



Feedback is More Valuable than Gold (continued)

良言如玉 (續)

A Dharma talk given by Ajahn Amaro at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas on October 29, 2018

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阿莫若法師2018年10月29日開示於萬佛殿

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Question: In terms of feedback, how do we know when to take those in and improve and when to maybe ignore some the feedback?

Ajahn Amaro: That's a good question because in the Buddha's teachings, at least in the Pali Canon, he spells out five particular conditions about how to give feedback. Firstly, you have to establish an attitude of loving kindness. So, if I want you to be different because I'm annoyed with you, that motivation is then my aversion and I should wait to follow it.

If I want you to be different so I'll feel happy, then that's only part of the picture, and it also is an unskillful motivation. If I want you to be different to make you happy, so that you will stop causing yourself and others harm, then that's the right motivation to speak; in this way you establish an attitude of loving kindness from the heart.

Secondly, you ask permission to bring up a subject. If this happens within our community, you'd say, 'I'd like to raise something with you. Would that be okay?' If they say, no, then, you don't mention the topic. They have to give permission for you to raise the subject.

The third condition is choosing the right time and situation. You choose a situation, perhaps when the person won't be embarrassed, or you've got plenty of time to talk to be clear about what you need to ask or say. It should not be at a time where you're sitting on a bus together and you're about to get off at the bus stop, so you've only got one and a half minutes to talk.

The fourth condition is that you should stick to the facts than hearsay, or than your assumptions about other's thoughts or feelings. For example, if you met a person in the doorway and he or she takes one look at you and scowled or were angry with you. You then probably assume that person made pulled an ugly face at you because he was angry. But when the person says, 'Oh, I wasn't angry, I was just trying to get to the bathroom. And you were in my way. It had nothing to do with you. I just had a bathroom emergency.' So that fourth condition is to not make assumptions but to speak according to what is factual as far as you can.

問題：對於別人所給予的意見或批評，如何區分哪些應該虛心受教，哪些應該束之高閣？

阿莫若法師：這個問題很好，在巴利文大藏經裡，佛陀提出關於勸諫的五個條件。第一，必須先具備慈愛的態度。如果希望對方改變是因為他觸惱你，那麼你得先緩一緩，因為你勸他的動機可能是出於厭惡。

如果對方改變能令自己樂，這只是自己以偏概全的想法，也非出於善巧。如果改變對方能夠讓對方得到快樂，能夠讓對方停止傷害自己和他人，那才是正確的動機，才是出於內心的慈悲。

第二，提議前必須先得到對方同意。譬如這種情況發生在團體裡，你說：「有些事想提出來跟大家討論，可以嗎？」如果大家說不行，你就得作罷；要得到大家的同意，才可以提意見。

第三，選擇對的時間和場合。你會挑選時機，找一個讓人不會尷尬又有充分時間交談的場合，而不是碰巧一起搭公車，在下車前的一分半鐘裡討論。

第四，必須實事求是而不是道聽途說或者預設對方的想法或感受。譬如在走廊上，對方臉色難看的看你一眼，好像在生你的氣。於是

And then, the fifth one is the most challenging one: you have to be free of the same fault yourself. So, if you want to criticize someone for being angry and reactive and you recognize that you've still got the problem yourself, then it's more skillful to deal with yourself before you bring it up with another. Like one of Master Hsuan Hua's well-known verses, he said, 'Truly recognize your own faults. Do not criticize the faults of others, others' faults are just your own. Being one with everyone is called the Great Compassion.' So, be at least ready to recognize your own faults.

Sometimes people asked me, 'Can we negotiate number five? Can we kind of acknowledge our faults that we still got work to do there and bring up the subject anyway?' Now, these are guidelines, these are not absolute. And so, it's not a diktat. These are guidelines to give us the skillful structures for offering feedback.

