



# The Practice of the Great Compassion Mantra

## 大悲咒的修持

A Talk by Terri Nicolson at the Buddha Hall of the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas on December 16, 2023

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Most of us recite the Great Compassion Mantra many times each day and are very familiar with its syllables and the many stories of its efficacy. The deep levels of compassion and many meanings and powers of the mantra are much more difficult to fathom. The Venerable Master, in his great wisdom and compassion, wrote a four-line verse for every single line of the mantra and also lectured the *Dharani Sutra*, in which he included a line-by-line explanation of the mantra.

For example, for the first line of the Great Compassion Mantra, “Na Mo He La Da Nuo Duo La Ye Ye,” the Master wrote the following verse:

*Contemplating with kindness, contemplating with compassion,  
Contemplating with joy, and with equanimity.  
Rescuing beings everywhere, transforming the universe,  
He gathers in those with and without prior affinities,  
So that they cease suffering, find joy, and return to the basic source.*

In his commentary on this first line of the mantra the Master explains,

“In general, this means to take refuge with the limitless, limitless, Three Jewels of the ten directions. It is the original body of the Bodhisattva Who Regards the World’s Sounds (Avalokiteśvara)... Reciting this line of the mantra is also a Dharma of Increasing Benefits. If you already have roots of goodness and recite the mantra, your roots of goodness will increase, and you will obtain even more benefits. If you can recite even the first line of the mantra that’s a Dharma of Accomplishment. Your every wish will be granted.”

How amazing is that? And that is only the first line. The Great Compassionate Dharma of the Great Compassion Mantra is one aspect of Guanyin’s great compassion. Mantras are part of what

我們大多數人每天都會持誦多遍〈大悲咒〉，也深諳咒語的音節以及它眾多的感應故事。然而〈大悲咒〉所蘊藏的廣大慈悲、無量智慧與威神力，卻難窺其貌。宣公上人以其慈悲智慧開演《陀羅尼經》，當中也將〈大悲咒〉逐句以四句偈頌作解說。

例如，大悲咒的第一句「南無喝囉怛那哆囉夜耶」，上人寫了如下的偈語：

慈觀悲觀喜捨觀，  
普度眾生化大千。  
有緣無緣同攝受，  
離苦得樂返本源。

在〈大悲咒〉頭一句的講解，上人說道：「這是皈依十方三世無盡無盡的三寶，也就是觀世音菩薩本身。這一句咒是增益法。你有善根，念誦此咒，能令你善根增長，得到更多利益。這一句咒也是成就法，能令你遂心滿願。」

真是不可思議！而這僅僅是第一句咒。〈大悲咒〉是觀音菩薩大悲心的一種展現，咒語屬於我們稱為佛教密宗或密教的一部分，有些人誤以為「密」是指秘而不宣，事實並非如此。上人曾多次傳授四眾弟子此一法門。然而，學習這一法門是有條件的，就像接受醫科培訓一樣。首先，必須具

we sometimes call the Secret or Esoteric School of Buddhism. Sometimes people mistakenly think this means they are secrets kept from others and not shared. This is far from the truth. The Venerable Master transmitted this Dharma many times to both Sangha members and lay disciples. However, there are requirements for learning it. It is similar to training to be a doctor. First, you must have a great deal of education in the sciences and many years of training through medical school, residency, and internship, which is practicing medicine under the guidance of a fully trained and experienced doctor.

In the same way, in order to practice these Dharma, one must first study them under the guidance of someone who has fully mastered the practice. In this case, the Venerable Master. One must also hold the five precepts, hold to the Six Great Principles, and bring a sincere heart to the practice. It is practiced for the sake of all living beings, not for personal gain.

In his introduction to the publication of the transmission verses, the Venerable Master said that originally the transmission had been cut off because no one in the Dharma Ending Age understood it. How fortunate we are that the Master revived it. He said that it is a Dharma that is most rare and is difficult to encounter in many eons of time.

