



# 參禪往事

## Chan Retreat Recollections

恒來法師2024年6月15日講於萬佛聖城佛殿

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A Dharma Talk by Dharma Master Heng Lai at the Buddha Hall of the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas on June 15, 2024

Chinese Translated by BTTS Volunteer and Yinong



The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, the Venerable Master, the Great Assembly, Amitofo.

I met the Venerable Master in December 1969 in Chinatown, in Waverly Place, in the Buddhist Lecture Hall. I was searching for somebody to help me understand my earlier experiences. I didn't know how to speak with anybody, and I didn't know where to look, but by causes and conditions, I was able to meet the Venerable Master.

When I saw him, I realized that I found someone who could truly understand me. When I met him, he was teaching the new shamis and shaminis (male and female novice monastics) how to fold their sitting cloths. I didn't know what a sitting cloth was. I just knew he was folding sitting cloths and showing them how to put them on the bowing bench.

At that time, the former Heng Yin walked up to the Master and, in Mandarin, told him that I wanted to meet him. Shifu looked at me, laughed and he said,

諸佛菩薩，上人，大眾，阿彌陀佛。

我是1969年12月在中國城的天后廟街佛教講堂遇見了上人。我當時正在尋找能幫助我理解我過去經歷的人。我不知道該和誰講我這些經歷，也不知道該去哪裏找人幫助，但在因緣際會之下，我得以遇到上人。

當我見到他時，我意識到自己找到了一位真正理解我的人。那時候，上人正在教新出家沙彌和沙彌尼如何摺坐具。我當時不知道坐具是什麼，只知道他在教他們如何摺疊，並示範如何將坐具放在拜墊上。

當時，前恒隱走到上人面前，用中文告訴上人說我想見他。師父看著我，笑著說：「哦，你終於來了。」這是我第一次見到上人。

由於種種因緣，我曾經離開跑掉，然後回來再跑掉，最後我又回到了金山寺。我在1971年以在家人的身份搬進了金山寺。他們是在1970年購置並建立了金山寺。

“Oh, you finally arrived.” That was my first meeting with the Venerable Master.

Through various causes and conditions, I left and ran away, then came back and ran away again, and then I came back. I finally moved into Gold Mountain Monastery, which was bought and established in 1970, in 1971 as a layman.

At first, I felt bad about eating the food of the Three Jewels, and I had no real income or money. I went to Oakland and got a job, and it turned out that I started working for the then mayor of Oakland. At that time, it was Mayor Redding, and he was building a sailboat, so I helped him build his sailboat, and he paid me.

I wanted to talk to the Master about my experiences at sea before I had met him. I had had a spiritual experience, and I didn't know how to deal with it. I did not know how to talk to him about this matter, but intuitively, I knew he understood my situation, but I didn't know to what extent.

I tried to be patient and listen to the lectures. I had to stand during the lectures because if I sat down, I'd go to sleep. I stood during the lectures and tried to understand what the master was speaking about.

They had the first big Chan session the first year I was there. We had a 98-day Chan. Shifu told us that traditionally, in China, when they had a Chan session, it was very strict, the rules were very rigid, and very few people could practice that way. Here in the United States, we don't have that ability. He says, what we'll do is that we won't punish people by beating them with a stick like they do in China if they drop off to sleep. He says, “We don't do that. We won't do that here. If somebody sitting next to you in meditation falls asleep, don't bother with them, but if they start snoring, then you can wake them up. Other than that, just mind your own business.”

He said that we take investigating Chan seriously. We sat twenty-one hours a day; We would walk for twenty minutes in between sits, then sit for one hour, and then walk again up to midnight. Then we rested until three in the morning and started again. Shifu said, “Those of you who don't think you can follow the schedule, can go to bed at 8 o'clock at night, but you should really try to follow the schedule. Everybody has to understand that everything is made from the mind alone, and you can truly do this if you set your mind to it.”

I was really nervous about doing that Chan session,

起初，我對吃三寶的飯是很不安，加上我沒有什麼收入或錢。於是我去奧克蘭（屋崙），找到了一份工作，開始為當時的奧克蘭市長打工。那是瑞丁市長，他正在建造一艘帆船，所以我幫他造船，他也支付了我工資。

我一直想跟師父談談在見到他之前，我在海上的經歷。我有過一次靈性的經歷，但我不知道該如何應對。我也不知道該如何向師父講述這件事，但直覺告訴我，他了解我的情況，但我不知道他到底明白到什麼程度。

