

On Faith and Good Roots

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信心與善根

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「信」這個字，有信任、信心和信仰的意思。今晚想就「信心」這一方面，談談個人的看法。

佛教裡面講「信為道源功德母」，信心如何能有這麼大的力量？為什麼如此的重要？簡單來說，就是我們的理解能力不夠。因為不知道，所以需要信心；如果你已經知道了，還需要相信什麼？例如今天來大殿聽經、拜佛，你怎麼知道這個屋頂不會塌下來？有人說：「前幾天都沒有塌下來呀！」前幾天沒有塌，今天就不會塌嗎？主要還是因為我們對建築師、對施工品質有信心，對政府定期的檢查有信心。所以我們每天都在用自己的信心，只是不知道而已。就像佛法講的，百姓日用而不知，每天都在用，但是卻不知道。

另一方面，我們的社會也不注重信心的教育。而是教大家懷疑，教你懷疑這個，懷疑那個，好像這樣子就比別人高明。假設你正在看報紙，有個人經過見到你正在看的這份報紙，說：「哼，我根本不相信這份報紙！」好像他一下子就比你高明了。所以現在這個社會，彷彿在比誰更會懷疑，誰最不相信別人，誰就是最高明的。

而在教育系統裡，教大家什麼都不要相信，美國人稱為「critical thinking」，中文叫「批判式思考」。所以小孩沒上學之前，相信爸爸，相信媽媽，相信法師；去學校上學，書念了幾年，爸爸也不相信了，媽媽也不相信了，法師也不相信了。然後學校很得意地說：「啊，我終於教會他批判性思考啦！」如果仔細想想，這其實是滿奇怪的。

我看過一個電視節目，有一個人要找人投資他的生意。他跟投資人說：「我有一個很好的想法，但不能直接告訴你，因為我不知道你會不會偷偷告訴別人。你一定要簽一個保密協議，答應我不會告訴任何人，我才能跟你講。」結果那個投資人告訴他：「我一天有上百個人找我投資生意，我沒時間簽你的保密協議。再者，懷疑別人是一種能力，相

In Chinese, the character “xin” (信) includes Trust, Faith and Belief. The topic I would like to discuss is Faith.

In Buddhism, we say “Faith is the source of the Way and the mother of all merit and virtue.” Why is faith so powerful? Why is having faith so important? Simply put, our knowledge is limited. When we don't fully understand something, we must rely on faith. If you already know everything, you therefore don't have to believe in anything. For example, today, we are here in the Buddha Hall to perform ceremonies and listen to lectures. How do you know the ceiling of this Buddha Hall is not going to fall down? Some of you may say, “It didn't fall down before.” Just because it didn't fall down before, doesn't mean it won't fall down today. You came in today because you trusted the architect, the construction workers, and the government inspectors. Hence, we use our trust everyday, even if we are unaware of it. Like in Buddhism, we say the mind is used everyday but people do not know it.

Our education system does not emphasize on teaching trust; instead, it encourages people to doubt and question things for proof. This makes people believe that doubting is a higher virtue. For example, if you are reading a newspaper and someone walks by and said, “Humph, I never believe this newspaper!” Instantly, this person appears to be so much superior to you. Therefore, we see in our society today that people compete to see who has the most doubt, as if the person who believes the least is the smartest.

Our education system teaches people not to believe anything. In English, we call this “critical thinking.” Before a child enters the education system, he believes in his father or mother, (or in Dharma Masters). After the child goes through schooling, he no longer fully believes in his parents (or in Dharma Masters). Yet, the education system that produces such a child would very proudly say, “Ah ha! We finally taught him critical thinking!”



信別人也是一種能力。知道何時該相信、誰該相信也是一門學問，你得先要學會這個學問。」

信心是一門大學問，但是現代人大多數都是疑心很重，什麼事都是先懷疑；尤其媒體接觸得越多，就懷疑得越多，反而不知道自己相信什麼。

很多人說，「我什麼都不信」或者「我只信自己」。其實這是不可能的。美國一位出名的投資者說過：「如果你相信廣告有用，那你被騙了一次；如果你相信廣告沒有用，那你被騙了兩次，因為你不知道它已經下意識地在影響你了。」現代人只知道懷疑而不知道信心的作用，所以很多人連自己相信什麼都不知道，該相信什麼也不知道。