Although the Dharma is one that must be transmitted, the verses the Master wrote originally appeared on the early covers of Vajra Bodhi Sea magazine, which was available to the public and is still available online through the VBS index. The first issue has the Master's verse in praise of Guanyin Bodhisattva. The next forty-two issues have his verses for the Great Compassion Mnatra. Issues 44-175 contain his verse for each line of the Great Compassion Mantra.

Tonight, I'd like to talk a bit about some of them. I'll begin with the Joined Palms Hand, because putting our palms together is an almost universal gesture of respect and good will. It can be found in all the major religious traditions of the world, and so connects us with the rest humankind most naturally. The Sanskrit greeting, Namaste, which includes putting one's palms together, means from my heart to your heart.

The Master's verse says:

### *Joined Palms Hand and Eye*

*Single-mindedly revere the god among gods (the Buddha)  
Living Beings' kindness toward one another is true and sincere.  
In planting seeds and reaping the results, one must seek within oneself.*

備基礎科學的深厚知識，並經過醫學院、住院醫師培訓，最後在受過訓練且經驗豐富的醫師指導下實習看診。

同樣地，修習這些法門也必須在通曉此法的善知識指導下學習。對我們而言，這位善知識就是上人。此外，修習者也必須持守五戒和六大宗旨，並以誠心學習。不為個人私利而修，而以利益眾生為目的。

在出版傳法偈的序文中，上人提到，法門已在末法時期失傳，無人知曉。我們何其幸運，因著上人的復興得以修習〈大悲咒〉法門。上人說，這是稀有難得、萬劫難遇的法。

雖然法門須經傳授才能學習，但上人所寫的偈頌已刊登在早期的《金剛菩提海》雜誌封面上，供大眾閱覽，現今仍可透過VBS索引線上查閱。創刊號刊登上人讚歎觀音菩薩的偈頌，接下來的42期則連載上人所作的偈頌。第44至175期則收錄〈大悲咒〉每句咒的偈頌。

我想談談觀音菩薩的幾隻手。先從「合掌手」開始，因為合掌幾乎是普世尊重和善意的手勢。它存在於世界各主要宗教傳統中，因此能自然地將我們與他人連結在一起。梵文的問候語「Namaste」還包括合掌的動作，意思是「讓彼此的心相互接軌」。

以下是上人有關「合掌手」的偈頌

### 合掌手

一心恭敬天中天  
眾生愛念各真度  
種因結果求諸己  
禮尚往來道不偏

錫杖是觀音菩薩的另一隻手，能引起許多人的共鳴。我認為它是真正的魔杖。在傳說和故事中，巫師

*Showing mutual respect as we come and go, impartial is the Way.*

The Tin Staff is another one of Guanyin's hands that strikes a chord with many of us. I see it as the true magic wand. In legends and stories, wizards and enchanters all have magic wands or staffs. Guanyin Bodhisattva's staff, however, is real. And the real magic and power is in her kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. These are the four Brahma Viharas or Unlimited Hearts. The Master's verse says,

### *Tin Staff Hand and Eye*

*Great kindness and great compassion rescue the sentient multitudes.  
Great joy and great equanimity benefit all that thrives.  
Great vows and great humaneness are the Bodhisattva Way.  
Great courage and great strength bear the fruit of Buddhahood.*

The sword is another symbol that appears in many different cultures and traditions as a metaphor for the righteous power and the warding off and quelling of evil. King Arthur's sword is an example of this in Western culture. Both the Judaic and Christian tradition use a sword as a metaphor for God's power over evil. The Master's verse says,

### *Jeweled Sword Hand and Eye*

*The Jeweled Sword lets fly a light that penetrates two sets of three.  
Chi, mei, and wang-liang ghosts obey all the commands.  
This is what puts to rest the Dharma Realm's weird energies.  
Propagate this proper teaching to help qián and kūn get free.*

The final hand I want to discuss is The Bestowing of fearlessness Hand and Eye, which also has some parallels in both Jewish and Arabic traditions. The Hamsa, or in Moslem tradition, the Hand of Fatima, wards off and offers protection from evil. Although some versions are inscribed with the Star of David, others are, interestingly enough, inscribed with an eye. Fearlessness, one could say, the calm that comes from feeling protecting from evil and harm, is something all sentient beings wish for.

