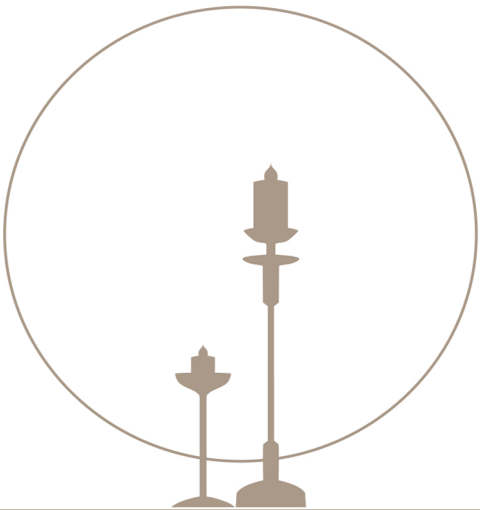
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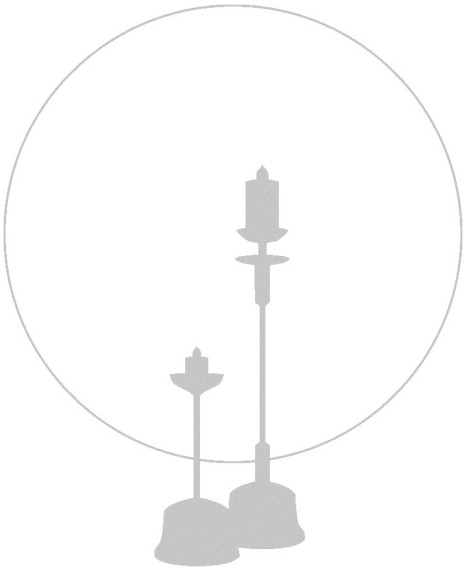
生命的自觉与自由

The Awakening and Freedom of Life



济群法师 著
Master Jiqun

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



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2025年对孤困儿童团队的开示

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首先欢迎大家，你们这个组织的创办人提出要让“天下无孤”，非常了不起。各位能致力于这样的利他事业，去帮助更多人，在佛教来说，就是一群菩萨。因为菩萨道的精神正是无我利他。

身处今天这个时代，每个人都有很多混乱、焦虑，社会和生态的环境也不理想。在这样的背景下，做菩萨很不容易。我曾受复旦大学心理学系邀请，在该系举办的论坛上作讲座，论坛主题是“让爱心更有力量”。为什么会有这个主题？因为很多人做慈善，做着做着就后继乏力了。

怎么才能有源源不断的动力，越做越有力量？需要在内心找到慈悲大爱的源泉。否则，很可能会成为

自身难保的泥菩萨。现在的人，不管做事业也好，做慈善也好，往往立足于向外寻找意义。问题是，在社会快速发展的今天，外在世界充满了不确定，很多时候和我们的期待完全不同，使人陷入焦虑、抑郁、无意义感。所以，找准定位尤其重要。听说你们也学点佛法，这很重要。因为佛法可以引导我们了解生命真相，向内寻找依赖、意义、价值和幸福，为参与慈善赋能。这是东方智慧和西方文化最大的不同。

一、何为自觉

无明产生的爱恨情仇、喜怒哀乐
都是不同心理状态的呈现
一旦开启清明、觉醒的力量
我们就有能力摆脱
生命内在的迷惑和烦恼
所以生命的自觉非常重要
就是开发自我拯救、自我解脱
自我疗愈的能力

说到自觉，大家都有一些简单的认识，比如主动而非被迫地做一件事。但从佛法角度说，自觉没有那么简单，还意味着生命的觉醒。这个概念不仅佛教在提，社会上也有不少人认识到个中价值，还有媒体把“生命的觉醒”列为世界十大奢侈品之首。因为奢侈品象征着珍贵和稀缺，而在商品极大丰富的今天，真正奢侈的并不是物质，而是精神状态。

在人生过程中，我们有相当一段时间在追逐外在财富，却发现，由此带来的幸福感非常有限，还会使满足的阈值不断提高，越来越难以自洽。我曾经说过：“你是什么，比你拥有什么要更重要。”因为你是什么，代表了你是什么样的存在，是觉醒的存在，还

是无明的存在？是智慧的存在，还是愚痴的存在？是纯净的存在，还是混乱的存在？是无私的存在，还是自私的存在？是慈悲的存在，还是仇恨的存在？

佛法告诉我们，每个生命内在都有一个无尽宝藏。佛陀来到这个世界的最大贡献，就是发现每个人都可以自我拯救，自我疗愈。而其他宗教普遍认为，人是不能自救的，必须依赖外在的神。大千世界，芸芸众生，除了普罗大众，还有高层次的生命。比如佛教讲的佛菩萨，儒家讲的圣贤，其他宗教讲的耶稣等，都很了不起。虽然从现象上，生命千差万别，但根本分歧到底在哪里？《六祖坛经》告诉我们：“前念迷即是众生，后念悟即是佛。”也就是说，凡夫和圣贤的差别只在迷悟之间。

迷和悟，佛教中还有另一种表达，就是明和无明。觉醒，就是明，所谓心如明镜，朗照一切，山河大地都可以在心中显现。带着这样一份清明的心，对自己的起心动念、待人接物就能现知现觉，而不是后知后觉。佛法告诉我们，心本身就具备这种能力，但在现实生活中，我们往往处在无明之中。因为看不清，就

会不知不觉地想很多，做很多，说很多。

佛法认为，这就是凡圣的分歧所在。生命在此一分为二，从迷的方面，我们懵懵懂懂地来到世界，再懵懵懂懂地离开，始终不知道“我是谁”，不知道“生从何来，死往何去”，也不知道世界真相到底是什么。然后，带着这份认知、设定和执著看世界。在认识世界的过程中，又会执著于自我的感觉、想法，由此发展出种种不良心理。这些心理又在推动我们，一生又一生地轮回。

相反，明就是对一切看得清清楚楚，包括错误认知产生的行为，以及由此导致的轮回。在清明心的观照下，会发现所有这一切都是心灵天空的影像。所以古德说：“梦里明明有六趣，觉后空空无大千。”

其实，无明产生的爱恨情仇、喜怒哀乐，都是不同心理状态的呈现。一旦开启清明、觉醒的力量，我们就有能力摆脱生命内在的迷惑和烦恼。所以生命的自觉非常重要，就是开发自我拯救、自我解脱、自我疗愈的能力。这是佛法修行的核心所在，不论什么法门，最终都是为了导向觉醒。

二、自由与自在

人的枷锁固然有社会带来的
但更多是出自
生命内在的无明、业力、烦恼
如果不解决生命内在的枷锁
就不可能真正自由
从这个意义上，佛法所说的自在
和西方所说的自由具有互补作用

自由的概念来自西方，出自文艺复兴以来的人文主义思潮，倡导个性解放，重视个人价值。佛法中类似的概念，叫自在。连在一起，就是我们常说的自由自在。我曾和哲学家周国平就“佛教的人本思想与西方的人本思想”展开对话，其中有一部分，谈到“个性解放与个人解脱”。这两个概念有些相似，那到底有什么不同呢？

之所以提出个性解放，是在中世纪封建王权和宗教神权的双重统治下，人们迫切希望解除束缚，让人性得到充分张扬。只要不伤害他人，符合法律的范围，怎么解放都可以。所以，文艺复兴带来了文学、艺术、科学的全面繁荣。但同时，也把人性中的贪嗔痴统统

放了出来，最终演变为两次世界大战，以及日益严重的环境问题、社会问题、心理问题。可见，虽然个性解放解除了社会层面对人的束缚，但也带来极大的副作用。

而个人解脱，是在充分了解人性的前提下，提出我们应该解脱什么，发展什么，开显什么。佛法认为，人都有两面性，所谓一念成佛，一念成魔；一念天堂，一念地狱。所以，解脱是生命内在的。

