

## This is My Story: A Longtime Volunteer Shares His Experiences 這是我的故事：一位長期義工의分享

By Tom Johnson Chinese Translated by BTTS volunteer  
湯姆·強森文 佛經翻譯委員會義工 中譯

My name is Tom Johnson. I was a volunteer at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas for the last 12 years. My primary service was to Buildings & Grounds, but I also helped in a number of other departments, including security (guard duty). Most people know me personally, because they would see me at the Mountain Gate from 6 PM until 9 PM. Of course, I went also went to evening ceremonies and could be seen there too.

I arrived at CTTB in 2007 from Berkeley, California. I grew up there, and the Berkeley Buddhist Monastery was my next-door neighbor (that is another story). I first met the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua back in 1992 at the Olema Vedanta Retreat. I belong to a group called the Vedanta Society. They are a Hindu group that has a temple in Berkeley. The Master gave a talk at that Vedanta Retreat which I attended. It was an interesting time. The Master gave his talk and a 'young' Dharma Master Heng Sure translated for him. At the end of the first talk, which lasted from 8:30 AM to 10 AM, everyone left the tent for a quick rest break. The retreat took place in a tent with a huge roomy grass-floored area. I was sitting there and for some reason I said to myself, "I'm going to sit here and see what he (the Master) does next."

Everyone left and I was the only person from the retreat still sitting in this huge grassy-floored tented area during the break. The Venerable Master was still seated and Dharma Master Heng Sure was sitting next to him. They weren't moving. The three of us just looked at each other for a few minutes, and then the Venerable Master looked over at Dharma Master Heng Sure. With a smile, he nodded to Dharma

我的名字是湯姆強森，我在萬佛城做了12年義工。我最主要的工作是在建設部門，但是我有在其他的部門幫忙，其中包括了保安工作(看守山門)。大多數人都認識我，因為他們會在下午6點到晚上9點在山門看到我。當然我也有去晚課，在那裡也能夠看到我。

2007年我從加州柏克萊市到萬佛城。我是在柏克萊長大的，柏克萊聖寺是我的隔壁鄰居，這當然是另一個故事。我第一次見到上人是在1992年，在奧勒馬吠陀中心。我那時候屬於吠陀協會，他們是印度教團體，有一間寺廟在加州柏克萊市。當時我參加奧勒馬吠陀協會的禪修營，那天上人在那裡演講，當時的經驗真有趣。上人演講時，由年輕的恆實法師做翻譯。第一場演講是從早上8:30到10:00點，結束後每個人都離開帳篷略作休息。禪修是在一片大草皮的帳篷里舉行。我當時坐在那裡跟我自己說：我要坐在這裡看看他（上人）下一步要做什麼。

在這段休息的時間中，每個人都離開了，我是唯一的一位仍坐在大草皮上的參與者。上人當時仍然坐在那裡，恆實法師坐在他旁邊，他們沒有移動。我們三人看著對方有幾分鐘的時間。之後上人看著恆實法師，臉上帶著微笑，點點頭跟恆實法師表示可以離開了。我看到



1992年上人在吠陀教修行中心

1992 Venerable Master Hua at the Olema Vedanta Retreat.

Master Heng Sure to leave. I saw the Venerable Master reach down and pull his leggings up. Dharma Master Heng Sure looked over and did the same thing. It was amusing to say the least. I had ‘alligator eyes’ to see that.

Among the Hindus there is a saying, “If you see an ‘awakened soul’ three times, then your spiritual life will awaken.” In my lifetime, I have seen the Master exactly three times, and I am so glad that I did. Two of them were at CTTB. After the Olema Retreat, I began to have fantastic visions of the Master. My mind was drawn to him. I just couldn’t stop thinking of him. One day, I was at a bus stop in Marin somewhere and I was just thinking of the Master, then all of a sudden, I looked over - and there He was! Then, He disappeared! I was shocked. I had many visions of the master, some of which I wrote down. I always wanted to go back and ask him about these vivid, dream-like experiences and ask him about them, but I never had the chance. However, I did meet Dharma Master Heng Sure sometime after the Olema Retreat. He was looking for a building to turn into a new Buddha Hall in Berkeley. I told him that I had just the building in mind that might work. There was an old church building next door to my mom’s house in the center of Berkeley. I showed it to him and he liked it. A few years later, it became the Berkeley Buddhist Monastery. We lived next door to each other until my mom came down with Alzheimer’s disease. She moved out of her home in Berkeley to live with my sister in 2007, and I went to live at the City of the Ten Buddhas.

