

談佛法的宗教經驗

—在美國紐約長島菩提精舍講

印順導師

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導師的話：

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引言——佛法的弘揚要健全團結

佛法近來似乎有漸呈萎縮的現象，每一個法師及有心的居士都想如何可以振興佛法。海外的法師和居士們，都很希望將佛法轉移到新大陸的美國來發揚。這是非常艱鉅的工作，但是應當怎樣著手呢？佛法是一種宗教，宗教須適應社會。佛法的好處甚深，一般人不大了解，所以推動更艱難。不過出家弟子的健全團結，與在家弟子的共同努力，實甚重要。佛陀在世之時亦頗注意於組織僧團，推行佛法，團結就是力量。

佛教是宗教，宗教要發生力量，必需這個宗教的信徒，要具有信心，盡心去做。不論信也好，學也好，修習也好，要有所得。因為人們往往畏問你信佛教以後得到什麼？不但佛教如此，其他宗教也莫不皆然。由信心而引發宗教經驗，獲得好處。佛法的信眾如都能虔誠努力，充滿活力，在學習過程中，得到佛法的真實利益，則佛法必能發揚光大。反之，如沒有所得，祇知道跟了我父親這樣做，隨著我母親或祖父母這樣做，我亦照樣做，信佛教變成照例文章，徒存形式，便失去了佛教的

真正意義。在美國弘揚佛法，尤須注意，因為美國社會講求實效。如講道理，要尋根究底講信仰修持，亦要有實地的經驗。佛法有深深淺淺的不同利益，即使淺淺的得到一點點經驗，也能加強信念，從淺入深，積少成多。今天不妨就淺近的來講。

第一、「信」的經驗

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佛法中的「信」是什麼？信佛、信法、信僧。換言之，信仰「三寶」。為什麼要信呢？我先說一個比喻：一般人生在世，生死輪迴中，生時不知怎樣生的，糊裡糊塗，混著過去，不知怎樣是好，以後怎樣更不知道。佛法說「生死長夜」，人生真是漫漫長夜。雖然電燈開得很亮，但我們人生還是好比在黑暗中摸索。東摸西摸，找不到出路，有一種徬徨空虛的感覺。年輕的人如此，年紀大了，直到老年，念頭愈多，愈加紛擾。假如我們真正有信心，信仰三寶的話，等於眼前忽然一亮，找到一線光明。好似在茫茫大海上，忽然看到大陸，這時真有說不出的高興。信佛、信僧，找到了明燈，望到了人生的歸宿。

「信心」好像一顆澄清濁水的「清水珠」，能將渾水變清；信心使我們內心清淨，心上得到安定。信心沒有生之前，煩惱無窮，混混沌沌，莫知所從。凡具有信心者，必能得到安定。佛經上說：「若有信者得歡喜」。這種豁然開朗的經驗，因為得到佛法的引導，可漸除煩惱的困擾，找得了一條光明大道，跟此信心而來。若能向此方向努力，必得快樂。煩惱雖還是有的，仍應努力修習。但有了內心清淨信心的經驗，會安心的向前邁進了！

第二、「戒」的經驗

「戒」，「受戒」，好像是形式的，其實不然。諸位法師都知道，凡出家者由戒師引導受戒，他人來來恭賀他，希望他得到上品的戒。戒的力量確有上品、中品、下品的。受戒者得到的這個戒，以誓願為體。不應做的事須決心不做；應做的事當盡力去做。要虔誠、懇切、懺悔，有這種堅強的信願，然後

可得「戒」。這種依佛法所得的戒，即是心裡增加了一種特殊的力量，這種力量能「防非制惡」。這力量自得戒後，一天一天的增加。一般人，裡面的感情衝動很強，外面的引誘力異常的大，推之挽之，不能抵抗。一個不小心，就會做錯，所謂「一失足成千古恨」。如得到了戒，則自內心發生一種力

