

學佛與佛學

慧日講堂住持

厚觀法師

學佛 以佛為模範而學

什麼是「學佛」？我認為可用印順導師的說法來做一個簡單的定義。印順導師在《佛在人間》這本著作中說到：「學佛，就是向佛學習，以佛為我們的模範而學。佛是怎樣修學而成的，我們也這樣照著學。」（p.128）

雖然說許多人都在「學佛」，但由於每個人對「佛」的認識，與對「佛的教導」理解程度深淺不同，因而所學的內容與所得的成果也隨之有異。有的人把佛當成一般的神一樣，只是求保佑，希望得今生、來生的福樂；有的人認為佛斷盡煩惱得覺悟，因而希望學佛的智慧，並致力於身口意三業清淨，求解脫；有的認為佛不但自己覺悟，而且以大悲心度一切眾生，因而積極學佛的悲智雙運、自利利他。

佛學 佛法之學、佛教之學

那麼什麼又是「佛學」呢？或許大家對「佛學」的定義不太一樣，有的人認為：「學」是學問、學術，必須抽離信仰，以純客觀的態度來研究佛教才能稱為「佛學」。而印順導師認為：歷史學、考古學、物理學、生物學、哲學、儒學、理學、神學……都是「學」，而「佛學」是「佛法之學、佛教之學」。雖然說思想學



術有其共同性，但每一門學問也都有其特殊性。

佛學研究使用的方法學，如歷史、考古、考據、語言、文獻……，似乎含蓋的很廣，容易誤解當成一般的學問；但是佛學處理的並不只是物質、器世間而已，而是涉及人類思想、情感、心靈層面的宗教信仰，關係到人對生死的態度，及修行解脫的問題。即使同樣一個人，受到周遭環境的影響，心理變化都會千差萬別，更何況是多數人在一個共業中。佛學研究探究的是不同時代人們對佛法的理解，或佛教在歷史中的興衰，因此涉及的議題非常複雜。研究的對象包含了一切教、理、行、果，涵蓋了經典、律典、論典、教派、僧團、佛教史的演變，如何修行、如何斷除煩惱、如何利益眾生，以及如何成就聲

聞、菩薩果位直到圓滿的佛果都是。

前面提到，「學佛」會隨著每個人對「佛」的理解程度不同，得到的成果也有差別；同樣地，「佛學」也是如此，由於研究者的心態、方法與研究對象的不同，所得的成果也不免互有差異。

佛學研究的原則與方法 ——三法印

印順導師說，他不反對純客觀的、純知識的佛學，但他認為：佛法是宗教之一，重視信、解、行、證，智慧與慈悲，如果忽略這一特性，以非宗教者的心態來研究的話，那縱使有良好的成就，也難保正確。

印順導師指出，佛學研究做為一個學科，研究的方法、動機應該以「佛法研究佛法」，也就是必須符合「三法印」。

第一個法印是「諸行無常」，世間諸法沒有「不變性」，佛教流傳過程中，思想、制度等種種，所有一切都是變化無常的。因此，應掌握無常的法則，去觀察佛教興盛、衰微，乃至沒落的原因何在，注意因時因地必然的演變。否則很容易做出謬誤的結論，或是認為「越古越真」、「越後越圓滿」，忽略佛教發展的整體性。同時，雖然一切都變化無常，但也應在錯綜複雜的變化中，把握相對安定的共同性，如某時某地、某宗某派的共義。

第二法印是「諸法無我」，世間諸法沒有「獨存性」，萬事萬物都是因緣假合。無我分為「人無我」和「法無我」。「人無我」也就是大家口口聲聲講的「客觀」，不要預設立場、抱持著成見來研究。如果一個佛學研究者，沒有以「佛法研究佛法」，那麼當他在探究佛教的業報、三世因果或禪定神通等議題時，可能因為自我的預設立場而落入主觀的判定，認為佛教的「境、行、果」是種「神

話」，或者認為它只是一個做不到的「理想」。

再談「法無我」。因世間是眾緣和合而成，並非孤立的；萬法互相影響，從而產生語言、文字、思想上的種種變化。如要以研究宗派、教團為主題，不能局限於單一宗派、教團的觀察，應留意到該宗派、教團與當時的時空背景互動，所產生的無論是對經典的詮釋方式，或是修行、儀規的適應調整等等。能掌握「法無我」的原則，較能如實呈現原有的相貌。