西方人讲的自由偏向社会性，认为枷锁是外在环境造成的，正如卢梭所说："人生而自由，又无往不在枷锁之中。"在佛法看来，只对了一小半。因为人的枷锁固然有社会带来的，但更多是出自生命内在的无明、业力、烦恼。如果不解决生命内在的枷锁，就不可能真正自由。从这个意义上，佛法所说的自在，和西方所说的自由具有互补作用。在和哲学家周国平对话后，我们共同的结论是，西方哲学一定要佛法来补充。

三、生命为何不自由

烦恼
让身不自由，心不自在
佛法所说的解脱
就是让我们解除内心烦恼
佛教把贪嗔痴称为三毒
即生命自带的三种病毒
由此制造种种烦恼
演绎爱恨情仇

生命中，究竟什么让我们不自由、不自在？看清这一点，才能去除障碍，自由自在。西方人关注外在自由，所以从解决社会问题入手。比如以三权分立等制度，对公权加以约束，对个人权利充分保护。但佛法更关注内在因素，以下，我从三个方面探讨佛法对这一问题的认识。

1. 业力带来的不自由

业就是行为。社会上，有工业、农业、商业等各行各业。包括我们从事的慈善事业，也是一种业，属于善业。

佛法把人的行为分为身体、语言、思想三种，即身、语、意三业。我们为什么会成为今天这样的存在？多数人是不知不觉的。其中有各种因缘，比如原生家庭中，父母的影响；文化教育中，文化传承、学校教育的影响；人际关系中，朋友、同事的影响；社会环境中，种种三观的影响……但外境并不是决定性的，能否产生作用，关键在于认知——我们是认同它、接受它，还是反对它、拒绝它。

每个人都有一套认知系统，然后带着这套系统看世界，或是接受某些信息，形成自身观念；或是排斥某些信息，拒绝受其影响。所以说，认知会产生观念，观念会引发行为。前面说过，行为有身语意三种。我们通常以为，说出的话、做出的事才是行为。其实，所有起心动念都会在生命中产生累积，包括每天思考什么事理，重复什么情绪。

所以，无论是说过、做过还是想过的，都是人格形成的密码，是有规律的。比如你接受一种文化，形成自己的思维方式和观念，进而产生行为，并累积为习惯。一旦这些惯性具有力量，就会成为你的性格乃

至人格，对生命具有主导作用。佛教中，将此称为轮回的力量。

说到轮回，我们往往想着前世今生，其实，我们每天都在不同的心理习惯、行为模式中轮回。各位做慈善事业，有一份爱心，就是在善的惯性中轮回。做企业的人，每天想着怎么做好企业，就是在企业中轮回；从政的人，每天想着怎么经营仕途，就是在仕途中轮回；搞艺术的人，每天想着与艺术有关的事，就是在艺术中轮回。

我们在执著中做事，又在做的过程中产生更大的执著和需求，不断去做，做了又继续执著。一旦产生惯性，不论是生活习惯，还是思维方式、兴趣爱好，都会主导甚至控制我们。在这样的惯性中，我们是身不由己的。如果把业力延伸到更长的时空，比如投生到什么家庭，也是不能自主的。

可见，生命发展是有规律的。一个人有没有福报，做事是否顺利，都有往昔业力的因素。虽然业力可以改变，但在改变之前，我们是不自由的。包括你的性格、做事方式，都在不知不觉地控制你，影响你。

从不同生命形态来说，鸟可以在天上飞翔，鱼可以在水中生活，都是人做不到的，这也是业力决定的。不同业力造就了不同的生命形态。在这样一种形态中，我们也是不自由的。

2. 认知带来的不自由

我们能看到什么样的世界，是认知系统决定的。你们有没有戴过 VR 眼镜？戴上后，如果眼前出现了万丈深渊，即使知道自己站在地上，很多人还是不敢往前迈步，就是因为受制于认知。

我们现在的业力系统，就像一个 VR 眼镜。我们自以为看到真实、客观的世界，其实是由所戴眼镜决定的。只是这个眼镜与生俱来，所以我们根本想不到，甚至不相信，世界还会有另一种面貌。

在我们过去所受的教育中，世界就像自己所知所见的那样，是真实的存在。但现代科学发现，我们看到的世界只有 4%，还有 96% 是看不到的。也就是说，我们的认知有很大局限。即使和动物相比，很多动物

的感官灵敏性，也远超人类。

除了感官系统的局限，我们的认知还有极大的片面性。我经常说，每个人接触世界有两个模式，一是认知模式，一是需求模式。认知模式取决于你的观念，有什么观念，就会看到什么世界。需求模式取决于你的爱好，比如你喜欢吃辣的，所以辣椒才是美味；但对不能吃辣的人，就避之唯恐不及了。此外，有人喜欢酸味，有人无肉不欢，也有人闻到这些味道都受不了。

此外，还有情绪的影响。你喜欢一个人的时候，他的缺点也会变成优点；不喜欢一个人的时候，他的优点也会变成缺点。喜欢什么，可以说出一百个好的理由；不喜欢什么，也可以说出一百个不好的理由。如果你能言善辩，黑的可以说成白的，死的可以说成活的。

可见，认知都是从自我感觉出发，本身就有极大的片面性，甚至是完全错误的。但人们往往相信自己的感觉，执著自己的认知，并把这一切看得无比真实，产生这样那样的设定和期待。可世界不是按你的设定

存在，也不是以你的意志为转移，当真相和你的认知不吻合时，烦恼就产生了。

受限于认知的迟钝性和片面性，是很不自由的。一方面，看不清现实的无常变化。在过去的年代，一眼可以望穿百年，心也相对稳定。但在瞬息万变的今天，我们想牢牢抓住的东西，似乎都抓不住，就会焦虑、迷茫、找不到出路。一方面，看不清生命的终极问题，不知道“我是谁”“生从何来，死往何去”“世界的真相是什么”。所以，很多人被空心病困扰，不知道什么是真的，什么是假的，什么是有意义的，什么是没意义的，更不知道未来的出路在哪里。

3. 烦恼带来的不自由

我们以为自己活在现实中，其实，是活在自己的心念中。每天，我们都在各种要不要、喜欢不喜欢、有价值没价值中纠结。此外，爱和恨更是生命的两大主题。尤其是各种小说和影视，往往在这两个字中纠来缠去，把爱和恨演绎到极致。我们看得跌宕起伏，

当事人却终生被爱恨困扰，苦不堪言。

现实中同样存在这个问题。比如你在乎什么，拼命追求，追求的过程很辛苦，得不到的时候很痛苦，得而复失更是苦上加苦。如果不放下这种贪著，心永远是不自由的。其实，当你追求的某个人、某件事尚未出现时，并没有因此而来的苦，也不是生活中缺了这些就不行。可一旦对某人、某事产生执著后，你会觉得得不到就活不下去，人生就没意义了。反之，你恨一个人，把自己恨得很痛苦，很分裂，但要把仇恨放下，也是不容易的。

现代人受制于碎片化的生活，形成了忙乱的习惯，要不停地刷手机，玩电脑，或是做些什么，一直忙到身体实在没电，才能睡着。只要还有点电，就要动个不停，才觉得充实。事实上，这种忙乱会让人很辛苦。我常说，未来考察一个人是否幸福的重要因素，是看他有没有能力让身心休息，有没有随时停下的自主力。

此外，抑郁、焦虑、没有安全感等负面心理，也让人深陷痛苦之中，甚至觉得活不下去。其实，能不能活下去，还是在一念之间。当你被念头牢牢掌控时，

觉得活在这个世界一点意义都没有；一旦解除这个念头，意义就回来了。

以上种种烦恼，让身不自由，心不自在。佛法所说的解脱，就是让我们解除内心烦恼。佛教把贪嗔痴称为三毒，即生命自带的三种病毒，由此制造种种烦恼，演绎爱恨情仇。佛法就是引导我们看清真相，不要在三毒编织的梦中追逐、沉沦。

