

# Lessons From Bees and Beeps

## 無言的教誨——嗡嗡聲和嗶嗶聲

A Talk Given by Roger Kellermen at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas on September 2, 2018

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Today, I'll start with a story, from the eighties, probably mid-eighties. In those days, I worked at the office and there weren't as many people here as there are now. The office people were responsible for keeping the cottages ready at all times for visitors.

This was around the time when cell phones had come out and one day I was in the office and I received a call. The Venerable Master had a cell phone that was about five pounds, (around \$7.) He called and he said, "Guo Min (that's my Dharma name), I'm coming with an important guest. I'll be there in thirty minutes." He was on the road to CTTB and was around Cloverdale. He said, "I need cottage three

今天跟大家分享一些以前發生過的事情，我將從80年代的一個故事開始，可能是80年代中期發生的。當時我在行政辦公室工作，人手不像現在那麼多，我們的工作之一就是要保持側邊一排小木屋的整潔，以方便接待貴賓。

那時候手機才剛問世，有一天我在辦公室接到電話。上人當時有一隻大約五磅重的手機（約七塊美元），上人打電話來說：「果民（我的法名），我帶一位重要的客人，大概30分鐘後到。」上人正在回萬佛城的路上，大概在克羅維戴爾那個小鎮附近。上人在電話裡頭吩咐：「把三號房準備好。」這

to be ready.” I should explain that cottage three was always reserved for the Venerable Master’s special guests and it wasn’t used very much. And I never actually had prepared it. I found somebody and together we went down to cottage three and tried to get it ready.

We rushed down there with brooms, mops and cleaning supplies. This being CTTB, there were plenty of cobwebs, a lot of dust, dirty toilet bowls from rusty water—generally the place was not very clean. All the time as I was cleaning the house, I thought to myself, “Shifu, why didn’t you call earlier so I could’ve had more time to get it ready.” Of course, cottage three was my responsibility which I had forgotten about. I was in the mindset of, “Oh my gosh, this is not going to be ready in time! Oh, if I only had more time to get it ready, it would’ve been better.” Thirty minutes isn’t much time and it wasn’t ready. During the entire time I kept thinking, “Shifu, I wish you had called earlier, giving me more time.”

The important thing when guests arrive is that you are not still inside cleaning. We just did the best we could and got outside cottage three as the Master pulled up with his guest. I was with another monk and stood outside the house. Just at that moment, two bees came and stung me on the forehead and face. I tried to hold my head and at the same time practice awesome deportment but it was not working.

There’s a little path from the sidewalk up into cottage three, and the Master came up with the guest. As he passed me, he said, “Guo Min, those two bees are my Dharma protectors.” Of course this is what happens when you get angry at a sage. I don’t have to explain it too much, but it was really obvious what was going on. It was a lesson. It wasn’t the sage but the disciple trying to do the work.

The next story I’ll tell is from 1993. At that time, I was a monk in Washington DC, at Avatamsaka Hermitage (later changed to Avatamsaka Vihara). This was the first Avatamsaka Hermitage, not the current one. It was in a gated community. It was a very large and beautiful house



### 三號樓

#### Cottage three

裡說明一下，三號房是專門用來接待上人的嘉賓，平時不常使用，我也始終沒去打掃。電話掛上之後，我趕緊找一個人和我去打掃房子。

我們帶著掃帚、拖把和清潔用品跑到那兒。你們知道，聖城這個地方有很多蜘蛛絲、灰塵，馬桶也有水垢，總之不會太乾淨。打掃房子的時候，我心想：「師父，您怎麼不早點打電話來，這樣我就有多一點時間。」我早忘了整理三號房是我的責任。我當時心想：「噢，天哪，怎麼可能來得及做完！如果有多一點時間就好了。」30分鐘不是很多，根本整理不完。整個打掃時間我只是一直想：「師父，真希望您早點告訴我，讓我有更多一點時間打掃。」

眼前最重要的，就是別讓客人到的時候還看見你在房裡打掃。我們卯足了勁兒，終於趕在上人和貴賓抵達前離開房子。我和另一個比丘站在屋外，這時突然飛來兩隻蜜蜂，螫我的額頭和臉。我不敢晃頭，而且努力保持威儀，但一點也不管用。

三號房前面有一條小徑通往人行道，當上人跟貴賓一起經過我身旁時，上人說：「果民，這兩隻蜜蜂是我的護法。」這就是對聖人生氣的果報。我不需要解釋太多，因為實



that had been featured in an architectural magazine. It had wood paneling and it was extremely adorned.

I should explain a little bit. When you were in one of these monasteries throughout the week and people would come to attend ceremonies and hear lectures. We also had Sunday school for the children. During the week we did morning and evening recitations and listened to tapes of the Venerable Master. There were just two of us, another monk and myself. The monk was Heng Tso.

In general, at CTTB, maybe you would be suddenly asked to move to another monastery for a while. The monks in those days managed Avatamsaka Monastery in Calgary, Avatamsaka Hermitage, Gold Mountain Monastery, and Long Beach Monastery. So monks would come in and out from our temples. Perhaps you'd come back to CTTB for a while, but then you'd moved out again. We were never quite set up in one place.

When you were out in these branch monasteries, the Master wouldn't be there all the time. At CTTB he'd come maybe once a week, but perhaps only twice a year at branch monasteries. At Avatamsaka Heritage, the Master came only once while I was there for a year.

When you were in these outlying places, maybe we'd get a little "soft" or a little slacked, because things were not up to standard, so when the Master came it was like "Spring cleaning" and things would get fixed up again. We called it "Spring cleaning" because there was always something to be fixed up, either it was yourself or the place—it was never all quite right.