第三個法印是「涅槃寂靜」。「涅槃」是貪瞋癡、一切煩惱永盡的狀態。在早期經典《阿含經》就很清楚的指出，佛陀出世的目的是為了幫助一切眾生，解決生老病死問題與斷除煩惱、得解脫。因此，我們一切的學習與研究，目的是為了讓眾生減輕煩惱，甚至是斷除。一旦沒有把握這個原則，那麼在研究過程中可能會忘失方向，落入筆戰或是人身攻擊。如果是辯論了真理還好，但往往過程中伴隨著貪心、瞋恨心和慢心等煩惱，這就和涅槃寂靜相違背。

印順導師指出，佛學是「為佛法而學」，如果佛學研究沒有把這三法印放進來，那麼將無法觸及佛法的核心。相反的，能夠掌握三法印，抱持著以佛法研究佛法的態度，那麼不管是研究歷史、文獻



第二屆畢業生難得有機會聚在一起。
The second session graduates' reunion after 15 years.

或是教理行果等，不但對自己的生命有幫助，行有餘力也能夠幫助眾生。例如，可以探討歷史中某個教理、教團為什麼會從興盛走向沒落，是受到其他教派或外道的影響，或整體社會人心的敗壞？還是本身人材凋零，太過世俗化，逐漸缺乏法味？或是教義太過狹隘，只重視義理思辨，缺少了實踐修持？或只重視信仰，忽略教理的修習等等？當研究的目的是為了能夠鑑往知來，當作現在或是未來的參考，那麼所做的研究就很有意義。

世間知識的有限性， 與智慧在佛法中的內涵

佛學研究所得到的學問知識是有限的。智慧，在佛法中可以分為生得慧、聞所成慧、思所成慧、修所成慧和現證無漏慧。其中「生得慧」是與生俱來的基本智能，也包括後天的努力、父母師長的教導、社會文化的啟發熏陶等所得的知識。或許有人認為聽經聞法、研究教理就是「聞所成慧」，但如《大毘婆沙論》卷42所說：「若於三藏十二分教，受持、轉讀、究竟流布，是生得慧。」（大正27，217b12-13）雖然研究的是佛教相關的內容，不過所得到的智慧也只是一般的知識學問，還是屬於「生得慧」的範圍。依佛法來說，除了聽聞學習之外，必須契應

三法印，正見具足，深信因果、三寶、四諦，即使遭受誹謗、打擊，皆不能動搖其信念，那才是「聞所成慧」。除了淨信之外，還進一步思惟抉擇，內心產生強烈的善法欲，並轉為身口的實際行動，防非止惡，長養慈悲心，這是「思所成慧」。而聞所成慧、思所成慧都還是散心觀，必須達到與禪定相應，才足以稱為「修所成慧」。有了與定相應的修所成慧為基礎，再持續向上精進，體證諸法無我、斷煩惱，才是「現證無漏慧」。

《阿含經》中描述，有一婦人，她兒子相繼命終，內心非常痛苦而發狂，直到聽了佛陀開示，頓時證得初果、得法眼淨。我們學習巴利文、藏文，知道電腦如何使用，怎麼運用學術規則，這些都是知識，和此婦人當下體悟到「無常、空、無我」，足以讓她開悟的智慧是不一樣的。「初果」是入聖位的第一個階段，主要是斷除薩迦耶見（有身見）、戒禁取見、疑等三結。凡夫與聖人的差別在於有沒有我執，即使再多的學問，如果沒有徹底斷除「我執」，未能體證三法印的「諸法無我」，都還是凡夫。

研究動機、態度與慧解的關係

當年我要赴日本留學時，印順導師勉勵我：「為佛法而學，不要做世間學問想。」「要用學問，不要被學問用」。我想導師是叮嚀，雖然是以學術的方式探究佛法，但不要忘記動機是為佛法而學，為淨治身心、為利益眾生，為弘揚正法。佛法是要淨治身心，不是學問的堆積，就如同蠶把桑葉吃進去，如果吐出來的仍是桑葉，那就沒意思；吃桑葉要吐出絲來，那麼才有用。世間的學問要比是比



