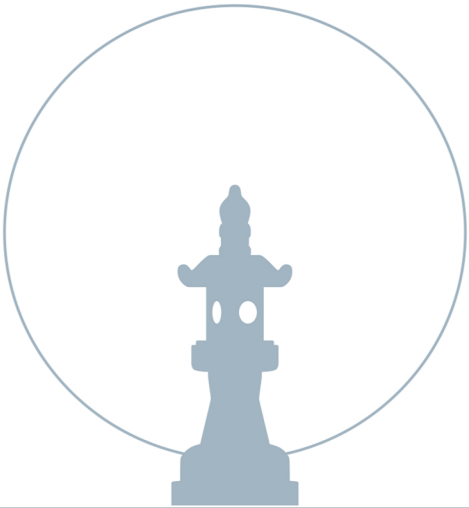
静心学堂 丛书
The Mindful Peace Academy Collection
中英双语 Chinese-English Edition

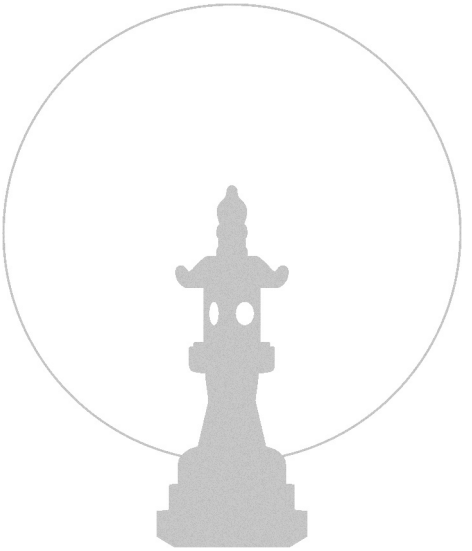
# 佛教与中国传统文化

Buddhism and Chinese Traditional Culture



济群法师
Master Jiqun 著

大千出版社



【静心学堂丛书】

文化篇

人生篇

社会篇

信仰篇

实践篇



静心学堂丛书

The Mindful Peace Academy Collection

中英双语

Chinese-English Edition

# 佛教与中国传统文化

# Buddhism and Chinese Traditional Culture

济群法师 著

Master Jiqun

大千出版社

2002年讲于南京大学

## 【目 录】

一、佛教与哲学.....2
二、佛教与文学.....7
三、佛教与艺术.....11
四、佛教与民俗、道德.....15
五、人生的幸福.....22
六、“空”的智慧.....27
七、结　说.....32
八、答　疑.....35
认识佛教，到底难不难.....36
为什么佛教在印度失传了.....39
正信，才是祛魅的良药.....41
抱佛脚和世俗化.....44
价值取向决定你的选择.....46



对多数没有佛教信仰或不曾接触过佛教的人来说，佛教似乎离现实生活非常遥远。事实上，佛教在中国产生的影响远不止信仰范畴，还涉及文化、生活等各个领域。1998 年，佛教界举办了“佛教传入中国两千年”的纪念活动。作为一种外来宗教，佛教在中国经过两千年的传播，早已和本土文化水乳交融、密不可分，成为传统的重要组成部分。

关于佛教传入的时间，早期多认为是东汉明帝永平十年（公元 67 年）。其后，学术界经过进一步考证，提出传入时间应为西汉汉哀帝元寿元年（公元前 2 年），这也是教界目前一致公认的。

# 一、佛教与哲学

佛教传入中国后
祖师大德分别根据
佛教典籍中的部分思想
建构了不同的修学体系
如果从哲学角度研究
可将华严、唯识、天台、三论等宗派
称为华严哲学、唯识哲学
天台哲学、中观哲学

中国文化史上，虽在春秋时期出现过百家争鸣的盛况，但汉魏之后，真正对中国社会产生影响的，主要是儒释道三家。

如果我们不了解佛教，就无法全面认识中国文化。比如魏晋玄学，便深受佛教般若思想的影响。般若典籍谈空说无，正是玄学崇尚的境界。所以在南北朝时期，般若经典的翻译及弘扬成为热潮。而隋唐哲学的内涵主要是佛学，如果离开佛法义理，隋唐时期的哲学史几乎是一片空白了。

早期的儒家思想比较富有生活气息，发展至宋明理学，将重点落实为心性。关于心性的内容，正是中国哲学的薄弱之处。虽然《孟子》及《易经》有所涉

及，但总体较为单薄。而佛教的大小乘经论，对心性都有丰富且深入的阐述。需要说明的是，佛教对于心性的认识，不仅在理论上深入剖析，更体现在具体修证中。尤其是禅宗，特别重视对心性的探究。因而也有人说，宋明理学是戴着儒家帽子的和尚，表面为儒家，内涵却是佛家。且不论宋明理学的兼收并蓄是否成功，其深受佛教之影响，则是不争的事实。

及至清末民初，谭嗣同、康有为、梁启超、杨度等维新人士，以大乘佛教慈悲济世的大无畏精神推动改革，救亡图存。虽然他们的改革失败了，但志士们的精神却影响了数代国人。而在他们的哲学思想中，又有相当部分是源于佛学。谭嗣同的《仁学》受华严及唯识思想的影响，开卷即是“凡为仁学者，于佛书当通《华严》及心宗、相宗之书”，提出“仁为天地万物之源，故唯心，故唯识”。康有为的《大同书》则受到佛教无我思想的影响，立志打破社会各阶级的界限。

纵观中国哲学史，佛教始终占据相当重要的地位。胡适先生早年曾撰写《中国哲学史大纲》，及半便不

了了之，原因就在于他当时还不了解佛教。其后，他也开始研究佛教，并收集了很多禅宗方面的资料。尽管他的考证未必为教界普遍接受，但也从中反映了他对佛教的重视，及佛教对中国哲学的深远影响。

佛教渊源于宗教和哲学特别发达的印度，具有丰富的哲学内涵。在印度，从早期的《奥义书》到六派哲学、佛教思想，充分体现出宗教与哲学一体化的特点。《奥义书》既是一部宗教经典，也是一部哲学名著。叔本华对《奥义书》的评价是：我得到此书，生前可以安慰，死后可以安息。根植于印度的文化传统，佛教也形成了深广而严谨的哲学体系。传入中国后，祖师大德分别根据佛教典籍中的部分思想，建构了不同的修学体系。如果从哲学角度研究，也可将华严、唯识、天台、三论等宗派称为华严哲学、唯识哲学、天台哲学、中观哲学。

近代以来，尤以唯识哲学在学界的影响为最。民国年间，欧阳竟无在南京创办支那内学院，专门研究法相唯识。梁启超、熊十力、梁漱溟等许多著名学者先后在其门下受教。当时，梁漱溟受蔡元培之邀在北

大讲授印度哲学，主要从佛教的角度进行介绍，开高校讲授佛学风气之先。其后，熊十力也曾到北大开讲唯识。从正宗的唯识思想来讲，熊十力属于离经叛道之列。因为他又走回了宋明理学的老路，成为现代新儒学宗师。他所撰写的《新唯识论》，吸收真常唯心的思想，对唯识理论重新诠释。此书甫经问世，便引起支那内学院乃至整个佛教界的批驳，出现了一系列破《新唯识论》的文章。

唯识的哲学思想非常丰富，对精神现象和潜意识的分析尤为深入，且着重探讨认识与存在的关系，主要思想可归纳为两点：其一，我们认识的对象没有离开自己的认识；其二，我们认识的对象是由自己规定的。唯识思想和海德格尔、胡塞尔的现象学有许多相通之处，所以现在有不少学者在从事唯识学和现象学的比较研究。唯识学立足于世界观和本体论，建构了丰富的哲学体系，其理论多根据因明的规则建立。而因明的结构较之西方形式逻辑更严密，所以唯识学的整个建构非常严谨。

# 二、佛教与文学

佛教典籍的体裁也非常丰富
既有诗歌式、散文式的
也有小说式、戏剧式的
即使不从信仰层面来接受
也可作为文化传承来学习
所以
在传统文人士大夫中非常普及

佛教对中国文学影响也十分广泛。佛经浩如烟海，仅《大正藏》便收录了一万多卷。佛教中的许多经典，如广为流传的《金刚经》《维摩经》《法华经》等，即使单从文学角度来看，也堪称传世力作。

佛经展现的时空观更是国人闻所未闻的。中国人的时空观比较窄，正如庄子所言，“六合之外，圣人存而不论”。而佛经阐述的时空，则为我们展现了磅礴的气势。在《维摩经》中，维摩诘居士示疾，佛陀派弟子前往问候。其居处虽仅一丈，但数百人进入后并不感到拥挤，房间也未曾变大，这就是佛法所说的不可思议的境界。舍利弗进屋后转念：众人前来探

病，却连坐处也没有，当于何坐？此念方起，维摩诘便询问文殊菩萨：您游于无量千万亿阿僧祇国，何处的座椅最为殊胜？文殊菩萨答言：距东方三十六恒河沙国，有须弥相佛国，那里的狮子座高八万四千由旬，庄严美妙堪称一绝。维摩诘便示现神通之力，即刻运来三万二千狮子座安放于丈室之内。佛经中的叙述是以整个宇宙为舞台，以无限时空为背景。对于不信佛的人来说，或许只是当作神话看待。即便如此，它那开放的想象，也从另一个角度极大拓展了国人的思维。

佛教典籍的体裁也非常丰富，既有诗歌式、散文式的，也有小说式、戏剧式的。即使不从信仰层面来接受，也可作为文化传承来学习，所以在传统文人士大夫中非常普及。早在东晋时期，即有十八高贤会集庐山，于高僧慧远法师门下同结莲社，共修净业。及至唐宋，文人好佛之风更盛。王维、白居易、柳宗元、刘禹锡、范仲淹、王安石、苏东坡等，都是虔诚的佛教徒。文学作品代表着作者对世界的观察、心得及生活积累，同时也是作者思想境界的反映，精神信仰的折射。因此，古代的很多文学作品都蕴含着佛理，流

动着禅意。如果我们不了解佛教，就很难透彻这些作品的底蕴。

此外，还有部分作品直接取材于佛教或相关内容，如《西游记》是以唐僧（玄奘三藏）西去印度取经的经历为题材。学过历史的同学应该知道，玄奘三藏是中国佛教史上的四大翻译家之一，对汉传佛教贡献卓著。《西游记》取材于这段历史，创作中自然渗透了许多佛教思想。遗憾的是，经过部分影视作品的演绎，唐僧反而成了孙悟空、猪八戒的拙劣陪衬，未能再现历史真实。而《阅微草堂笔记》《聊斋志异》等笔记小说，也在不同程度上反映了佛教的因果思想。至于名著《红楼梦》，则为读者展现了许多极富禅意的诗作。如果对佛教一无所知，势必无法正确解读这些作品。

# 三、佛教与艺术

作品的品位有多高
主要取决于创作者的思想境界
如果没有相当的文化和宗教素养
作品如何能有空灵、深邃的境界
正所谓“功夫在画外”
同样的，如果我们不具备佛学修养
也很难追随创作者的创作心路
进入那种意境

佛教对艺术创作的影响更是不容忽视的。佛教的传入和佛教造像的盛行，极大促进了中国雕塑、建筑、绘画艺术的发展。

其中，以雕塑领域最为突出。存世作品中，佛教造像不仅数量众多，更有着令世人瞩目的艺术价值。如果没有敦煌、云冈、龙门、麦积山等众多石窟中数以千万计的佛教造像，没有巍峨梵宇中的诸佛菩萨，雕塑艺术宝库将减少一半以上的珍藏，中国雕塑史也决不会像今天所看到的那么丰厚、那么有分量。