My first duties at the monastery were with Buildings & Grounds. I became the CTTB liaison with the Ukiah Fire Department. The Fire Marshal, Dave Haas would come to inspect the buildings and write up the violations. I would then work on correcting the ‘violations’ or to be more specific, performed fire signage and electrical work. He would return to note our corrections, then we would go through the same thing for another building, and we did this one by one, building after building. As part of my job, I was able to see the layout and design of every building at CTTB along with the Fire Marshal. Dave Haas went through every building at the temple to try to get the temple fire safe. I got to see every building and go where nobody usually looks (in basements, attics, etc.). He also told me an unusual history of Ukiah and the old mental hospital.

There is more information about the old state hospital (which is now CTTB) that can be read from books in the public library in Ukiah. I looked into these and other stories. I copied some of the better stories and used to give them out to people to read. I also met quite a few people who used to work at the old state hospital and

上人伸手下去把僧襪拉上來，恆實法師看著上人也照著做。這至少可以說是非常有趣的。我暗暗地觀察著這一切。

印度教有這麼一說：如果你能夠看到覺悟的靈魂三次，你的靈性也能夠覺悟。在我的一生，我真的很高興，我正好看見上人三次，其中的兩次是在萬佛城。在奧勒馬的禪修之後，我開始看到上人的奇妙影像，我無法停止我的心念一直想著上人。有一天，在馬林縣的某個公車站牌我當時想著上人，忽然我回頭一看，上人就出現在我的身邊，然後他又消失了，我當時很震驚。我很多次看到上人的影像，其中有幾次我把它寫下來。我總是想要去問上人關於這些很清晰又很像夢境的經驗，但是我從來沒有機會。在奧勒馬的禪修之後，我有機會再見到恆實法師，當時他在柏克萊市尋找適合的道場。我跟他說：我想到一個地點可能適合，它是一個舊的教堂，在我母親的房子旁邊，位於柏克萊市的中心，我帶他去看他覺得不錯。幾年之後，它就成了柏克萊聖寺。我們成為隔壁的鄰居好幾年，直到我母親得了阿茲海默症。在2007年她搬離了在柏克萊的家，去跟我姊姊住在一起，我就搬到了萬佛城。

我在道場的第一份工作是在維修部門，我成為萬佛城和瑜伽市消防局的聯絡人。當消防隊長大衛·哈斯來做大樓的消防檢測，他會寫下違規事項。我的工作修正這些違規事項，具體而言是關於消防標示牌，電工工作等等。他會回來做複檢，做紀錄，然後我們會一個建築物一個建築物的檢查，直到完成。因為這份工作跟著消防隊長，我看到了萬佛城每一個大樓的設計格局。大衛·哈斯檢查每一個大樓確保佛寺的防火安全，我因此能夠看到了人們一般不會到達的地方，譬如說：地下室，閣樓等等。他也跟我說到了很多關於舊精神病院和瑜伽市的一些特別的歷史。

在瑜伽市的公立圖書館，可以看到一些關於舊州立醫院(現在是萬佛城)的一些書籍。當我看到的一些故事，我會把一些比較好的故事拷貝下來，跟其他的人分

they told me stories that were insightful and very informative. This helped to enrich my story telling to people about the temple grounds. It also helped that I was able to look at the old architectural prints of the buildings. These are works of art: they were drawn with pencil and have NO mistakes on them. They also have the dates of the buildings on the all of the prints. This is how I came to know the ages of the buildings.