2005年至法鼓山採訪惠敏法師與李志夫教授。

不完的，一山還比一山高，對於「生得慧」能做的只有謙虛。也許更可以檢視的是：自己是否有良好的動機，有出離心、清淨心、甚至是大乘堅固的菩提心，這些才是能夠幫助我們透過經典文字，得到聞慧的真實利益。



與諸山長老攝於西蓮淨苑新教學大樓前。

如果對這些基本內容、定義不瞭解，還以為所研究的就是聞慧、思慧，好像很有貢獻的樣子，但其實自己既沒有起清淨心，亦無斷惡修善的強烈動機，也沒有抵抗誘惑的力量，那麼連佛法都還沒有進入，更談不上聞慧、思慧。當寫出來的文字沒有辦法感動自己，又有幾個人會看呢？長久下去，不但宗教生命枯萎，沒有了活力，不要說利益他人，連自己都無法利益，這樣非常可惜。

不用特別指佛學研究，就算是一般研究也是希望能夠對人類有所貢獻，學術研究並不是堆砌文字而已，作為一個佛教研究者應該要經常問自己：為什麼要研究？所從事的研究能不能感動自己和引起他人的共鳴？印順導師早年的作品《妙雲集》，被學者批評沒有學術的寫作格式，如引證、出處等，認為不具價值。導師知道有人這樣批評，在之後的《空之探究》、《初期大乘佛教之起源與開展》、《中國禪宗史》等專書著作就詳細記載出處。導師平日閱藏那麼多，只要記錄一下很簡單，之後還以《中國禪宗史》一書獲頒日本立正大學博士學位。像導師這樣思想融貫之後，方法學也不用特別學，要用就可以用了。

導師見到現實的佛教界，為什麼與經典中佛陀教導人們的佛法差距那麼大？

為了縮短佛法與現實佛教間的差距，因此投入了佛學研究。正是這樣研究的基本態度和動機，清楚「為什麼而行」，所以同樣是學術格式著作，導師的著作和其他學者相較，讀起來特別令人感動，可以淨化身心。我們在研究時掌握一些基本態度是很重要的，否則研究成果也無法和這些修行者有所相應。比如以教觀雙美著名的天台智者大師來說，他是一位有實際止觀經驗的人，做為一個旁觀研究者，雖然不用談到要擁有相同的證量，但至少要以同理心，才有可能比較貼近或體會出他的心境。否則寫出來的東西，只是一些文獻的比較，是否就真能正確理解智者大師呢？

佛學研究的價值

佛學的研究能夠幫助我們獲得正確的教理，對於修行也很有幫助。如同當代的醫學，第一線為大眾治療的醫生、護士固然很重要，但還要有學校不斷地培育後進、傳承經驗，而為了因應環境的變化以及新疾病的發生，也必須不斷地從事醫學研究，以奠定未來醫學進步的基礎。走向成佛覺悟也是一樣，實際了脫生死的修行很重要，但對於所修、所學的是否正確，如果能夠以經論及古德的經驗來檢證，較不容易偏差。另外，對於似是而非的論

說，學術教理的研究也顯得非常重要。就好像過去胡適先生以學術方法研究《六祖壇經》，如果覺得他的研究不合乎事實，那必須以同樣的考據方法來指正其錯誤。

善用修學環境、廣結善緣

有一些來佛研所就讀的學生，認為可以得到佛學的研究方法、次第；但真的進來了，常被語言、功課壓力壓得喘不過氣來，心中開始對學術、佛學研究感到失望。也許是覺得將來用不上，或者發現自己不是做學者的料而打退堂鼓。其實，佛學研究不應該想得太狹隘。佛研所的老師們各有專攻，可以幫助我們在很短的時間建立整體佛法的架構；學習過這些方法，至少比自己一個人盲修瞎練、東看看西看看要好。我們剛開始學習佛法時，有很多問題可以找到更高明的人回答，但修學到某種程度以後，也許自己的問題也是別人的問題，找不到幾個人可以回答。這時候如果知道研究方法、如何運用工具書，那麼許多問題可以從大藏經或近代的研究成果中找到解答。