我總是盡量耐心地聽講經，而我必須站著聽講，因為一坐下我就會睡著。聽經的時候我就站著聽，努力去理解師父在講什麼。

我在那裏的第一年，金山寺舉辦了第一次大型的禪七法會，我們參加了為期九十八天的禪修。師父告訴我們，傳統上在中國，打禪七的規矩是非常嚴格，只有極少數人能夠這樣修禪。但在美國這裏，我們沒有那樣的能力。他說我們要做的是，我們不會像在中國那樣，有人睡著就用香板打他們。師父說：「我們不這樣做。如果坐在你旁邊的人睡著了，不用理他們；但如果他們打呼了，你可以叫醒他們。除此之外，你就專注自己的修行。」

他告訴我們要認真參禪。我們一天坐21小時，坐香每1小時，就行香20分鐘，如此循環到午夜。午夜過後，養息香到凌晨三點，然後再起香參禪。師父說：「你們當中哪一個自認跟不上時間表的人，晚間八點就可以回去睡覺，但你也應該盡力來跟隨這個課表。大家要明白，一切唯心造，只要你下了決心，你就可以做到。」

我對禪七時間表感到很繃緊，因為我認為這是不可能做到的。我們怎麼可以坐到半夜呢？這太難以置信了。但我還是接受了師父的教導，我說：「我會盡力的。」然後看看八點會怎樣。我終於撐過了八點，腿非常疼，但我還是做到了。我對自己說：「好吧，我還沒死，那應該沒問題，我就繼

because I thought it was impossible. How can we sit till midnight? That's inconceivable. But I took Shifu's instructions directly. I said, "I'll try my best." We'll see what happens at 8 o'clock. I was able to survive when 8 o'clock rolled around. My legs really hurt, but I was able to do it still. I said, "Well, I'm not dead yet, so I guess it's okay, so I'll just stay here." It worked out, and I was able to go all the way to midnight. The last two hours, in the last two sits, my body stopped fighting with me and relaxed, and I was able to sit full lotus without any pain. I was really happy, free, and easy during those last two hours. It was probably just because of exhaustion, but it was a good feeling. I thought, Well, I don't even need to go to bed; I'll stay in the Buddha Hall and try practicing sitting up all night and see if that works. I was able to do that until three and I said, well, I'll keep that up. I learned a lot about the teaching then.

The Master taught us that Chan is not about sitting in meditation but about investigating Chan. He used to call it "investigating Chan." He said, "What do you mean by investigating Chan? You shouldn't just sit there and recite the Buddha's name. It would be best if you investigated who's reciting the Buddha's name. Who is this person sitting here? It would help if you investigated it much like a cat sitting in front of a mouse hole, waiting for the mouse to come out, ready to pounce on it. You need to have that kind of intensity to investigate "who." Who you are? Who you truly are. Who your real Buddha nature is."

This made profound sense to me because before I met the Master, I was a sailor on a ship. I was an AB, (able-bodied seaman). As an AB, I had to stand in long watches for many months at sea. I was able to do this very thing.

I stood there. I didn't sit. Seamen were not allowed to do anything but watch the ocean. Because of that, I started to investigate my huatou. They call it huatou, investigating a meditation topic. I was investigating. Who am I? How did I get here? I was investigating that very same thing. I didn't know that that was Chan.

I'd had a profound experience where my mind completely stopped thinking for just a second, and it was enough to realize that this profound release and peace was what I needed to grow. I wanted that to happen again, so that's why I was looking for a teacher in the first place. I really took that very seriously, and I would sit there really tightly during the day,

續待在這裏吧。」結果，我竟然能撐到了午夜。最後兩個小時，最後這兩支香打坐，我的身體不再抗議了，放鬆了，我可以持續雙盤打坐，沒有任何疼痛。我非常高興、自在、輕鬆，最後那兩個小時的感覺非常好。可能只是因為太累了，但這種感覺很好。我想，好吧，我甚至不需要回去睡覺；我就留在禪堂繼續坐，看看行不行。我就一直坐到凌晨三點，然後我決定繼續坐。那時候，我學到了很多教法。

師父教導我們，禪不是僅僅靜坐，而是要「參禪」。他說，「參禪，什麼是參禪？你不是坐在那裏念『念佛是誰』，而是要參『念佛是誰』。坐在這裏的這個人是誰？參禪如貓捕鼠，你要像貓守在老鼠洞前隨時準備撲上去，帶著那種專注來參究『誰』。你是誰？你真正的本來面目是什麼？你應該參究自己的佛性。」

這對我來說意義深遠，因為在我遇到師父之前，我曾是一名海員。我是一等水手。作為一級海員，我必須在海上長時間值班數月。我能夠做到這件事。

在船上，我就是站著，沒有坐下。海員除了觀看海面，不能做任何其他事情。也因如此，我開始參話頭。他們叫它「話頭」，就是參禪的一個話題。我當時正在參究「我是誰？我怎麼到這裏？」我參究的正是同樣的問題，但我不知道那就是禪。

