

静心学堂 丛书

The Mindful Peace Academy Collection 中英双语 Chinese-English Edition

# 学修行菩萨



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並

Studying the Path with Guanyin Bodhisattva

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今天是观音菩萨成道日。这几天,各地信众多半 会到寺院敬香礼佛,西园寺也是人山人海,香火鼎盛。 相信大家入寺时已经感受到这种"热烈"的气氛。江 南人喜欢大把烧香,甚至有人将成百箱的香搭成高高 的香塔来烧。但他们惟求量而不求质,结果烧起来浓 烟滚滚,气味刺鼻,也不管菩萨是否接受,只是一厢 情愿地烧着。

事实上,这并不是正确的纪念方式。大量香火使 寺院烟雾缭绕,空气严重污染,也使生活其间的出家 人备受困扰。另一个严重问题是,到处扔着香的包装, 部分还印有佛菩萨像和名号。且不说给环境带来问题, 这种"把香一点,袋子一扔"的行为,究竟是在祈福 还是造业?这么做,与其说是表达了虔诚,不如说是 反映了对学佛的无知,同时还隐含强烈的贪著和所求, 是凡夫心而非清净心的体现。这样一种方式,既不能 和佛菩萨相应,也不能使自身得到成长,还会给外人 带来"佛教是迷信"的观感,可谓问题重重。

对于信众来说,如何在这些殊胜的日子表达虔诚?作为寺院来说,如何通过如理如法的纪念活动,引导大众建立正信,起到忆念三宝、见贤思齐的作用?这就需要认识到:我们为什么要信仰佛菩萨?

信佛不是找一个靠山,而是以此作为学习榜样。 就这个意义而言,对观音菩萨最好的纪念,不是什么 外在形式,而是了解菩萨的发心、行持、功德,践行 菩萨的法门,由此圆满菩萨的品质,并最终成为观音 菩萨。

这才是菩萨的本怀, 也是佛陀出世的本怀。

佛教中有很多菩萨,其中,观音、文殊、地藏、普贤是我们最为熟悉的四大菩萨,分别代表菩萨成就的不同品质——观音菩萨代表大悲,文殊菩萨代表大智,地藏菩萨代表大愿,普贤菩萨代表大行。当然这



并不是说,观音菩萨除了大悲就不具备其他品质,而 是以大悲最为突出,同时以种种方便为众生开示,引 导众生修习大悲。其他菩萨亦然。

那么,怎样学习菩萨的行持和法门?现在很多人 把诵经作为学佛的主要方式,可我们想过没有,经到 底是念给谁听的?念给佛菩萨听吗?佛菩萨是不需要 听的。如果是念给自己听,意义又在哪里?

事实上, 诵经的关键在于, 了解其中阐述的修行 内涵、法门和原理, 进而依教奉行。如果纯粹把它当 作功课, 有口无心地念一念, 虽然也能种点善根, 但 对诵经蕴含的意义而言, 实在是微不足道的。所以我 们要了解敬香、礼佛、诵经的真意,把对佛菩萨的纪念,升华为对修行具有实际意义的纪念。

"千江有水千江月,万里无云万里天。"月亮为什么能映现水中?因为水是清净的。同样,必须是清净的心,才能和佛菩萨感应道交。很多人信仰观音菩萨,可我们问问自己:对菩萨有多少了解?和菩萨的行为是否相应?如果不了解、不相应,只是根据个人需要求求拜拜,就会流于盲目和迷信。

如何才能和佛菩萨相应?首先要虔诚,这是成就清净心的基础。如果其中夹杂强烈的世俗贪著,这种祈求是不清净的,无法达到净化内心的效果。进一步,还要了解佛菩萨出世的目的。佛陀出现于世,是要开示众生悟人佛的知见,引导众生行佛所行,证佛所证。

佛陀在菩提树下成道时看到,一切众生都有如来智慧德相,都有成佛的潜力。这是生命中的无尽宝藏。但众生因为无明,不知宝藏在身,就如乞丐一般,总是在匮乏中度日。佛陀悟道后说法四十五年,目的就是帮助我们开启这个宝藏。这也是学佛的重点所在。虽然佛菩萨大慈大悲,能为众生带来护佑,但外在加

持并不究竟,即使富甲天下,位高权重,对生命也只 有暂时的意义,甚至会因这份名利地位,更有条件造 作不善业。所以学佛关键是生命内在的改变,而不是 外在保佑。

今天的讲座主要是纪念观音菩萨圣诞,将围绕菩萨的身世、名号、修行法门、称念圣号的意义几方面,和大家共同学习。只有了解观音菩萨的发心、功德和出世本怀,我们才能用实际行动向菩萨学习,成就菩萨品质,这才是对观音菩萨最好的纪念。



# 一、观音菩萨的身世

菩萨通常指发起并践行菩提心的修行者 尚未圆满佛果 即使登地菩萨 也有初地到十地的不同位次 需要圆满各个阶段的修行 那么,观音菩萨也是这样吗 其实不然 观音菩萨久远劫前早已成佛 只是在大乘经典中又以菩萨的身份出现 观音菩萨和中国的缘分特别深,被国人的接受程度也特别高,历史上就有"家家观世音"之说,足见观音信仰之盛。可以说,全世界只要有中国人的地方,就有人信仰观音、供奉观音、称念观音。普通民众对观音菩萨的熟悉程度,甚至超过了本师释迦牟尼佛。不过,人们虽然熟悉观音菩萨的各种造像,知道菩萨大慈大悲,寻声救苦,却往往不清楚,观音菩萨究竟是什么身份?是不是像迦叶和阿难尊者那样,是佛世时追随本师的弟子?