The Master's verse for the Bestowing of Fearlessness Hand and Eye is:

### *Bestowing Fearlessness Hand and Eye*

*This rare Dharma Jewel quells celestial demons.  
As we go toward Bodhi, karmic obstacles are dispelled.  
Myriad illnesses return to spring, blessings grow, and lifespans increase.*



### 合掌手 Joined Palms Hand and Eye

和魔法師都有魔杖或法杖。觀音菩薩的法杖是真實存在，它的神通與力量在於她的慈悲喜捨，也就是四梵住或四無量心。上人的偈頌說：

#### 錫杖手

大慈大悲救群生  
大喜大捨益含萌  
大願大仁菩薩道  
大雄大力佛果成

劍也是另一個出現在許多不同文化和傳統中的象徵，比喻正義的力量以及降妖伏魔。西方文化中的亞瑟王之劍即是一例。在猶太教和基督教的傳統中，劍被比喻為上帝征服邪惡的力量。上人對此作的偈頌是

#### 寶劍手

寶劍飛光透三三  
魑魅魍魎各遵宣  
法界妖氛從茲息  
弘揚正教度坤乾





施無畏手

Bestowing Fearlessness Hand and Eye



哈姆薩手

The Hand of Fatima

*The hand bestowing fearlessness saves the multitudes from confusion.*

I would like to share some of my personal experiences with the Master. He often said that we should not neglect to do even the smallest good and should be careful never to do even the smallest evil.

And in every day, in the way that he interacted with us all and all living beings, he was a great example of this. I'm going to try and give a few examples from my own personal experience. Many of you are aware that the Venerable Master taught us about liberating life and the great kindness and compassion he showed in teaching us this ceremony and liberating living beings.

But he didn't neglect the small things either. When I brought the first summer camp to the CTTB, the children and I were here without very much of the assembly, which was still in San Francisco. He gave me money to buy bird seed for the birds at the CTTB and gave me very specific instructions that it was my job together with my students, the children who were here that summer, to feed the birds.

His instructions were that we were to first recite the Great Compassion Mantra over the bird seed and then sprinkle it and let the birds eat it. He had another instruction. He said don't get involved with the birds.

If the big birds bully the small birds, if they fight over the bird seed, you just stay out of it. Just recite the Great Compassion Mantra and then leave the birds alone. I remember that when we would first

最後我想討論的是〈施無畏手〉，這與猶太教和回教傳統文化有相似之處。例如猶太教的「哈姆薩手」，在回教傳統中被稱為「法蒂瑪之手」，具有驅邪作用。儘管有些版本的「哈姆薩手」刻有大衛星，但也有刻有一隻眼的版本。可以說，無畏是因鎮魔與庇護所產生的平靜，這也是所有有情眾生所渴望的。

上人作的無畏施手的偈頌是：

施無畏手

收盡天魔法寶奇  
業障消除趣菩提  
萬病回春增福壽  
施無畏手度群迷

以下我想和大家分享一些我追隨上人的點滴。他常教導我們——勿以善小而不為，勿以惡小而為之。

在日常生活中，上人與弟子以及所有眾生的互動方式，都是我們的榜樣。我將試著從我的個人經驗中舉出幾個例子。許多人都曉得，上人教導我們放生，以及他在指導我們放生儀軌和釋放物命所展現的慈悲心。

上人不曾忽略小細節。當我把第一屆夏令營帶到萬佛城時，當時那裏沒有多少人，四眾弟子還在三藩市（金山寺）。上人給我錢，讓我給萬佛城的鳥兒買鳥食，並且非常明確的指示——我和我的學生（也就是那年夏天在萬佛城的孩子們）要負責餵鳥。