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量，可以「懸崖勒馬」，控制自己。

「戒」好比一個城，叫做「戒城」。古時修築城牆，所以防制匪敵。有了城牆時，如有匪敵進犯，保衛這城者，在裡面就發動員令，當然亦可以求外面的救援，但主要的是自力內在的戒備。「戒」的力量是由信佛法所起心理上的變化，發生一種「清淨誓願力」。有了這種力量，一天一天增長，煩惱自然漸除。

第三、「定」的經驗

修定一層，似乎中國佛教提倡的標準太高：在我國的禪宗發揚以後，嫌定太淺，修定的少了；反而又覺得太難了，於是專在禮拜念誦上著力。我現在所要講的是「生得定」。是我們每個人生下即得到的。假如諸位說沒有，那是沒有用因緣來顯發。譬如諸位能讀書，智力也由於「生得」，經教育的學習而獲得。我們都知道，我國有一部哲學書『莊子』。『莊子』有一段孔子與弟子顏回有關靜定的問答。孔子教顏回學習靜坐，顏回將所得的經驗，告訴孔子。顏回第一次報告孔子說：「靜坐久了，外面的境界都沒有了」。第二次又報告說：「我的手與足也不知何處去了！第三次報告孔子說：「我的心，我自己也不知何處去了」！那時，顏回已失卻身心世界，心靈一片虛明。正如『莊子』所說：「虛室生白，吉祥止止」。此種境界，中國叫做「坐忘」。這在佛法中是將到未到，到達定的邊緣——「生得」的「未到定」。年輕力壯的，如能靜坐，常會很快發現，得到這種經驗。

上面所說，當然是初步的，很淺的定，當然還須向上修習。但是需要指出的是，一般人只知道向外面去尋求，現代講求科學，技術發達，很有成就，卻不知從身心去尋求，不知道身

心中無邊功德，現現成成在那裡，待我人去找尋。所以即使略得定力，也能深信佛法中的修證，而向上趣入。

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第四、「慧」的經驗

慧的經驗，也是淺深不等。現在要講的，是最淺的「聞所成慧」，即「聞慧」。我人自讀經，或自聽開示而得來的慧，（與一般生得慧不同）就是聞慧。對佛法絕對的真理，豁然啓悟，由豁然無礙而得貫通，所謂「大開圓解」。這種解慧，並不是證悟。試舉一個比喻：井中有水，已經明白的看到，但不是嘗到。對聞所成慧——正見，經裡有頌說：「若有於世間，正見增上者，雖歷百千生，終不墮地獄」。這是說，若人生於世界上，能得到正見的力量，增長不退。如菩薩長期在生死輪迴中度眾生，得了此慧，雖然或有小錯，但決不造重罪。故生死雖歷千百次，終不墮入地獄。

結論

要求佛教發生力量，不能徒尚形式，徒重談論，而要心有所得。修學佛法的人，對於「信」要有信的經驗，對於「戒」要有戒的經驗，對於「定」要有定的經驗，對於「慧」要有慧的經驗。總之，要有內容，要有所得，這就是佛法的宗教經驗。有了宗教經驗，然後能起實效，能不退轉。記得從前太虛大師，就是憑他在西方寺所獲得的宗教經驗，所以能夠堅定信心，一生從事佛教的工作，可以作我們的金鑑。再者，學佛者要一步一步的修習，務須要將淺的辦得好，然後再求深的。

個人來美半年，因為身體的不強健，未能與諸位法師及居士多所切磋，內心很負疚。因為不久要回臺灣，謹以上面所講的，作為臨別贈言。（真覺記）

The Religious Experience of Buddhadharma

A Lecture Given at the Bodhi Temple, Long Island, New York

Master Yin-shun

Buddhadharma, it seems, is recently showing signs of decline. Every ordained Buddhist and concerned layman is thinking about ways to invigorate it, and Sangha members and laypeople living overseas hope very much to bring it to the New World and spread it there. But how should this extraordinary hard job be tackled? Buddhadharma is a religion, and religions have to fit society. Buddhadharma has many good points, yet this is generally not well understood. Thus it becomes even more difficult to promote it. Flawless unity of the disciples who have left the homelife and common efforts by those having families are of really great importance. Also during the Buddha's time, considerable attention was paid to the organization of the sangha because as far as the spread of Buddhism is concerned, being united means strength.