四、怎样才能自由自在

学习佛法
要学会从更高的维度
看世界，看人生
因为错误认知
以及对错误认知的执著
是使人不自由、不自在的
根本原因

生命的不自由，主要来自以上所说的业力、认知、烦恼。我们想要自由自在，同样要从这三个方面着手。

1. 从业力层面实现自由

佛法中，把业分成善业和不善业，也称白业和黑业。白就是纯净、无瑕，把生命导向光明；黑就是杂染、不净，把生命导向黑暗。

佛陀在经典中讲到四种生命。一是从黑暗走向黑暗，生命始终处于高度的无明和贪嗔痴之中；二是从黑暗走向光明，因为人性既有黑暗的力量，也有光明的力量，点亮内在的智慧明灯，就能消除黑暗，开启

光明；三是从光明走向光明，当我们通过修行进入觉醒模式，生命就能永远处在光明中；四是从光明走向黑暗，虽然内心曾经燃起一点微弱的光，却没有善加防护，不足以抵挡贪嗔痴，还是被黑暗覆蔽。

孔子说，“唯上智与下愚不移”，但中间的人多半可上可下。因为人性中有善的力量，也有不善的力量。除非修行已到一定程度，具足信心和力量，才能笃定地向前。否则的话，一不小心又会落入轮回的惯性，进入无明的轨道。所以，修行路上必须精进不懈。

修行的核心就是止恶行善。为什么某种行为能成为生命的主导？就是因为不断重复。运动员做一个简单的动作，都要经过百千万次的重复练习，由熟而能生巧。包括生活中的各种能力、兴趣爱好，都是在重复中积累并形成的。

生命是由各种心理组成的，所有行为的根源，都在于心的累积。佛法有部论典叫《百法明门论》，把人的心理分为普通心理、烦恼心理、善的心理等。我们要发展良性的生命，还是不良的生命，就要看清，自己有哪些心理元素，需要解决什么，发展什么。因

为发展什么样的心理，就会形成什么样的生命品质。

每个人都清楚家里有多少钱，有什么产业，但对内心的组成是否清楚？是不是知道，自己的内心由哪些心理构成？什么是良性心理，什么是不良心理？发展哪些心理，会给生命带来无尽的快乐和幸福？发展哪些心理，会给生命带来无尽的麻烦和痛苦？

从某种意义上说，每个人都是这些心理的第一体验者。你每天和焦虑、仇恨等负面心理在一起，就会痛苦不堪。反之，如果每天和友善、温暖、宽容等正向心理在一起，自然充满欢喜。不仅自己是这些心理的体验者，当你处在焦虑状态中，身边人也会被你散发的气息影响，深受其害。所以，我们要止恶行善，培养符合道德的正向心行，才能自利利他。做到一分，就有一分受益。

说到道德，很多人会认为是社会的需要，不是个人的需要。如果大家都不遵守道德，我遵守道德就会吃亏。事实上，道德是生命组成的优质材料。前面说过，生命品质就取决于我们的行为。其中有善行，也有不善行，就像优质和劣质的材料。道德正是让生命

生生增上的优质材料，反之，则是让生命随之堕落的劣质材料。

从某种意义上说，生命也是一个产品。想一想，我们是普通的产品，还是悉心打造的精品？我们肯定不希望自己是普通甚至劣质的产品，但真的是精品吗？社会上，每个知名品牌都会经过用心的设计和生产流程，精益求精。可我们发展到今天这样一种存在，有没有经过认真设计？其实没有。因为现行文化中缺乏相关内容，所以多数人是在不知不觉中成长起来，成为混乱的、碎片化的存在。

我曾说过，很多人的生命都是一大堆错误观念，加上一大堆混乱情绪。这样一种存在，会给你带来幸福吗？事实上，不良生命就是制造痛苦的永动机，会源源不断地给自己制造痛苦，也给身边人制造痛苦。佛法讲人生是苦，但不是绝对的。准确地说，以贪嗔痴为基础的生命才是痛苦的。如果以觉醒为基础的生命，是充满慈悲、喜悦、平安的。可见，心才是痛苦和快乐的源泉，物质只是辅助因素。当我们内心充满痛苦和不良情绪时，即使整个世界都属于你，一样不

会快乐。

所以，我们要让自己成为优质的存在。那样的话，到哪里都能自在，遇到什么都能化解。这比其他任何东西更重要，因为不仅关系到我们的今生，还关系到尽未来际的生命。

从业力层面说，我们一方面要忏悔以往的过失，检讨当下的心行，看看哪些行为会伤害自己和他人，发自内心地去改变它。只有通过反省，我们才能重新审视自己的心行，止恶行善，作出改变。另一方面，还要有生命的智慧。每个人都希望成为美好的存在，如果缺乏智慧，只能追求外在的美好，比方美容美发、装修房子，让自己和环境变得赏心悦目。但这些都是短暂且无常的，相比之下，内在的美好才能让我们长久受益。哪怕青春不再，生活清简，都不会影响心的富足。

2. 从认知层面实现自由

生命有两个层面，既是有限的，也是无限的。我们看到的，更多是有限的层面，甚至一个念头就成了自己的整个世界。其实，念头背后还有虚空般的心。当我们跳出念头和情绪，就能体会到无限的心。

在认知层面，佛法是帮助我们跳出自我感觉，正确认识世间各种现象。物理学中，有经典物理学，还有量子力学、相对论、弦论等。而佛法是属于缘起论，也就是说，一切的存在，包括我们的生命体，都是条件关系的假相，是无自性的。这是佛法对现象的本质判断。

所谓无自性，即任何事物不是独立不变的，而有无限的可能。基于此，佛法提出一即一切，认为每个微尘都和整个宇宙连接。无自性，是特别针对自性见而施设。凡夫因为我法二执，看到万事万物，都感觉是独立、客观、真实不变的。

过去的哲学、科学也在不同程度上支持这个观点。印度早期哲学认为极微是构成宇宙的最小元素，是真实且不可分割的。经典物理学也认为，虽然现象并不

实在，但组成现象的基本粒子是真实的，由此构成宇宙。但现在的量子力学已发现波粒二象性，即物质以波还是粒子的方式存在，并不固定。我们能看到什么样的世界，还受制于个人认知。对我们所见的世界来说，我们不只是简单的观察者，同时也是参与者。可能有人会说：这样的话，为什么大家会看到一样的东西？那是因为我们戴的 VR 一样，操作程序一样。如果换成猫狗的 VR 系统，就进入猫狗的世界了。

我们对现象世界会产生两种执著，一是对自我的执著，一是对现象的执著，由此构成美丑、善恶、你我的二元世界，引发相应的对立。当我们执著于二元时，就会被卡在其中，使生命不再自由。所有的佛法修行，都是帮助我们打破二元对立。就像布满乌云的天空，如果你活在云层中，周围都是黑乎乎的一片，无法看到世界真相。只有放下执著，才能穿透云层，回归虚空般的本心。

这时候，世界一切现象对你来说都是如梦如幻的。自古以来，《金刚经》就深受文人士大夫的喜爱。经中告诉我们："一切有为法，如梦幻泡影，如露亦如

电，应作如是观。”具备这样的见地，不论遇到什么样的压力和逆境，都会知道，这不过是缘生缘灭的现象而已。所有焦虑和执著都来自对世界的自性见，当你认识到这些只是梦幻泡影，并没有那么真实时，受到的影响就少了，你的生命就自在了。