If someone says, 'Can I bring something up with you?' And your first reaction is, no, then that's something to look at. Why are you afraid of what someone might say to you? They are offering you a treasure more valuable than a pile of gold. Are you sure that what they're going to say is not helpful, true, or valuable? Or is this just a kind of fearful reaction in your heart?

So, having a sense of honesty to be ready to look at your own reactions and your own aversion when being told something that might be unpleasant—that's the key. Also being ready to say, 'Well, yes, I'm open to hearing what you got to say, but can we make it next week, for I feel that condition is more appropriate based on the right time, place, and situation. Then you're able to make yourself a bit more open and prepared to receive what they might want to say, and it might be far less intimidating and difficult.

Question: As a layperson, what's a healthy approach to contemplating death?

Ajahn Amaro: Whether you're a layperson or a monastic, I think we're all in the same boat. Whether you have hair or no hair, we all stop breathing one day. It's interesting that the Buddha didn't, at least in the Pali Canon, really distinguish between giving advice to laypeople and monastics in terms of contemplations of death.

One of the most helpful teachings, I believe you find it both in the Sutra of Forty-two Sections and in the Pali Canon is where the Buddha asks the assembly, 'How long is a human lifespan? Someone says, 'Venerable Sir, 70 years.' And he said, 'You don't understand my teaching.' Then someone else voiced, '60 years, 50 years, 40 years,' to which the Buddha still said, 'You don't understand my teaching.' Another person said, '30, 20, 10 years,' and still the Buddha replied,

你依據對方的表情，做了對方對你不滿的假設。結果那個人說：「哦，我沒有生氣，我正想上廁所，你剛好擋到我的路。這跟你一點關係也沒有，我只是內急跑廁所。」所以不預設立場，盡量根據事實說話。

第五個條件最具挑戰性，因為你必須先克服自己犯同樣的錯誤。當你要批評某人生氣時的態度或反應，如果你意識到自己也有同樣的問題，你得有本事先修正自己。就像宣公上人著名的偈頌：「真認自己錯，莫論他人非；他非即我非，同體名大悲。」至少要能認識自己的問題。

當我談到第五個條件時，經常有人會問：「能放寬這條嗎？可以承認自己有待改進，卻還是給對方建言嗎？」我提供的這些只是參考依據，並非絕對，也不是命令，只是讓我們能更善巧地提供別人意見。

因此，當有人對你說：「我可以給你一點意見嗎？」如果你當下的反應是排斥，那就要注意了。為什麼害怕聽別人要告訴你的事？他們提供的可能比一堆黃金更有價值。你確定他們說的對你沒有幫助，不是真的也毫無用處？或者只是你內心的恐懼？

泰然處之，觀察自己的反應，就不難發現問題癥結在於自己不想聽逆耳之言。你可以跟對方說：「好，我洗耳恭聽，不過可不可以下禮拜再講？我覺得時這樣在時間、地點和環境上都比較恰當。」這讓你能大方一點接受批評，事實上對方要說的，可能沒有你擔心的那麼糟糕。

問題：在家人如何以正確思維面對死亡？

阿莫若法師：無論你是在家人或出家人，我想我們都一樣；無論有頭髮、沒頭髮，有一天我們都會停止心跳。在巴利文大藏經的記載中，佛陀對於死亡這件事，對在家人和出家人的教

‘You don’t understand my teaching.’ To five years, four years, three years, two years, or even six months, he still said, ‘You don’t understand my teaching.’ ‘One month, half a month, one week, one day?!’ The Buddha said, ‘You don’t understand my teaching. Then someone asked, ‘We can’t even expect to live a whole day? Then I say half a day is the most we can reasonably expect to live.’ Again, the Buddha said, ‘You don’t understand my teaching.’

Finally, someone said, ‘The only amount of time that we can reasonably expect to live is from the beginning to the end of an in-breath to the end of an out-breath. All the time it takes to swallow some food that you have already chewed.’ The Buddha said, ‘You understand my teaching.’