其實「懷疑」是個很廉價的東西，「相信」反而很珍貴。現在我可以懷疑在座的每個人，你們每個人都都可以懷疑我，因此懷疑的確很廉價。但是要相信一個人卻很難，要贏得人家的信任也很難。整個社會的構成及運作，都必須在信心的基礎上完成。想想看2008年金融危機。爆發的前幾天，所有工廠都在運作，銀行都在營業，大家上班下班；幾天後金融危機爆發，嘍！錢沒有了，銀行關門了！為什麼？因為信心沒有了。信心一旦喪失，社會就停擺了。所以信心運作的時候，我們日用而不知；當有一天信心不在了，才發現一切都行不通。

既然不能依賴懷疑，人的理解能力又有限，那該怎麼樣去「相信」呢？今天車壞了，修車的人說汽車這裡壞了、那裡壞了，你也不知道對錯。所謂「隔行如隔山」，如果信錯這個人怎麼辦？或者醫師跟我說要動手術，我相信這個醫師，結果手術後發現診斷錯誤，怎麼辦呢？信心既然有這麼大的風險，所以人不願意相信。那麼到底該怎麼辦呢？

信心確實有很大的風險，所以接觸的資訊越多，人就會有越多的害怕。身為一名醫生，我就經常遇到類似的問題。我的看法是：信心對醫生和病人都是一種挑戰、一種修行。醫生要培養贏得病人信任的能力，講話不能太誇張，不能隨便答應別人；而病人也要培養對醫生以及治療的適當信任。

人的理解能力就像一棵樹，看得見、摸得著，但是極其有限，所以必須仰賴信心。那麼該如何

But if we think about this carefully, this is actually very strange.

I saw once on TV that a person went to look for an investor. He told the investor, "I got this great idea but I cannot tell you now because I don't know if you will tell other people about my idea. You have to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement before I tell." The investor replied, "I go through hundreds of deals a day. I cannot sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement. Furthermore, doubting people is ability, but trusting people is also ability. Knowing when to trust, who to trust is also a skill. You must learn this skill."

Faith can be a powerful skill but people of our time are full of doubts. We distrust everything; especially when we are exposed to more media, we develop more doubts. People do not know what to believe.

Many people would say, "I don't believe anything" or "I only believe in myself." This is in fact impossible. A famous investor once said, "If you believe in advertising, you are fooled once. If you don't think advertising affects you, you are fooled twice because you don't know how it is influencing you." Modern people only know how to doubt, but seldom do they understand the power of belief. Thus, many people don't know what they believe and don't know what to believe.

Truly is: doubt is cheap and faith is precious. Right now, I can doubt every one of you here and anyone of you can doubt me. Therefore, doubt is cheap. However, to trust or win someone's trust can be very difficult. Fundamentally, our society's structure and operation depends on trust. Think back to the 2008 Financial Crisis. A few days before the crisis, the factories were running, banks were open, everyone went on with their jobs. But a few days after the Financial Crisis, Boom! Money was gone and banks were closed. Why? Faith in the system was gone. Once faith was gone, society halted. When our faith is working, we do not feel it even though we use it everyday. But when faith disappears one day we then realize everything is wrong.

Since we cannot rely on doubt and we have limited knowledge, how do we believe? There is a Chinese saying: "A different industry is like a different world." If your car broke down today, the mechanic would tell you things that you might not know if they were true. What if you believed the wrong person? If a doctor you trusted told you to get surgery, and you later found out that he misdiagnosed you, what would you do? Faith is risky, so people don't want to rely on it. But then what should one do?

Faith is indeed very risky. Therefore, when people have access to more information, people become more fearful. They don't want to believe this, and they don't want to believe that. Being a doctor myself, I often encounter similar problems. Hence, I believe that trust is a challenge for both patients and doctors. Doctors must cultivate the ability to win peoples' trust. We must be very careful when we speak and never over-promise. Patients likewise must cultivate proper faith in doctors and medicine.

Our ability to reason is like a tree; everyone can see it. However, our ability to reason is very limited, so we must rely on our faith as well.