印順導師指出，不論研究或修學，有三個過程：得要、深入、旁通。首先是要能夠「得要」，也就是建立架構，把握佛法的核心，瞭解佛教史的演變，如對大乘三系、八宗等整體的掌握。接著是「深入」，有了骨架，還須要血肉的填補，對於個人有興趣的部分再繼續深入。最後還要「旁通」，如果只是深入而不求旁通，可能會陷入偏狹的一邊，所以深入之外還要能觸類旁通。

剛進入佛研所學習，如果一開始沒有建立架構的話，未來的研究很容易落入見樹不見林；但如有了骨架，那麼當要建立起一棟精美的房子，缺什麼你會很清楚。我是佛研所第二屆的學生，當時陳榮波老師帶全班八位同學略讀一百卷的《大智度

論》，一個學期下來讓我眼界大開，雖然不是瞭解得很細膩，但是對我建立佛法架構有很大的幫助。後來我選定《大智度論》為研究主題，無論是上任何課程，都盡量和《大智度論》做連結。一旦問題意識產生的時候，所遇到的一切都會和你研究的有關，每個地方都會出現想要的答案，這樣的研究就會覺得很有趣了。

結語

對於「佛學」的定義不同，那麼態度就會很不一樣。「學佛」是以佛為模範而學，有其宗教信仰的特性。如果抽離信仰來談佛學研究，那麼研究的成果大概只能莊嚴圖書館而已，無法對自己身心、對他人有所幫助。因此，在修學的過程中應該反省：我們有沒有得到要領，有沒有深入，有沒有觸類旁通？建立起動機、方法，不斷的反省：我為什麼而來？對於基本的教理建立了架構，知道自己現在的研究是定位在什麼地方，知道哪裡不足、哪裡需要再補強。

有些人修學佛法是為自己而學，有的為他人而學。如果是為自己而學，佛學研究可以幫助我們掌握佛法要義，戒、定、慧的內涵，但要成就佛果，必須進一步下苦工夫去做；如果是為眾生而學，佛學研究更可以幫助我們廣博瞭解。當百寶箱裡的藥很多，儘管不是自己的毛病，也可以提供眾生契理契機的法門。



參加佛研所三十週年成果展。
Attending the Ceremony of 30 years Achievement exhibition.

Imitating the Buddha and Buddhist Studies

Ven. Houguan

Learning by Emulating the Buddha

What is Imitating the Buddha (xue fo)? I think we can refer to Master Yin Shun's statement for a simple and straightforward definition. Quoted from Master's book *Buddha in the Human World* is his statement: "Imitating the Buddha is emulating the Buddha, practicing by taking the Buddha as a model. How the Buddha has completed his practice of Buddhahood and we follow suit." (p.128)

Many people imitate the Buddha, but their perception of the Buddha and their understanding of the Buddha's teachings are different, therefore what they imitate and what they achieve are different. Some people worship the Buddha as God and seek blessings for their present life and future lives; some perceive the Buddha as one who has eliminated all afflictions and attained enlightenment, so they aspire to learn and cultivate the Buddha's wisdom, devote themselves to purifying their bodily, verbal, and mental actions, and seek liberation; some regard the Buddha not only as an enlightened one but also who delivers all beings with great compassion, and thus they emulate enthusiastically to perfect their compassion and wisdom and benefit themselves and others.

Buddhist Studies: the Studies of Buddhadharma and Buddhism

What is Buddhist studies (fo xue)? Maybe people have different ideas about what Buddhist



studies really is. Some people think that "studies" is about knowledge and academics, and that Buddhist studies is exclusive of faith and shall be taken from a purely objective perspective. According to Master Yin Shun, history, archeology, physics, biology, philosophy, Confucianism, Neo-Confucianism, and theology, to name a few, all represent different fields of studies, and Buddhist studies is the study of Buddhadharma, the study of Buddhism. Although academic thoughts share some commonalities, each discipline is unique in its own way.