心本身具备自在的能力，只是被卡在各种现象时，才变得不自在。所以八正道以正见为首，让我们建立正见，即正确认识，包括无常见、无我见、唯识见、中观见等。具备正见，才能开启智慧，认识世界真相。如果认识和世界真相不吻合，就会引发种种烦恼。有句话叫作“慈悲没有敌人，智慧不起烦恼”，说的正是这个道理。

学习佛法，要学会从更高的维度看世界，看人生。因为错误认知以及对错误认知的执著，是使人不自由、不自在的根本原因。当我们摆脱错误认知，就能实现认知上的自由。这种自由不仅是理性层面的，还要超越理性，开启自身本具的无限智慧，才有能力了悟世间一切真相。

3. 从摆脱烦恼实现自由

如何解决烦恼带来的不自由、不自在？主要有两个方法。

首先是从认知入手。因为很多烦恼和我们的认知有关，和看问题的方式有关。一旦改变认知，就能解决粗重的烦恼。但还有很多根深蒂固的微细烦恼无法解决，这就需要通过禅修开启觉知，即内心自觉的能力。

禅修的方式很多。我们现在倡导的，是《大念处经》所说的正念禅修。因为这一方式容易入手，操作性强。我们构建的正念禅修系统，有初中高三级，从正念入手，最终抵达无念的本心。

修习正念，关键是训练两种力量，一是专注力，一是觉知力。首先要学会专注，比如在座上，以呼吸为锚点，将心专注于呼吸。但光有专注还不够，世间做事比较成功的，多半会有专注力，但由做事形成的专注，往往带有一份执著，会产生焦虑等情绪，甚至对做事产生依赖。一旦产生依赖，就会害怕挫折、失败，患得患失。

专注只是基础，更重要的是训练觉知。在专注做事的当下，还能心如明镜，了了明知。这是心原本具备的力量，我们要做的就是去开启它，在专心做事的同时，保有一份超然和清明，对当下所做的事及心理活动清清楚楚。当心安住于觉知，就能和事保持距离，不会对此产生依赖，更不会因此引发负面情绪。

凡夫因为无明，时时都在制造烦恼、情绪，一旦开启觉知，开启内在清明的心，我们就有能力化解情绪和烦恼。这种力量需要通过禅修不断训练。近年来，正念修习风靡世界，被运用在心理学、教育、医疗等各个领域，因为它可以有效帮助现代人解决心理问题。不过，心理学等领域对正念的使用偏于技术性，缺少佛法的大智慧，缺少对生命和世界的整体认知，只能解决暂时的心理问题。佛法的正念禅修是帮助我们认识本心，开发内在的无尽宝藏，实现生命的究竟解脱。这就必须以正见为引导，否则，我们对正念的认识很有限，产生的作用也很有限。

正念是觉醒最直接的钥匙，一旦开启，生命就会从根本上获得解脱与自由。这并不是说，一开发觉醒

的心，所有的烦恼习气就能立刻解决，还是要通过相当时间的磨炼，所谓理可顿悟，事须渐修。不仅要在座上修行，还要在座下历境炼心。因为烦恼是无始以来的累积，根深蒂固。所以佛教中除了见道，还要修道，要在各种对境中去历练，看看自己到底是什么样的反应，会不会被影响，被带走。一次次地用觉知解决问题，清除烦恼，最终彻底解脱，得大自在。

以上，从业力、认知、摆脱烦恼三个层面，说明生命如何才能从迷惑到觉醒，从不自由到自由自在。

五、讲座问答

现在的学校和社会
基本不提供关于生命的教育
必须靠家庭补上这一课
为孩子的身心健康提供保障
不论从个人成长还是家人相处来说
彼此都要有连结

问：关于学佛，我的问题是，理论方面还了解一些，但禅修时老是碰到“懂，但不愿意做”。就是在实际践行中，私欲的力量特别大，懒，躺床上不愿起，这种情况该怎么办？

答：怎么办？修行本身是不容易的。尤其今天这个时代，是佛教所说的末法时代。为什么叫末法？因为诱惑重重，整个世界都在推动你去贪嗔痴，所以修行尤其困难。

为了帮助大家更好地学修，我曾提出两句话：一是良好的氛围，一是有效的引导。所谓氛围，就是有一拨人，比如 5 个、10 个、15 个，每周在一起学习、

交流，或是做义工、做慈善。因为人的惰性很强，社会的诱惑又那么大，如果没有氛围，是很难管住自己的。除了氛围，还要有效的引导，这样才能在修行路上看到自己的成长，看到正念的力量不断增强，烦恼的干扰不断减弱。这两点缺一不可。光有好的氛围，但学得不长进，没收获，动力也不足；光有好的引导，没有相应氛围，坚持下去会很辛苦。

问：我家有个 14 岁的男孩，有时对孩子要求高了，会产生很多烦恼，导致他也烦恼。有时就顺其自然，但要求低了，又觉得他很松散，觉得自己没尽到责任，会后悔。在这方面，我始终找不到合适的度，应该怎么做?

答：对孩子的教育，不是靠要求，而要以氛围引导。否则，要求高也不对，要求低也不对。你希望孩子成为什么样的人，应该给他创造相应的环境，让他在不知不觉中往这个方向成长。通常，孩子是管不住自己的。即使作为父母，你们真能事事管住自己，做

到自己希望的那样吗？也是管不住的。那怎么可能要求孩子管住自己呢？

中国文化讲修身、齐家，所以家庭也要有文化传承的氛围。如果能在家中做个安心茶室，每周和家人在一起喝喝茶、读读书、转转正念球、互相养生关爱、做做素食之类。除了家人，也可包括亲戚、朋友、同学、同事。现在的人平时不联系，有了事才联系，比较功利。当我们构建一个友善的公益氛围，大家来到这里，只谈怎么学文化，怎么修身养性。有了这样的氛围，相信孩子也能在耳濡目染中受到正面影响。

现在的学校和社会基本不提供关于生命的教育，必须靠家庭补上这一课，为孩子的身心健康提供保障。不论从个人成长还是家人相处来说，彼此都要有连结。但今天很多人活在自我感觉中，即使夫妻、父子、母女之间，也缺乏心的连结。大家都和手机连结，不和人连结。我们现在推广的安心茶室，就是希望能做这么一件事。

问：法师说要慢下来，但对孩子来说，比如初三

学业很重，如果让他慢下来，好像要耽搁他的感觉，所以不自觉地着急。

答：孩子的身心健康才是最重要的。我曾讲过《佛法在家庭教育中的运用》，其中谈到，很多父母只关心孩子的成绩、技能，却忽略了他的品行和身心健康，直到孩子在这方面出现问题，才悔不该当初。

我说的重点不是慢下来，而是为父母和孩子的良性交流创造环境，以此引导孩子建立健康的生活方式。所以，这应该是促进而非影响学习的。其实在人工智能时代，一味学知识的意义已经不大了，即使你读一百年，AI 一秒就会。对未来的人来说，关键是具有创造力和心智健康。这两点素养，将比任何时候更重要。

问：我是五年前成为“手牵手”的志愿者，在帮扶过程中看到，有些家庭会有两三个孩子属于我们对接的对象，比如孩子的父母不在，或是有残疾、精神障碍等。越是这样家庭的孩子，我们做得越用心，但

改变很慢很慢。今天我们有幸接触佛法，知道了业力，请法师开示，像这样的家庭，我们如何有效陪伴，让他们走向更好的人生轨迹？

答：改变一个人，本身是不容易的。不要说这些生活困难的孩子，即使很多物质条件优越的家庭，父母同样为孩子的问题头疼不已，甚至搞得鸡飞狗跳。可见，这是整个社会的普遍问题。中国传统文化中，从儒家的学以成人，到佛法的修身养性，都是关于如何做人的标准和方法。但在今天，很多人的成长缺少标准和方法，属于野蛮生长。

你们做这件事，是在学做菩萨，必须有很大的耐心、善巧的方法。你们过往肯定有不少成功经验，可以不断总结、优化、共享。此外，环境也很重要，要营造友善、利他、温暖的公益环境。因为你们面对的，是缺少关爱的孩子，所以爱是一个重要前提。在这样的氛围中，才能更好地影响并带动他们，教他们做人做事。关于传统文化的学习，我们有很多项目，大家未来可以到我们这里学习、体验。



The Awakening and Freedom of Life

Master Jiqun

Translated by MPI Translation Center

A Teaching by Master Jiqun
to a Team Supporting Orphans and Children in Need
in 2025

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Welcome. The founder of your organization has put forward the aim of "no orphan in this world," a profoundly inspiring resolve. Your sustained commitment to this altruistic work, offering care to many, reflects the essence of the Bodhisattva Path—selflessness and compassion in action.