我们知道,菩萨通常指发起并践行菩提心的修行者,尚未圆满佛果。即使登地菩萨,也有初地到十地的不同位次,需要圆满各个阶段的修行。那么,观音

菩萨也是这样吗?其实不然。观音菩萨久远劫前早已成佛,只是在大乘经典中又以菩萨的身份出现,包括文殊、地藏、普贤等诸大菩萨,都是释迦佛宣说大乘经典时介绍给我们的,并不是当时生于印度的佛弟子。

## 1.《千手千眼大悲心陀罗尼经》的记载

《千手千眼大悲心陀罗尼经》中,讲述了观音菩萨的来历。佛弟子熟知的"大悲咒",正是出于此经。经中记载:

一时,释迦牟尼佛在补陀落迦山,观世音宫殿,宝庄严道场中,坐宝师子座……如来于彼座上,将欲演说总持陀罗尼故……时观世音菩萨,于大会中密放神通,光明照曜,十方刹土及此三千大千世界,皆作金色。

观音菩萨示现神通后,为与会的无量菩萨摩诃萨、大声闻僧、诸天人等讲述了"大悲咒"的由来:

在过去无量亿劫,有佛出世,名"千光王静住如来"。 彼佛怜念一切众生,特别为观音菩萨说此"广大圆满 无碍大悲心陀罗尼",并授记菩萨"当持此心咒,普 为未来恶世一切众生作大利乐"。菩萨听闻大悲咒后, 即从初地超第八地,故发愿以此咒利益安乐一切众生。 接着,观音菩萨为大众宣说"大悲咒",及如法诵持 的方法和功德。

听闻甚深法义后,佛弟子中的多闻第一阿难尊者 向释迦佛请问观音菩萨的来历。佛陀告诉阿难:

此观世音菩萨不可思议威神之力,已于过去无量劫中,已作佛竟,号"正法明如来"。 大悲愿力,为欲发起一切菩萨,安乐成熟诸众生故,现作菩萨。

所以说,成佛并不等于退休,还要尽未来际地在 十方法界利益众生,尤其是我们所在的娑婆世界。

"娑婆"意为堪忍,因为这个世界有很多天灾人祸, 人们烦恼重重,生死不定。经中总结为劫浊、见浊、 烦恼浊、众生浊、命浊,又称五浊恶世。观音菩萨看 到众生有这么多苦难,为大悲驱使,倒驾慈航,再以 菩萨身示现,发愿在此广度众生。

## 2.《千光眼观自在菩萨秘密法经》的记载

在《千光眼观自在菩萨秘密法经》中,释迦牟尼佛告诉我们:"观自在菩萨为众生故,具足千臂,其眼亦尔。"进而详细宣说了观音菩萨无量无边的殊胜功德。阿难尊者听闻后,对菩萨有如此大的功德感到疑惑,所以佛陀又对他说:

我念往昔时,观自在菩萨于我前成佛, 号曰正法明,十号具足。我于彼时为彼佛 下作苦行弟子,蒙其教化,今得成佛。十 方如来皆由观自在教化之力故,于妙国土 得无上道,转妙法轮。是故汝等勿生疑惑, 常应供养。

### 【静心学堂丛书】

这段记载也告诉我们,观音菩萨早已成佛,号正 法明如来,曾在过去世当过释迦佛的老师。正是在他 的指点教化下,佛陀才走上觉悟之道。不仅如此,十 方如来都是由"观自在教化之力",才能证道、说法。

# 3.《悲华经》的记载

按照《悲华经》记载:无量劫前,阿弥陀佛为转轮圣王,富有威望且势力广大,其太子名为不眴,即观音菩萨。当时有佛名宝藏如来,为转轮圣王和太子说法并授记。不眴太子在宝藏如来前发愿:

今我以大音声告诸众生:我之所有一切 善根,尽回向阿耨多罗三藐三菩提。愿我行 菩萨道时,若有众生受诸苦恼恐怖等事,退 失正法堕大暗处,忧愁孤穷,无有救护,无 依无舍,若能念我称我名字,若其为我天耳 所闻,天眼所见,是众生等若不得免斯苦恼 者,我终不成阿耨多罗三藐三菩提。 宝藏如来也为不眴太子授记说:

善男子! 汝观天人及三恶道一切众生, 生大悲心欲断众生诸苦恼故, 欲断众生诸烦 恼故,欲令众生住安乐故。善男子! 今当字汝 为观世音……无量寿佛般涅槃已, 第二恒河 沙等阿僧祇劫后分;初夜分中正法灭尽, 夜 后分中, 彼土转名一切珍宝所成就世界。所 有种种庄严无量无边,安乐世界所不及也。

我们知道,现在的西方三圣是阿弥陀佛、观音菩萨、大势至菩萨。将来阿弥陀佛入灭后,继任的就是观音菩萨,号遍出一切光明功德山王如来,且国土比现在的极乐世界更庄严。这是观音菩萨和阿弥陀佛的因缘。

以上,简单介绍了佛典记载的观音菩萨的身世。



# 二、观音菩萨的名号

观音菩萨的名号 有自利和利他的内涵 耳根圆通的修行侧重自利 寻声救苦的修行侧重利他 这正是菩萨道修行的两大面向 因为我们这个娑婆世界有太多苦难 所以观音菩萨特别受到大家的爱戴 观音菩萨也叫观世音菩萨,从名号看,和音声的修行有关。

《楞严经》中,记载了观音菩萨耳根圆通的法门: "初于闻中,入流亡所,所入既寂,动静二相了然不 生。"这一方法主要用于个人修行,通过听音声,"反 闻闻自性,性成无上道"。详细内容会在下面解说。

《观世音菩萨普门品》中,主要包含两项内容,一是菩萨以种种身相慈悲度生,"普门无尽,大悲周遍";一是寻声救苦,只要受苦众生称念观音菩萨名号,就能得到救度:"若有无量百千万亿众生受诸苦恼,闻是观世音菩萨,一心称名。观世音菩萨即时观其音声,皆得解脱。"