The research methods employed by Buddhist studies range from disciplines such as history, archeology, textual research, linguistics, documentation science and therefore it is easily misunderstood as an ordinary branch of knowledge. However, Buddhism does not merely address substances and the material world; it is

a religious faith that involves human thoughts, feelings, and the spiritual aspect, affects people's attitude toward birth and death, and is related to the issue of practice and liberation. Even an individual bound to the influence of environment can have various emotions, not to mention a multitude of people sharing collective karma. Buddhist studies is an investigation of people's understanding of Buddhism in different times, and its rise and fall in the course of history. Thus it contains a complex array of subject areas. Buddhist studies includes the study of all the Buddhist doctrines, theories, practices, and results, and covers the sūtra, vinaya, and śāstra, schools of teaching, sangha, evolution in Buddhist history. It is also a study about practice, elimination of mental afflictions, altruism, and the attainment of voice-hearer, bodhisattva, and utmost perfection of Buddhahood.

As previously mentioned, in imitating the Buddha, people will achieve different goals due to the differences in their understanding of the Buddha. It's the same with Buddhist studies. With differences in their mindset, approach, and focus of research, researchers will inevitably attain different results.

The Principle and Approach in Buddhist Studies—the Three Seals of the Dharma

Master Yin Shun said that he has no objection to Buddhist studies directed in pure objectivity and pure knowledge. However, according to the Master, Buddhism is still a religion that values faith, understanding, practice, realization, as well as wisdom and compassion. By ignoring this feature and conducting Buddhist research without the religious aspect, one is unlikely to be on the right path, even if one has gained great academic achievements.

As Master Yin Shun pointed out, Buddhist studies is a field of study, so the research methodology and motivation should be guided by

the principle of studying the Buddhadharma by the Buddhadharma. In other words, it has to be in accord with the Three Seals of the Dharma.

The first Dharma Seal is that all things are impermanent. There is no unchanging nature in all the worldly phenomena; in the history of Buddhism, Buddhist thoughts and codes, among other elements, are all changing and impermanent. Therefore, with the law of impermanence we perceive the causes for the rise and fall, and even the decline of Buddhism. We should consider the inevitable change and evolution due to the conditions of time and space, or else we are very likely to make incorrect conclusions and to think that the more ancient the more authentic, or the later the more perfect and complete, therefore overlooking the integrity in the development of Buddhism. Nevertheless, although all phenomena are changing and impermanent, we should try to identify and explore, in the midst of the interrelated and complex changes, the relatively stable commonality, for example, the shared philosophy of teaching among certain schools and sects, in a given time and place.

The second Seal is that all dharmas are without a self. There is no independent self in all worldly phenomena, because everything is temporary existence of the working of causes and conditions coming together. "No-self" consists of two kinds: absence of self in persons and absence of self in dharmas. Absence of self in persons, in other words, is what most people refer to as objectivity, or conducting research without a preoccupied position or a presumption. When addressing the Buddhist concepts of karma, causality of the three periods, meditative absorption, or spiritual power, a Buddhist researcher with presumptions may judge subjectively the Buddhist teaching of sthāna-carya-phala (situation-practice-fruit) as a myth, or some "ideal" beyond our reach.

With regard to the absence of self in dharmas, the phenomena in this world are the results of different causes and conditions coming together and therefore are not exclusive; as

phenomena influence each other, there are changes in terms of language, writing, and thought. For instance, research on Buddhist schools or orders should not be limited to a certain single Buddhist school or order, but should also consider the impact it has received within that historical and territorial background, which therefore influences its interpretation of sutras and modifies the practice methods and ritual service. By following the principle of selflessness in dharmas, one is more likely to reveal things as they are.

The third Seal is that in Nirvana is stillness and extinction. “Nirvana” indicates the state of mind free of greed, hatred, delusion, all afflictions and troubles. As pointed out in the early Buddhist scripture Agama, the Buddha came to this world to help all beings solve their problems of birth, aging, sickness, and death, as well as cut off their afflictions in order to attain liberation. In light of this, all our study and research should help sentient beings alleviate and eliminate their afflictions. Missing this principle, we may lose the direction in the process of our research, and fall into a war of words or personal attack. If the debate is about truth, that’s fine in its own right. But more often than not, the process is related to the afflictions of greed, aversion, and arrogance, which is not in line with the principle: In Nirvana is stillness and extinction.