我有過一次深刻的經歷，我的心念有那麼一瞬間完全靜止，這已經足夠讓我意識到這種深刻的釋放和安寧，正是我成長所需要的。我希望再次經歷這種狀態，這也是我最初尋找師父的原因。我非常認真對待這件事，白天我總是緊跟著禪七課表打坐，非常專注參誰、誰、誰——整天都在努力參。我想再次打開那次奇妙的體驗，但它沒有出現。

那時，師父在禪七期間會給我們開示，有時一天兩次到三次。在坐香時，他會沿著禪凳來回觀察每個人，看看他們在做什麼。

focusing on who, who, who—all day trying to investigate. I wanted to break open that wonderful experience I'd had before, but it wouldn't break open.

Back then, Shifu would give instructional talks, sometimes two or three times a day during the Chan session. During the sit, he'd walk up and down along the Chan benches and look at everybody, seeing what they were doing.

He stopped by me when I was focusing hard on my topic. My jaw was really tight, and I was trying to think, who, who? And Shifu leaned over and said, "What are you doing?" I said, "Shifu, I'm trying to gain awakening." Shifu started laughing. He goes, "No, no, no, no. You can't force your brain to wake up. The more you try to do that, the more it will run away. Enlightenment will run away." That's how he worded it. He said it would run away. "To wake up, you need to let go and just cultivate and be patient. When the time arises, it will arise on its own. You can't force it."

So I kept doing the Chan. The next day, I still got caught up again, really working hard, and all of a sudden, the Venerable Elder Xu Yun, Empty Cloud, entered my mind. I don't know how to describe this. He entered my mind and spoke to me in absolutely perfect English. He called me by my lay name, which was Eric. He says, "Eric, you need to simmer down. Stop pushing so hard."

I was always afraid of Master Xu Yun because when I saw pictures of him, he looked so strict and extremely tough. I saw those big posters of Elder Xu with his finger burned off. I thought, Oh, this cultivator is really tough! and I was always afraid of him, but when he entered my mind, he was absolutely compassionate. He was just really joyful, and he was very, very good to me. He just talked to me as if he was my close friend, and that really got me going. I really decided to work hard then. I went through the Chan session and gained a lot of success that way; I could simmer down, cultivate, and start establishing a foundation by doing the entire Chan session.

Later, in the 1970s, some disciples in Brazil asked the Venerable Master to come down there and lecture the Dharma for them. Shifu agreed, so he went to Brazil and stayed for around six months, a long time. When he went down there, I stayed at Gold Mountain for a while, but all the people there were young. They argued with one another, but Shifu wasn't there. I didn't want to hang around here without Shifu, so I just went out and got a job on an oil tanker for Chevron from Richmond, California.

有一次當我專注話頭時，師父停在我身旁。我緊抵下顎，努力參誰、誰？師父俯身問道：「你在做什麼？」我說：「師父，我在努力開悟。」師父笑了，說：「不。你不能強迫你的腦袋開悟。你愈要這樣做，它愈跑得遠。開悟會跑了。」師父是這樣說的。他說開悟會逃跑。「要開悟，你要放下，只管修行並且有耐心，時候到了，它自會到來。你不能強求它。」

於是我繼續坐禪。第二天，我又陷入了努力參究的狀態，突然間，虛雲老和尚出現在我的腦海裏。我不知道該如何形容這種感覺，他進入了我的腦海中，並用完全流利的英語對我說話。他叫我俗家名字艾瑞，他說：「艾瑞，你需要冷靜下來，別再那麼用力了。」

我一直很害怕虛雲老和尚，因為每次看到他的照片，他都顯得非常嚴厲而且極具威嚴。我看過虛老的燃指供佛的照片，心想：「哇，這個修行者，真是太厲害了！」所以我總是很敬畏他，但當他進入我的腦海時，他卻是那麼慈悲，而且充滿歡喜，對我非常非常好。他就像我親密的朋友一樣在與我交談，這真的讓我有向前的動力。之後我下定決心更加努力修行。我打完這次的禪七，並以這種方式獲得了很大的進展；我可以靜下來修行，通過禪七開始打基礎。

後來，在1970年代，一些在巴西的弟子邀請師父去那裏弘化。師父同意了，就去了巴西，還待了六個月左右。師父去了巴西時，我在金山寺待了一段時間，但寺裏的人都很年輕，經常爭吵，因為師父不在。我不想沒有師父的情況下在這裏閒晃，所以我就離開了，在加州列治文市的雪弗龍運輸公司找到了一份商業油輪的工作。這是一艘專門運送石油的船。