So, if you think about it, that’s about three or four seconds. That’s the amount that we can all reasonably expect to live. Even medically, if you have an aneurysm, and a blood vessel bursts in your brain, you have about that amount of time, just a few seconds before everything comes to an end. So, this kind of contemplation might seem a bit intimidating, but I feel that having this kind of recollection is useful to us whether we’re a layperson or a monastic.

That’s not to make us lazy or evade our responsibilities, but to really keep everything in contexts. This reflection helps us to recognize well. You might think, ‘I have a plan to go on holiday next week. What will happen?’ It’s not a sure thing. When we relate to things in this way, then again, like being attached to success or failures, likes and dislikes, it balances everything out so that you’re not tying your mind to an imagined future, but rather you’re bringing your attention to the present.

What really matters is whether our mind matures or lack spiritual maturity. Are we grateful for the amount of work left we have to do? Do we still carry around greed, hatred, and delusion in our hearts? From this perspective, many things that once seemed important will just fall away. It’s really a helpful introduction to beginning a project to not always put your name written to everything. I’ve found that this really kept things in perspective.

And then you will gain a quality of ease in your heart that comes from recognizing your faults, but of course it’s uncertain that this would be your response. In that moment, the heart takes refuge in wisdom rather than in imagined possessions or an imagined future. Your peace will not depend on your life continuing but rather on the Triple Gems.

Question: When we undertake projects, we usually set out a goal that we envision success in and enjoy doing. Yet, how do we not get attached to the results but still be motivated to do a good job?

Ajahn Amaro: Oftentimes it’s mistakenly represented that the Buddha

導並沒有不同。

最有用的教導之一，相信在《四十二章經》和巴利文大藏經都找得到，佛陀問法會大眾：「人的壽命有多長？」有人回答：「世尊，七十歲。」佛陀說：「你不明白我的教導。」有人回答六十歲、五十歲、四十歲，佛陀說：「你不明白我的教導。」那回答三十、二十、十歲，佛陀說：「你不明白我的教導。」回答五歲、四歲、三歲、兩歲，佛陀說：「你不明白我的教導。」那麼回答六個月，佛陀還是說：「你不明白我的教導。」回答一個月、半個月、一個禮拜，一天！？難道連一天都不到？起碼有半天吧？佛陀依然說：「你不明白我的教導。」

最後，有人回答：「人的壽命長度只在呼吸之間，只在足夠吞下剛嚼完那口食物的時間。」佛陀說：「你明白我的教導了。」

如果測量一下，這時間大概只有三、四秒左右，這就是我們可以合理預期的人命長度。甚至從醫學角度來看，如果你是動脈瘤患者，一根血管在大腦中爆裂，差不多也是幾秒鐘就結束生命了。這樣想法聽起來或許有點駭人，但我覺得對在家或出家人而言，是很有幫助的。

觀想死亡，不是要我們偷懶或者逃避責任，而是把事物看得更透徹。這種反思也有助於我們認清事實。原本計劃好下週去度假，會部會有什麼事發生？這是無法預期的。用這種態度來看事情，能減少我們對於成敗、好惡的執著，讓我們不會把心思放在對未來的憧憬，而是專注於當下。

真正重要的是我們的心。我們的心性是否成熟？是否懂得感恩？是否還有未完成的工作？內心是否還有貪瞋癡？如果這樣思維，許多曾經認為重要的事，都不再重要了。我發現把自

said every kind of desire is problematic. He did indeed say that desire is the cause of suffering, dukkha, but that kind of desire is called “tanha” in pali or “trishna” in sanskrit. It’s not the only kind of desire. Another kind of desire which can be very wholesome is called “chanda.”

There’s a set of four qualities that the Buddha spoke that are necessary conditions to succeed at anything.

The first one is chanda, which means ‘interest, desire, zeal, or enthusiasm,’ the sense of ‘Yeah, I want to do this. This is interesting. This has a value.’ The second is virya, which means ‘energy,’ so you have to be interested in something and then apply energy or effort to do it. The third is citta, ‘respect,’ which means thinking about what it is that you want to do. And then the fourth one is called vimansa, and that means ‘reviewing,’ so did it work?