可见,观音菩萨的名号有自利和利他的内涵。耳 根圆通的修行侧重自利,寻声救苦的修行侧重利他。 这正是菩萨道修行的两大面向。因为我们这个娑婆世 界有太多苦难,所以观音菩萨特别受到大家的爱戴。



# 三、观音菩萨的修行法门

菩萨为什么能自在 关键就在这个"观"字 "观",又名毗婆舍那 即智慧观照 当我们以观智审视身心内外的一切 就能摆脱束缚,自在无碍 如何培养观照力 就般若法门来说,有三种般若 即文字般若、观照般若、实相般若 现在"观音法门"之名被用得很滥,不少民间宗教、附佛外道,甚至邪教组织,看到"观音"的名号既有信誉又有市场,纷纷打着这个招牌招摇撞骗。这是我们特别需要警惕,需要加以鉴别的。那么,"观音法门"究竟是什么样的?在此根据不同经典,简单给大家介绍几种。

# 1.《心经》的观音法门

佛法修行的目标非常明确,就是于自身圆满佛菩萨的品质。在修行前,我们的人格和生命品质是以无明为基础,核心内涵是贪嗔痴。这就注定我们是充满

迷惑的凡夫,注定会不断地制造烦恼、痛苦和轮回。 如果不改变这种状况,生命是没有希望的。因为贪嗔 痴没有尽头,所以烦恼没有尽头,痛苦和轮回也没有 尽头。

当我们真正意识到现有生命的过患,向往佛菩萨的解脱自在,就要从根本上改变它。学佛是转凡成圣的过程,转凡即改变凡夫的生命品质,成圣即成就佛菩萨的生命品质,那就是觉醒和解脱。从现象看,佛和众生有着天壤之别,但最初的分歧点就在迷和悟的一念之间。迷了就是众生,悟了就是佛。当然,仅仅开智慧还不够,必须进一步圆满慈悲。凡夫的生命是由无明发展而来,由此形成迷惑的系统,造就凡夫的人格。我们了解到这个道理,就知道修行究竟要做些什么。

《心经》中,"观世音"被译为"观自在",经文开篇为:

观自在菩萨行深般若波罗蜜多时, 照见五蕴皆空, 度一切苦厄。

"观世音"是姚秦鸠摩罗什的翻译,"观自在"是 唐代玄奘三藏的翻译,他们都是中国佛教史上最著名 的翻译家。罗什偏向意译,文字优美晓畅;玄奘偏向 直译,在表达上更为忠实。

菩萨为什么能自在?关键就在这个"观"字。 "观",又名毗婆舍那,即智慧观照。当我们以观智审 视身心内外的一切,就能摆脱束缚,自在无碍。如何 培养观照力?就般若法门来说,有三种般若,即文字 般若、观照般若、实相般若。

学佛首先要通过闻思经教获得正见,为文字般若。 凡夫为无明所惑,看不清身心和世界,对自己产生错误认定,把身份、地位、相貌等暂时拥有的东西当作"我",进而发展出贪嗔痴,发展出种种错误观念和烦恼。然后又会带着这些错误认定看世界,所见都是被自己处理过的,并不是世界真相。但我们往往执著于此,以为自己看到的就是真实,佛法称之为我执和法执。这种执著遍一切时、一切处,又称"遍计所执",是一切烦恼的源头。因为烦恼,就会造业;因为造业,就会轮回。生命的迷惑系统就此开展出来。 佛法强调如实见,就是引导我们摆脱误解,正确 地认识自己,认识世界,认识宇宙人生的本质。从这 个意义上说,学佛就是在学习正见,开启智慧。佛教 虽有汉传、南传、藏传三大语系,种种宗派,但核心 正见是一致的,就是无常无我、诸法唯识、缘起性空, 及一切众生皆有佛性等。我们通过闻思掌握了文字般 若,知道应该如何看待身心内外的一切。更重要的, 是接受并运用这种认识,替代固有的错误知见,以智 慧思考人生,解决问题。

接着要将闻思正见转化为观智,这就离不开止的基础。所谓止,即持续、稳定的专注,需要通过禅修来训练。我们可以选定佛像、佛号或呼吸作为专注目标,系念于此,不断训练。当妄念逐步平息,内心就会生起了了分明的觉知力。进而以这种觉知力观察每个动作、每个念头,如实看到色身只是色受想行识五蕴的假合,其中是没有我的;同时看到心念是无常变化的,看到一切感受最终都是苦因。虽然看到一切,但不带任何情绪。这就是观照般若。随着观照力的增长、贪嗔痴就得不到支持、将逐渐被消融、被瓦解、

使生命越来越自在。

观自在菩萨就是通过观照,照见五蕴皆空。这不是一般的观照力,而是甚深般若。平常人也在禅修,也在培养观照力,但不是行深般若,只是意识层面的观照力。必须超越意识,才能进入实相般若,才是甚深般若。

当然在观照般若的层面,也能照见五蕴皆空。但 这个空是不透彻的,只是在世俗谛的角度,了解到一 切都是因缘假相,其中没有自性。如果契入甚深般若, 就可以直接照见五蕴的空性,所谓当体即空。然后安 住空性,摆脱一切痛苦。这就是观自在菩萨的修行。

大家现在还不是观自在菩萨,还不能行深般若波罗蜜多,可以先从观照般若着手。只要我们往这个方向精进努力,随着观照般若的增强,一定会越来越安然,最终成就解脱自在的人生。正如《心经》所说,"远离颠倒梦想,究竟涅槃。"西园寺的"观自在禅修营",也重视观照般若的训练。从内观导向禅宗修行,既容易契人,又有其高度,是次第清晰且行之有效的组合。