In our time today, everyone lives with turmoil and anxiety, and social and ecological conditions are far from ideal. In this context, to practice the Bodhisattva Path is not easy. I once gave a lecture at a forum organized by the Psychology Department of Fudan University titled

"Making a Loving Heart More Powerful." Why did this topic arise? Because many who begin charitable work later find their motivation fading.

How can we sustain our motivation and grow stronger the more we do? We must find within ourselves a well-spring of compassion and great love. Without this inner source, we may become like a clay bodhisattva that cannot even protect itself.

Today, whether in work or in charity, many people seek meaning outside themselves. Yet in a rapidly changing society, the external world is full of uncertainty and often unfolds in ways we never expected. This easily leads to anxiety, depression, or a sense of meaninglessness. That is why finding the right inner orientation is especially important.

I've heard that you have also been studying Buddhist teachings. This is very valuable, because the Dharma can guide us to understand the truth of life, find inner reliance,

and cultivate meaning, value, and happiness. It can also strengthen and support our work in charity. In this way, the Dharma shows a key difference in perspective between Eastern wisdom and Western culture.

I

What Is Self-Awakening

Everyone has some basic understanding of self-awareness—such as doing something voluntarily rather than being forced. But from a Buddhist perspective, self-awareness is far more profound; it refers to the awakening of life itself. This idea is not only emphasized in Buddhism. Many in society have also come to recognize its value, and some media have even described "the awakening of life" as the greatest luxury in the world. Luxury represents what is rare and precious. In a time when material goods are abundantly available, what is truly luxurious is not material wealth, but a cultivated and awakened state of mind.

For a large part of our lives, we chase external wealth, only to find that the happiness it brings is very limited. It also keeps raising our threshold of satisfaction, making it increasingly difficult to feel at ease with ourselves. I once said, "Who you are is more important than what you possess." For "who you are" reflects the kind of existence you embody: awakened or deluded, wise or ignorant, pure or confused, selfless or selfish, compassionate or full of hatred.

Buddhist teachings tell us that within every life lies an infinite treasure. The Buddha's greatest contribution to the world is that he revealed every person has the capacity to save and heal themselves. However, other religions believe that humans cannot save themselves and must rely on external gods. In the vast world, among the myriad beings, there are not only ordinary people but also higher-level beings, such as buddhas and bodhisattvas in Buddhism, sages in Confucianism, and Jesus in Christianity. Although living beings appear very different, where does the fundamental difference lie? The *Platform Sutra of the*

Sixth Patriarch tells us, "The deluded mind is that of an ordinary being; the awakened mind is that of a buddha." In other words, the difference between an ordinary being and a sage lies only in delusion and enlightenment.

In Buddhism, delusion and awakening are also expressed as ignorance and clarity. Awakening is clarity, where the mind is like a clean mirror, reflecting everything as it is, so that mountains, rivers, and the great earth may all appear within it. With such clarity, we become immediately aware of our thoughts as they arise and of how we interact with others, rather than realizing it only afterward. The Dharma teaches that the mind already possesses this capacity, yet in daily life, we often dwell in ignorance. Because we cannot see clearly, we end up thinking too much, doing too much, and saying too much—all without even realizing it.

Buddhism teaches that this is where the difference between ordinary beings and sages arises. Life divides here. If we follow the path of delusion, we enter the world in a state

of confusion and leave it the same way. We never truly know who we are, where we came from before birth, where we're going after death, or what the true nature of the world is. We then view the world through the lens of our cognition, assumptions, and attachments. When we try to understand the world, we cling to our own feelings and thoughts, which give rise to unhealthy mental states. These mental states, in turn, drive us to drift through samsara life after life.

Conversely, clarity means seeing everything with complete discernment, including the actions that arise from wrong views and the cycles of rebirth they bring about. Under the illumination of a clear mind, we come to see that all of these are merely mental images appearing in the open sky of the mind. As the ancient masters said, "In dreams, there are clearly six realms of existence; after awakening, there is nothing but emptiness."

In fact, mental states such as love and hate, joy and sorrow, are the varying appearances of the mind, formed on the

basis of ignorance. Once we open the clarity and the awakening mind, we train the ability to free the mind from delusion and affliction. Awakening is essential because this is the heart of Buddhist practice: revealing our capacity for self-liberation and self-healing. Whatever path we follow, the purpose remains the same—to guide the mind toward awakening.

II

Freedom and Liberation

The concept of freedom arose during the Renaissance humanistic movement, which advocated individual freedom and emphasized personal value. In Buddhism, a similar idea is expressed as "liberation," and together they form the phrase "freedom and liberation." I once had a dialogue with philosopher Zhou Guoping on "Buddhist Humanism and Western Humanism," where we discussed "individual freedom and personal liberation." Although the two share much in common, how exactly do they differ?

The call for individual freedom emerged because, in the

Middle Ages, people longed to break free from the dual oppression of feudal monarchy and religious theocracy. They wanted a world in which human nature could be fully expressed. As long as one did not harm others and remained within the law, one could pursue freedom in whatever way one wished. The Renaissance therefore brought forth a great flourishing in literature, art, and science. Yet it also unleashed the greed, aversion, and ignorance latent in human nature, eventually contributing to two World Wars and increasingly serious environmental, social, and psychological problems. Thus, while individual freedom removed many social constraints, it also produced significant side effects.

However, in Buddhism, personal liberation is grounded in a thorough understanding of human nature. It identifies what we should relinquish, what we should cultivate, and what we should manifest. Buddhism teaches that human nature contains both sides: in one thought we may awaken like a Buddha, and in the next we may fall into delusion like a demon. Therefore, liberation is

intrinsic to life.

The Western concept of freedom emphasizes the social dimension, holding that shackles are imposed by the external environment. As Rousseau stated, "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains." From a Buddhist perspective, this only tells part of the story. While some shackles may indeed come from society, most arise from the ignorance, karma, and afflictions within our own minds. Without addressing these inner constraints, true freedom is impossible. In this sense, the Buddhist concept of "liberation" complements the Western concept of freedom. After a dialogue with philosopher Zhou Guoping, we concluded that Buddhist teachings can serve as an essential complement to Western philosophy.

III

Why Isn't Life Free

What exactly makes us feel not free in life? Only by identifying these obstacles can we remove them and attain both freedom and liberation. To address this, Western philosophy emphasizes external freedom, focusing on social issues through systems such as the separation of powers, which limit public authority while protecting individual rights. Buddhism, however, focuses more on internal factors. In the following, I will examine this issue from three aspects.

1. How Karma Limits Freedom

Karma refers to actions. In society, people act through various fields, such as industry, agriculture, and commerce. The charity we engage in is also an action, just a wholesome one.

In Buddhism, human actions are classified into three types—physical, verbal, and mental—known as the three karmas of body, speech, and mind. Why have we become the people we are today? For most of us, this happens without our awareness. Many conditions shape us: the influence of our parents in our original family, the impact of cultural heritage and school education, the influence of friends and colleagues in our relationships, and the values embedded in the wider social environment. However, these external factors are not decisive; their impact depends on how we perceive them—whether we accept, reject, or resist them.