The most useful thing about my experience as I served at the temple was that I realized that people needed help. Of course, I couldn't help everyone and wasn't going to either, but I had the opportunity to help others in need. I discovered that at the temple all sorts of help is needed. Oftentimes, I ended up doing a lot of jobs that no one else wanted to do, such as disposing of hazardous waste. Nobody wants to handle poisons and hazardous waste...so I got the job, and learned that it is not as bad as people might think. In Buddhism, you can take a psychological perspective to everything that you do. In this case, poisons are just substances. If you respect them, they are not necessarily bad or harmful - it is what you do with them that makes them harmful (i.e. spilling them). If you just remember to be respectful of them, life is good. I found this sort of attitude to also be helpful when working with people at the temple too.

I always thought of Guanyin Bodhisattva and her need to help others while I did my work. I wanted to think that somehow I could be like her. Well, I don't have as many arms as she does, so probably I can't be exactly like her, but it is nice to try...to just try. It was a pleasure to be a service to those who needed help. For years, I had always wanted to do some sort of "service" work, like the kinds that Mother Teresa's people do. Hindus call this sort of service "karma yoga." While I lived in Berkeley, there were few opportunities for me to perform this kind of work. At CTTB, there were endless requests for help. It was a pleasure to receive them and respond to them.

I have had many good memories in the Buddha Hall; it was always a pleasure to attend the ceremonies for me. The best memories I had were when I first came. I would go to the morning ceremonies and just love 'the morning air' It is such a different time of day and had such an unusual attraction for me. It isn't easy to get up at 4 AM, go to ceremony, then work all day, go to evening ceremony, and try to do everything else you would like to do with yourself. You cannot do everything you would like to do when you get older. If you are young, enjoy and make the most of your youth while you have it. ❀

享。我也遇到了一些曾經在舊醫院工作的人，他們跟我分享了許多很有用的資訊。這些都豐富了我跟其他人分享佛寺的故事，也幫助了我了解舊大樓的設計藍圖，這些都是藝術品，用鉛筆一筆一筆劃出來，而絲毫不差。在所有的設計藍圖上都有日期，我也因此知道了這些大樓的年份。

我在道場服務過程中最珍貴的經驗是覺悟到人們需要幫助。當然我不可能幫助到每一個人，而且我也沒有這個打算。但是我有這個機會能夠去幫助需要幫助的人。我發現在道場需要各種的幫忙，結果常常我就是做那些沒有人願意做的工作。譬如，危險物質的清除。沒有人願意去清除有毒和危險的廢棄物，結果我就得到這份工作。我了解到，這其實並非如人們所想的那麼糟糕。在佛教中你可以選擇某種心態去看待你所做的一切。有毒物質只是一種物質。你如果對它保持敬意，它其實並沒有所謂的害處和傷害。是你的行為讓它變成有害，比如說洩漏。如果你記住去尊敬它，那就沒有什麼問題。我發現這樣的態度很有幫助，尤其是跟道場的住眾們一起工作時。

當我在工作的時候，我都會想著觀音菩薩和祂如何去幫助眾生。我試著去想著如何變成祂。當然我沒有像祂一樣有這麼多隻手，所以我不可能跟祂一模一樣。但是我覺得只要嘗試著去做，試試看都很好。當我能夠幫助到需要幫助的人，我總是充滿喜悅。很多年間，我一直想要做一些義務服務的工作，像德蕾莎修女那樣地付出。印度教把這種服務稱作「業行瑜珈」。當我還住在柏克萊的時候，我很少有機會做那樣的工作。在萬佛城，永遠有需要幫助的情況。我愉快的去接受它們，去回應它們。

我在萬佛寶殿有很多美好的回憶。對我而言，參加各種法會都是充滿著喜悅。最好的回憶就是我剛來的時候，我去參加早課，特別喜歡早晨的空氣。這是一個在一天中這麼特別的時段，對我有非比尋常的吸引力。能夠早上四點鐘起床，去參加早課，之後再工作整天，再去參加晚課，再試著去做一些其他你自己想做的事，是不容易的。當我們老了之後並沒有辦法做所有你想做的事。所以當你還擁有年輕，好好的去享用它，好好把握。❀

Q&A with Venerable Master Hua at the Vedanta Society's Retreat  
in Olema, California on May 25, 1992