# 2.《楞严经》耳根圆通的修行

耳根圆通是建立在如来藏的见地上,这一修法人 手处极高,直指人心,历来被禅宗祖师所重视。

生命有两个系统。常人都活在迷惑的凡夫系统,但佛陀悟道时发现,一切众生都有觉悟潜质,只是隐没不现。基于此,佛教修行有了顿渐之分。顿悟是引导学人直接认识生命内在的觉性,一超直人如来地;渐修则是从迷惑系统入手,在认识过程中——突破,使内心尘垢越来越薄,逐步接近并最终体认觉性。两种修法分别对应利根和钝根,事实上,佛陀之所以说八万四千法,也是为了针对不同根机者,以最适合他们的方式加以引导,所谓应机设教。

那么,利根和钝根的差别在哪里?就在于心灵尘 垢的多少。利根者心垢很薄,一点即破,可以用直指 来点拨;而钝根者心垢很厚,刀枪不入,必须以前行 为铺垫。但根机也不是天生的,而是代表生命的积累。 即使现在是钝根,只要方法正确,通过渐次修行,也 能清除心垢,使觉性显现出来。就像神秀所说的"时 时勤拂拭,莫使惹尘埃"。

### 【静心学堂丛书】

耳根圆通的修行属于顿悟,而不是渐修法门。《楞严经》第六卷中,二十五位菩萨讲述了自己过去生中的修行经验。比如大势至菩萨说的是自己如何修念佛法门,从念佛、忆佛,到都摄六根,净念相续,对净土宗有很大影响。而观音菩萨介绍的就是耳根圆通法门,对禅宗有很大影响。相关经文有点深,在此大致介绍一下:

于时有佛出现于世,名观世音。我于彼佛发菩提心,彼佛教我从闻思修入三摩地。初于闻中,入流亡所,所入既寂,动静二相了然不生。如是渐增,闻所闻尽;尽闻不住,觉所觉空;空觉极圆,空所空灭;生灭既灭,寂灭现前。忽然超越世出世间,十方圆明,获二殊胜。一者上合十方诸佛本妙觉心,与佛如来同一慈力;二者下合十方一切六道众生,与诸众生同一悲仰。

首先告诉我们,曾经有佛出世,名"观世音"。

观世音菩萨在因地修行时,曾亲近观世音佛,并在佛 前发菩提心。观世音佛就引导他修习解脱法门,方法 是"从闻思修入三摩地"。这句话是佛法修行的常道。 每个佛弟子的修行,都是从听闻正法成就闻慧,从如 理思维成就思慧,从法随法行成就修慧,似乎没什么 特别。

本经的殊胜之处在于对闻思修的解读。第一步是怎么来闻。大家现在听到我的声音时,心会专注到声音上。包括我们每天听到很多声音,听的当下,心就会投向这个对象,对声音生起种种虚妄分别,也就是识。我们看观世音佛是怎么教观音菩萨的。

"初于闻中,入流亡所。"人流,即逆流。平常人 听声音时,会习惯性地向外追逐,关注这是什么声音, 并从声音去判断发生了什么。而逆流是向内看,关注 听声音的是谁?能听声音的心是什么?通过审察听的 作用,回归闻性。闻有闻识和闻性之分。我们把心粘 在声音上,起种种分别,是识的作用。而识产生的根 源,是来自闻性。这是觉性的不同表现和作用,表现 在听上,是闻性;表现在见上,是见性。禅宗修行所 做的,就是直接开显觉性。

闻识是有生有灭的。比如我们现在听到声音,会产生相应的认识;没有声音时,由此产生的识也消失了。但不论有没有声音,听不听得见,闻性还在,听的作用还在。如果不在的话,怎么知道没有声音?比如我们现在看见这么多人,看见庄严的讲堂,是看的作用。那么眼睛闭上时有没有看的作用?同样也有看的作用,看到的是一片漆黑。如果没有看的作用,怎么知道是一片漆黑?既然知道,说明看的作用还在。所以说,能分辨是识的作用,但根源在于觉性。"初于闻中,入流亡所"的入流,就是进入闻性之流。心契入觉性时,对外在声音的粘著会减少。因为回归闻性,声音就会若有若无,甚至充耳不闻。即便它存在,也只是影像而已,不会对我们有多少影响。

"所入既寂,动静二相了然不生。"只要不陷入对声音的执著,心就能回归闻性,回归觉性,不论外界和念头是动是静,都能了了分明。有声音出现,我们听到并有念头生起,是动的状态;没有声音,内心安然.是静的状态。不论什么状态,我们都清清楚楚,

同时心无所住。但因为安住于觉性, 所以出现什么, 心都不会粘上去。

"如是渐增,闻所闻尽。"我们以前一直没有开启闻性,现在要通过禅修不断地熟悉它。每个声音出现时都去追问——我是谁?能听声音的是谁?在不断追问的过程中,闻性的力量日益强大;能闻的妄识和所闻的声音,在闻性的观照下,将渐渐消融。如此,闻识和声音产生的干扰越来越少,心就会越来越空,越来越安静,越来越清净。这种空和清净就取决于闻性的渐增。

"尽闻不住,觉所觉空。"我们认识到闻识和所闻渐渐消融,是因为内心有一种觉知的力量。但这种觉知是不究竟的,所以接着要"觉所觉空"。如果有能觉的心在,就是意识范畴的观照般若,还属于过渡阶段。所以不能停留于此,必须从有造作的观照,进入无造作的观照,否则就无法真正契入。如何从觉知回归觉性?需要把觉知也空掉,不要住在觉知,也不要住在所觉。

"空觉极圆,空所空灭。" 当我们把能觉和所觉空

了,是不是还有一个空在?如果有空在的话,也是不究竟的,就是偏空。所以这个空也要空掉。我们所证悟的无念心体是无相无住的,不能住于空也不能住于有,不能住于动也不能住于静。它超越了所有相,朗照无住。只有这样,才能体认到空觉不二的心体。《坛经》告诉我们,觉性是有体有用的:在体的层面是空的,在用的层面则妙用无穷。如果我们执著于空,它就会失去妙用。对修行来说,执著空甚至比执著有更可怕。正如《中论》所说:"大圣说空法,为离诸见故,若复见有空,诸佛所不化。"佛陀说空的法门,是为了破除我们对有的执著。如果反过来执著空,不惧因果,以为什么都无所谓,那么诸佛对你都没办法了。