And in a way, the essence of skillful action is not the amount of energy we put into something, but rather whether it’s freeing of self-view, because as long you think it’s ‘my project,’ that ‘I want to succeed, I’m gonna show them,’ or ‘this is a great thing and I’m going get so much out of it,’ then all these I-s will produce a lot of suffering. Even if it’s successful, you turn it into a monster through that kind of self-obsession and self-cherishing.

If the motivation is guided by mindfulness and wisdom, it’s a response to a need. For instance, if Ukiah really needs a good university, and the world needs Buddhist universities since so many people want to be here, then okay, let’s put some effort into it. It’s being guided by a response to a communal need. It’s not coming from ego; it’s not coming from self-view.

So, in this respect, the most helpful quality is that of wise reflection and consideration like looking directly at the motivation, the “what’s driving this?” That’s the most trustworthy quality. And again, if we’re unclear about our own motivation—if it’s not something that’s obvious or distinct to us—then our friends can be the most reliable source of guidance and information.

So, it can be difficult to tell, but that’s one of the things of being an abbot of a monastery. I find that I reflect on a lot in setting out goals such as building project in terms of running retreats, training people, or choosing teachings to give them. How much is motivated by what’s a skillful response to the situation and what’s motivated by my wanting to be someone special or not wanting to fail or look bad? This is really valuable to look at and notice;

己的名字寫在要執行的計畫上很有幫助，可以讓我們更正確看待事物。

認清「凡事都是不確定的」，才能夠得到心靈的平靜。在心靈皈依智慧，而不是皈依想像中的未來、財富或是不壞的色身。內心的平靜，不是取決於生命的延續，而是依止三寶。

問題：進行計畫時，我們通常會設立目標，並且朝著預定目標去執行。如何不在意結果，卻依然有動力做好工作？

阿莫若法師：很多時候，佛陀的教法被錯解，認為一切的欲望都是有問題的。佛陀確實說過欲望是萬苦之源(dukkha)，他指的是巴利文稱為tanha、梵語稱為trishna的欲望。這並不是人類僅有的欲望，另一種稱為chanda的欲望，則是非常有益的。

佛陀說，成功必須具備四種緣。

第一是「欲如意足」，指興趣、欲望、熱情、熱忱，那種感覺就是「是的，我想做這份工作，這份工作很有意思、很有價值」。第二是「精進如意足」，指一種精力，除了感興趣，還必須費力氣去完成。第三是「心如意足」，指專心思考想做的事。第四「思惟如意足」，指省察評估工作的成效如何。

某種程度而言，善巧的本質不在於投入多少努力，而在是否夾雜我見。如果認為這個計畫是屬於我的、我要成功、我要讓人刮目相看或者這是個好機會，我可以撈到很多好處，那麼這些「我」將會帶來很多痛苦。即使成功了，這種自我迷戀也會讓你變成一個怪物。

如果你的動機源自於正念和智慧，那就是對需求的回應。比如說瑜伽市的確需要一所好大學，世界需要佛教大學，因為很多人都想來這裡修行，既然如此，我們就努力實現！這就是基於大眾群體的需求所做的回應，而非以自我中心或我見為出發點。

用智慧觀照思考，反思驅動自己的動機是什麼？這種觀照最值得信賴。如果我們不清楚自己的動機或者動機不是那麼顯而易見，那麼身旁同參道友的意見就是最可靠的訊息來源。

要區分動機是否出於我執、我見並非易事。身為方丈，在策劃道場建設、安排法會、人才培訓

when anything is driven by self-view, by I, me, mine, then it's encouraged to let go. Don't be fooled by it and leave it alone.

