

畢 生 難 遇 的 大 善 知 識

—— 我的師父宣公上人



It Is Hard to Encounter a Good Spiritual Teacher: My Teacher, the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua

The Oral History Project
口述上人教化

Spoken by Dr. Ron Epstein
易象乾教授 口述

Compiled by Editorial Staff
編輯部 整理

I. Confusion for the sixties'

Tina: Earlier we were talking about youth searching for answers; would you say that your generation was more cynical?

Epstein: No, it was a different time historically. I think that for your generation what's difficult to understand is the context of what was going on. It was in the context of the 50's and 60's. In the 50's, there was a lot of conformism. For the first time, people in the suburbs were very well off. There was also McCarthyism, which was the big red scare, and many people were afraid of being informed upon and wrongly accused. In the early 60's, there was the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the Vietnam War began.

1968, when the Shurangama Session took place, was a watershed year. While we were meditating in Tianhou Temple in Chinatown, people were rioting in the African-American district in San Francisco, and they burned down large segments of it. We heard the police sirens and the fire engines almost every evening. 1968 was the time of the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy. It was when the Soviets were sending their army into Czechoslovakia to brutally put down a peaceful, democratic revolution of the Czechoslovak people. Students were rioting in Paris and all over the world. It was the height of the

一、迷茫的六十年代

楊亭娜：先前，我們談到你童年時一直在尋找答案，是不是認為你們那一代都比較憤世嫉俗？

易象乾：不！這是一個不同的歷史時期。我覺得你們這一代很難理解的是當時的歷史背景。那應該是在上個世紀五、六十年代。在五十年代，出現了很多盲目跟從者。這是有始以來第一次，住在郊區的人都是非常有钱的。那裡也有一些麥卡錫主義的信奉者，那是紅色恐慌，很多人都害怕被告發並成為被誤抓的對象。而在六十年代初，有古巴導彈危機和越戰爆發。

一九六八年，在楞嚴法會舉辦之後，可以說成了轉折年。正當我們在中國城天后廟一起參禪，有些人在三藩市非裔美國人住區內發生了暴動，把那邊很多地方都燒毀了。那些日子幾乎每天晚上，我們都會聽到警笛聲和火警聲。一九六八年，還發生了馬丁·路德·金和羅勃·甘迺迪的遇刺事件。捷克斯洛伐克人民的民主革命被蘇聯派遣軍隊鎮壓了，巴黎和世界各地的學生也發生

civil rights movement. It was a time of real upheavals all over the world. It was very, very different than today. It was also the time of the so-called psychedelic movement and the Summer of Love in San Francisco. It was all mixed together, the political upheaval and the agitation for social change. Nobody was very clear about what was happening or what to do about it.

Tina: Definitely looking back at the 60's in terms of film, you hear a lot of the music, 'Turn, Turn, Turn. . .', all those protest songs, Joan Baez, right? So that's what characterizes that time, but I'm sure there's more to it than just music.

Epstein: Young people were searching for something new. On the one hand, there was cynicism about the old order. For example, when I was a student at Harvard, John F. Kennedy was assassinated. (There is a saying in our generation: everybody knew where they were when Kennedy was assassinated.) We had the feeling that when Kennedy came to Washington, the White House was the new Camelot. Kennedy gave inspiring speeches and set up the Peace Corp., and he made many of us feel that there was a kind of new hope for a new world order. Whether that was really justified is not really clear, but when he was assassinated, there was a feeling that the old order that was hopelessly corrupt was winning and that there had to be a new way to being in the world.

We were all searching for something new. People were searching in different ways. But there wasn't the same kind of concern as there is today about making a living, getting a decent job and praying that if one got married that one's marriage will stay together. . . all the concerns that people have today, did not exist to the same extent then. A lot of people were focused in more idealistic ways and didn't think much about those things.

There was a sense of a struggle for the future of the country, for new ways of human possibility. A lot of it was misguided. That was some of the context of what was going on. We didn't know very much about Buddhism at all. Hardly anyone in the West knew very much about Buddhism, including the Westerners then who called themselves Buddhist teachers. It was very, very different time.

II. First Met with the Master

Victor: So I heard you trying many teachers, like you were searching a lot during that time?

Epstein: Not really. I first heard about Buddhism, I think, when I was in high school. Around 1959, I read an article called "Beat Zen, Square Zen, and Zen" by Alan Watts. I must have been a senior in high school. I just thought it was very amusing. I couldn't relate to it at all. My freshman year at Harvard, I remember leafing through the catalogue of courses,

了暴亂。那是一次民權運動的高峰，是一次真正全世界的動亂。那時和今天有非常非常大的區別。也是所謂的「迷幻藥運動」，和「愛在三藩市之夏」的時期。政治劇變和社會變革的動盪混合在一起。都很迷茫，不知道發生了什麼。

楊亭娜：很明顯，回顧六十年代的電影，會聽到許多音樂都是「改變、改變、改變……」，全都是些叛逆性的歌，就像瓊·貝茲，不是嗎？這就是那個時期的特徵！但我敢肯定這不單單只是局限於音樂。

易象乾：年輕人在尋找新的目標。一方面，是對舊秩序的玩世不恭。比如，我還在哈佛大學讀書的時候，約翰·甘迺迪被刺殺了。（我們這代人有種說法：在甘迺迪被刺的那一刻，所有人都知道他們在哪裡。）我們有種感覺，在甘迺迪入主華盛頓後，白宮似乎呈現新氣象。甘迺迪發表了令人振奮的演說，而且成立了和平工作團，使我們許多人都對新的社會秩序有了一絲希望。無論這種感覺是否是合理的，這一點並不真正清楚，但就在他被刺的那一刻，我們都覺得那個令人絕望的腐敗舊勢力贏了，這個世界需要一些新的出路。