而存世的古建筑中，也有相当部分是寺庙建筑。如现存最早的两座唐代古建，均为佛寺殿堂，即山西的佛光寺大殿和南禅寺大殿。至于古塔，基本都是佛

教建筑。尤其是那些经典之作，如嵩山嵩岳寺塔、山西应县木塔、大理崇圣寺三塔、苏州云岩寺塔等，虽然风格造型各异，但都是清一色的佛塔。俗话说，“天下名山僧占多”。名山，既因自然景观而名，亦因人文景观而胜，而佛教名胜正是人文景观中的一项重要内容。

中国的绘画和书法作品，同样离不开佛教题材。山水画中，有古寺梵刹、阿兰若处；人物画中，有诸佛菩萨、金刚罗汉、高僧大德。而各个朝代抄写的经书，则在弘扬佛法的同时，为我们保留了大量的古代书法作品。其中，书法大家的抄经名作便不胜枚举，如王羲之书《遗教经》、张旭书《心经》、柳公权书《金刚经》、苏轼书《圆觉经》、赵孟頫书《妙法莲华经》、林则徐书《阿弥陀经》、欧阳渐书《心经》、弘一大师书《华严经集联》等。此外，敦煌石窟还保存有大量唐人写经，既是珍贵的佛教典籍，也是不可多得的书法艺术宝藏。

在这些作品中，通过直接书写佛经或相关题材，体现着佛法的境界和精神。我们知道，中国传统绘画

的表现方式和西画截然不同。西画重视写实，而国画重视写意，逸笔草草，直抒胸臆。“意”就是一种思想，一种境界。作品的品位有多高，主要取决于创作者的思想境界。如果没有相当的文化和宗教素养，作品如何能有空灵、深邃的境界？正所谓“功夫在画外”。同样的，如果我们不具备佛学修养，也很难追随创作者的创作心路，进入那种意境。现代人的心如此浮躁，若不了解作品的背景，如何穿越千百年的时空，领略那番禅意，体会那份超然？

# 四、佛教与民俗、道德

我们在行善时
不必关注外在结果
那只是行善的副产品
真正的利益
在于完善人格和提升生命素质
这一结果与行善是同步的
是当下就能感受到的
我们做什么
心灵就会有什么改变
做多少，就会改变多少

除了对艺术领域的影响，佛教传入中国以来，也走入了寻常百姓家。极盛之时，可谓“家家观世音，户户阿弥陀”。于是乎，佛菩萨圣诞等宗教节日也逐渐成为社会普遍接受的民俗节日。

其中，尤以腊八节和盂兰盆会的影响为最。国人有很强的孝道观念，但这种孝是建立于伦理纲常之上；而佛教提倡的孝亲则着重于报恩，可以说是更究竟的尽孝方式。

此外，国人的很多道德观念也深受佛教影响，如因果报应的观念等等。维系社会安定主要有两种方式：一是通过法律，一是通过道德。在世界各民族中，宗教都是道德建立的基石，以此维系人类社会数千年

的文明发展。在阿拉伯国家，依伊斯兰教建立其道德基石；在欧美国家，依基督教建立其道德基石；在亚洲国家，则依儒家思想、佛教等建立其道德基石。

基本的道德信条其实很简单，如佛教的五戒，基督教的十诫，是具有永久性和普遍性的。社会虽然在不断发展，人性却没有太大变化。人类对外部世界展开了种种探索，并有了越来越多的认识，但对自身的生命依然无知。古人存在的问题，今天也一样存在。人性中的贪、嗔、痴烦恼，和两千多年前佛陀时代的人们并没有什么不同。如果说有什么不同，我觉得，人性的弱点在今天更为张扬。

从整体来看，现代人的欲望或许比以往任何时代的人更大，也更贪婪。古人崇尚的是哲理，是精神追求；而现代人崇尚的是金钱，是物质享乐。我们知道，哲理代表了智慧，而经济只能代表物质的繁荣。此外，整个社会对演艺明星、快餐文化的崇尚，又说明了什么？只能说明他们沉迷的是声色犬马，这正是古圣先贤呵斥的生活方式。这样一种价值取向，从某种意义上说，是反映了思想的倒退而非进步。

宗教戒律是针对人性弱点建立的。古今中外的犯罪现象，无非是杀盗淫妄，不同的只是犯罪手段有所改变。以刀砍人和以枪炮伤人有什么不同？不同的只是后者杀伤力更大，但不能说明人性有什么变化。而佛教提倡的不杀生、不偷盗、不邪淫、不妄语等，就是为了从根本上消除犯罪现象产生的根源。

或许有人会觉得，建立几条规范很简单，任何人或单位都可以建立相应的制度。那么戒律的特殊性又在哪里？就在于它有强大的后盾。建立规范很容易，但使大家共同遵守这一规范并不容易。只有当规范成为法律时，才会具有一定威力。但法律的作用不可能面面俱到，总有漏洞可钻。即使法律能发现并制裁所有犯罪现象，但当法律发生作用时，这些犯罪行为已经对社会构成破坏。更何况，法律能在多大程度上发挥作用，还取决于执法者是否公正等诸多因素。而戒律是根植于宗教信仰，根植于对神的敬畏，对因果规律的敬畏。神是无所不在的，因果规律也是遍一切处的。有了这样的认知，持戒就是自觉行为，绝不会心存侥幸。宗教信条就像一个无形的警察，随时都在我

们心中站岗，监督着我们的起心动念和言行举止。

佛教的因果观为三世论，即生命有过去、现在、未来。我们现有的人生是过去生命的延续，死亡只是这期色身的衰败，并不意味着生命的终结。唯物论者则是一世论、断灭论，认为生命既没有过去也没有未来。这种“人死如灯灭”的观点，很容易使人无所畏惧。既然生命只是那么短短几十年，流芳千古与遗臭万年又有什么区别？当然，对社会来说意义是不同的，流芳千古的是造福人类者，遗臭万年的是危害他人者。但这种不同对个体生命却没有意义，所以断灭论会使人们变得非常功利，并导致享乐主义和自私自利的泛滥。假如没有神祇或因果观念的约束，只要权力大到可以不受法律制裁，或狂妄地蔑视法律，必然会为所欲为。

所以说，宗教信仰是维护社会安定的基本力量。在当今这个全球一体化的社会，我们需要寻找一种可行的全球道德规范。有些传统宗教排他性较强，或与现实人生距离较大，而佛教既立足于现实人生且具有包容性。更使人容易接受的是，佛教认为自利与利他

是统一的。凡夫难免有我执，所以做每件事都会有利益考量。如果像儒家那样将义与利对立起来，很难使人坚守这一道德信条。建国几十年来，一直在提倡“全心全意为人民服务”，这正是佛教提倡的菩萨道精神。但如果意识不到“为人民服务”的意义所在，这种服务能持之以恒吗？事实上，很少有人能真正做到这一点。

相比之下，佛教道德的可行性更强，因为它是结合利益对道德行为进行界定。衡量一种行为是否符合道德规范，就要看它是否对自他双方真正有益。同时，它不仅能使我们获得眼前利益，更能使我们获得长远利益。在很多人的感觉中，利益他人似乎要以牺牲个人利益为前提。但佛教认为，凡是有利于别人的行为，必然有利于自己。当然，可能暂时需要付出一些，但这一善行会给未来生命带来百千倍的回报。就像播下一粒种子，会结出累累硕果。结果可能在今生，也可能在来生或更久。因缘成熟时一定会得到回报，正所谓功不唐捐。

或许有人会对此产生怀疑：万一善有善报只是空

洞的安慰，是永不兑现的许诺？对于凡夫来说，总是希望马上见到结果才肯确信。其实，结果并不都需要等那么久。善行能使我们内心善的种子得到滋养，所以在付出的当下，就会使心灵受益。这正是佛教对因果报应更重要的诠释。

所以，我们在行善时不必关注外在结果，那只是行善的副产品。真正的利益，在于完善人格和提升生命素质。这一结果与行善是同步的，是当下就能感受到的。我们做什么，心灵就会有什么改变；做多少，就会改变多少。

# 五、人生的幸福

未来能否获得幸福
关键取决于心理素质
面对世间的风云变化
始终保持
坦然淡定、宠辱不惊的心态
如果具备这一点
走到哪里都能立于不败之地

生命是习惯的积累。每个人来到世界时，生命起点都不相同，性格品行也大相径庭。俗话说，“三岁看一生”。在一个没有生活历练的孩子身上就存在种种不同表现，或慈悲，或残忍，或愚笨，或聪明，或贪婪，或淡泊……不一而足。原因何在？正因为今生是过去生命的延续，还带着以往的种种习性。以贪为例，贪一次并不可怕，如果继续不断地贪，每贪一次，生命中贪的力量就会得到张扬，贪的种子就会得到滋养，久而久之，贪就会成为人性中最强大的力量，使其成为地道的贪性人。反过来说，一个有爱心的人，看到世间苦难就会产生悲心，如此不断长养生命中慈悲的种子，当慈悲发展为人性中最强大的力量时，就

会将我们带入不断增上的良性循环中。

人性包括各种不同因素。佛法认为，众生与众生是平等的，众生与佛陀也是平等的。为什么现实中的我们会表现出那么大的差异？而和佛陀相比，更有着难以逾越的天壤之别？正是因为在生命延续过程中，张扬了不同的层面。当一种力量具有压倒一切的优势时，其他力量便会相应萎缩。在我们的生命中，善恶双方一直在不断争斗，不断发展自身势力。而我们自己就是提供给养的人，我们究竟希望哪一方获胜？

幸福的根本是什么？就在于良好的心态。因为外在的一切都会变化，家庭会解体，财富会失去。尤其是今天这个全球化的世界，影响命运发展的因素已经越来越多，包括有形或无形的，直接或间接的。

过去，很多人一辈子生活在小山村或小城市中，信息非常闭塞，甚至邻村发生些什么都不知道。而在今天这个时代，一场 911 事件，却对整个世界构成了巨大影响。因为世界已是联系非常紧密的整体，我们不知何时会被什么意外干扰自己的生活。可能走在路上突然被车撞倒，可能不慎感染了致命疾病。当生活

变得越来越丰富之后，潜在的意外也越来越多。

我觉得，未来能否获得幸福，关键取决于心理素质。面对世间的风云变化，始终保持坦然淡定、宠辱不惊的心态。如果具备这一点，走到哪里都能立于不败之地。在东南亚金融风波中，不少人因为这一挫折精神失常甚至自寻短见，但也有不少人安然度过这一劫难。为什么在同样的社会变故中，人们受到的伤害完全不同呢？就在于能否正确看待财富，在于对财富的执著程度。环境对人构成的伤害，和我们在乎的程度是成正比的。在乎，就是佛教所说的执著。对感情特别执著的人，失恋就是伤害他的利刃；对事业特别执著的人，事业失败就是摧毁他的灭顶之灾。如果把这些得失看得淡些，不论结果如何，都不会构成多少伤害。

其实，幸福生活可以很简单，未必一定要多么富有。不少人富得没时间享受，那种富有只是给别人看的。是不是在别人羡慕的目光中就能得到幸福？如果大家觉得这个人很幸福，而他自己却觉得痛苦，那么他是幸福还是痛苦？如果大家都觉得这个人很富有，