Each of us has a way of thinking that determines how we

accept or reject information and form our own views. These views, in turn, shape our actions. As mentioned earlier, there are three types of actions: body, speech, and mind. We often assume that only what we say or do counts as action. In reality, our mental actions—our daily thoughts and emotions—also accumulate and play a significant role in shaping our lives.

Everything we say, do, and think forms a kind of code that shapes our personality, following a consistent pattern. For example, when you embrace a certain culture, it influences your way of thinking and your views. These views then give rise to actions, which accumulate over time into habits. As these habits strengthen, they shape your character and, eventually, your personality, exerting a dominant influence over your life. In Buddhism, this process is known as the power of samsara.

When we talk about samsara, we usually think of past and future lives. In fact, we experience samsara every day through our mental habits and behavior patterns.

For instance, if you devote yourself to charity, your compassion keeps you in the cycle of kindness. If you run a business, your constant focus on improving the company keeps you in the cycle of business. If you are in politics, your daily concern with status and power keeps you in the cycle of politics. And if you are an artist, constantly thinking about art keeps you in the cycle of art.

We often act out of attachment, and in doing so, generate even stronger attachment and craving. The more we act, the more we cling, creating a self-reinforcing cycle. Once this cycle takes hold, whether in our habits, way of thinking, or personal interests, it begins to dominate our lives. Within such habitual patterns, we find ourselves no longer truly free. If we extend karma across a longer span of time and space—for instance, to the family into which we are born—we can see that even then, we are not truly free.

It is clear that life unfolds according to certain laws. Whether a person enjoys blessings or faces difficulties is closely linked to their past karma. Although karma can

be transformed, until it is, we are not truly free. Even our character and ways of doing things unconsciously control and shape us.

On a broader level, birds can fly in the sky, and fish can live in the water—these abilities are beyond human capacity. Different karmic forces give rise to different forms of life, and within each form, we are not truly free.

2. How Cognition Limits Freedom

The world we see is shaped by our cognitive system. Have you ever tried wearing a virtual reality (VR) headset? When you see a deep chasm before you, even if you know you're standing on solid ground, you may still hesitate to step forward, because your perception takes over.

Our present karmic system functions like a pair of VR headsets. We believe we are seeing a real, objective world, but what we perceive is actually determined by the headsets we wear. These "headsets" are so innate that we have

never considered, or even imagined, that the world could appear differently.

The education we received taught us that the world exists exactly as we see and know it—a real and objective reality. Yet modern science suggests that we can directly perceive only about four percent of the universe, while the remaining ninety-six percent lies beyond our perception. This shows how limited our perception truly is. Even many animals have senses far more acute than those of human beings.

Beyond the limits of our senses, our perception is also highly limited. I often say that each of us engages with the world in two ways: through perception and through needs. Our way of perception depends on our views—the views we hold shape the world we perceive. Our needs depend on our preferences. For example, if you enjoy spicy food, chili peppers taste delicious to you; but for someone who can't handle spice, they are something to avoid. Similarly, some people love sour flavors, some

cannot live without meat, while others cannot tolerate any of these tastes at all.

Furthermore, our emotions shape how we perceive the world. When we like someone, even their flaws can appear as virtues; when we dislike them, even their virtues can seem like flaws. We can find a hundred reasons to justify what we like, and just as many to condemn what we dislike. A skilled debater could even turn black into white, or make the dead seem alive.

Clearly, perception arises from our own feelings, making it partial—and sometimes even completely mistaken. Yet we tend to trust our feelings, cling to our perceptions, and regard them as absolutely real. From this, we form many assumptions and expectations. But the world does not exist according to our assumptions, nor does it move in accordance with our will. When reality fails to align with our perceptions, afflictions naturally arise.

When our perception is limited—dull and one-sided—we

are not truly free. This lack of freedom reveals itself in two ways. First, we fail to see the impermanent nature of reality. In the past, we lived a slower life, and our minds could remain relatively calm. But in today's rapidly changing world, whatever we try to hold onto seems to slip through our fingers, leaving us anxious, lost, and unable to find a way forward. Second, we fail to answer life's ultimate questions: Who am I? Where did I come from before birth, and where will I go after death? What is the true nature of the world? As a result, many people suffer from a sense of inner emptiness. They find themselves unable to distinguish what is real from unreal, meaningful from meaningless, or to see where the future lies.

3. How Afflictions Obstruct Freedom

We believe we live in a real world, but in reality, we dwell within our own thoughts. Every day, we struggle with what we want or don't want, what we like or dislike, and what we consider valuable or worthless. Love and hate are the two great themes of life, portrayed to their fullest

extremes in countless novels and films. As spectators, we may find such stories captivating, but for those bound by lifelong love or hatred, they bring nothing but suffering.

The same problem exists in our everyday lives. For example, when we care deeply about something and pursue it desperately, the process can be exhausting; failing to realize it brings suffering, and losing it after gaining brings even more suffering. As long as we cling to such desires, our minds can never be truly free. In fact, before that person or thing entered our life, there was no suffering, nor did we feel that life was incomplete without it. Yet once we become attached, we start to believe that we cannot live without it—that life would lose its meaning. The same applies to hatred. When you hate someone, you make yourself suffer and feel torn apart—yet letting go of that hatred is never easy.

Today, many people live fragmented lives, caught in a constant rush. They have to keep scrolling on their phones, sitting in front of computers, or finding something to stay

occupied. Many people only fall asleep when their bodies are completely exhausted. As long as they have a little energy left, they keep busy, thinking that busyness itself is fulfillment. But in fact, this constant busyness is exhausting. I often say that in the future, one of the most important measures of happiness will be a person's ability to let the body and mind rest, and their ability to stop at will.

In addition, negative emotions such as depression, anxiety, and insecurity can trap people in suffering—sometimes even making them feel that life is no longer worth living. In fact, whether we can go on living often depends on a single thought. When we are firmly gripped by negative thinking, life may seem utterly meaningless; yet, once we break free from these thoughts, a sense of meaning naturally comes back.

All these afflictions prevent the body and mind from being free. In Buddhism, liberation means freeing ourselves from inner afflictions. Buddhism defines greed, aversion, and ignorance as the Three Poisons. In other words, these

three inner viruses give rise to afflictions and fuel the dramas of love and hate. The purpose of Buddhist practice is to help us see reality as it is, so that we no longer chase or sink into the illusions woven by these poisons.

IV

How Can We Attain Awakening

Our lack of freedom mainly arises from karma, perception, and afflictions. To attain true freedom, we must work on these three aspects.

1. Attaining Freedom Through Karma

In Buddhism, karma is divided into wholesome karma and unwholesome karma, also known as white karma and black karma. "White" signifies purity and flawlessness, guiding life toward light; "black" represents defilement and impurity, leading life toward darkness.

The Buddha described four types of life journeys:

(a) **From darkness to darkness:** life remains engulfed in deep ignorance, greed, aversion, and delusion;

(b) **From darkness to light:** human nature contains both dark and light forces. By igniting the lamp of wisdom within, we can dispel the darkness and step into the light;

(c) **From light to light:** through dedicated practice, we enter a state of awakening, and life abides in perpetual light;

(d) **From light to darkness:** even a flicker of light, if not properly nurtured, can be overwhelmed by greed, aversion, and delusion, allowing darkness to reclaim its hold.

Confucius said, "Only the wisest and the most foolish remain unchanged." Most people can rise or fall, for human nature contains both wholesome and unwholesome forces. When we have gained confidence and strength

through cultivation, we can move forward with steady resolve. Without a certain level of practice, we can easily slip back into the inertia of samsara and fall once again into ignorance. That is why, on the path of cultivation, we must be diligent and never grow lax.