他的指示是，首先我們要在鳥食上持誦〈大悲咒〉，然後撒在地上讓鳥兒吃。他還有另一項指示，就是不要和鳥兒有瓜葛。

如果大鳥欺負小鳥，或是鳥兒相互搶食，都別插手。儘管念〈大悲

come with the Master to visit the CTTB, before we lived here, that the people who were staying here taking care of the grounds said they knew when the Master was coming because the birds would get very excited and start flying in circles around the CTTB.

So, not only did the Master establish an elementary school, a junior high, a high school, and university, but he cared for every single student. I remember specifically one time when the Master was eating lunch with us, and one of my students had forgotten something and ran back to school to get it. He ran all the way back to school and then to the Dining hall again.

When he got there, the Master called him up, and he was afraid he might get scolded for being late. But the Master said, “You need to sit down and wait three minutes—I think it was three minutes)—before you eat because otherwise, you’re going to get a stomach ache.”

So, even the smallest thing that he could do to help a student, he was willing to do. We’re almost out of time, but I’ll tell one more story.

On a smaller level, at one point there was a problem with many children in the Buddha hall making a lot of noise. And many of the Dharma masters thought it would be a good idea to have a soundproof room in the back of the Buddha hall so they wouldn’t bother us all. I remember asking the Master saying, “But how will they learn to behave in the Buddha hall if we don’t have them here?” He explained at that time that every time they started to make noise, we would take them outside.

When they quieted down, we’d bring them back in. Shrfu said, “Here’s a method. If they make noise again, if they make trouble, take them home.” No second chances. Just go home. And I remember doing it.

I put my daughter, who was then about three years old, in her stroller. And she cried all the way home: “I’ll be good. I promise I’ll be good.” But because the Master had said no second chances, so I took her home. And it was quite remarkable.

The next time we were in the Buddha hall, she was very well-behaved. I think I didn’t understand how confusing it was that we kept taking her in and bringing her back rather than having a very clear rule about how to behave. Amitufo. ❀

咒》，別去管那些鳥。我記得，在我們搬到這裏之前，初次隨上人來萬佛城，負責看管的人說，他們知道師父什麼時候會來，因為鳥兒們會很興奮，開始在萬佛城上空盤旋。

上人不但設立了小學、中學、大學，也關心每個學生。我記得，有一次師父正和我們一起用午齋，我的一個學生忘了帶某樣東西，跑回學校拿。他一路跑去學校，再跑回齋堂。

當他回來時，師父叫他上前，他怕自己遲到挨罵。但師父對他說：「你要坐下來等三分鐘（我記得是三分鐘）——然後再吃飯，否則你會鬧肚子」。

所以，即使是照顧學生這種最細微的事情，他也會做。時間差不多了，我再說一個故事。

從更細微處來說，以前，大殿曾有許多小孩吵得很厲害。許多法師認為在大殿後面設一個隔音室是個好方法，這樣小孩就不會干擾大家。我記得請示師父時，他說：「如果我們不讓小孩在這裏，他們如何學會在大殿守規矩？」他解釋道，當小孩開始吵鬧，就把他們帶到外邊去。

等他們安靜下來，再把他們帶回佛殿。師父說，「如果他們又開始吵鬧，製造問題，有個辦法，就帶他們回家。」絕不寬貸，馬上帶回家。我記得我真的這麼做。

我把當時約三歲的女兒放在嬰兒推車裏，回家的路上，她一路哭著說：「我會乖乖地。我保證會聽話。」可是師父說沒有第二次機會，所以我把她帶回家。這真是高招。

下回我們去佛殿時，她非常乖巧。我想是我自己原先沒弄明白，我們不斷把孩子帶進帶出，而不是定下一個明確的規則，對她而言，有多困惑。

阿彌陀佛。❀