Buddhism is a religion. If a religion wants to get strong its followers have to have faith and work as hard as they can. No matter whether in regard to trust, study, or practice, it is necessary to have some result because people often will ask you what you get from being a Buddhist. This is so not only in the case of Buddhism but holds true for all religions. Religious experience and benefit are brought about by trust. If the followers of Buddhism are able to work seriously with devotion and full of vigour, they will receive the real benefits of Buddhadharma while they practice. In this case Buddhadharma will no doubt spread far and wide. On the other hand, if the individual doesn't gain anything but just does what his

father, mother, or grandparents did then being a Buddhist becomes following a template and nothing but the form remains while

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the real meaning of Buddhism is lost. You have to pay special attention to this when spreading dharma in America because Americans stress effectiveness. If you want to teach the doctrine you have to go into depth and detail; if you want to talk about trust and practice, you need real experience. Buddhadharma offers benefits on several levels. Even if the experience is only small and shallow, still your faith will be strengthened, and the experience will deepen and get larger and larger. So today I might well talk only about simple things.

The Experience of Trust

What does "trust" mean? Trust in Buddha, dharma, and sangha. In other words, trust in the Triple Jewel. Why should we have trust? Let me first give an example. The general human being is born confused into this samsaric world, and lives a muddleheaded life without any understanding about what is good, not to mention about what is going to happen after this existence. In Buddhadharma, this is called "the long night of samsara." Indeed, human life is like a long night. Though bright lights are on, we still grope in darkness here and there, without finding a way out, with a feeling of apprehension and vanity. Young people are like that, and the older they get, up into old age, the more they think, the more confused they become. But

if you have real trust in the Triple Jewel, it is as if you can all of a sudden see with light before your eyes or as if, drifting on the boundless ocean, you finally see land. The joy at that moment is beyond words. To trust Buddha, dharma, and sangha means finding a bright light or seeing the harbour of our human life.

"Trust" is like a gem purifying water which makes muddy water clean, because it induces purity into our hearts and causes our minds to become stable and firm. Before you have established trust, there are

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countless afflictive emotions, and you are totally confused without a clue what to do. But anyone with trust certainly attains stability and firmness. It is said in the texts that "the trusting one will be joyful." This experience of sudden opening due to the guidance of Buddhadharmā can gradually remove disturbance by afflictive emotions, as if one had found a bright highway. If you can work towards this, you will become happy without doubt. There will still be afflictive emotions but you should practice seriously, and with the experience of clarifying trust in your mind, you can proceed without worry!

The Experience of Morality

"Morality" and "accepting the rules" look formalistic but really are not so. All of you, venerable sangha members, know that when a person leaving the homelife is guided by the Precept Master to accept the rules, everybody congratulates him expressing the wish he

might obtain rules of highest quality. In terms of power, the rules are actually divided into those of inferior, middling, and higher quality. The essence of the rules an ordinand accepts is firm commitments. One has to make a strong decision not to do what should not be done and to engage in what should be engaged in. You have to be devout, sincere, and repentant. With such strong trust and commitment, you will receive the "rules." The rules received in accordance with Buddhadharma amount to a special additional power in your mind which is able to protect from unvirtue.

After having accepted the rules, this power will increase day by day. For the average person, emotional impulses are very strong and the seductive forces of the outside world possess extraordinary power. Even if he tries to ward them off, he cannot resist. The slightest lack of awareness, and a mistake is made. This is often referred to as "stumbling once leads to eternal

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regret." But if you've accepted the rules, you'll acquire a mental power by which "reigning in the horse right on the edge of the cliff" you can control oneself.