而他自己还感觉很贫穷，那么他是富有还是贫穷？人们常常将物质作为幸福的保障，实际上，幸福只是个人的感觉，因为人都是活在自己的心态中。有些人生活清贫，却怡然自得；有些人锦衣玉食，却烦恼重重。百万就能幸福吗？千万就能幸福吗？谁也不能为此划定一个标准。可见，幸福是无法具体量化的。

幸福生活是健康的。如果为了赚钱把自己变成一个工具，这种生活健康吗？有些少数民族地区经济虽不发达，但人们都很快乐，劳动时也在引吭高歌。相比之下，他们显然比我们更懂得享受生活。我们现在所说的现代化，基本是全盘西化，结果使世界变得千篇一律。每一个现代化城市，都是高楼大厦、钢筋水泥和各种噪音，人为地将人与大自然隔绝开来。在这样浮躁的环境中，人很容易变得急功近利。

# 六、“空”的智慧

世界是无限的
宇宙是无限的
那么，人究竟有没有能力
认识世界和宇宙呢
佛法认为
我们的心也是无限的
若能开发心性中的无限层面
自然可以认识无限

佛教所说的“空”，是非常重要的人生智慧。常人理解的空是什么都没有，其实并非如此。“空”，是对存在的智慧诠释。《心经》是最短的一部佛教经典，只有二百六十多字，但内涵极为深厚。其中，被人引用最多的是“色不异空，空不异色；色即是空，空即是色”这一公式。色代表物质的存在，我们不能离开存在的现象认识空。换言之，存在的当下就是空。

我们对空的理解，还要和因果结合起来。佛教对人生的解释，可归纳为“因缘因果”四个字。也就是说，世间一切存在和败坏都是因缘决定的，所谓“诸法因缘生，诸法因缘灭”。“诸法”代表存在的一切，它们是因缘（条件）决定的。其中，“因”是主要条

件，“缘”是次要条件。除了这些条件的和合，我们找不到真实不变的存在。比如眼前这张桌子，“桌子”是个假名，是为交流需要而约定俗成的一个概念。除了这个假名，桌子本身只是一堆材料的组合，是木板、铁钉、油漆、人工等众多条件和合后形成的。离开这些条件，哪有什么桌子？可见，桌子不过是因缘假相。其中每一种条件，又由众多条件构成，比如木头由各种元素组成，等等。

佛教所说的空是缘起性空，否定有独存、不变的事物存在。一切都是条件决定，而不是自己决定的。桌子没有自己，我们也没有自己。依此类推，世上万事万物莫不是因缘和合的假相，也就是佛教所说的“假有”。所谓“假”，是要我们远离有和空二边：桌子虽非固定不变的有，但假相宛然。如果认为完全没有，那是断灭见；如果认为固定不变，又落入常见。而佛教对世界是中道的认识，是远离断、常二边的真实认识。

佛陀在《金刚经》中告诉我们一个认识世界的公式：“所言一切法者，即非一切法，是故名一切法。”

同样的道理，所谓桌子，即非桌子，是名桌子。桌子是因缘的假相，并无固定不变的实质，后由我们为其安立桌子的名称，如此而已。所以说，任何事物的存在既是有，也是空。要空掉的是我们赋予它的诸多内涵，比如这个桌子好看不好看，有价值没价值。这些评判都是我们赋予它的，在不同人看来，价值会有很大区别。至于是否好看或喜欢，则和人的好恶、情绪有关。我们将自己的情绪投射到对象中，然后执著它。佛教所说的“空”，正是帮助我们透视事物的真相，透视因缘的假相。

从佛法修行上说，“空”主要是破除我执。人最大的特点是处处以自我为中心。佛教认为，一切烦恼和罪恶皆源于对自我的执著。如果一个人总想着个人得失，必定活得特别痛苦。我们还可以观察到，如果一个人处处为大家着想，很少考虑自己，一定过得很开心，很安然。

世界是无限的，宇宙是无限的。那么，人究竟有没有能力认识世界和宇宙呢？佛法认为，我们的心也是无限的，若能开发心性中的无限层面，自然可以认

识无限。但强烈的我执，却使我们的心从无限变成有限，甚至极为有限的一点点。从唯识学的角度说，每个人都有属于自己的世界，都是活在属于自己的世界中。有些人的世界很狭窄，有些人的世界很开阔。我们看到的世界有多大，就取决于自己的心。有些人一心扑在某人身上，那个人就是他的世界；有些人一心扑在家庭，那个家就是他的世界；有些人一心扑在事业，那个事业就是他的世界。

佛教关于“空”的认识，就在于帮助我们打破我执，使有限回归无限。因为我执，使世人充满无尽的烦恼和痛苦，一旦打破我执，生命就会回归原初的自然状态，成为一个自在的人。

佛陀告诉我们，一切众生皆有佛性，皆能成佛。成佛，就是开发生命本具的无量智慧、无量光明、无量功德。我们的心本和太虚一样，心包太虚，量周沙界。现在却局限于由我执构建的狭隘世界中。学佛，就是要粉碎我执建立的城堡，将生命宝藏开发出来。整个佛法修行，就是破除我执的过程。禅宗所说的开悟，正是打开生命宝藏的钥匙。

# 七、结 说

得到一个高学历
并不意味着
我们已经认识人生
如果不懂得如何做人
要把今生几十年过好
也不容易
何况生命还有无尽的未来

在座同学们会有许多知识，如历史知识、文学知识、哲学知识等。所有知识中最根本的，是做人的知识，认识自我的知识。知识有如大海，任何人都不可能拥有全部，缺乏其中某一种，对生活并不会构成太大影响。但我们不能不做人，不能缺乏做人的知识。因为做人不可以请假，也不可以退休。认识生命，才是人生幸福的根本。懂得如何做人，才是任何人必不可少的知识。西方哲学将“认识你自己”作为重要内容，如果不了解自己，只懂得向外追求，只懂得赚钱、做学问，根本不可能获得幸福。

现代教育重视实际技能和知识掌握，却对做人的知识重视不够，结果使很多人面对人生困惑时手足无

措，乃至病急乱投医。法轮功的信徒中，博士、硕士比比皆是。所以得到一个高学历，并不意味着我们已经认识人生。如果不懂得如何做人，要把今生几十年过好也不容易，何况生命还有无尽的未来。

现代人太缺乏正确的人生观念，这是需要加强的。尤其是学文科的同学，更应该了解传统文化，了解佛教。有了正确的人生观念，才会有良好的心态，才能有美好的明天。

# 八、答 疑

国人之所以缺乏信仰
主要是因为对宗教有太多偏见
而当这种精神需求被压抑时
会转而寻找另外的替代物
如果只关心基本生存
宗教的确是不重要的
如果还有更高的精神需求
那宗教绝不是可有可无的

2002 年 11 月，济群法师应邀为南大历史系几十位博士及硕士作了题为《佛教与中国传统文化》的讲座，并在讲座结束后与在场师生交流、答疑。

## 认识佛教，到底难不难

**问：**听了这次讲座后，对佛教有了新认识。但我的困惑是，为什么在非佛教人士看来，佛学那么深奥？您觉得，是什么妨碍了我们对这种简单理论的理解？

**济群法师：**佛学并不简单，事实上，它比任何哲学、宗教更博大精深。但在做人方面，佛教为我们提

供了一些简单、基本的做人准则。

什么原因使我们无法了解佛教呢？我想，你们应该比我更清楚。我们从书本上得来的佛教印象，往往是经过其他思想处理的，多半对宗教持否定态度。而我们从生活中得来的佛教印象，往往是寺院烧香拜佛的场面，或影视作品演绎的“酒肉穿肠过，佛祖心中留”。由此产生的认识，不仅似是而非，且不少是完全颠倒的，本身就是对佛教内涵的错误解读。如是，以讹传讹，成为人们深入了解佛教的障碍。

佛法是佛陀为众生留下的精神食粮。我们不去学习，不会给佛法带来什么损失，却会使自己失去很多。佛法是人生的智慧，是解脱的途径，拒绝它，就是拒绝了解自己，拒绝究竟解脱人生痛苦的大智慧。

**问：**我是学思想史的，据我所知，隋唐时期的老百姓对于佛教经典都耳熟能详。只不过近代以来，受话语方式、书面语言等原因限制，使我们觉得佛法很遥远。

**济群法师：**这有两方面的原因。语言是一方面的障碍，随着“五四”白话文运动的兴起，现代人的古文阅读能力比以前差了许多。另一方面，佛教的思想义理确实深奥，因为它揭示了宇宙人生的真相，是佛陀在菩提树下觉悟的真理，不是仅仅根据文字就能读懂的。《金刚经》的文字并不深奥，其中的深意却很难透彻。事实上，我们在不同修行阶段阅读，都会有新的、进一步的理解。但读不懂也没关系，因为佛教也有许多普及性的入门读物，可以由浅入深地渐次学习。

**问：**讲座中，您谈到胡适先生写《中国哲学史大纲》，之所以写不下去是因为对宗教不了解。但他在《回忆录》中说，是因公务繁忙才没完成的。如果把他关在山上，两三年后就完稿了。

**济群法师：**关于胡适没有完成《中国哲学史大纲》的原因，你说的和我说的并不矛盾。他为什么要到寺院闭关呢？不就是因为不懂佛学吗？如果他已经有深入、透彻的了解，就不需要那么长时间了。

## 为什么佛教在印度失传了

**问：**我想问三个问题。一是您讲座中提到的梁漱溟先生，我们知道他对中国文化、印度文化、西洋文化都有研究。请教法师，梁先生对于佛学讲得怎样？第二，印度已经没有佛教了，而是信仰印度教，我想知道佛教与印度教的关系及佛教灭绝的原因。第三，你刚才谈到宗教对人类道德修养有很大作用，但和法律相比，却是一种软机制，我同意这个观点。但我们怎样解释另一种现象，即历史上各宗教之间及宗教内部有很多残酷的斗争事件？

**济群法师：**梁先生早年在北大讲过印度哲学，但他对佛学的研究并不深入。后来又回归儒学，他的思想是徘徊于佛儒之间的。

关于第二个问题，印度的传统宗教是婆罗门教，有三千多年历史。印度的原住民是达罗毗荼人，雅利安人侵入后建立婆罗门教，并占据统治地位。佛教兴起时，被称为反传统的沙门集团。它对婆罗门教的挑战，类似西方人文思想对中世纪黑暗统治的突破。佛

教的立足点是以人为本，对婆罗门教的祭祀仪式、种姓制度等进行了全面否定。到十二世纪，佛教逐渐在印度本土消失。原因主要有两点：一是佛教人才衰落，而印度教涌现了许多出色人才。印度非常重视思辩，各宗教间常以论辩一比高下，失败者必须改宗。另一个重要原因，是伊斯兰教的入侵。佛教在印度消失，是他们的极大不幸。在佛教盛行的阿育王时期，整个印度社会安定、生活富足。而佛教退出印度舞台之后，伊斯兰教、印度教、锡克教之间经常出现争斗和冲突，酿成流血事件。

至于第三个问题，宗教之间所以会产生冲突，主要是因为宗教的局限性。一神教通常有很强的排他性，甚至为捍卫自己的信仰进行圣战。而佛教是一种包容性更强，也更重视和平的宗教。在佛教史上，从不曾以佛教的名义发动战争。当然，健康的传统宗教都有共同的道德准则，即做人的基本准则。总的来说，这些准则对维护社会安定具有重要作用。