The essence of cultivation lies in refraining from unwholesome actions and fostering wholesome ones. But why do certain behaviors come to dominate our lives? Because they are repeated again and again. Even a simple movement for an athlete requires countless repetitions to master—after all, practice makes perfect. The same is true for all our abilities and interests in life; they are shaped through countless repetitions.

Life consists of many mental factors, and the root of all our actions lies in these mental accumulations. In Buddhism, the *Treatise on the Hundred Dharmas* divides the mind into three categories: ordinary mental states, afflicted mental states, and wholesome mental states. Whether we cultivate a wholesome life or an unwholesome one

depends on how clearly we recognize these mental factors. We need to see which ones should be transformed and which ones should be cultivated, because the quality of our lives is shaped by the mental states we choose to foster.

We all know how much money we have and what assets we possess, but do we know the composition of our inner world? Do we really understand which mental factors make up our minds? Can we tell which are wholesome and which are unwholesome? Which mental states, when cultivated, bring lasting joy and well-being, and which mental states give rise to endless trouble and suffering?

In a sense, each of us is the first to experience our own states of mind. If we spend our days caught in anxiety, hatred, or other negative emotions, we will inevitably suffer. On the other hand, if we nurture kindness, warmth, and tolerance, our lives will naturally be filled with joy. And we are not the only ones affected. When we are anxious, those around us can also feel the energy we radiate and

may suffer as well. This is why we must refrain from unwholesome states and cultivate wholesome, ethical ones. In doing so, we benefit both ourselves and others. Every effort we make, no matter how small, bears its own fruit.

When it comes to morality, many see it as a social obligation rather than a personal need. They may think, "If others ignore morality while I follow it, I will be at a disadvantage." In fact, morality is like a fine material that determines the quality of life. As mentioned earlier, the quality of life depends on our actions—some wholesome, others unwholesome—just like using good or poor materials. Morality is the refined material that allows life to flourish from one lifetime to the next. Without it, life is built on inferior material, leading only to decline.

In a sense, life itself can be seen as a kind of product. We might ask ourselves: are we ordinary products, or have we been carefully crafted into true masterpieces? Naturally, no one wants to be ordinary, let alone defective—but can we really call ourselves masterpieces? In the world of

business, every renowned brand goes through careful design and meticulous production, striving for excellence at every stage. Yet when we consider how we have developed, can we truly say it was the result of careful design? The truth is, it was not. Because our culture provides little guidance in this area, most people grow up unconsciously, becoming scattered and confused in their inner lives.

I once said that many people's lives are built on piles of wrong views and heaps of confused emotions. Can such a life truly bring happiness? In fact, such a state of life is like a perpetual motion machine, ceaselessly generating suffering for oneself and for others. Buddhism teaches that life is suffering, but this is not absolute. More precisely, it is a life rooted in greed, aversion, and ignorance that gives rise to suffering. A life of awakening, on the other hand, is filled with compassion, joy, and peace. This shows that the mind is the source of both suffering and happiness, while material things are only secondary. When your mind is full of suffering and negative emotions, even if the whole world were yours, you still would not find happiness.

Therefore, we should strive to cultivate a higher-quality state of being. In this way, we can feel at ease wherever we are and be able to resolve whatever we encounter. This is more important than anything else, because it concerns not only our present life but also our endless future lives.

From the perspective of karma, we must approach life in two ways. First, we need to repent for our past mistakes and examine our present state of mind—seeing clearly which of our actions may harm ourselves and others, and sincerely resolving to change them. Only through such honest self-reflection can we stop unwholesome actions and cultivate wholesome ones.

Second, we need to develop the wisdom of life. Everyone wants to become a better person, but without wisdom, we often pursue only external forms of goodness—improving our appearance or decorating our surroundings to make them pleasing. These, however, are temporary and impermanent. True and lasting benefit comes from cultivating inner beauty. Even when youth fades and life

becomes simple, the mind remains rich and content.

2. Attaining Freedom Through Right View

Life has two dimensions: the finite and the infinite. Most of the time, we only see the finite. Sometimes, even a single thought becomes our entire world. However, behind every thought lies the true mind, as vast as space. When we step outside of our thoughts and emotions, we can experience the infinite nature of the true mind.

Building on this, at the level of perception, Buddhism helps us step beyond our immediate feelings and see the true nature of worldly phenomena. To understand the world, physics offers various approaches, such as classical physics, quantum physics, relativity, and string theory. Buddhism, however, teaches the law of dependent origination: all forms of existence, including our physical body, are temporary appearances arising from conditions, with no fixed self-nature. This is how Buddhism apprehends the true nature of all phenomena.

"No fixed self-nature" means that nothing exists on its own or remains unchanged. Instead, everything has infinite possibilities. Based on this, Buddhism teaches that "One is all and all is one," pointing out that even a tiny speck of dust is connected with the entire universe. "No fixed self-nature" aims to counter the wrong view of "fixed self-nature." It is because ordinary beings, clinging to the self and phenomena, perceive all things as if they were independent, objective, real, and unchanging.

In fact, both philosophy and science have supported this view of "no fixed self-nature" to some extent. For example, Early Indian philosophy held that the paramanu—the ultimate particle—was real, indivisible, and the smallest element of the universe. Classical physics also held that phenomena were not real, yet the basic particles making up phenomena were real, thus creating the universe. However, quantum mechanics has revealed the wave-particle duality, showing that matter does not exist in any fixed form as either wave or particle. What kind of world we see is also shaped by our personal perception. Regarding

the world we see, we are not merely observers but also active participants. Some may ask, "If that's the case, why do we all seem to see the same things?" It is because we are like users wearing the same VR headset, running the same program. If we were to switch to the VR system of a cat or a dog, we would enter their world instead.

In the phenomenal world, we tend to develop two types of attachments: attachment to the self and attachment to phenomena. From these attachments arises a dualistic world, such as beauty and ugliness, good and evil, self and other. This duality can give rise to opposition. When we cling to duality, we become trapped in it and lose our freedom. In fact, all Buddhist practices are to help us break free from dualistic opposition. It is like a sky covered with dark clouds: when we live within the clouds, we are surrounded by darkness, unable to see the truth of the world. Only by letting go of attachment can we break through the clouds and return to our original mind, as vast as the sky.

When you reach this state of mind, all phenomena in the world appear like a dream or an illusion. Just as the *Diamond Sutra*, cherished by literati and scholars for centuries, teaches us, "All conditioned phenomena are like dreams, illusions, bubbles, shadows, like dewdrops and a flash of lightning. They should be seen as such." With this insight, no matter what pressure or adversity we face, we understand that they are only temporary phenomena—arising and passing away through conditions. Actually, all our anxiety and attachment come from the belief that the world has a fixed self-nature. When we realize that these views are nothing more than dreams and illusions, their impact on us diminishes, and we can experience true freedom.

The mind itself possesses the ability to liberate itself, but it loses this freedom when it becomes entangled in phenomena. This is why the Eightfold Path begins with Right View. In other words, we need to cultivate right views, including impermanence, no-self, the mind-only teaching, and the Madhyamaka insight. With the Right View,

we can unlock wisdom and see the truth of the world. If our views do not align with the truth of the world, we will experience afflictions. As the saying goes: "Compassion has no enemies, and wisdom gives rise to no afflictions." This is exactly what the teaching means.

When studying Buddhism, we need to learn to view the world and life from a higher dimension. The reason we lack true freedom is that we hold wrong views and cling to them. By breaking free from these wrong views, we can attain freedom. This freedom, however, is not confined to rational thought; it goes beyond rationality, allowing us to unlock the infinite wisdom within. Only then can we come to understand the truth of the world.

3. Attaining Freedom by Overcoming Afflictions

How can we address the lack of freedom caused by afflictions? There are mainly two methods.