"生灭既灭,寂灭现前。"这是最关键的。我们著有著空,著动著静,这些都属于凡夫心、生灭心。现在我们要把空的执著、有的执著、动的执著、静的执著、凡的执著、圣的执著、成佛的执著、度众生的执著……所有执著通通打掉。只要有一种执著,就会成为凡夫心的支撑点。当凡夫心有了支撑点,就是体认

觉性的障碍。所以要把一切支撑去掉,就像禅宗说的"佛来佛斩,魔来魔斩",才会"生灭既灭,寂灭现前"。生灭指生灭心,当生灭的有漏妄心被彻底扫除,寂灭的真心才会全然呈现。

"忽然超越世出世间,十方圆明,获二殊胜。"当 觉性全然呈现时,超越了世间和出世间,像虚空一样, 周遍十方,光明圆满。这样就能获得两种殊胜。

"一者上合十方诸佛本妙觉心,与佛如来同一慈力;二者下合十方一切六道众生,与诸众生同一悲仰。"一是证悟和十方诸佛相同的觉性,以及和诸佛相同的大慈大悲。二是证悟和十方诸佛乃至六道一切众生的共同体。如此,上可以和诸佛同一鼻孔出气,下可以和六道众生心心相印,对他们生起同体大悲之心。我们和众生的隔阂,正是因为迷失了共同体,从而对自己产生错误认定,建立我执。因为我执,就会制造种种对立,包括国家、地区、民族的分歧,都是由我执发展而来。

《楞严经》耳根圆通的修行真是非常殊胜,能够听一遍,已经种下顿教法门的善根。

# 3.《普门品》大悲周遍的修行

《普门品》出自《妙法莲华经》,其中阐述的观音 法门,可以归纳为八个字——普门无尽,大悲周遍。 普就是遍及一切。观音菩萨的大慈大悲是无限的,对 一切众生平等无别。所以这种慈悲是可以量化的,只 要还有一个众生是菩萨不愿慈悲的,就不是圆满的大 慈大悲。当然我们没机会接触一切众生,关键在于, 对于自己接触到的所有人,能不能理解他们、同情他 们、接纳他们、无条件地帮助他们?

这种慈悲需要在生活中去检验,需要在每件事、每个众生身上去检验。然后通过检验不断调整,慈悲的力量就会越来越大,我们就有能力面对更多的人,包括曾经不喜欢的人。这是我们培养和成就慈悲心的过程。

佛经中,这种大慈大悲的具体体现,就是观音菩萨的千手千眼。千手代表无限的慈悲,千眼代表无限的智慧。菩萨为了利益无量众生,眼和手都不够用, 所以才要化现千手千眼。这是菩萨悲愿的象征。表现 在《普门品》,则是观音菩萨的三十二应——"应以何身得度者,即现何身而为说法。"

很多时候,我们看不出谁是观音菩萨。真正的菩萨,不会在头上贴一个"我是观音菩萨"的标签。那么,观音菩萨究竟是什么样的?南普陀观音阁有太虚大师撰写的楹联:"清净为心皆普陀,慈悲济物即观音。"告诉我们:只要具备观音菩萨的慈悲品质,就是观音菩萨。

什么是观音菩萨的品质?不是一般的慈悲,而是无缘大慈,同体大悲。无缘,即没有任何条件;同体,是把众生和自己视为一体。这不是观想,而是确实如此。因为观音菩萨已证悟和六道众生的共同体,所以同体是理所当然的。就像身上哪里痛了痒了,手立刻会帮忙,不会考虑要不要帮,帮了有什么好处。这就是同体,是出于本能的反应。观音菩萨对众生的慈悲也是如此,完全把众生和自己融为一体,以众生的痛苦为自己的痛苦,以众生的需要为自己的需要。

我们生命中多少具有悲悯的品质,所谓"恻隐之 心人皆有之",但这种心往往很微弱。要将这念狭隘 的悲悯之心扩大成无限,对一切众生生起平等、广大、 无我、无所得的同体大悲,必须付出很大的努力。首 先是发起菩提心,建立崇高的利他主义愿望,以利益 众生、帮助众生解除痛苦作为自己的使命。其次是作 空性观修,破除自他隔阂,这样才能培养平等乃至无 所得的心,将世俗菩提心升华为胜义菩提心。

所以说,观音菩萨成就的大慈大悲,绝不是常人那种狭隘的、充满人我是非的爱心,而是无限广大、平等无别的。因为这样的慈悲,菩萨才能寻声救苦,解除众生的种种灾难。正如《普门品》所说:"闻是观世音菩萨,一心称名,观世音菩萨即时观其音声,皆得解脱。若有持是观世音菩萨名者,设入大火,火不能烧,由是菩萨威神力故。若为大水所漂,称其名号,即得浅处……"

为什么观音菩萨有这么大的力量?菩萨靠什么为 众生解除灾难,解决各种痛苦、烦恼?靠的正是大悲 心。这就告诉我们——念观音菩萨,就是念大悲心; 修观音法门,就是修大悲心;成为观音菩萨,就是圆 满大悲心。 大悲心是以空性为基础,而空性具有解除一切烦恼的作用,所以在大悲心中,对立、仇恨、灾难都会被消融。这是观音菩萨的秘密武器,也是我们生命中的无价之宝。一旦成就大悲,我们不仅有能力解除自身的痛苦和灾难,同时也有能力解除一切众生的痛苦和灾难,真正"让世界充满爱"。大悲心不仅能消除灾难,还能使我们成就无量福报,所求皆满。可以说,大悲心是最大的福田。我们修习大悲,就是在耕耘福田。