## 正信，才是祛魅的良药

**问：**我在做建国后秘密社团的论文，比较关注邪教问题。在社会发展过程中，宗教资源和政治资源、经济资源、军事资源一样，都是不可或缺的。在反邪教的过程中，人们往往以无神论和科学技术来反对它。实际上，他们在斗争平台上找不到对手，因为科技人员也有相信邪教的。有些宗教人士或学者认为，佛教是比较和平的，且经过长期积累，已完全中国化了，大力发展佛教，可以保护我国的宗教资源不被“法轮功”之类的邪教夺取。

**济群法师：**你说的有道理。过去，政府对宗教认识不足，导致整个社会与宗教对立。科学虽能解决一些问题，但并不是万能的。实际上，两者不可互相替代。科学有科学涉及的领域，宗教也有宗教涉及的领域。科学是改造物质世界的，宗教是解决心灵问题的。科学能解决的问题，宗教未必能解决；宗教能解决的问题，科学也未必能解决。

曾几何时，人们认为练气功是科学，而信教却是

迷信。所以信教是难以启齿的，练气功反而是光明正大的。“法轮功”之所以盛行一时，就是因为它既打着气功的旗号，又赋予宗教的内涵。虽然这个内涵是极端错误的，却在某种程度上弥补了人们对宗教信仰的需求。

这又涉及另一个问题，人类究竟有没有信仰的需要？从社会现状来看，虽然很多西方国家宗教信仰十分普遍，但在中国，很多人没有信仰也照样过日子，似乎宗教并非生活必需。因而人们常以诧异的目光看待佛教徒，尤其是其中的知识分子，觉得文化人怎么也信这些子虚乌有的东西？

国人之所以缺乏信仰，主要是因为对宗教有太多偏见。而当这种精神需求被压抑时，会转而寻找另外的替代物，比如邪教，比如物质。现代人往往通过拼命赚钱、享乐，甚至对社会进行破坏来发泄烦恼。其实，也不能说他们完全没有信仰。但他们所信的，只是钱，只是自己，只是眼前的利益和快乐。根据马斯洛的理论，人有不同层面的需求，并通过不同领域予以解决。如果只关心基本生存，那么宗教的确是不重

要的。如果还有更高的精神需求，那宗教绝不是可有可无的。

安全感也是人们主要的精神需求之一。比如人类对死亡有着与生俱来的恐惧，关注到这些层面，势必会归于宗教。历史上风光一时的人物，都已烟消云散，这便使人们对生命的终极目标产生疑惑。如果没有宗教信仰，往往会在对生死的探究中迷失方向。不少哲学家和文学家便因此产生虚无感，并因无法排遣这种虚无而结束生命。佛法告诉我们，生命是无限的延续。死亡只是一期生命的终结，同时又是新生命的开始。有了这样的认知，我们就不会畏惧死亡了。在茫茫宇宙，地球就像太空中的一艘飞船，上不着天，下不着地；没有来处，也没有去处。我们从哪里来，又去向何方？唯有信仰，才能帮助我们找到人生的立足点和最终归宿。

## 抱佛脚和世俗化

**问：**人们所说的“平时不烧香，临时抱佛脚”，是否说明了佛教在民众心目中的位置？

**济群法师：**“平时不烧香，临时抱佛脚”的人确实很多，但为什么他们想到抱佛脚，而不是抱别的脚呢？佛法义理深广，信徒的理解程度也大相径庭，只有部分人才有能力深入研究并付诸实践。多数人只是在遇到困难时想到佛教，想来佛菩萨面前寻求保护。不过，这也足以说明佛教对民众的影响力，否则，他们就会去抱别的脚了。人们遇到困难时最先想到的，一定是最重要、最有能力的人。所以，这个问题恰恰说明佛教的重要性。

**问：**我对宗教接触比较少，提一个门外的问题。宗教给我的感觉很神圣，但我看到许多僧人有世俗化的倾向。特别在乡村，有和尚吃肉、帮人做法事等现象。我想知道，真正有虔诚信仰的僧人在教界的比例有多少？

**济群法师：**你提到的这些现象的确存在。我认为这既是佛教界的问题，也是中国社会的问题。近几十年来，佛教一直没有得到良好的发展机遇，并在文革期间遭到几乎毁灭性的破坏。宗教政策落实后，整个社会又处于转型带来的无序状态。如是种种，教界也不可避免地存在诸多问题，如因发展旅游而走向商业化、世俗化。如果在人们需要宗教时，教界不能以纯洁的面貌出现，不仅是教界的不幸，也是整个社会的不幸。如果教界失去纯洁性，人们就失去了精神家园，失去了心灵净化之地。我对此也很担忧，并发表了《佛教在商业浪潮中的反思》等文章，对相关问题加以探讨。

至于有虔诚信仰的僧人占有多大比例，我没有具体调查过。每个人接触到的，只是几个寺院、部分僧人，看到不良现象时，不能以点带面、以偏概全。就我走过的地方看，道风好的寺院也有不少。

## 价值取向决定你的选择

**问：**您刚才讲到执著，如果一个很贪的人，对一切很执著，那么不执著后又是什么样的呢？如果执著不是很强烈，是否就说明宗教对他的影响比较大？另外，执著与得失成败对立吗？

**济群法师：**对于凡夫来说，不可能做到什么都不执著。如果真的什么都不执著之后，就是一个自在的人，不会被外界各种变化影响或伤害的人。至于执著不太强烈，也未必就是受宗教影响，也许是往昔善根，也许是天性淡泊，也许是自身修养使然。当然，佛教中有很多断除执著的方法，可以使我们更快地看破、放下。

每个人对人生目标的追求，都是以执著为基础。它与得失成败，在某些方面未必对立，但在某些方面是对立的。如果在努力过程中始终贯穿着执著，必然会因这种执著带来无尽烦恼。而有些人生追求，虽是以执著开始，最终的结果却是放弃执著。即以执著为起点，以放弃为终点。从佛法修行来说，如果不放弃

执著，将始终处于有限的层面，达不到最终目标。我们在乎一件事，就会落入相应的陷阱中。一旦打破这份执著，心才能和整个宇宙相通。

**问：**在现实生活中，对别人好一点，自己不会失去什么。但生活并不总是那么简单。比如三人被困在洞内，其中两人必须吃掉另一人才能生存，否则没等到救援者前来就会全部饿死。这个故事曾引起一场对人生价值的争论，您怎么看待这个问题？

**济群法师：**关键是你如何为自己定位，也就是说，你想成为什么样的人。定位不同，采取的行为也不同。在佛教中，菩萨处处舍己为人，就像舍身饲虎的萨埵那太子一样，主动为众生献身。如果是只为自己考虑的凡夫，当然会为了自身利益把别人吃掉。所以，关键在于定位，然后就清楚自己该怎么做了。





# Buddhism and Chinese Traditional Culture

Master Jiqun

Translated by MPI Translation Center

**Lecture delivered at Nanjing University in 2002**

## Contents


I Buddhism and Philosophy .....55

II Buddhism and Literature .....63

III Buddhism and Art .....68

IV Buddhism, Folk Customs, and Morality .....73

V The Happiness of Life .....82

VI The Wisdom of "Emptiness" .....88

VII Conclusion .....95

VIII Q&A Session .....98

1. Is It Difficult to Understand Buddhism? .....98

2. Why Did Buddhism Disappear in India? .....102

3. Right Faith Is the Best Remedy to Dispel Illusions .....105

4. "Clutching the Buddha's Feet" and Secularization .....109

5. Your Values Determine Your Choices.....112

On November 5, 2002, Master Jiqun delivered a lecture titled "Understanding Buddhism" at Nanjing University. His audience was the master's and doctoral students of the School of History. This article is based on the lecture's recording.

Since most people are not Buddhists and have little contact with the tradition, Buddhism can seem remote from everyday life. Yet in reality, its influence in China reaches far beyond faith, extending into many areas, such as culture and daily life. For example, in 1998, the Buddhist

community held a commemorative event titled "Two Thousand Years of Buddhism in China." Although it first arrived as a foreign religion, Buddhism has spread in China over two millennia. Over time, it has integrated seamlessly with local culture, and become an inseparable part of tradition.

It was long believed that Buddhism was first introduced to China in 67 CE, during the tenth year of Emperor Ming's Yongping era in the Eastern Han Dynasty. Later, scholarly research suggested an earlier date—2 BCE, the first year of Yuanshou during Emperor Ai of the Western Han Dynasty. Today, this new date is widely recognized by the Buddhist community.

# I

## Buddhism and Philosophy

In Chinese cultural history, the Spring and Autumn Period (770–476 BCE) witnessed the flourishing of the Hundred Schools of Thought. However, after the Han and Wei periods (202 BCE–266 CE), it was mainly Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism that truly influenced Chinese society.

If we do not understand Buddhism, we cannot fully comprehend Chinese culture. For example, the philosophy of *Xuanxue* in the Wei and Jin periods (220–420 CE) was deeply influenced by Buddhist teaching on Prajna. The Prajna texts focus on the idea of emptiness, which

is precisely the realm that Xuanxue revered. Therefore, during the Northern and Southern Dynasties, translating and spreading Prajna texts became especially popular. Later, in the Sui and Tang dynasties, philosophy was mainly rooted in Buddhism; without Buddhist teachings, philosophy during the Sui and Tang periods would have been almost empty.

Early Confucian thought was closely connected to everyday life. Later, as it developed into Neo-Confucianism during the Song and Ming dynasties, its focus shifted to exploring the nature of mind. When it came to the mind, traditional Chinese philosophy was relatively weak. Although works like the *Mencius* and the *Book of Changes* touched upon it, overall, they were relatively limited. However, both Mahayana and Theravada Buddhist sutras and treatises provided rich and profound teachings on the mind.

More importantly, Buddhism understands the mind not only in theory, but also through practice and realization.

Chan Buddhism, in particular, emphasizes exploring the true nature of the mind. For this reason, some say that Neo-Confucianism is like monks wearing Confucian hats—outwardly Confucian, but inwardly Buddhist. Whether Neo-Confucianism's blending of ideas succeeded or not, it is an indisputable fact that it was deeply influenced by Buddhism.

By the late Qing and early Republican periods, reformers such as Tan Sitong, Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, and Yangdu sought to save the nation through reform. In doing so, they drew strength from Mahayana Buddhist spirit of fearlessness, vowing to serve all beings and relieve their suffering. Although their reforms ultimately failed, the spirit of these patriots influenced generations of Chinese people. In fact, much of their philosophical thought was drawn from Buddhism.

For example, Tan Sitong's the *Theory of Benevolence* was influenced by Huayan and Yogacara thought. He begins his work by saying, "Anyone who studies benevolence

should be familiar with Buddhist texts, such as the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, as well as the teachings of the Mind School and Consciousness-only School." He believes that "Benevolence is the source of all things in heaven and earth; in essence, it is only mind, only consciousness." In the same way, Kang Youwei's the *Book of the Great Unity* drew on the Buddhist idea of no-self. Guided by this idea, he devoted himself to breaking down the boundaries between social classes.

Looking over the history of Chinese philosophy, Buddhism has always held a significant place. In his early years, Hu Shi began writing *An Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy*. But he left it unfinished halfway because he had not yet gained a proper understanding of Buddhism. Later, he began to study Buddhism and collected a lot of materials on Chan Buddhism. Although his research may not have been widely accepted by the Buddhist community, it shows that he emphasized the importance of Buddhism and recognized its profound influence on Chinese philosophy.