The first step is to work on our perception, as many

afflictions arise from the way we see and interpret things. Changing our perception can resolve many coarse afflictions. However, some subtle, deep-rooted afflictions remain. To address these, we cultivate awareness through meditation, unlocking the mind's capacity for self-awakening.

There are many ways to practice meditation. What we promote is Right Mindfulness Meditation, as taught in the *Satipatthana Sutta*. This approach is easy to start and highly practical. Our mindfulness meditation system has three levels—beginner, intermediate, and advanced—starting with mindfulness and gradually leading to the original mind of no-thought.

To practice mindfulness, we cultivate two key abilities: concentration and awareness. The first step is learning to focus—for example, in meditation, using the breath as an anchor for the mind. But concentration alone is not enough. Many successful people have strong focus, yet it often comes with attachment. This attachment can

give rise to anxiety, negative emotions, or dependence on achievement. Once we become attached, we fear setbacks and failures, and become overly concerned with gains and losses.

Concentration is only the foundation; cultivating awareness is even more important. While fully engaged in an activity, the mind can remain clear and lucid, like a mirror reflecting everything without attachment. This clarity is an inherent quality of the mind, and our task is to awaken it. By doing so, we can stay focused yet maintain a sense of detachment, fully aware of both our actions and mental states. When the mind rests in awareness, it naturally keeps a healthy distance, free from attachment and negative emotions.

Ordinary beings, out of ignorance, constantly generate afflictions and emotions. Once we awaken awareness and open the mind's inner clarity, we gain the ability to dissolve these emotions and afflictions. This capacity must be cultivated through ongoing meditation practice. In

recent years, mindfulness has gained worldwide popularity and is applied in fields such as psychology, education, and healthcare, effectively helping people address mental challenges. Yet in these contexts, mindfulness is often treated as a mere technique, offering only temporary relief. It lacks the profound wisdom of Buddhism and a holistic understanding of life and the world. Buddhist mindfulness meditation, in contrast, helps us realize our original mind, unlock inner treasures, and attain ultimate liberation. This practice must be guided by Right View; without it, our understanding of mindfulness—and the benefits it brings—will remain limited.

Mindfulness is the most direct key to awakening. Once it is unlocked, life can attain freedom and liberation. This doesn't mean that all afflictions and habitual tendencies vanish immediately. Cultivation still requires consistent effort over time. As the Buddhist saying goes, "Awakening may be sudden, but cultivation must be gradual." Practice is not limited to seated meditation; it extends into daily life, where we face real challenges. Our afflictions are

deeply rooted, accumulated over countless lifetimes. That is why Buddhism emphasizes not only "seeing the path" but also "walking the path." By observing our reactions in each encounter—seeing whether we are influenced or carried away—we gradually dissolve afflictions. By approaching every problem with awareness, we gradually clear our afflictions and ultimately realize complete liberation and great freedom.

To sum up, we have explored how life can progress from delusion to awakening, and from bondage to true freedom, through three aspects: karma, perception, and the letting go of afflictions.

V

Q&A

Q: In studying Buddhism, I understand the teachings to some extent. But during meditation, I often face the problem of "knowing but not doing." In practice, my own desires feel very strong. For example, I get lazy and find myself lying in bed, unwilling to get up. How should I deal with this?

A: What can we do? Practice is never easy, especially in our era, which Buddhism calls the Age of Dharma Decline. Why is it called that? Because temptations surround us, and the world constantly pulls us toward greed, aversion, and ignorance. This makes practice particularly

challenging today.

To help everyone study and practice effectively, I once highlighted two key points: a supportive atmosphere and effective guidance. By "atmosphere," I mean a group of people—say five, ten, or fifteen—who meet weekly to study, share, volunteer, or do charity work. Human laziness is strong, and social temptations are many; without such an environment, it is very difficult to maintain self-discipline. Equally important is effective guidance. This allows us to see our growth on the path of practice, as mindfulness strengthens and afflictions gradually weaken. Both elements are indispensable. A supportive atmosphere without progress or gain will not sustain motivation. Effective guidance without a supportive environment makes consistent practice difficult to maintain.

Q: I have a 14-year-old boy. Sometimes when my expectations are too high, I end up feeling very stressed, and he becomes stressed as well. But when I relax my expectations and let things flow, I worry that he is becoming too

loose. Then I feel I haven't done my duty as a parent and start regretting it. I can't seem to find the right balance. What should I do?

A: When educating children, it is not about imposing demands but guiding them through the right environment. If you rely only on demands—whether too high or too low—they will not work. If you hope your child will grow into a certain kind of person, you should create an environment that naturally supports that direction. In such an atmosphere, the child will grow that way without even noticing. Often, children just cannot manage themselves. And even as parents, can you truly control yourselves and live up to all your own expectations? Of course not. So how could we expect children to control themselves?

Chinese culture emphasizes self-cultivation and family harmony, so it is important for families to nurture an atmosphere where culture can be passed on. One way is to create a Dhyana Tea Space at home, where the family can gather each week to drink tea, read, practice with the mindfulness

ball, care for one another's well-being, and prepare vegetarian meals. You can also invite relatives, friends, classmates, and colleagues to join. Today, many people stay out of touch until they need something, which feels transactional. But when we can build a warm and altruistic environment where people come together simply to learn culture and cultivate body and mind, I believe children will naturally receive positive influence through what they see and experience.

Today, schools and society offer almost no education about life itself, so families must fill this gap to ensure children's physical and mental well-being. Whether for personal growth or for family relationships, genuine connection is essential. Yet many people now live inside their own perceptions; even between spouses or between parents and children, heartfelt connection is often lacking. People are connected to their phones, but not to one another. Our "Dhyana Tea Space" initiative is meant to help restore this kind of meaningful connection.

Q: Master, you said we should slow down. But for a child in the final year of junior high, the academic load is very heavy. If they slow down, it feels as if they will fall behind, so I can't help feeling anxious about it.

A: What matters most is a child's physical and mental well-being. In my talk on "Bringing Buddhist Teachings to Family Education," I pointed out that many parents focus only on grades and skills, while overlooking their child's character and overall health. Only when problems eventually arise do they regret not having paid attention sooner.

The key point I am making is not about slowing down. It is about creating an environment that supports healthy communication between parents and children, so that children can be guided toward a healthier way of living. This does not hinder their studies; it can actually help them.

In the age of artificial intelligence, simply accumulating

knowledge no longer holds the same value. Even if you studied for a hundred years, AI could learn the same material in a second. For the future, what truly matters are creativity and mental well-being. These two qualities will be more important than ever.

Q: I became a "Hand in Hand" volunteer five years ago. In my work, I've seen families where two or even three children fall under our care. Some have lost their parents, while others have parents living with disabilities or mental illness. The more difficult the situation, the more care we try to give, yet progress remains very slow. Now that we have the good fortune to encounter the Dharma and understand karma, I would like to ask: Master, how can we effectively support these families and help them move toward a better direction in life?

A: Changing a person is never easy. This is true not only for children facing hardship; even in well-off families, parents often worry about their children and may even find the household in turmoil. This shows that the problem is

widespread across society. In traditional Chinese culture, from Confucian teachings on learning to become a virtuous person to Buddhist practices of cultivating body and mind, there have long been clear standards and methods for personal development. Yet today many people grow up without such guidance, developing in a kind of wild, unguided way.

What you are doing is learning to walk the path of a bodhisattva. This calls for great patience and skillful means. You already have valuable experience, so keep reviewing it, refining it, and sharing it with one another. The environment is equally important. Create a space that is warm, kind, and altruistic. The children you serve lack consistent care, so love must come first. Only in such an atmosphere can you genuinely influence and support them, guiding them in how to live and how to act. As for learning traditional culture, we have many programs available. You are welcome to come learn with us and experience them in the future.

静心学堂丛书

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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.

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