大乘佛教的特征是菩提心和大悲心,遗憾的是,这一点恰恰被我们所忽略。为什么很多佛教徒给人冷漠、消极的印象?正是因为我们没能践行大乘佛教的核心,没能像诸佛菩萨那样,和众生同呼吸共命运。有鉴于此,我从 2003 年开始,就一直倡导菩提心的修行,倡导受持菩提心戒,就是希望大家真正认识并实践大乘的精神。

#### 【静心学堂丛书】

以上介绍的三种修行,分别出自《心经》《楞严经》和《妙法莲华经》。这些才是真正的观音法门。 现在社会上有很多假冒伪劣产品,佛教也常常被别有 用心者利用,出现各种附佛外道,希望大家树立正见, 明辨是非。

# 四、称念观音圣号的意义

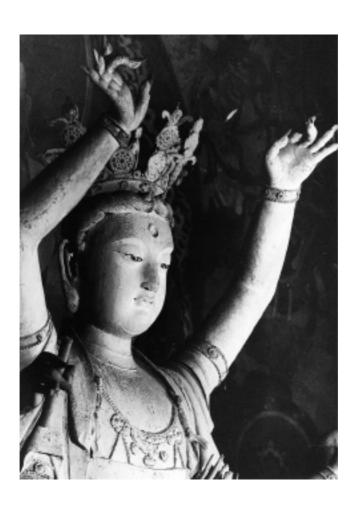
念观音菩萨 是念大悲心,修大悲心 我们不要一味祈求观音菩萨 而要向观音菩萨学习 争做观音菩萨的使者 成为观音菩萨的一只眼,一只手 作为佛弟子,我们称念观音圣号,修习观音法门,并不是为了求求拜拜,也不是祈请观音菩萨满足自己的一己私欲。其意义主要在于以下三个方面:

- 第一,念观音菩萨是培养观照力,通过修习观照 般若,契入实相般若,成就解脱自在的人生。
- 第二,念观音菩萨是修习耳根圆通,不再向外追逐,而是反闻闻自性,向内寻找:谁在闻?闻的识由何而生?就像禅宗从"念佛是谁"的话头一路追寻,我们也要通过反闻,从音声之流寻找源头。当年佛陀在菩提树下,通过逆观十二缘起,从老死到生,再从有到取到爱,一直向前追溯到无明,找到轮回的源头。其实观音法门也是同样,是从声音去寻找能听声音的

识,再从识的产生寻找闻性,契入觉性。

第三,念观音菩萨是念大悲心,修大悲心。我们不要一味祈求观音菩萨,而要向观音菩萨学习,争做观音菩萨的使者,成为观音菩萨的一只眼,一只手。如果一个人只会祈求,说明他的生命是极其匮乏的。学做菩萨,是要给予众生帮助。一个能够给予的人,不觉得缺少什么的人,才是最富有的。事实上,生命本来就有无尽宝藏,关键是开启并体认这个宝藏。

在这殊胜的日子,我们以这样的方式来认识观音菩萨,听闻观音法门,是对菩萨最好的纪念。但仅仅听是不够的,还要对以上所说的法义如理思维,更重要的,是以观音菩萨为榜样,修习大悲,开发觉性,早日成就观音菩萨的品质。



#### 【观音菩萨赞】

摘自《千手千眼观世音菩萨大悲心陀罗尼》

稽首观音大悲主,愿力洪深相好身。 千臂庄严普护持,千眼光明遍观照。 真实语中宣密语,无为心内起悲心。 速令满足诸希求,汞使灭除诸罪障。 龙天圣众同慈护,百千三昧顿熏修。 受持身是光明幢,受持心是神通藏。 洗涤尘劳愿济海,超证菩提方便门。 我今称诵誓皈依,所愿从心悉圆满。





# STUDYING THE PATH WITH GUANYIN BODHISATTVA

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Today marks the sacred birthday of Guanyin Bodhisattva. In the past few days, devotees from all places have flocked to temples to offer incense and pay homage to Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Xiyuan Temple, for example, has been packed with people, with the scent of incense permeating the air. I believe everyone can feel this "enthusiastic" atmosphere upon entering the temple. People in the Jiangnan region enjoy burning a large quantity of incense, with some even stacking hundreds of incense boxes into towering piles. However, this focus on quantity over quality often leads to heavy smoke and overpowering smells, without considering whether the

bodhisattvas would appreciate such burnings.

This is not the correct way to commemorate the occasion. Excessive incense burning fills the temple with smoke, which severely pollutes the air and troubles the monks who live there. Furthermore, discarded incense packaging, some of which even bear images and names of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, is flying everywhere. Apart from such littering's environmental impact, is this "burn the incense, throw the bag" behavior meant to seek blessing or to create negative karma? Rather than expressing devotion, such behavior only reflects ignorance about Buddhist teachings. Behind it lies a strong sense of attachment and desire that stem from an unenlightened mind rather than a pure and clean one. This mode of celebration neither resonates with Buddhas and bodhisattvas. nor promotes personal growth, and even risks giving outsiders the impression that Buddhism is merely superstitious. Clearly, there are issues that need to be addressed.

So, on exceptional days like this, how exactly should

followers express their devotion? How can temples arrange events that align with the Dharma to guide the public towards establishing the right faith, remembering the Three Jewels, and emulating the virtuous? To accomplish these goals, we must first understand why we believe in Buddhas and bodhisattyas.

Embracing Buddhism is not about seeking external support, but rather adopting Buddhas and bodhisattvas as role models to learn from. Therefore, the most meaningful way to commemorate Guanyin is not through superficial offerings, but by understanding his aspirations, practices, and virtues, adhering to his teachings, acquiring his perfected qualities, and ultimately becoming Guanyin.

These embody not only the true intention of the Bodhisattva but also the very reason for the Buddha's appearance in this world.