Buddhism originated in India, where religion and philosophy were particularly advanced. In fact, Buddhism itself carries a rich philosophical meaning. From the early Upanishads to the six schools of philosophy and Buddhist thought, we can see how religion and philosophy were deeply integrated in India. For example, the Upanishads are both religious scriptures and philosophical masterpieces. Schopenhauer once praised the text, saying: "It has been the solace of my life; it will be the solace of my death."

Rooted in India's cultural traditions, Buddhism also formed a profound and rigorous philosophical system. After it was introduced to China, great masters, drawing on the ideas from Buddhist sutras, constructed different systems of practice. From a philosophical perspective, schools such as Huayan, Yogacara, Tiantai, and the Three Treatises can be regarded as Huayan philosophy, Yogacara philosophy, Tiantai philosophy, and Madhyamaka philosophy.

Since modern times, Yogacara philosophy has exerted a significant influence on the academic community. In particular, during the Republican era, Ouyang Jingwu founded the China Inner Studies Academy in Nanjing, focusing on the study of Dharmalaksana Yogacara. Moreover, renowned scholars such as Liang Qichao, Xiong Shili, and Liang Shuming studied under him. At that time, Liang Shuming was invited by Cai Yuanpei to lecture on Indian philosophy at Peking University. He presented it from a Buddhist perspective and helped pioneer the teaching of Buddhist studies in modern Chinese universities.

Later, Xiong Shili also went to Peking University to lecture on Yogacara. However, according to classical Yogacara thought, Xiong Shili was considered to have deviated from the tradition, because he reverted to the old path of Neo-Confucianism and eventually became a master of modern New Confucianism. In his work the *New Treatise on Yogacara*, he absorbed the thought of the eternal true mind and mind-only, offering a new reinterpretation of

Yogacara theory. As soon as this book was published, it immediately drew strong criticism from the China Inner Studies Academy and even the entire Buddhist community. As a result, many articles were written to refute it.

Yogacara philosophy is exceptionally rich. It offers deep insights into mental phenomena and even the subconscious. And it also focuses on studying how the objects of perception are related to the mind of perception. Its main ideas can be summarized in two points:

First, the objects we perceive are not separate from our mind of perception.

Second, the objects we perceive are determined by ourselves.

In fact, Yogacara shares many similarities with the phenomenology of Heidegger and Husserl. That is why so many scholars are now engaged in comparative research between Yogacara and phenomenology. In addition,

Yogacara, based on worldview and ontology, constructs a rich philosophical system, and its theories are built on the principles of Buddhist logic, known as Hetuvidya. Since the structure of Hetuvidya is even more rigorous than Western formal logic, the entire framework of Yogacara is logically tight and highly systematic.

# II

## Buddhism and Literature

Buddhism has had an extensive influence on Chinese literature. First, Buddhist sutras are vast like an ocean. For example, the *Taisho Tripitaka* alone contains over ten thousand volumes. Moreover, even from a literary perspective, many classics in Buddhism, such as the widely circulated the *Diamond Sutra*, the *Vimalakirti Sutra*, the *Lotus Sutra*, are masterpieces for the ages.

The concept of time and space presented in Buddhist sutras was something the Chinese people had never encountered before. The traditional Chinese view of time and space was more limited in scope, just as Zhuangzi

once said: "Beyond the Six Directions, the sage recognizes their existence, but cannot grasp them." By comparison, the time and space described in Buddhist sutras display remarkable vastness. For example, in the *Vimalakirti Sutra*, when the layman Vimalakirti manifested illness, the Buddha dispatched disciples to visit him. Although his dwelling was only one *zhang* (about ten feet) in size, hundreds of people entered, yet the space neither felt crowded nor expanded. This reveals the inconceivable realm spoken of in Buddhism.

At that moment, when Sariputra entered the room, he thought to himself: "So many people have come to visit Vimalakirt, yet there are no seats; where can we sit?" As soon as this thought arose, Vimalakirti asked Manjusri Bodhisattva: "You have traveled through countless billions of asamkhyeya worlds; where are the most supreme seats?" Manjusri replied: "To the east, beyond thirty-six Ganges' sands of countries, there is the Buddha-land of Mahasupratisthita. There, the lion thrones are eighty-four

thousand *yojanas*[1] high, and their solemn magnificence is unparalleled." Vimalakirti then manifested his supernatural powers and instantly transported 32,000 lion thrones and placed them in his ten-foot room.

Thus, the Buddhist sutras present the entire universe as a stage, with infinite time and space as the backdrop. For those who do not believe in Buddhism, they may regard this merely as myths. Even so, its boundless imagination greatly expanded the thinking of the Chinese people.

Buddhist sutras also have rich literary forms, including poetry, prose, fiction, and drama. Even for those who were not Buddhist, these texts can still be studied as part of cultural tradition. That is why they were very popular among traditional literati and scholars. As early as the Eastern Jin dynasty, eighteen distinguished scholars gathered at Mount Lu, under the guidance of the eminent

1. Yojana is an ancient Indian unit of length. It originally referred to the distance an ox could travel in a day while yoked to a cart, approximately 11.2 kilometers.

monk Master Huiyuan. Together, they formed the White Lotus Society to cultivate Pure Land practice.

By the Tang and Song dynasties, literati showed an even greater enthusiasm for Buddhism. Among them were famous figures such as Wang Wei, Bai Juyi, Liu Zongyuan, Liu Yuxi, Fan Zhongyan, Wang Anshi, and Su Dongpo. They were all devout Buddhists. Moreover, literary works not only expressed an author's observations of the world, insights, and life experiences, but also reflected their thoughts and spiritual beliefs. As a result, many ancient literary works are imbued with Buddhist ideas and flow with the spirit of Chan. If we do not understand Buddhism, it is difficult to fully grasp the true meaning of these works.

In addition, some literary works directly draw material from Buddhist texts or related content. For example, the *Journey to the West* is based on the journey of the Tang Monk (Tripitaka Master Xuanzang) to India to seek Buddhist sutras. As students of history know, Xuanzang

is one of the four great translators in the history of Chinese Buddhism and has made outstanding contributions to Chinese Mahayana Buddhism. The *Journey to the West*, based on his experiences, is naturally infused with many Buddhist ideas. Unfortunately, some film and television adaptations have portrayed the Tang Monk merely as a foil to Sun Wukong and Zhu Bajie, failing to represent history correctly.

Moreover, collections such as the *Notes of the Thatched Abode of Close Observations* and the *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* also reflect Buddhist ideas of cause and effect. In the classic novel *Dream of the Red Chamber*, readers find many poems filled with the spirit of Chan. Thus, if one knows nothing about Buddhism, they will be unable to correctly interpret these works.

# III

## Buddhism and Art

Buddhism shaped artistic creation in ways that cannot be overlooked. As it spread into China and Buddhist statuary thrived, it inspired remarkable achievements in sculpture, architecture, and painting.

Of these arts, sculpture stands out the most. The surviving Buddhist statues are not only numerous, but also of outstanding artistic value, attracting worldwide attention. In fact, without the tens of millions of Buddhist statues in grottoes such as Dunhuang, Yungang, Longmen, and Maijishan, and without the buddhas and bodhisattvas enshrined in towering temples, more than half

of the treasures of Chinese sculpture would have been lost. As a result, the history of Chinese sculpture would never be as rich and profound as we see today.

Moreover, a considerable portion of the surviving ancient buildings are also temples. For instance, the two oldest existing Tang dynasty buildings are both Buddhist temple halls: the main halls of Foguang Temple and Nanchan Temple in Shanxi province. In addition, when it comes to ancient pagodas, they are basically all Buddhist structures. This is especially true for classic pagodas, such as the Songyue Temple Pagoda on Mount Song, the Wooden Pagoda of Ying County in Shanxi, the Three Pagodas of Chongsheng Temple in Dali, and the Yunyan Temple Pagoda in Suzhou. Although their building styles differ, they are all purely Buddhist pagodas. As the saying goes, "Famous mountains are often where monks dwell." In fact, famous mountains are renowned not only for their natural landscapes, but also for their cultural landscapes. Among these cultural landscapes, Buddhist sites play a vital role.

Chinese paintings and calligraphy are also inseparable from Buddhist themes. For instance, in landscape paintings, there are ancient temples and Aranyakas (hermitages); and in figure paintings, there are various buddhas and bodhisattvas, Vajras, Arhats, and eminent monks. Moreover, the sutras copied in various dynasties not only propagated the Dharma, but also preserved a large number of ancient calligraphic works for us. Among them are countless famous calligraphy of copying sutras by great calligraphers, such as:

- The *Sutra of the Last Teaching* by Wang Xizhi
- The *Heart Sutra* by Zhang Xu
- The *Diamond Sutra* by Liu Gongquan
- The *Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment* by Su Shi
- The *Lotus Sutra* by Zhao Mengfu
- The *Amitabha Sutra* by Lin Zexu
- The *Heart Sutra* by Ouyang Jian
- The *Collection of Couplets from the Avatamsaka Sutra* by Master Hongyi

In addition, the Dunhuang Grottoes preserve a large number of sutras copied by people of the Tang dynasty. These are not only precious Buddhist sutras, but also invaluable treasures of calligraphic art.

These works embody the spirit of the Dharma through direct transcription of Buddhist sutras or related texts. We know that traditional Chinese painting differs profoundly from Western painting in the way of expression. Western painting emphasizes realistic depiction, while Chinese painting values *yi*, using freehand brushwork to directly convey inner feeling. Here, yi refers to both an idea and a state of spiritual attainment. In fact, the quality of an artwork mainly depends on the creator's state of mind. Without sufficient cultural and religious cultivation, how can a work achieve such ethereal and profound depth? As the saying goes, "True mastery lies beyond the painting itself."

Similarly, if we do not possess Buddhist cultivation, it is difficult to follow the artist's mindset and truly enter the

artistic world they created. Today, people's minds are so restless. If we do not understand the background of these works, how can we appreciate the meaning of Chan and experience the timeless transcendence?

# IV

## Buddhism, Folk Customs, and Morality

Beyond its influence on art, Buddhism has also found its way into the daily lives of ordinary people since it was introduced to China. At its peak, it was said that, "Every household venerates Guanyin, and every family honors Amitabha." Over time, religious festivals such as the birthdays of buddhas and bodhisattvas gradually became folk festivals that were widely celebrated by the public.

Among these, the Laba Festival and the Ullambana Festival have been especially influential. In Chinese culture, filial piety is deeply valued, though it has traditionally been

rooted in social and ethical norms. However, the filial piety advocated by Buddhism emphasizes repaying kindness. In this sense, it can be seen as a more ultimate way of fulfilling filial duties.

In addition, many Chinese moral values have been deeply influenced by Buddhism, such as the belief in cause and effect. Generally speaking, social stability is maintained through law and morality. Across the world, religion has long served as the cornerstone of morality, thereby sustaining human civilization for thousands of years. For example, in Arab countries, this moral foundation is built upon Islam; in Western countries, upon Christianity; and in many Asian countries, upon Confucianism, Buddhism, and related traditions.

For these religions, the basic moral teachings are actually very simple. For example, Buddhism has the Five Precepts and Christianity has the Ten Commandments. These principles are timeless and universal. Although society may keep changing, human nature hasn't changed much.

Indeed, we have explored the external world extensively and gained more and more knowledge, but we remain ignorant of ourselves. As a result, the problems people faced in ancient times still exist. We are still suffering from greed, hatred, and delusion, just as people did in the Buddha's time over two thousand years ago. If there is any difference, I believe these weaknesses of human nature are perhaps even more pronounced today.

