是影響我對他們的看法。我必須敞開心胸去接納彼此的互動和當下的體驗，時時刻刻保持這種開明與覺知，避免自我和旁人的見

We see that many of these things are probably just imagined. We may try to tell person A about it. We may encourage him to talk with the other person and address these issues directly. If the two of them finally talk, it might go like this: person A tells person B what he thought. Person B is surprised, because the allegations are actually untrue. With just a short conversation, the whole thing falls apart and person A experiences a kind of liberation. He feels at ease, free from the baggage and illusory stories that the mind had constructed.

We sometimes forget the difference between what we are



actually observing and what the mind is constructing – all the stories, interpretations and theories we have about other people. We forget what is real and what is just imagined. We lose our way, and experience and create a lot of suffering because of that.

These are some brief examples of how the principles we learn from the sutras can be applied. Like respect for the Buddha nature, which you can see clearly in the *Lotus Sutra*. Like how everything is created from the mind, and what we take to be real is often just a construction. All these principles are not just abstract, but are in fact very useful to understand what is going on in our own experience – and hopefully see what leads to affliction and what leads to liberation, to freedom. In each moment, we can use these principles to observe and become more skillful in how we use our minds. This would be good for our relationships and also benefit the whole community.

I deeply appreciate everyone's support for Sudhana Center and also for DRBU. I wish everyone the best in your cultivation. Amitufofo! ❀

解影響我對某人的看法。

另一個啟示則是待人接物中，要檢驗那些我們信以為真的見解。以下這個生活中常見的例子，或許可做為最佳說明。有兩個人彼此間存在一些尚未化解的矛盾，而身為旁觀者的其他人反而比較看得清楚他們的問題。簡單來說，甲對乙有不少的想法和成見，例如他就是這麼想的、他就是這麼看待我的、他這麼做就是因為如何如何、他就是想要這樣那樣。

可是身為旁觀者的我們，會發現甲對乙的許多看法很可能只是他自己的想像。於是我們鼓勵他去和對方

溝通，直接說出這些問題。當兩個人真的坐下來對談的時候，情況很可能是這樣：甲說出了自己對乙的看法，而乙感到非常驚訝，因為這些陳述都不是真的。簡短真誠的對話之後，兩人的矛盾瓦解了，甲也得以釋懷。卸下心中的壓抑和那些虛構的故事，生活又恢復了它的平靜自在。

我們經常會忘了真妄的區別，什麼是真實所見，什麼是妄心所現，就是心中看待他人的那些故事、那些看法、那些理論。我們忘了什麼是真實、什麼是幻景，由此而偏離正道，自討苦吃。

這些故事告訴我們如何活用佛經的道理，例如《法華經》中尊重一切眾生皆有的佛性，還有佛陀教導的「一切唯心造」，凡夫信以為真的事物，經常是識心投射的妄境。這些道理不是抽象的概念，事實上是認識自己很有用的工具，讓我們能覺察煩惱從何而起，如何趨向究竟的解脫。我們可以利用這些道理，念念觀照，善用其心，對於個人及團體都有很大的好處。

最後非常感謝各位對善財參學中心和法界佛教大學的支持，祝福大家修行順利，阿彌陀佛！❀