In Buddhism, there are many bodhisattvas, and the four most familiar ones are Guanyin, Manjushri, Ksitigarbha, and Samantabhadra. Each represents a distinct virtue they have attained: Guanyin embodies great compassion, Manjushri great wisdom, Ksitigarbha great vows, and Samantabhadra great conduct. However, this does not mean Guanyin only possesses great compassion at the expense of other qualities. Rather, great compassion is his most notable attribute, and he skillfully employs various methods to guide sentient beings towards cultivating it. The same is true for the other bodhisattvas.

Yet, how do we learn the practices and teachings of bodhisattvas? Many people today see reciting sutras as the main way to study Buddhism, but have we ever considered for whom we are reciting these sutras? Are we doing it for Buddhas and bodhisattvas? But they do not need to hear our recitations. Or, if we are reciting sutras for ourselves, what is then the underlying significance?

In reality, the real purpose of reciting sutras is to understand the teachings, methods, and principles they articulate, so we can follow them as guidance in our spiritual cultivation. If we treat sutra recitation merely as an obligation and do it absentmindedly, while it might plant some seeds of merit, its benefit is truly trivial compared to the profound insights contained in the sutras. Thus, we need to understand the deeper meanings behind practices like reciting sutras, offering incense, and venerating the Buddha. In doing so, we can transform our commemoration of the Buddha and bodhisattvas into actions that have real and practical significance in our cultivation.

"A thousand streams, with water flowing by, mirror a thousand reflections of the moon; Countless miles of azure, where no clouds lie, unveil countless miles of the majestic sky." Why can the water reflect the moon? Because the water is pure. Similarly, it takes a pure heart to resonate and connect with Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Many of us believe in Guanyin, but we must ask ourselves: How well do we truly know about him? Do our actions align with his? If we do not know him well or our actions do not align, and we merely pray for our personal blessings, we risk falling into blind faith and superstition.

How do we connect with Buddhas and bodhisattvas? First, we need to be devout, as this is the foundation for attaining a pure heart. If our prayers are intermingled with intense worldly desire, they become impure and can no longer cleanse our minds. Furthermore, it is crucial to understand the reasons why Buddhas and bodhisattvas appeared in our world. The Buddha came to this world to awaken all sentient beings to his wisdom, guide them along the path he took, and help them to realize the same enlightenment.

Upon attaining enlightenment beneath the bodhi tree, the Buddha saw that all sentient beings possess the wisdom and virtue of the Tathagata and have the potential to reach Buddhahood. This potential is an infinite treasure within life itself. Yet, due to ignorance, sentient beings remain unaware of this treasure, thus living in deprivation like beggars. After reaching enlightenment, the Buddha spent 45 years teaching, aiming to help us uncover this treasure. This is the central focus of Buddhism. Although Buddhas and bodhisattvas show great compassion and

can safeguard sentient beings, their blessings are external forces that do not bring lasting solutions. Even if we possess great wealth and high status, their impact on life is only transitory. In fact, they could even foster negative actions. Therefore, the essence of learning Buddhism lies in the inner transformation of our lives, rather than external blessings.

In today's lecture, which honors the sacred birth of Guanyin, we will together learn about his origin, sacred name, Dharma Gate (methods of practice), and the significance of chanting his sacred name. Only by knowing Guanyin's aspirations, virtues, and the true purpose of his appearance in our world, can we genuinely learn from this Bodhisattva, align our actions with his teachings, and cultivate his qualities. This is the most meaningful way to commemorate Guanyin.

# I

# THE ORIGIN OF GUANYIN BODHISATTVA

Guanyin has a profound connection with China and is widely embraced by Chinese people. The saying "every household reveres Guanyin" attests to the devotion and faith people hold for him. In every Chinese community around the world, there are individuals who believe in, worship, and chant the name of Guanyin. In fact, many are more familiar with Guanyin than with Shakyamuni Buddha. However, despite recognizing various depictions of Guanyin and acknowledging his great compassion and commitment to helping those in distress, people often know very little about his origin. Was he a disciple

of the Buddha, like Venerable Kasyapa and Venerable Ananda?

Bodhisattvas typically refer to individuals who have begun practicing bodhicitta, but have not yet reached Buddhahood. Even after realizing emptiness, bodhisattvas from the first to the tenth stage, all have their own practices to perfect. So, does Guanyin fall into the same category as these bodhisattvas? Not quite. Guanyin, in fact, attained Buddhahood countless kalpas ago, but appears as a bodhisattva in Mahayana scriptures, alongside other great bodhisattvas such as Manjushri, Ksitigarbha, and Samantabhadra. They were all introduced to us by Shakyamuni Buddha when he was teaching the Mahayana scriptures, and were not disciples from India at the Buddha's time.

1. The Account in Thousand-Handed and Thousand-Eyed Guanyin Bodhisattva's Vast, Perfect, Unimpeded, Great-Compassionate Heart Dharani Sutra The Thousand-Handed and Thousand-Eyed Guanyin Bodhisattva's Vast, Perfect, Unimpeded, Great-Compassionate Heart Dharani Sutra narrates the origins of Guanyin and contains the well-known Nilakantha Dharani, the Great Compassion Mantra/Dharani. The sutra writes:

Thus I have heard, once Shakyamuni Buddha was at Potalaka Mountain, in the treasure-adorned Guanyin's palace, sitting on a precious Lion-Throne adorned in purity with countless multifarious jewels... At that time, the Tathagata, who was sitting on his throne, intending to explain a teaching of the Total-Retention Dharani... At that time in the congregation, Guanyin Bodhisattva secretly emitted his sacrosanct light, thereupon, the worlds in the ten directions, along with this three-thousand-great-thousand worlds system, were all illuminated and became golden.