Overall, modern people's desires are probably greater than those of any previous era. That is, we have become greedier. In ancient times, people revered philosophy and spiritual pursuits. Today, however, people revere money and material enjoyment. Yet, we know that philosophy represents wisdom, while the economy only represents material prosperity. Furthermore, when we see that people admire celebrities and fast-paced consumer culture, what does this reveal? It shows that people are indulging in sensual pleasures—the very lifestyle that ancient sages once condemned. Such values, in a certain sense, reflect a regression, rather than progress in thought.

Religious precepts are established to address the weaknesses of human nature. If we look at crimes throughout history and across the world, they are nothing more than killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and lying. What has changed are only the methods. For example, what is the real difference between killing someone with a knife and killing with guns or cannons? The only difference is that the latter is more destructive, but it does not mean that human nature has changed. This is why Buddhism teaches the precepts of refraining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and lying—aiming to eliminate the root causes of crime.

Some may think that setting up a few rules is simple and that anyone or any organization can create a system of rules. But what makes religious precepts unique? It's that they have a powerful backing. In fact, setting up rules is easy, but ensuring that everyone abides by them isn't. Rules only gain real force when they are written into law. Yet even the law can't cover everything; there are always loopholes to exploit. Even if the law can detect and

punish every crime, by the time the law takes effect, the crime has already caused damage to society. Moreover, how far the law can play its role depends on many factors, such as whether those who enforce it are fair and just.

However, religious precepts are different. They are rooted in belief—faith in awe of deities and the law of cause and effect. Deities are ever-present, and the law of cause and effect pervades everything. With such understanding, observing precepts becomes an act of inner discipline, so we will no longer think we can get away with it. In this sense, religious precepts are like an invisible police-man, standing watch within our minds, and guiding our thoughts, speech, and actions.

The Buddhist view of causality spans three periods of time, meaning that life has past, present, and future. Our current life is a continuation of past lives; death is merely the decay of this physical body, not the end of life itself. However, materialists hold a one-life view, believing that life has neither past nor future. For them, "Death is like

the extinguishing of a lamp," which can easily make people become fearless of consequences. Since life lasts only a few decades, does it really matter to us whether we are praised or condemned for generations afterward?

Of course, for society, those who benefit humanity are celebrated for generations, while those who harm others are reviled. But for the individual, this difference has no real meaning. Such a nihilistic view can make people very utilitarian, leading to the spread of hedonism and selfishness. Without belief in deities or the law of cause and effect, as long as our power is great enough to avoid legal sanctions or arrogantly dismiss the law, we will inevitably act without restraint.

Therefore, religious belief is a fundamental force for maintaining social stability. In today's globalized world, we need to find a feasible global moral code. Some traditional religions are highly exclusive or quite distant from real life, while Buddhism is both inclusive and connected with real life.

What's more, Buddhism teaches that benefiting self and benefiting others are ultimately unified—a principle that people find easier to accept. Inevitably, ordinary people have self-attachment, so in everything they do, they consider personal gain. However, Confucianism holds that righteousness and interests are incompatible. But if we follow this teaching, it becomes difficult to uphold this moral code. Since the founding of our country, we've been advocating the principle of "serving the people wholeheartedly." This is precisely the spirit of the Bodhisattva path advocated by Buddhism. But if we don't understand the true meaning of "serving the people," how can such service be sustained in the long run? In fact, very few people can truly achieve this.

By comparison, Buddhist morality is more practical because it connects moral behavior with personal benefits. To judge whether an action conforms to moral norms, we must see whether it truly benefits both oneself and others. At the same time, such action should bring not only immediate benefits but also long-term ones. Many people

feel that benefiting others means sacrificing their benefits. However, Buddhism believes that any action that benefits others will naturally benefit oneself. Of course, it may require some temporary effort, but this good deed will bring returns hundreds or thousands of times greater in future lives. It is like planting a seed that eventually yields abundant fruit. The result may come in this life, the next, or even later. When the conditions are ripe, the reward will surely come. In fact, no good deed ever goes unrewarded.

Some may doubt this: What if the saying "Good deeds are rewarded" is nothing more than empty comfort, a promise that never comes true? After all, ordinary people always want to see results right away before they believe. Actually, the results don't always take so long to appear. Indeed, good deeds nourish the seeds of goodness within us. So as long as we benefit others, the very act itself nourishes our mind. This is how Buddhism interprets the law of causality.

In fact, when we do good deeds, we don't need to focus

on external results—those are just by-products. The true benefit lies in perfecting our character and enhancing the quality of our lives. And this benefit arises at the very moment we do good; it can be felt instantly. Whatever good we do brings a change to our mind; the more we do, the greater the change.

# V

## The Happiness of Life

Life is the accumulation of habits. When we come into the world, our starting points are not the same, and our character and conduct also vary greatly. As the saying goes, "By the age of three, you can foresee a person's whole life." Even in kids without much life experience, we can already see many differences: compassionate or cruel; foolish or intelligent; greedy or detached.

Why is this? Because this life is a continuation of past lives, still carrying past habits. Take greed for example: being greedy once is not terrible. But if greed continues, every act of greed strengthens its force and nourishes its

seed. Over time, greed will become the strongest force in our mind, until we are completely ruled by it. Conversely, when we see the suffering of the world with a loving mind, compassion naturally arises. Each time, the seed of compassion is nourished and grows stronger. When compassion grows into the strongest force within us, it will lead us into an ever-improving virtuous cycle.

In fact, human nature is made up of many qualities. Buddhism teaches that all sentient beings are equal, and that sentient beings are also equal to the Buddha. However, why do we show such great differences in real life? And compared to the Buddha, why is there such an unbridgeable gap? Because as our life goes on, we keep strengthening different qualities. When one quality grows overwhelmingly strong, the others naturally become weak. In our lives, good and evil qualities are constantly battling against each other, each trying to grow stronger. And we are the ones who feed and sustain them. So the question is: which side do we truly wish to see prevail?

What is the root of happiness? It lies in maintaining a good mindset. After all, everything external is bound to change: family bonds may loosen with time, wealth may be lost. Especially in today's globalized world, our destiny is shaped by even more conditions—some visible and direct, others invisible and indirect.

In the past, many people spent their whole lives in small villages or towns, with very limited information—even not knowing what was happening in neighboring villages. But today, an event like 9/11 has had a huge impact on the whole world. Since the world is now a closely connected whole, we don't know when some unexpected event will disrupt our lives. We may suddenly be hit by a car while walking on the road or struck by a deadly disease. As our lives become richer, potential accidents also increase.

I believe that our future happiness depends on our state of mind. Even when facing the changing tides of the world, we must always maintain a calm and composed mindset, unmoved by success or failure. With such a mindset, we

can stand firm wherever we go. For example, during the Southeast Asian financial crisis, some became mentally unstable and even took their own lives, while others passed through this crisis unharmed. Why did people suffer so differently in the same crisis? It depends on whether they can view wealth correctly, and how attached they are to it.

In fact, the harm we suffer is in line with how much we care about it. This caring is what Buddhism calls attachment. For those who are deeply attached to affections, a broken relationship cuts like a sharp blade; for those who are deeply attached to their careers, career failure is like a crushing blow. But if we take these gains and losses more lightly, then whatever the outcome, they won't bring us much harm.

In fact, a happy life can be very simple—it doesn't require much wealth. Many people are so rich that they have no time to enjoy lives; their wealth is only for display. But can they attain happiness just because others admire them? If everyone thinks someone is very happy, but they feel

miserable, are they happy or miserable? If everyone thinks this person is very wealthy, but they feel poor, are they rich or poor? People often regard material possessions as the guarantee of happiness, but in fact, happiness is really about how they feel inside, because they live within their own mindsets. Some people live in poverty, but feel content and at ease; others are richly dressed and fed, but still full of afflictions. Questions like, "Will a million make us happy? What about ten million?" show that no one can decide how much money it takes to be happy. It's clear that happiness isn't something we can measure.

A happy life is also a healthy life. But if we turn ourselves into tools just for making money, is such a life healthy? For example, in some ethnic minority regions of China, the economy is not developed, yet people live happily. They even sing freely while working. It is clear that they understand how to enjoy life better than we do. By contrast, what we now call "Modernization" is in fact mostly "Westernization." As a result, the world is becoming more and more uniform. Every modern city looks the same, full

of skyscrapers, concrete, and noise, isolating people from nature. In such a restless environment, people are easily driven by the desire for quick success and instant gain.

# VI

## The Wisdom of "Emptiness"

The "emptiness" taught in Buddhism is a very important wisdom for life. Many people think that emptiness means "nothing at all," but this is not true. In fact, "emptiness" is a wise way of understanding the phenomena. For example, the *Heart Sutra* is the shortest of all Buddhist sutras. It has only 260 Chinese characters, yet it contains profound meaning. One of its most frequently quoted lines is: "Form does not differ from emptiness, and emptiness does not differ from form; form is emptiness, and emptiness is form." Here, "form" refers to all phenomena, everything that exists. We cannot understand emptiness apart from phenomena. In other words, the very phenomena we see

at this moment are empty in nature.

To truly understand emptiness, we also need to connect it with the law of cause and effect. Buddhism teaches that life follows the principle of "causes, conditions and effects." In other words, everything in this world, whether it arises or disappears, depends on causes and conditions. As the teaching says: "All phenomena arise from causes and conditions, and all phenomena cease when causes and conditions cease." Here, "all phenomena" refer to everything that exists. Their existence is not independent, but relies on both causes (the main factors) and conditions (the supporting factors).

These combined factors bring things into existence, but that existence is not permanent. Take this table for example. The word "table" is only a temporary name, a concept people agree on for the sake of communication. Apart from this name, the table itself is just a combination of many materials—wood planks, iron nails, paint, labor, and so on. Without these materials, where is the

table? Clearly, the table is merely a provisional appearance that arises from causes and conditions. Furthermore, each of these conditions is also made up of many other factors. For instance, wood itself consists of many elements.

Buddhism teaches the principle of dependent arising, which means everything that exists is empty in nature. This teaching denies the idea that anything can exist on its own or remain unchanged. Everything arises because of conditions, not by itself. For example, a table does not have a fixed self, and neither do we. In the same way, everything in the world is nothing but a provisional appearance that arises from causes and conditions. This is what Buddhism calls "provisional existence." Here, "provisional" reminds us not to fall into the two extremes: believing that something is real and unchanging, or believing that it does not exist at all. For example, the table is not fixed or unchanging, yet its provisional form is still clearly present. If we say the table is nothing at all, that is the nihilistic view; if we say it is unchanging, that is the eternalistic view. In fact, Buddhism understands the world through the Middle

Way—a right view that sees everything as it is, free from nihilistic and eternalistic views.

In the *Diamond Sutra*, the Buddha teaches us a formula for understanding the world: "What is called all dharmas is not truly all dharmas; that is why they are called all dharmas." In the same way, what we call a table is not a table; that is why it is called a table. The table is a provisional appearance that arises from causes and conditions; it is not fixed or unchanging. Yet we simply give it the name "table." From this, we see that anything that exists is also empty in nature. Here, "empty" means breaking free from the judgements we project onto things. For example, we may say a table looks beautiful or ugly, valuable or worthless. These judgments come from us, but different people see it differently. Whether we like something or find it attractive depends on our own preferences and emotions. We project our emotions onto the object of focus, and then cling to it. However, Buddhism teaches "emptiness" to help us see through the provisional appearances that arise from causes and conditions, and

understand everything as it is.