宣公上人1992年5月25日吠陀教修行中心問答紀錄節選

問：我想問問「用意」。是有時候人的「用意」是好的，所引起的行為卻造成傷害，那該怎麼辦？

上人：你處處想著利人，就不會對人有妨礙了。你若處處想要利己，那對人就有妨礙。我若答覆錯了，請各位指教。

問：上人，我要問您一句話，你是一位中國的美國人，我是一個美國的中國人，因為我出生在蘇州，所以你講話，我聽得懂，因為我聽得懂，所以我認為上人的本性和我的本性是一樣的。

上人：你是沒認識自己，我是愚癡中的愚癡，而你卻是智慧中的智慧。我不但和你是一個，和所有的眾生都是一個。和螞蟻在一起，我就像個螞蟻似的；和偉大的人物在一起，我也不比他小多少，和最小的我也不比他大多少。是法平等，無有高下。我今天再告訴你們一句話，你們誰若想要發揮自己的智慧和能力，這個只在你們自己裡邊，我對你們所說的，都是一些皮毛譬喻或者形容詞。真正的智慧是要你自己來挖掘，要自己把它找回來，我沒有法子告訴你，我告訴你的，都不是智慧。

問：我們吠陀教中「我」的道理非常優美，我們也了解必須要超脫這個「我」，但是佛性又是怎麼一回事？常常好像和這個「我」很相似的。

上人：你要找佛性，你現在說話就是佛性說，你吃飯就是佛性吃，你跑路也是佛性跑，你一舉一動無非佛性在那兒使你這個樣子。可是，你若往好的路上走就是佛性，你要是往不好的路上走，就是魔性，所以善惡之分，只在一念之間，你要知道這一念之間，根本分而不分，不分而分。一個「心」字形容佛性也形容得很好：「三點如星布，彎勾似月牙，披毛從此起，做佛也由他。」 ❀

**Question: My question is on intention. What is a skillful response when the intention feels clean, and yet harm comes from the action that the intention provoked?**

Venerable Master Hua: In terms of intention, the first thing to do is to rid your intention of any selfish benefit. In every situation, if your intention is to benefit others, then you will not obstruct others. On the other hand, if you only intend to benefit yourself, then you will obstruct everyone. If my answers are wrong, I hope you all will correct me.

**Question: Venerable Master, I want to ask you something. You're an American among Chinese, I'm a Chinese among Americans. Because I was born in Suzhou (in China), when you speak I understand what you're talking about. Because I understand what you said, I think the Venerable Master's self-nature and my self-nature are the same.**

Venerable Master Hua: You still do not know yourself. I am the stupid one among the stupid and you are the intelligent one among the intelligent. I'm not only one with you, I'm also identical with all living beings. When I'm with ants, I feel like an ant. When I'm with great people, I'm not much lesser than them. When I'm with the most insignificant people, I don't feel I'm more superior than them. The Dharma is level and equal, there is no high and low. I'll tell you something else today. Whoever wants to activate their inner wisdom and potential has to do it from within. Whatever I say to you is only an extrinsic similarity or a graphic indication. You have to mine your true wisdom by yourself, you yourself have to uncover it. There is no way I can convey it to you. What I can say in words is not true wisdom.

**Question: We can appreciate the beauty of Atman in Vedanta. We can also understand the necessity of transcending the jivaatman (self), but what about the Buddha-nature which seems often to be similar with the Atman, the true self.**

Venerable Master Hua: If you are looking for the Buddha-nature, you're talking now and it's the Buddha-nature who is talking. Eating: it's the Buddha-nature eating. Running: it's the Buddha-nature running. Every act you do, it's none other than Buddha-nature doing it; however, it is only if you're on a good road that it is the Buddha-nature. If you're on a bad road, it's the demon-nature. So the difference between good and evil lies within a single thought. You must know that within this one thought, fundamentally, it's different yet not different, not different yet different. The Chinese character for "mind" (心) symbolizes the Buddha-nature very well. It's described as,

*Three dots like clustering stars,*

*A hook like the new moon.*

*Animals and Buddhas*

*Both come from here.* ❀