As Master Yin Shun pointed out, Buddhist studies requires studying for the sake of the Buddhadharmas. If the research in Buddhist studies fails to incorporate the Three Seals of the Dharma, then it cannot possibly reach the core of the Buddhadharmas. On the contrary, guided by the Three Dharma Seals and having the attitude of studying the Buddhadharmas by means of the Buddhadharmas, we will be able to not only benefit our own life but also help other sentient beings, through our research on Buddhist history, literature, teachings, theory, practice, and results. For instance, the focus of research can be on the subject why in history certain Buddhist philosophy or Buddhist order first thrived and

then declined. Was it because of the influence by other Buddhist schools or some other religions or the deterioration of the overall social climate? Was it because of the dying-off of its talent or its eventual secularization and hence loss of the essence of the Dharma as a result? Was it because its teaching was too narrow, stressing philosophical debate but overlooking the application in daily life and real practice? Or was it the consequence of overemphasis on faith and negligence of the practice? When the purpose of a research is to reflect on the past, project to the future, and serve as a reference point for the present and the future, then the research will have significant meaning.

The Limitedness of Worldly Knowledge Versus the Wisdom Encompassed in the Buddhadharmas

The learning and knowledge acquired in Buddhist research is limited. In Buddhism, wisdom can be distinguished into wisdom acquired from birth, wisdom acquired through learning, wisdom acquired through comprehension, wisdom acquired through cultivation, and flawless wisdom through realization. Of these five forms of wisdom, wisdom acquired from birth is the basic intelligence from birth, which also includes the knowledge acquired through individual study, guidance from teachers and parents, and inspiration and influence from society and cultures. Some people may regard the sheer act of reading the sutras, hearing the Dharma, and studying Buddhist philosophy as being the same as wisdom acquired through learning. However, volume 42 of the *Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣa-śāstra* says, “If one can receive, uphold, read or recite, and thoroughly spread the tripitaka (the Three Baskets) and dvadaśāṅga-buddha-vacana (the twelve-fold division of Buddhist literature genres), one gains the wisdom acquired from birth.” (Taisho Tripitaka 27, 217b12-13) The subject of our research may be related to Buddhism, but if the wisdom we acquire is no more than ordinary learning and knowledge,

then it still falls under the wisdom acquired from birth. In terms of the Buddhadharmā, apart from hearing, learning, and studying the Dharma, one should act in accordance with the Three Seals of the Dharma, embrace the right views, deeply believe in the law of cause and effect, the Three Jewels, and the Four Noble Truths, and should not waver in faith even when one is slandered and stricken. That is exactly wisdom acquired through learning. In addition to purified faith, one should further speculate and select, give rise to a strong aspiration to wholesome dharma, and transmit it into verbal and bodily actions, shy away from the incorrect and refraining from the evil, constantly nurturing the compassionate mind. This is wisdom acquired through comprehension. Nevertheless, wisdom acquired through learning and wisdom acquired through comprehension still fall under “contemplation performed with a scattered mind.” Wisdom has to go along with meditative absorption before it can be called wisdom acquired through cultivation. Based on wisdom acquired through cultivation that is in line with meditative concentration, one strives forward with the practice and will eventually realize the wisdom that all dharmas have no self, and therefore eradicate afflictions. That is flawless wisdom through personal realization.

There is a story in the Āgama Sūtra. A woman was in great agony and lost her mind because she lost all her sons, one after another. Later she heard an enlightening talk from the Buddha and immediately achieved the first fruit of enlightenment, attaining purification of the Dharma eye. We may have learned Pali, Tibetan, computer skills, and academic rules, but these are all merely knowledge, which is not the same as what the woman in the story had realized at that moment—impermanence, emptiness, and no-self—which is wisdom enabling her to become enlightened. The “first fruit of enlightenment” is the first stage as one enters the level of enlightenment; essentially, it requires one to eliminate three defilements of sakkayaditthi

(view of self), attachment to mistaken precepts, and doubt. The difference between an untrained worldlings and Noble ones lies in whether one has attachment to self or not. Even when one obtains a great deal of knowledge, if one hasn't completely removed one's attachment to self and realized that all dharmas have no self—one of the Three Seals of the Dharma—then one will always be an ordinary mortal.