In Buddhist practice, realizing emptiness helps one break free from self-attachment. This is important because human beings naturally tend to be self-centered. Buddhism teaches that all afflictions and evils come from self-attachment. Therefore, if a person is always thinking about personal gains and losses, they will inevitably live in great suffering. Yet, we can also see that if someone thinks more about others and less about themselves, they will naturally live happily and peacefully.

The world is infinite; so is the universe. But this raises a question: do human beings really have the ability to understand such infinity? Buddhism teaches that our mind is also infinite. If we can awaken and develop the infinite aspects of the mind, we can naturally understand its infinity. However, strong self-attachment turns our mind from infinite to finite, even to an extremely limited point. From the perspective of Yogacara, everyone has their own world and lives within it. Some people live in a very narrow

world, while others live in a more expansive one. In fact, the world we perceive depends on our own mind. For example, some people attach themselves entirely to one person, and that person becomes their whole world; some focus solely on their family, and that family becomes their world; others immerse themselves in their career, and that career is their world.

Buddhism teaches the wisdom of emptiness to help us break free from self-attachment, so that the finite can return to the infinite. It is because of self-attachment that we are filled with endless afflictions and suffering. Once this self-attachment is broken, life can return to its original and natural state, and we will become truly free.

The Buddha taught us that all sentient beings possess Buddha-nature and therefore have the potential to become buddhas. To become a buddha is to awaken the infinite wisdom, infinite light, and infinite merit that already exist within us. In fact, our mind is inherently like the vast space—able to embrace the vast universe, with a capacity

that spans worlds as countless as grains of sand. However, our mind has become confined within a narrow world created by self-attachment. Therefore, studying Buddhism is about breaking down the fortress of self-attachment and uncovering the treasures of life. In fact, the entire Buddhist practice is about letting go of self-attachment. And what Chan Buddhism calls "direct enlightenment" is precisely the key that unlocks these treasures.

# VII

## Conclusion

All of you already have a lot of knowledge—history, literature, philosophy, and many other fields. But among all kinds of knowledge, the most fundamental is learning how to live as a virtuous person and to understand oneself. Knowledge is as vast as the ocean; no one can master it all. Missing one subject or another will not greatly impact our lives. However, we cannot avoid being human, nor can we lack the understanding of how to live as a virtuous person. After all, being a virtuous person is something we can never take a break from and never retire from. That is why understanding life is the foundation of happiness. And knowing how to live as a virtuous person

is essential knowledge for everyone. Even Western philosophy takes "Know thyself" as an important tenet. If we fail to understand ourselves and only run after external goals, such as money or academic achievements, we cannot attain true happiness.

Modern education emphasizes practical skills and knowledge, but neglects how to be a virtuous person. As a result, many people feel lost and helpless when facing life's challenges, and some even turn to desperate or harmful choices. For example, among the followers of Falun Gong, many have doctoral and master's degrees. This shows that having a high level of education does not mean one understands the true meaning of life. In fact, if one does not understand how to live as a virtuous person, it is already hard enough to live these few decades well—let alone face the endless future lifetimes.

Nowadays, we greatly lack proper views of life, and this is something we must strengthen. In particular, students of the humanities should seek to understand traditional

culture and Buddhism. With the right views of life, we can cultivate a healthy mindset and create a brighter future.

# VIII

## Q&A Session

In November 2002, Master Jiqun was invited to give a lecture titled "Buddhism and Chinese Traditional Culture" to a group of master's and doctoral students in the School of History at Nanjing University. After the lecture, he held a Q&A session with the faculty and students.

### 1. Is It Difficult to Understand Buddhism?

**Question:** After listening to this lecture, I feel I have gained a new understanding of Buddhism. However, I still have a question: Why does Buddhism seem so profound or difficult to grasp for those of us who are not Buddhist

practitioners? In your view, what prevents us from truly understanding what appears to be such simple truths?

**Master Jiqun:** Buddhism is not simple; in fact, it is more vast and profound than any philosophy or religion. However, when it comes to being a virtuous person, Buddhism provides us with some simple and basic principles.

So what prevents us from understanding Buddhism? I think you may already sense the answer. When we read about Buddhism in books, the picture we get is often shaped by other ideologies—many of which dismiss religion. In daily life, our impressions often come from what we see in temples, such as people burning incense or bowing in veneration. They may also come from media portrayals that spread sayings such as, "As long as you keep the Buddha in your mind, eating meat and drinking wine doesn't matter." But such views are not true; in fact, they are often the exact opposite of what Buddhism actually teaches. Over time, these wrong views spread from one person to another, and become real obstacles to correctly

understand Buddhism.

The Dharma is the spiritual nourishment the Buddha left for all beings. If we choose not to study it, the Dharma itself loses nothing, but we are the ones who lose something truly precious. The Dharma is the wisdom of life and the path to liberation. Therefore, to reject the Dharma is to turn away from truly knowing ourselves, and from the great wisdom that can free us from the suffering of life.

**Question:** I study the history of thought. As far as I know, during the Sui and Tang dynasties, ordinary people were very familiar with Buddhist classic texts. However, in modern times, changes in discourse and written expression have made the Dharma seem distant to us.

**Master Jiqun:** There are two reasons for this. First, language itself can be a barrier. With the rise of vernacular Chinese during the May Fourth Movement, modern people's ability to read classical Chinese is much weaker than before. Second, the Buddhist teachings are indeed

profound, because they reveal the truths of life and the universe—the truths the Buddha realized under the Bodhi tree. Such truths cannot be fully understood merely through texts. Take the *Diamond Sutra* as an example: its texts are not difficult, but its deep meanings are difficult to grasp. In fact, as we progress through different stages of practice, we will gain new and deeper understandings. It's fine if we don't fully grasp it right away, because Buddhism also offers many beginner-friendly texts that allow us to learn gradually, from the basics to the more profound teachings.

**Question:** In your lecture, you mentioned that Hu Shi couldn't continue writing *An Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy* because he didn't understand religion. However, in his memoirs, he said he didn't complete it due to busy official duties. He even claimed that if he were secluded on a mountain, he could have finished it in two or three years.

**Master Jiqun:** The reason you mentioned and the one I

gave are not in conflict. But why would he need to retreat to a temple in the first place? Isn't it because he didn't understand Buddhism? If he had already gained a deep and thorough understanding, he wouldn't have needed so much time to finish writing this book.

## 2. Why Did Buddhism Disappear in India?

**Question:** I have three questions.

First, you mentioned Liang Shuming in your lecture. We know that he studied Chinese, Indian, and Western cultures. May I ask, Venerable Master, "How did Liang Shuming interpret Buddhism?"

Second, since Buddhism has disappeared in India, the Indian people now mainly believe in Hinduism. I'd like to know the relationship between Buddhism and Hinduism, as well as the reasons for Buddhism's decline in India.

Third, you just mentioned that religion plays a significant role in moral cultivation, but compared with law, it is a kind of soft mechanism. I agree with you. But how do we explain many violent conflicts throughout history, between different religions and within religions themselves?

**Master Jiqun:** Regarding your first question, Liang Shuming lectured on Indian philosophy at Peking University in his early years, but his study of Buddhism was not very deep. Later, he turned back to Confucianism, and his thoughts wavered between Buddhism and Confucianism.

As for the second question, India's traditional religion is Brahmanism, which has a history of over 3,000 years. The original inhabitants of India were the Dravidians. Later, when the Aryans invaded, they established Brahmanism and took the ruling position. When Buddhism emerged, it was seen as the anti-traditional Sramana group. The way Buddhism challenged Brahmanism was similar to the way Western humanistic thought broke through the dark rule of the Middle Ages. In particular, Buddhism is

human-centered and completely negated Brahmanical rituals and the caste system.

By the 12th century, however, Buddhism gradually disappeared in India. There were two main reasons for this. First, Buddhist talents declined, while Hinduism produced many outstanding figures. Since Indians highly value debate, different religions often compete through debate, and the losing side was expected to convert to the winner's faith. Second, the invasion of Islam. The disappearance of Buddhism in India was a great misfortune. Back in the time of Emperor Ashoka, when Buddhism flourished, the entire Indian society was peaceful, and people lived in abundance. But after Buddhism faded from India, fights and conflicts often broke out among Islam, Hinduism, and Sikhism, leading to bloodshed incidents.

Regarding the third question, conflicts between religions arise due to the limitations of religions themselves. For example, monotheistic religions are often strongly exclusive, and may even wage holy wars to defend their beliefs.

By contrast, Buddhism is a more inclusive and peace-loving religion. In fact, throughout Buddhist history, no war has ever been launched in the name of Buddhism. At the same time, all healthy traditional religions share basic moral principles that are essential to being a good human. Generally speaking, these principles play an important role in maintaining social stability.

### 3. Right Faith Is the Best Remedy to Dispel Illusions

**Question:** I am writing a thesis on secret societies after the founding of the People's Republic of China. And I am especially interested in the issue of cults. In social development, religious resources are just as indispensable as political, economic, and military resources. When fighting against cults, people often rely on atheism and science. But in this fight, science and atheism alone do not really work, because even scientists may also believe in cults. Some religious figures and scholars believe that Buddhism is relatively peaceful and has been fully sinicized through long-term development. So they believe that by

vigorously promoting Buddhism, we can protect China's religious resources from being taken over by cults such as "Falun Gong."

**Master Jiqun:** What you say makes sense. In the past, the government had a limited understanding of religion, which led many people to oppose it. Indeed, science can solve some problems, but it is not omnipotent. In fact, the two cannot replace each other. Science has its own field, while religion has its own as well. Science works on transforming the material world, while religion addresses spiritual issues. What science can solve may not be solved by religion, and vice versa.

There was a time when people thought practicing *qigong* as scientific, while following a religion was seen as superstition. As a result, following a religion was something people were reluctant to admit, but practicing qigong was perfectly acceptable. The reason "Falun Gong" became popular for a while was that it presented itself as qigong while adopting religious elements. Although these

elements were completely misguided, they still, to some extent, met some people's needs for religious belief.

This raises another question: Do people really need faith? Looking at today's society, we see that in many Western countries, religious belief is very common. But in China, many people live without any faith, as if religion were not essential to life. Because of this, people often wonder why someone would become a Buddhist. Intellectuals especially can't understand how educated people could believe in something they think isn't real.

In fact, our people lack religious faith, mainly because of deep-rooted prejudices against religion. When such spiritual needs are suppressed, people inevitably seek alternatives, such as cults or materialism. As a result, people today often cope with their afflictions by relentlessly pursuing wealth, indulging in pleasures, or even engaging in destructive behavior. In fact, it's not that they have no faith at all; rather, their faith is solely in money, themselves, immediate interests, and pleasures. According to

Maslow's hierarchy of needs, people have different levels of needs, which are addressed through various fields. If one only cares about basic survival, then religion indeed seems unimportant. But if they have higher spiritual needs, religion is by no means dispensable.

A sense of security is also one of the main spiritual needs of people. Take, for example, our fear of death. When such questions arise, we naturally seek answers from religion. After all, even the most glorious figures in history eventually vanished like smoke, which has led us to question the ultimate purpose of life. Without religious faith, we may lose direction in exploring the truth of life and death. This is why many philosophers and writers fell into nihilism, and some even ended their lives because they couldn't escape it.

However, Buddhism teaches us that life is an infinite continuation. Death is the end of one phase of life and the beginning of a new one. With this understanding, we will no longer fear death. In the vast universe, Earth

is like a spaceship floating in space—neither anchored to the heavens above nor grounded to the Earth below, without a point of origin or final destination. We naturally ask: Where did we come from, and where are we going? It is faith that helps us find our footing in life and our ultimate destination.