在夠明顯的。這是給我的教訓，問題不是出在聖人，而是做弟子的應該把工作做好。

接下來要講的，是1993年發生的故事。那時我還是比丘，派駐在大華府地區的華嚴精舍。最初的華嚴精舍跟現在的不同，是位在一個有門禁的社區，那是一棟又大又漂亮的房子，還曾被一本建築雜誌報導過。這棟房子四壁有美麗的木鑲板，看起來十分莊嚴。

我稍微解釋一下，法總的分支道場情況大多如此，居士只有在法會或是講法的時候才會來，週日有為小孩開設類似主日學的課程。平常的時候，出家人就負責做早晚課，和聽上人講法的錄音帶。當時華嚴精舍只有兩個人，一個是我，另一位就是比丘恆佐。

以前在萬佛城，出家人會突然被派到分支道場一段時間。當時的比丘必須管理華嚴聖寺、華嚴精舍、金山寺和長堤聖寺，所以經常進進出出萬佛聖城，可能回到聖城一段時間，後來又被派去其他分支道場，但是都不會在一個地方待太久。

當你被派到分支場道，上人不曾經常在那裡。他每個禮拜都會到萬佛聖城一次，但是分支道場可能每年只去個兩次。我在華嚴精舍一年，上人只來過一次。

在分支道場我們會比較悠哉，做事情也比較不厭謹。所以當上人要來的時候，就像「春季大掃除」，每件事情都得就位。之所以稱做「春季大掃除」，因為總是有些東西要調整調整，可能是道場，也可能是自己，總之就是有



九十年代華嚴精舍（大華府地區）  
Avatamsaka Hermitage (later changed to Avatamsaka Vihara) in Maryland during 1990s.

The incident I want to relate happened around the time just after our “Spring cleaning.” I was having a particularly hard time with this monk Heng Tso; we were not getting along well. There were a lot of problems. Every morning of course we did Morning Ceremony, and since Avatamsaka Hermitage’s Buddha Hall was not yet completed then, we used the living room for the prayer. It was quite big and we had an altar there.

On this particular morning, just like every morning, we lit an incense stick and got ready for the ceremony. Suddenly the smoke detector starts beeping. Of course we had done ceremonies many times without any problems with the smoke detector. It wasn’t making the usual long “beep” – “beep”... “beep”... “beep.” It was going beep, beep, beep... beeping – long beeps and beep with different length pauses in between.

Heng Tso and I were running around trying to find out what was going on — was it the incense? Surely not because we had plenty of ceremonies there with no problems. Just at that moment, the telephone rang. It was 3:45 in the morning, our time in Washington. Who was on the phone? The Master was on the phone, “Guo Min, what’s happening?”

I said it before, whenever the Master talked to me on the phone, he wanted me to speak in Chinese, to practice my Chinese. It’s very hard to describe things if you don’t know what “smoke detector” is in Chinese... 「煙什麼東西，煙做聲音，嗶嗶。(Smoke thing, smoke thing makes sound, beep beep.) The Master hung up and the smoke detector started going again. Beep... beep... beep, beep.

The phone goes again. This time Heng Tso picks it up, and he’s much better at Chinese than mine and he’s a bit smarter. He explains to the Master about the smoke detector in good Chinese. Then Heng Tso says to the Master, “I think you’re doing it. Shifu.” The Master says to Heng Tso, “Do you really think I have that skill?” That was the end of the conversation. Heng Tso and I really thought about that for a long time, and then we just started laughing at the absurdity of the situation.

I think I’m telling this story tonight because sometimes people have heard over the years how the Master was very strict and very stern. This shows that he had a very different way of communicating when necessary. Heng Tso and I had a very tense relationship and here was the Master lightening our mood with the smoke detector. ❀

些地方不對。

這個故事是發生在「春季大掃除」之後。我跟恒佐處得不太好，兩個人之間有很多問題。當然每天我們會一起做早課，因為當時大殿還沒有整修完成，所以我們就在客廳做早課。客廳很大，我們就在那裡設置一個佛龕。

有一天早上，就像平常一樣，我們點香準備做早課，突然煙霧偵測器發出聲響。我們做過很多次早課，煙霧偵測器從來就沒響過。那天的聲響不像普通的長響：嗶—嗶—嗶，而是長短不一的：嗶嗶嗶—嗶、嗶嗶嗶—嗶、嗶、嗶，中間還會暫停一下。

我和恒佐試圖找出原因：是燒香的關係嗎？當然不是，因為做那麼多次早晚課從來都沒有問題。就在那一刻，電話響了。華盛頓時間早上3點45分，誰會在那個時候打來？是師父。師父問：「果民，怎麼樣啊？」

每次師父跟我講電話都會要我講中文。這回很難跟師父解釋，尤其我不知道「smoke detector (煙霧偵測器)」的中文是什麼。我跟師父說：「煙什麼東西，煙做聲音，嗶嗶。」上人把電話掛了，煙霧偵測器又開始響：嗶—嗶嗶嗶、嗶—。

這時電話又響了。這次是恒佐接電話，他的中文比我好得多，而且也比我聰明些。他用中文跟上人解釋煙霧偵測器響了，並且跟師父說：「我覺得是您讓煙霧偵測器響的。」師父對他說：「你覺得我有這個本事嗎？」這通電話就這樣結束，可是這件事情我和恒佐想了很久，後來兩人都為這荒謬的情況笑了起來。

今天講這個故事，是因為有時會聽到人家說師父很嚴厲、很嚴格，但是我想告訴大家，師父會視情況用很不一樣的方法和你溝通。當時我和恒佐的關係很緊張，師父就用煙霧偵測器來輕鬆化解我們的心情。❀