Question: There is a need now to resolve our increasing division and tension in our current society. I feel and sense people justifying their hatred for injustice and actions whether it's social, political, economical, or environmental. But I believe that if you detest hate, then you are proliferating the cycle of hatred; however, it's really hard to talk to people in a conscious manner about standing up for what you believe in with love in your heart rather than hating back. So, how can we help others detach from this?"

Ajahn Amaro: When I first came to America, I saw for myself that righteous indignation is seen as a sort of virtue, and living here, you come across statements by people saying that if you're not angry, you're not paying attention, and that anger is a good thing. So your question is very, very appropriate. But also, I think you kind of answered it yourself to some degree.

Rather than choosing a thing to say, it's more how you carry yourself. If you manifest a kind of angry and hateful aura, this carries its own message. And so, if someone is speaking to you or acting with hatred or anger about evil forces, and want to destroy them, we can be more fully at ease in ourselves. When we speak to them, fully attuned, at that moment, the words that come out of our mouths will be the most helpful.

I've had a few dreams where Master Hsuan Hua appeared, and there's one that happened many years ago. Master Hua appeared in this dream and he said, "Bright, loud, and mobile is the false. Subtle and indistinct is the true." It's a very specific statement, and I feel it is a very important message that the truth is often subtle and indistinct. The way that you are and your attitude is a subtle thing. It's an indistinct thing.

When you are faced with the other person's rage, their anger and indignation, receive and reflect on upon it, and let your heart answer, so that you're not reacting to it, but you let your heart respond. This is different from merely thinking or receiving a reaction and not making any kind of comment about it. Just let your words be guided by receptivity and openness. Whether it's toward an eight-year-old or an 80-year-old, or whomever, if you can respond with your heart, it will fit that time, that place, and that particular person. There there's no formula to this.

It's not a matter of scripting down things that are loud, obvious, and clear. This will almost always be much more than any kind expression, for it's responding from that subtle attunement to the time, place, and situation. That's what's going to be most helpful. That's my experience, anyway. ❀

或者決定課程內容的時候，我經常自省有那些是針對現況所做的善巧回應？又有那些只是出於自己想要與眾不同，不想失敗難看？這種觀照方式非常受用。如果事情是基於這些我見所驅使，最好放下它，別被我見愚弄，應該避而遠之。

問題：當今社會需要解決的問題就是日益增長的分裂和矛盾。遇到社會、政治、經濟或環境上的不公平待遇，人們習慣把內心的憤怒合理化，並且以牙還牙，這只是滋長仇恨的惡性循環。可是我發現要說服人們用善意來消弭仇恨很困難。請問怎樣才能幫助別人擺脫這種情況呢？

阿莫若法師：我初到美國的時候，就見識到正義的憤慨被視為一種美德。生活在這裡，你會聽到這樣的說法：「不生氣就表示你不在意。」言下之意，憤怒是件好事。所以你的問題問得極為恰當，某種程度上，我認為你已經回答了自己的問題。

與其選擇說什麼，不如以自己的方式表現，譬如你表現出憤怒和憎恨，就傳達了憤恨的訊息。因此如果遇到嫉惡如仇的言語或行為，消滅這種負面能量的方式就是泰然處之，這時說出口的話才會是最有幫助的。

我有幾次夢見宣化上人，其中一個是發生在很多年前。上人出現在夢中，說：「明亮、響亮、搖動不定是假的；微妙、幽隱是真的。」講得非常中肯，我認為這是很重要的訊息，真相往往是微妙幽隱的，在舉手投足之間所流露的。

面對他人的憤怒，接受它、認識它，用心去回應，但是行為上不起對待。這不是靠思考所得，而是真正接受對方，不做任何的評論。用這種全然接納、開放的心回應對方，無論對方是八歲小孩或是八十老嫗，你說的話都會是最契時、契地、契機的，因為沒有任何預設立場。

真實的話語不像預寫的腳本那麼響亮而明晰，卻能超越任何的標記。依據每個當下的狀況作回應，才會是最有幫助的，我的經驗是這樣的。❀