我們都在尋找一些新的東西，以各種不同的方式尋找著。但那時關心的問題和今天是不一樣的，不像今天這樣，大家想著維持生計，有份好工作，在結婚的時候祈禱婚姻能夠保持不破裂之類的事情。這些今天所關心的東西，那時對此並沒有這麼關注，許多人更多的是在考慮一些比較理想化的東西。

那是對國家未來和人類希望之新方向的掙扎感。但很多想法都誤入歧途了，那是當時的一些背景。我們根本不清楚佛教是什麼，很少有西方人知道什麼是佛教——包括一些自稱是佛教導師的西方人。那是非常不同的時期。

二、初遇上人

鄭偉德：我聽說你那時候拜會過很多老師，那時也是在尋找嗎？

易象乾：不完全是！我記得第一次聽到佛教的名字還是在高中。大約是在一九五九年，我讀到了艾倫·華茲的文章，《棒喝禪，規範禪，禪》。那時在高中裏應該是讀高年級了，我只是覺得裡面講得很有趣，但當時完全無法理解。在哈佛的第一年，還記得在選課目錄中，有一門課是中世紀西藏佛教經文。我和室友都覺得很好笑，覺

and seeing there was a course in Medieval Buddhist Tibetan Texts. My roommates and I all laughed, because we all thought that was the most absurd thing that one could possibly study. Because it was so irrelevant and so far away from the world that we then knew.

Then during my freshman year I heard Professor Paul Tillich, a very famous Christian theologian, talk about Buddhism in his class lectures. Then I started reading some books about Buddhism and looking at Buddhist art. And in my years in college, I had some very profound experiences with Buddhist art.

After college, I came out to San Francisco, to study Chinese. I knew that I wanted to study meditation, although I had never meditated. I knew, basically nothing about Buddhism. With some friends, we got an apartment a couple blocks from the San Francisco Zen Center. I meditated irregularly there.

And then one day I saw this Chinese monk walk pass me on the street. I think it was the Venerable Master. I remember being impressed that he was somehow different than the Japanese priests. He was somehow solid, both physically and psychically. He ignored me. He was completely focused as he went down the street, just complete, total concentration. I didn't think about him again, until I was looking for another apartment at the end of December, 1965. A friend said that there was a room available in the building in which the Venerable Master lived. I went over there and met him and moved into that place in January, 1966. I started meditating with him and saw that the quality of my meditation was very different there than it was at Zen Center. So I started meditating more there and less at Zen Center.

I gradually got to know him and over a period of about six months, came to realize something of who he really was. Because he wasn't advertising that he was the Chan patriarch. He was very low key. This was his so-called 'monk in the grave' period. There was nobody around very much then. Of his Chinese disciples, hardly anyone came. Just a handful of people would show up, maybe once a week.

Finally when I realized that he was my teacher, I tried to spend as much time meditating with him as possible until I went to Taiwan in August of 1966. Before I went, I asked him for a list of people whom I might go to see in Taiwan and Hong Kong. We couldn't go to mainland China then. He had somebody, I don't know who, write me out a list of names as reference, and he said, "You should go to see as many of these people as possible to see if you can find a good teacher over there to take refuge with." When I was in Taiwan and Hong Kong, I did go to see a number of people, but it was for the most part, quite disillusioning, after being with him. And it was quite a shock to see what Buddhism in Taiwan and Hong Kong was like.

☞ To be continued

得那是極度荒誕無稽的事情，沒人會去學的。因為那是那麼的不切實際，和我們所認識的現實世界之間的差距，實在是太大了。

大學一年級時，聽了保羅·提立克教授的課，他是非常著名的基督教神學家，在課堂上，他講到了佛教。然後，我就開始閱讀一些佛教書，並且學習佛教藝術。在大學時代，我建立了非常深厚的佛教藝術知識。

大學畢業後，到三藩市學習中文。我知道我想要學習坐禪，儘管此前並沒有打坐的經驗，基本上，對佛教還沒有什麼認識。我和一些朋友一起在三藩市禪修中心附近租了一間公寓，間斷地在那裏禪修。

後來有一天，在街上看見一位中國僧人從身邊走過去，我猜他就是上人。印象深刻，他很不同於日本來的法師，無論是從精神上還是體質上來說，他都有些像軍人。他沒有在意我，只是非常專心、完全集中精神在走路。我也沒有再想他，直到一九六五年十二月底，要另外尋找公寓的時候，朋友告訴我，有幢樓裡面有間空房，而上人正是住在那幢樓裡面。我去了那裡，見到他，並在一九六六年的一月搬進。我開始和他一起坐禪，我發現在那裡坐禪的品質和在禪修中心時完全不一樣。因此之後我就常在那裡打坐，而很少再去禪修中心了。

大約過了六個月，漸漸地我瞭解他真正是誰。因為他從不宣傳自己是禪宗祖師，非常低調，用他自己的話講，那是「墓中僧」時期。那時他的身邊沒什麼人，除了中國弟子，很少會有人來；只有幾個人，大概是一週來一次。

後來，明白他就是我的老師，從那時起直到一九六六年八月份去臺灣之前，我就儘量花更多的時間和他一起參禪。去之前，我問可以在臺灣和香港見哪些人——那時我們還不能去中國大陸。他讓別人幫忙，我不知道具體是誰，給我寫了一個名單作為參考，他說：「你可以儘量去拜訪名單上的人，看看在那邊能否找到好的老師來皈依。」到了臺灣和香港之後，我拜訪了很多人；但和他相比，大多數都令人很失望。而且看到了臺灣和香港佛教當時的狀況，令人頗為震驚。

☞ 待續