Since the rules are like a city wall they are called the "bulwark of the rules." In olden times, walls were built around cities in order to protect them from bandits. If you've got a wall and bandits or enemies tried to invade, those protecting the city integrated their forces inside the wall. Of course, they also could try to find allies and support outside, but the most important is to be on guard inside through one's own strength. The power of the rules is a psychological change which happens due to trust in

Buddhadharma and induces a kind of "power of pure commitments." With this power increasing every day, afflictive emotions naturally diminish gradually.

The Experience of Meditative Absorption

Regarding meditative absorption, it seems that Chinese Buddhism established too high a standard. Since the spread of the Chinese Ch'an school, the level of meditative absorption was discarded as not profound enough and those who practiced it were only very few. At the same time, however, people also felt ch'an to be too difficult to practice, and they concentrated their energies on prostrations and recitations. What I am going to talk about here is innate concentration which everyone possesses from birth on. If you feel there's nothing like that, it is only because one didn't avail oneself of situations to develop it. That you have the intellectual capacity to read, for example, comes also innately and is learnt through receiving education. As all of you know, there is an ancient Chinese philosophical work called Chuang-tzu. It contains one episode in which Confucius and his disciple Yen Hui discuss meditative ab-

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sorption. Confucius taught Yen Hui how to meditate, and Yen Hui came back to report his experience. The first time he said: "Sitting in meditation for a long time, all outer experiences disappear." The next time he told Confucius: "Now I even don't know where my hands and feet are!" And the third time he announced: "I don't know where my mind, my I is." At that time,

Yen Hui had lost his mind-body world, there was only spiritual openness and clarity. Chuang-tzu calls this "emptying one's heart understanding arises; goodness and peace rest in a calm mind", and Chinese generally refer to it as "sitting in oblivion." According to Buddhism, however, it is only innate concentration which has not yet reached the level of meditative absorption. Those who are young and strong often do have this experience when they begin to practice meditation.

What was mentioned above refers, of course, only to preliminary, shallow meditative absorption, and it is naturally necessary to practice further. But I want to point out that generally people merely know how to seek in the outside world. Today, though science is stressed and technology well advanced and successful, people don't know how to search within their mind-body. They are unaware of the fact that limitless qualities already exist in their own mind-body, just waiting for us to inquire. So, even if you develop only some power of meditative absorption, you will still fully trust the practice and realization of Buddhadharma, and continue to proceed upwards.

The Experience of Wisdom

With the experience of wisdom there are several levels, too. What I will explain now is the most superficial one -wisdom arising from listening or "the wisdom of listening. " This is the wisdom we develop

when reading sutras or listening to dharma talks. It

differs from inherent wisdom. And when you all of a sudden awaken to the absolute truth of Buddhadharma and from unprecedented openness proceed to penetration, it is called "opening up universal understanding." This understanding wisdom is not realization wisdom. Let me explain it by means of an example: to have clearly perceived the water in a well does not mean you have already tasted it. A canonical verse says about this wisdom arising out of listening (or right view):

"If there is someone in the world whose right view is superior though he might undergo a million lives he will not fall into the hells."

This means if someone is born in this world and obtains the power of right view, this power will increase without decline. It's like the bodhisattva who saves sentient beings for a long time in samsara: when you achieve this wisdom, though you may still make minor mistakes, you'll never commit any serious offense. Therefore, despite being reborn a million times, you won't fall into the hell realms.

Concluding Remarks

If you want Buddhism to become a power you must not merely favour its formal aspect or emphasize talking about it. What you need is personal experience. Practicing Buddhists have to have the experience of trust, morality, meditative absorption, and wisdom in their respective fields. To sum it up, there must be content, inner gain. This is the religious experience of Buddhadharma. After you've had religious experience, you can really function and you won't fall back. I remember how Ven. T'ai-hsu relied on the religious experiences he

gained in Hsi-fang Monastery to make his trust firm and engage in his lifelong service for Buddhism. He can be our paragon. And in addition, practicing Buddhists have to cultivate step by step. They have to deal well with the basics before striving for more profound things.

By now, I've been in America for six months but due to health reasons, I had too few chances to exchange ideas with everybody. Since my return to Taiwan is imminent, I'll offer this talk respectfully as my parting gift.

