



Expedient Wisdom

善巧智慧

Excerpted from the Avatamsaka Lecture by Reverend Heng Sure on May 27, 2017 at Berkeley Buddhist Monastery

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Skillful wisdom responds differently to different people. A good example of this is how Master Hua taught us when we were doing Three-steps-One-Bow Pilgrimage. During the years of our pilgrimage, Marty and I got to know each other's habits and thoughts. Marty is a visual person. He is a martial artist. But he can't use his martial arts. There's a good teacher; he forces his student to focus back on his mind.

So what about me? Well, the only thing that carried me through school was my ears. I was never a fighter. I'm the translator. I'm a language person. So what did Shr fu do for me using expedient wisdom? He told me, "You don't talk."

The martial artist can't throw a punch and the translator can't talk.

Expedient wisdom means that you teach individuals in a way that goes directly to their weakness. The point is that we're not growing or gaining anything by our cultivation. Cultivation is getting rid of our attachments, false thoughts, and habits. That's the fastest way "home" because progress is not measured by gains. We advance by subtraction. The goal is an uncovered Buddha nature, to get "home". So, we really do make progress by getting rid of what covers us. There's no other yardstick of how we grow in the Dharma. For example, the eighth and ninth ground Bodhisattvas have less ignorance than the seventh ground bodhisattva. Cultivation growth is measured by a very different yardstick. We focus on getting rid of things rather than gaining them.

If Marty were told to be a vigorous Dharma protector that just reinforces something he already knew in the world. But, Shr fu tells him, "I'll give you four power tools, four weapons for protection. Kindness, compassion, joy, and

善巧智慧會因材施教，例如我們三步一拜時上人就是這樣教導我們的。在朝拜的旅程中，我和馬汀（果廷，前恒朝法師）逐漸瞭解了彼此的習氣和想法。馬汀以視覺為主，他是一個武術家，但是他不能使用他的武術。這時候出現了一位善知識，讓他反觀內心。

那我呢？這麼多年陪我度過學生時代的唯一一個東西就是我的耳朵。我總是用言語來解決紛爭，我是一個翻譯者，我是一個擅長語言的人。那麼師父對於我的善巧智慧是什麼呢？他告訴我，你不要講話。

習武之人不能動用拳頭，翻譯者不能說話。

善巧智慧意味著在教化他人的時候直指他們的弱點。這裡重點在於我們修行並不是為了增長或者獲得任何東西，而是為了去除我們的執著，妄想，還有習氣。這是回家的捷徑，因為我們的進步不是由得到多少來衡量。我們修行是作減法。

我們的目標是讓佛性彰顯，不是嗎？所以我們是在去除覆障的過程中進步的。除此之外我們沒有衡量在佛法中成長的工具。比如說，第八地和第九地菩薩比第七地菩薩的愚痴少一些。這種衡量和我們修行中進步的衡量非常不同。我們在做減法，在不斷除去，而不是獲取。

serenity. If you can learn how to use those, no one will touch.”

Since he can't use martial arts, he's stripping that away, that layer of identity. So, the question for a martial artist who can't throw a punch is: who are you underneath that identity?

Let's take it deeper. That's what a skillful teacher does. Everybody has a different blend. Are you a sister? Are you the second child? Do you have an older sister who's always in the spotlight and you're always tagging along after? But that's not true either. That's provisionally true. But, deeper than that, who are you? The skillful teacher can show you. He or she can invite you to step out of it. It's hard letting go of all those layers of who we think we are. We cling to our costumes, our disguises. We cling to them because that's all we know, the stories that work.

For me, somebody whose only defense have been his words and that I can't talk, how vulnerable do I feel? What am I going to do if I can't talk my way out of situations? Then I need to use my wisdom, use my gung fu, use my faith in Guanyin. Use my vows and my sincerity—lots of things to use.

It's actually everything. That's the deeper level, yet most of us don't put ourselves in that situation of insecurity long enough to affect any change. The amazing thing is when you put yourself in that place where there's nowhere to go, the Buddhadharma is sufficient. It's not only enough, it's all we need. In the Buddhadharma, we work on our 84,000 agents of change. And then you let these go too, because they doesn't exist either.

That's what cultivation is for, but mostly we get to the point where we can change and yet we run away and don't want to do it. We cling to our identities—all these different identities. We won't push ourselves enough to change just based on our faith. In the Dharma-ending age, people find it hard to trust in the Buddha, something that's invisible. The problem with the Dharma-ending age is there aren't very many examples or models that we can look at and say, “There, I want to be just like that. I believe it's enough; it will take me across.” ❀

所以說，如果馬汀被告誡去做一個精進的護法，那麼只是增強他在俗世瞭解的東西。但是，師父告訴他：「我要給你四件利器：四件防禦武器——慈、悲、喜、捨——就用這些。」師父說：「如果你能夠學會如何運用這些，那麼任何人都不會碰你。」

他無法使用武術，所以他正在慢慢地剝下那一層的身份。對於一個不能動一個拳頭的習武之人在於：在這個身份之下你是誰？

我們深入一點。這就是一位善知識的教法。每個人都好像有不同的身份組成。你是一個妹妹嗎？你是家裡老二嗎？你有一個備受關注的姐姐，而你總是跟著她的跟班嗎？但是這也不是真的。這些都是暫時的。深入一點，你是誰？這些善知識會讓你看到。他會引導你跳出這些。我們很難放下一層一層的我相。我們執著於我們的「外衣」，我們的掩飾。我們執著於這些因為這是我們知道的所有，我們知道的只是成功過的個人故事。

所以，對於我這樣以語言為唯一防禦的人，不讓我說話。我感覺有多麼脆弱？如果我不能用語言來為自己解決困境，那我怎麼辦呢？用我的智慧，用我的功夫，用我對觀音菩薩的信仰，用我的誓言，用我的誠心，很多東西可以用。

我們大多數人很久沒有把自己置身於沒有安全感的情況下來做任何改變。神奇的是，當你把自己置身於無處可逃的情境時，佛法就足夠了。不但是足夠，而且是我們需要的全部。佛法是促使我們改變的八萬四千種妙藥。

這就是我們為什麼要修行的原因。大多數時候，當我們到了可以改變的時刻，我們就逃跑而不願去改變。我們執著於我們的身份——各種不同的身份。這就是為什麼我們身邊沒有很多佛。因為我們很難相信看不見的東西，我們沒看到有人這麼做。

末法時代的問題在於沒有很多我們可以參照和學習的榜樣，讓我們能夠說：「看，我就想成為那樣的人。我相信那樣就足夠了，那會度我到彼岸。」❀