### 4. "Clutching the Buddha's Feet" and Secularization

**Question:** People often say, "We don't burn incense when all is well, but clutch the Buddha's feet in times of need." Does this saying reflect how people view Buddhism?

**Master Jiqun:** Indeed, many people "don't burn incense when all is well but clutch the Buddha's feet in times of need." But we should ask: why do they think of clutching the Buddha's feet and not someone else's feet? The reason is that Buddhist teachings are vast and profound, and people understand them at different levels; only some have the ability to study them in depth and put them fully into practice. For most people, they think of Buddhism

only when they encounter difficulties and turn to the buddhas and bodhisattvas for protection. However, this already shows that Buddhism has a powerful influence among people. Otherwise, they would go clutch someone else's feet. After all, when people face difficulties, the one they turn to first is naturally the most important and the most capable. So, this very fact highlights the importance of Buddhism.

**Question:** I don't know much about religion, so I'd like to ask a question. To me, I feel religion is very sacred, but I've also noticed that many monks seem to be moving toward secular practices. For example, especially in rural areas, some monks eat meat or perform rituals for people. So I wonder: within the Buddhist community, how many monks can truly be considered devout in their practice?

**Master Jiqun:** What you described does exist. I think this is both a problem within the Buddhist community and in Chinese society. In recent decades, Buddhism has lacked opportunities for healthy development, and was nearly

destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. After religious policies were carried out, society was still in a state of disorder brought about by rapid social transformation. In this context, various issues emerged in the Buddhist community, including commercialization and secularization, often as a result of developing tourism. The real concern is this: If, just when people seek Buddhist teachings, the Buddhist community cannot present itself with purity, this is a misfortunate not only for Buddhism, but also for society as a whole. If the Buddhist community loses its purity, people lose their spiritual home—a place to purify and calm the mind. I am also deeply concerned about this. That is why I have published articles exploring related issues in depth, such as the "Reflections on Buddhism in the Tide of Commercialization."

As for how many monks are truly devout, I haven't conducted any survey. After all, each person only comes into contact with a limited number of monasteries and monks. So when we see some negative behaviors, we shouldn't generalize from a few cases to the whole community.

From what I've seen in my travels, there are actually quite a number of monasteries with strong discipline and a healthy monastic spirit.

### 5. Your Values Determine Your Choices

**Question:** Earlier, you mentioned attachment. If a very greedy person is attached to everything, what would they be like after letting go of attachment? If their attachment isn't very strong, does that mean they are more influenced by religion? Additionally, is attachment somehow opposed to our sense of gain and loss, or to success and failure?

**Master Jiqun:** For ordinary people, it's impossible to be completely unattached to everything. But once free from all attachments, one becomes a liberated person—unshaken and unharmed by the ever-changing external world. When someone's attachment seems not strong, this doesn't always come from religious influence. Instead, it could be a result of wholesome karmic roots from past lives, a naturally detached disposition, or personal moral

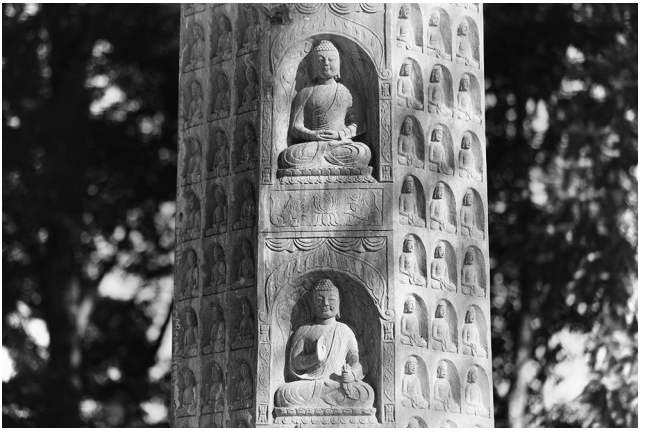
cultivation. Of course, Buddhism has many methods for eliminating attachment, helping us see through its nature and let it go more effectively.

Actually, attachment lies behind all our life goals. In some aspects, attachment may not directly conflict with success or failure, gain or loss; yet in other aspects, it does. If we carry attachment throughout our efforts, it will inevitably bring endless afflictions. However, some people start their pursuit of life's goals with attachment, but in the end they learn to let it go. From the perspective of Buddhist practice, if we don't let go of attachment, we will always remain bound to a limited level of being and cannot reach the ultimate goal. When we attach to something, we inevitably fall into its trap. But once we break through the attachment, our mind can connect with the entire universe.

**Question:** In real life, being a bit nicer to others doesn't cost us anything. But life isn't always that simple. For example, imagine three people trapped in a cave: two of

them must eat the third to survive; otherwise, if rescuers don't arrive, all three will starve to death. This story once sparked a debate about life's values. How do you view this issue?

**Master Jiqun:** The key is how you see yourself—that is, what kind of person you want to become. How you see yourself naturally shapes how you act. In Buddhism, bodhisattvas are always willing to sacrifice themselves for the sake of others. A well-known example is Prince Sattva, who offered his own body to a hungry tiger. This act embodies his willingness to sacrifice himself for all beings. But if someone is just an ordinary person who only thinks about themselves, then of course they may harm others to protect their own interests. So the crucial point lies in how you see yourself; once this is clear, you'll naturally know what to do.





# 静心学堂丛书

## 【一、文化篇】

01.《佛教与中国传统文化》
02.《佛教与一带一路》
03.《玄奘心路与中国人的精神建设》
04.《东方智慧在当今世界的价值》
05.《传承国学，为现代人安身立命》
06.《如何立心立命》
07.《佛教人本思想与西方人本思想》
08.《人与自我》
09.《认识自我的意义》
10.《我们靠什么认识世界》
11.《佛教的世界观》
12.《传统文化与现代教育》
13.《佛法在家庭教育中的运用》
14.《我理想中的僧教育》
15.《走进静心学堂》
16.《觉醒的艺术》
17.《禅意设计“十二字箴言”》
18.《用禅的智慧设计生活》
19.《生命也是可以被设计的》

## 【二、人生篇】

20.《佛学、哲学与人生》
21.《〈心经〉的人生智慧》
22.《认知与心理》
23.《心，人生的导演》
24.《佛法对心理问题的解决》
25.《心理学视角的佛学世界》
26.《人心、人性与人生》
27.《解脱心理学》
28.《〈六祖坛经〉与心理治疗》
29.《寻找心的本来》
30.《生命的回归》

31.《生命的痛苦及其解脱》
32.《生命的美容》
33.《生命的自觉与自由》
34.《茶与禅的修行》
35.《安心禅茶的禅修理路》
36.《以茶入禅，回归本心》
37.《煮茶观心》
38.《重新认识素食》
39.《从佛法视角谈“断舍离”》
40.《从物品整理到心灵整理》
41.《心灵创造幸福》

【三、社会篇】

42.《人工智能时代，人类何去何从》
43.《佛教在当代社会》
44.《佛教徒的人生态度》
45.《青春十问》
46.《人生百问》
47.《佛教的财富观》
48.《佛教的环保思想》
49.《当公共卫生遇到佛法》
50.《企业家的精神困惑与希望》
51.《大道大商——佛教与企业文化》
52.《经营企业与经营人生》
53.《企业与人生》
54.《企业家的现实价值与终极价值》

【四、信仰篇】

55.《佛教的道德观》
56.《慈善，是慈悲心的修行》
57.《与企业家们说慈善》
58.《轮回与解脱》
59.《人生五大问题》
60.《当代宗教信仰问题的思考》

61.《信仰与人生》
62.《人生佛教在当代的弘扬》
63.《人生佛教的思考》
64.《我的修学经历》
65.《佛法修学次第的思考》
66.《一个根本，三大要领》
67.《修学与弘法》
68.《行到水穷处，坐看云起时》

【五、实践篇】

69.《认识菩提导航》
70.《八步骤三种禅修》
71.《认识人格密码，开启八三禅修》
72.《走近佛陀，认识佛法》
73.《皈依修学手册》
74.《如何建立信仰》
75.《从住持三宝到自性三宝》
76.《认识菩提心》
77.《菩提心的修行》
78.《出家与解脱》
79.《戒律与道风建设》
80.《<慈经>的修行》
81.《四无量心的观修》
82.《凡圣只在迷悟间》
83.《正念，使浮躁远离》
84.《正念禅修的要领》
85.《盘坐、呼吸对禅修的意义》
86.《正念禅修十要素》
87.《开启正念与慈悲大爱》
88.《<心经>的禅观》
89.《涅槃之美》
90.《佛法要领》
91.《净土法门与五大要素》
92.《向观音菩萨学修行》

## 国际静心协会、静心学堂简介

国际静心协会（简称 MPI）是 2021 年成立于瑞士苏黎世的非盈利组织，旨在向全球传播佛法智慧和禅意生活。

静心学堂为“国际静心协会”旗下的核心公益品牌，致力于传承生命觉醒教育，为现代人提供安顿身心、安身立命之道。我们推广的静心学堂课程体系，为汉传佛教济群长老以四十年修学所证，对当代佛教教育的探索，包括禅意生活、智慧人生和觉醒之道。同时，我们将在世界各地营造具有禅意的空间、彼此增上的氛围，为大众修学保驾护航。

“静心学堂丛书”呈现了禅意生活、智慧人生的部分课程。我们衷心希望，更多人由此了解生命觉醒的教育，共享东方智慧给人类带来的福祉。

## Mindful Peace International & Mindful Peace Academy

**Mindful Peace International (MPI),** established in 2021 in Zurich, Switzerland, is a non-profit organization dedicated to spreading Buddhist wisdom and promoting a Chan-inspired life globally.

**The Mindful Peace Academy** serves as the core public welfare brand under Mindful Peace International. We are dedicated to passing on education about life awakening and offering modern individuals ways towards physical and mental well-being, thereby helping them ground themselves and discover their life's mission. The curriculum we promote at the Mindful Peace Academy has been authenticated by Master Jiqun, an eminent elder of Han Buddhism, through forty years of study and practice. It represents an exploration of contemporary Buddhist education, encompassing teachings on the Chan-inspired Life, the Wisdom for Living, and the Path to Awakening. Moreover, we are committed to creating Chan-inspired spaces and fostering mutually enriching environments worldwide to safeguard the public's learning journey.

**The** Mindful Peace Academy Collection showcases a selection of courses on the Chan-inspired Life and the Wisdom for Living. We sincerely hope that through these courses, more individuals will engage with life awakening education and share in the blessings that Eastern wisdom brings to humanity.

本书由智因居士乐捐印刷净资

诸供养中，法供养最
行动起来，把握当下善因缘

扫码一键访问

- 济群法师官网、社交媒体
- 国际静心协会官网、社交媒体
- 最新书目，功德助印
- 法宝结缘，加入我们



Access with QR code

- Master Jiqun: Website and social media
- MPI: Website and social media
- Latest Books; Support Printing
- Claim Free Dharma Books; Join Us

助印账号（汇款请注明“法宝助印”，专款专用）

银行 Bank: Zürcher Kantonalbank,8010 Zurich
账号 Account Number: CH95 0070 0114 8065 7306 8
户名 Account Name: Mindful Peace International
SWIFT/BIC Code: ZKBKCHZZ80A
地址： c/o TCM Glatt GmbH Richtiarkade 16 8304 Wallisellen