Research Motivation and Attitude and Their Relatedness to Liberation Through Wisdom

Before I was going to Japan for study, Master Yin Shun urged me to study for the sake of the Buddhadharmā instead of treating it merely as a worldly learning, and to make use of learning rather than becoming a slave of learning. I think the Master meant to remind me that although it's fine to explore Buddhism in an academic approach, I shouldn't forsake the motivation to study for the sake of the Buddhadharmā, for the sake of purifying my body and mind, for the sake of benefiting other sentient beings, and for the sake of spreading the Dharma in the correct sense. The Buddhadharmā is meant for purifying and curing our body and mind; it is not about accumulation of knowledge. We can use the silkworm eating mulberry leaves as an example. There is no point in consuming mulberry leaves and producing the same mulberry leaves. Instead, they are expected to produce silk fiber, which is useful. It's a never-ending competition to compare who has more learning, as reflected in a Chinese saying, “There is always another mountain that is higher.” Regarding the wisdom acquired from birth, what we can do is to have humility. Maybe we can further examine ourselves to see if we have a sound motivation, the aspiration to transcend the human world, a pristine and pure mind, and, furthermore, a strong and firm Mahayana bodhi mind. This is exactly how we can truly benefit from the wisdom acquired through learning, by

studying Buddhist sutras and scriptures.

If one fails to understand the fundamental content and definition and erroneously regards the research he is conducting as wisdom acquired through learning and comprehension, thinking that he is making a significant contribution, without either maintaining a pure mind and a strong motivation to cut off the evil and to practice the wholesome, or possessing the power to resist temptations, then he cannot be said to have entered the door of the Buddhadharmā, not to mention the acquisition of wisdom through learning and comprehension. When the words we write cannot move ourselves, how can we expect others to read it? If a person continues like this, his religious life will wither away and lose vitality, and he won't be able to benefit himself, let alone benefiting others, which will be a big pity .

Not just Buddhist research, but any research in other disciplines is expected to do good to humanity; academic research is not done for the purpose of piling up words and phrases. As a Buddhist researcher we should constantly ask ourselves the question: What is our research for? Can the research we are engaged in move ourselves and strike a chord in others? Master Yin

Shun's early work *Collection of Wondrous Clouds* was once criticized by scholars as lacking the formality of academic writing, such as citation and bibliography, and thus was deemed of little value. Acknowledging such a criticism, the Master then used citation and provided sources of citation in his later works, such as *Investigation into Śūnyatā*, *The Origin and Development of Early Mahayana Buddhism*, and *The History of Chinese Chan Buddhism*. As the Master had done extensive reading of Buddhist cannon, what he needed to do was to write down the sources, which would be easy for him. Later, he was offered a doctoral degree by Rissho University in Tokyo for his book entitled *The History of Chinese Chan Buddhism*. As the Master had mastered a thorough knowledge about Buddhism, he didn't particularly need to learn the methodology, for he had universal knowledge at his disposal.

The Master wondered why there was such a huge gap between the Buddhist circles in reality and the Buddhadharmā taught in sutras. In order to shorten the gap between the Buddhadharmā and the Buddhism in real life, he decided to devote himself to Buddhist research. It is exactly this fundamental research attitude and motivation of



在日本攻讀博士學位時與惠敏法師共同接待法鼓山佛教建築考察團。
A group picture taken while Ven. Houguan was earning a Doctor Degree in Japan.

knowing the reason for his research so the Master's works, written in academic style as well, can touch people's hearts and purify people's minds better than others. It is of much importance that we stick to some essential attitudes in doing research; otherwise our research results won't be what these great practitioners like. Take Master Zhiyi of the Tiantai tradition of Chinese Buddhism for example. Known in history for his accomplishment in both teaching and practice, Master Zhiyi was one with real experience in calming and contemplation. As a pure observer and researcher, we may not have to compare ourselves with Master Zhiyi in terms of his attainment of cultivation, but at least we should apply our empathy, so that we are more likely to reflect or experience his state of mind. Failing that, we will only produce something about literary comparison, and I wonder if that is the correct way to understand Master Zhiyi.

The Value of Buddhist Research

Buddhist research can help us acquire correct philosophy and theory, which will also facilitate our practice. Just as in modern medical practice, while the frontline medical doctors and nurses are important, it is equally important to train new hands and pass experience. In order to cope with environmental changes and cure new diseases, we need to continue to conduct medical research, which also lays a ground for medical advancement in the future. It's the same to walk the path to Buddhahood and enlightenment. While it is important to practice for liberation from the cycle of births and deaths, but we have to ask whether we are practicing correctly. We are less likely to go astray if we can verify our experience with record in the sutras and the experience obtained by ancient great practitioners. Moreover, academic research on Buddhist theory and philosophy is particularly important regarding those seemingly correct arguments and assertions. For example, Hu Shi once did an academic research on *Platform of the Sixth Patriarch*. If a person believes that

Hu Shi's research did not reveal the fact, he will need to point out the errors by adopting the same approach of textual research.