培養正確的信心呢？譬如今天有個法師要來講法，你怎麼知道他講的是不是邪知邪見？我覺得佛經講的很有道理，正確信心來自「善根」的開發。根，埋在地底不見之處，卻默默滋養整棵大樹。

據我的觀察，大部份有正確信心、知道怎麼運用信心的人都有善根。他們平常栽培善根，遇到事情自然就有正確的信心，做出正確的理解和判斷。因此佛法經常提到善根，確實有它的道理。就像一棵樹，懂樹的人都知道樹在地面上長的多大，地底下的根就有多大。所以有善根的人，他們的正信、正知正見都是自然而生的，不是刻意造作或臨時抱佛腳得來的，靠的是日積月累的功夫。

人的理解能力就像地面上的樹，看得見、摸得著；但真正支持樹的，是它的根，是我們看不到的。一個懂得照顧樹的人，不是去照顧樹的葉、樹的皮，而是培養樹的根，給它澆水，給它施肥。根照顧好，穩定了，樹自然長得健康茁壯。

培養信心也是一樣，平時就要好好守護自己的善根，多培植福報；不用太過追求理論，因為人類的理解能力十分有限。隔行如隔山，換一個科的醫生都不知道另外一科的醫生在幹什麼，回到家裡老婆在想什麼、孩子在想什麼都不知道，人的理解能力是真的很有限。但是善根是無窮的，應該要認真栽培這個善根。

法師問：怎樣栽培善根？

答：這是個滿難的問題，因為有人相信錯了，連善惡都搞不清楚。我個人覺得，諸惡莫做、眾善奉行很重要。佛教很注重熏修，因此要經常親近善知識。來聖城跟善知識一起耳濡目染，是很重要的。學習不是靠推理、論證得來的，現在社會過度強調邏輯思考，而忘記熏修實踐才是最重要的。

實踐很重要，我們做醫生必須到各專科實習兩、三年，即使出來開業，也要好幾年慢慢累積經驗，醫術才能越加純熟。各行各業也都一樣，都是在實踐中學習。佛陀很清楚這個道理，也明白眾生的心態。但是很多人，包括很多學者還是迷迷糊糊，搞不清楚這個道理。在這個以盲引盲的時代，很多人不信佛、不信古聖先賢，但是對一個教授、一個學者，他反倒信了，這是很可怕的事。❀

How do we know we are using our faith properly? For example, a Dharma Master comes to speak today, how do you know his is not spreading deviant knowledge and views? I concur with the Buddhist teaching that proper faith comes from developing “good roots”. Roots are something you cannot see, for they are underground, yet they nourish the tree.

According to my observation, people who have proper faith and know who and when to trust have good roots. They developed good roots in their daily lives so when they encounter a situation, their proper faith will arise, and they will know what to do properly. That's why in Buddhism we always talk about good roots. This is very true. To go back to the tree analogy people who know trees understand that a tree's roots are as big as the visible parts. Someone with good roots will naturally produce proper faith and proper understanding when needed. This is not something you can do intentionally or instantly—it is the result of long-term accumulation.

Although our ability to reason is like the tree above ground, one you can see it and touch, yet the real support for the tree is the roots, which we cannot see. Someone who knows how to take care of trees does not take care of the tree leaves or bark; instead that person will develop the tree's roots with water and fertilizers to the tree. When the roots are taken care of, and are strong, the tree will be healthy and strong.

Cultivating faith is the same; we have to protect our good roots regularly and build up blessings. Don't worry too much about theoretical issues because our ability to reason is very limited. “A different industry is like a different world.” A doctor might understand his field of study, but he might not fully understand what other experts do. Our knowledge is truly limited. When I go home, I don't know what my wife is thinking about or what my child is thinking about. However, our good roots are infinite so we should seriously cultivate our good roots.

A Dharma Master asks: How can we cultivate good roots?

Answer: This is a difficult question because some people believe in the wrong things and cannot differentiate good things from bad. Personally, I feel that doing all good and avoiding all evil is very important. Buddhism emphasizes learning by immersion. We should always be close to good and knowing advisors. Coming to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas and being immersed in the collective learning environment is very important.

Learning does not result from brief reasoning; our society over-emphasizes logical thinking and forgets that immersion and practice is the most important. Practice is very important. To be a doctor, we need to do rotations and internships for two to three years. Even after we began our practice, it takes many years to accumulate experience so we can become proficient. This is true for other professions as well; we all learn by doing. The Buddha correctly saw this and knew how we use our minds. On the other hand, people nowadays, including some scholars, are quite confused. We are in the era of blindly following blind men, many people do not believe in Buddhas, do not believe in Sages of the past, but they believe some professors or scholars. This is quite frightening. ❀