Making Good Use of the Study Environment, and Building a Broad Affinity

Some students at our Institute expected to learn about Buddhist research methodology and stages of progress. Once they entered our institute, they were often so stressed out with their study of language and other required courses that they started to feel disappointed with academic work and Buddhist research. So they were frustrated, feeling that their study would be of little use in the future or it is not scholarly work at all. In fact, we shouldn't look at Buddhist research in a narrow view. The teachers at our Institute have their expertise in their specialized areas, so they can help us gain an overall picture of the Buddhadharmā in a short period of time. This kind of learning is far better than just blindly practicing on our own without a direction. When we start learning Buddhism, we can easily find answers to our questions by asking those who are more learned than us. As we practice further and reach a certain level, our questions are probably other people's questions too and few people can answer. In this case, if we are familiar with the research method and know how to use reference books, then we may be able to find the answers to many of our questions in the Buddhist cannon or from recent research results.

As Master Yin Shun pointed out, there are three stages for both research and practice: grasping the outline, going in depth, and incorporating other aspects. First, we should grasp the outline, which is to format the structure, take hold of the essence of the Buddhadharmā, and to understand the historical evolution of Buddhism, such as gaining an overall picture of the three major philosophies, and the eight major schools in Mahayana Buddhism. Next is going in depth.

After building the framework, you have to add flesh and blood, which is an analogy that you need to continue to delve into the area that interests you most. Lastly, incorporating other aspects. If we go into depth without incorporating other aspects of learning, we may eventually indulge in a narrow, biased view. So apart from going into depth, we need to be able to broaden our learning.

In our institute if a new student does not seek to gain an overall picture in the beginning of his/her study, he/she may, when doing future research, very easily fall into a situation where he/she can't see the forest for the trees. With an overall structure in mind, you will see clearly what is missing when you are trying to build a beautiful house. When I was in my second year at the Institute, our teacher Chen Rongbo taught the whole class (eight of us in total) to read through the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra* (*Great Treatise on the Perfection of Wisdom*), about one hundred volumes, in one semester. This really opened my eyes. Although I didn't gain a detailed understanding of it, the experience was a great help to me in grasping the structure of the Buddhadharmā. Afterwards I chose *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra* as the subject of my research, and I would try my best to relate every course I took to *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra*. When a question pops into your head, you will find that everything is related to the research subject that you are interested in, and the answers you are searching for will pop up here and there too. Then you will find doing research in this way very interesting.

Conclusion

Due to difference in the definitions of Buddhist studies, one's attitude toward it varies too. The approach to imitating the Buddha is to emulate the Buddha, and therefore religious faith is an intrinsic characteristic. If we go about Buddhist research without this inherent component, our research work will at most add a new title to the library's collection, and will not bring any benefit

to our body and mind, or to others. In light of this, we should keep asking ourselves questions in the course of our study and practice: Are we taking hold of the principle? Are we delving into the matter? Are we incorporating other aspects? We should have a motivation, follow a method, and continuously reflect on issues such as, why I am here. By developing a structure to study the essential Buddhist teachings and theories, and knowing the focus of our research, we become aware of our inadequacies and the areas wherein we lack effectiveness.

Some people study and practice Buddhism for their own sake, and some for others. By studying for our own sake, we can use Buddhist research to help us grasp the essence of the Buddhadharmā, as well as the content of precepts, concentration, and wisdom. In order to attain Buddhahood, we have to work hard. If we are studying for the sake of sentient beings, Buddhist research can certainly help us gain wider and more comprehensive understanding. In our treasure box there are many medicines, which may not be right for our own illness. However they may help cure the illnesses of other sentient beings. In just this way there are various Buddhist teachings for people with different capacity to be used at different occasions.



擔任中華電子佛典協會的副主任委員。
Members of CBETA.