Upon demonstrating his supernatural powers, Guanyin explained the origin of the *Great Compassion Dharani* to the countless Bodhisattva Mahasattvas, great sravakas, heavenly beings, and others that were present. "Countless

billions of kalpas ago, a Buddha, whose name was Thousand Rays King Stillness Tathagata, appeared in the world. Because of his mercy towards all living beings, that Buddha, the World Honored One, spoke particularly to Guanyin this *Vast, Perfect, Unimpeded, Great Compassionate Heart Dharani*. He also predicted Guanyin's future attainment of Buddhahood, urging, 'You should hold this heart-dharani to give great benefit and happiness to all living beings in the future evil age.' After hearing the *Great Compassionate Dharani*, Guanyin immediately advanced from the first to the eighth Bhumi (stage of bodhisattva), vowing to use this mantra to comfort and benefit all sentient beings." Subsequently, Guanyin taught the assembly on the *Great Compassion Dharani*, its recitation methods, and its associated merits.

After listening to the profound teaching of the Dharma, Venerable Ananda, foremost in hearing and remembering the Buddha's teachings, asked Shakyamuni Buddha about Guanyin Bodhisattva's origins. The Buddha replied to Ananda:

This Guanyin Bodhisattva has unimaginable mighty and holy powers. Uncountable kalpas before, he had already been a Buddha named True Dharma Brightness Tathagata. Because of the power of his great compassionate vows, and in order to call upon all bodhisattvas to comfort and enlighten all living beings, he appears as a bodhisattva.

Thus, achieving Buddhahood does not mean retirement but rather an ongoing commitment to benefit all sentient beings across the ten Dharma Realms, particularly in the Saha World.

"Saha," translating to "enduring," accurately defines our world, as it is fraught with both natural disasters and human-caused catastrophes. People grapple with heavy afflictions, and the uncertainty of life and death is ever-present. These conditions are outlined in the sutras as the Five Turbidities of the Evil Age: Turbidity of the Age, Turbidity of Views, Turbidity of Afflictions, Turbidity of Sentient Beings, and Turbidity of the Lifespan. Witnessing the immense suffering of sentient beings,

Guanyin, propelled by great compassion, returns to this world. He appears in the form of a bodhisattva and vows to liberate all beings in this realm.

#### 2. The Account in the Secret Dharma Sutra of a Thousand Radiating Eyes of Guanyin Bodhisattva

In the Secret Dharma Sutra of a Thousand Radiating Eyes of Guanyin Bodhisattva, Shakyamuni Buddha told the congregation, "To benefit all sentient beings, Guanyin Bodhisattva has a thousand arms and just as many eyes." The Buddha then detailed the immeasurable superior merits of the Guanyin Bodhisattva. Upon hearing this, Venerable Ananda was perplexed by such immense merits of the Bodhisattva, prompting the Buddha to explain:

I remember a time in the past when Guanyin Bodhisattva had attained Buddhahood prior to me, known as "True Dharma Brightness Tathagata" and has all ten honorable titles of Buddha. At that time, I was an ascetic disciple under that Buddha, learning from his teachings, and now

I have achieved Buddhahood. All Tathagatas of the ten directions have achieved the supreme path in their marvelous land and turned the Wheel of the Dharma because of the teachings of Guanyin. Hence, you should not doubt Guanyin's merits and should always make offerings.

This account reveals that Guanyin Bodhisattva has attained Buddhahood long ago, known as "The Tathagata who Clearly Understands the True Law." He was once Shakyamuni Buddha's teacher, and it was under his tutelage that Shakyamuni Buddha set out on his journey to enlightenment. Moreover, all Tathagatas of the ten directions owe their ability to realize and preach the Dharma to Guanyin's profound teachings.

#### 3. The Account in the Compassionate Lotus Sutra

As written in the *Compassionate Lotus Sutra*, immeasurable kalpas ago, Amitabha Buddha was a Chakravartin Wheel-Turning Monarch, renowned in prestige and wielding vast influence. His prince, named Bu

Xuan (meaning Not Deluded), was none other than Guanyin Bodhisattva. At that time, there was a Buddha named Treasure Tathagata, who preached the Dharma to the Chakravartin Wheel-Turning Monarch and his crown prince, and bestowed upon them prophecies. Prince Bu Xuan, standing before Treasure Tathagata, vowed:

Now, with my great and righteous voice, I formally announce to all sentient beings that I transfer all my virtuous roots to Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi (the highest perfect awakening). As I walk the bodhisattva path, should there be sentient beings experiencing anguish, fear, or similar circumstances; should they stray from the true Dharma, thus falling into great confusion and suffering, being beset by worry, loneliness, and deprivation, lacking rescue or refuge; if they remember me or invoke my name, and if they are heard or seen by my divine ear or eye, and if these sentient beings cannot be liberated from their suffering, then I will never attain Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi.

Treasure Tathagata also gave a prophecy to Prince Bu Xuan, saying:

You observe devas, humans, and all beings in the Three Evil Paths, cultivating great compassion with the desire to cut off all their suffering, to sever all their afflictions, and to make all beings dwell in peace and happiness. Virtuous man! I shall now name you Avalokitesvara (Guanyin)... After Amitabha Buddha enters nirvana, in the latter part of the second asamkhyeya kalpa that follows; during the initial division of the night, the true Dharma shall be completely extinguished. In the subsequent division of that same night, that land will be renamed as the "World-Accomplished-with-All-Jewels." This world, resplendent with various supreme embellishments and boundless tranquility and bliss, will surpass the preceding world.

Amitabha Buddha, Guanyin Bodhisattva, and Mahasthamaprapta Bodhisattva are currently the Three Saints of the Pure Land. In the future, after Amitabha Buddha enters nirvana, Guanyin Bodhisattva will succeed him,

and the Pure Land will be even more splendid than it is now. Such is the profound karmic connection between Guanyin Bodhisattva and Amitabha Buddha.

This concludes a succinct overview of Guanyin Bodhisattva's origin as found in the Buddhist canons.

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# GUANYIN BODHISATTVA'S SACRED NAME

Guanyin Bodhisattva, also known as Guanshiyin Bodhisattva, bears a title intimately linked to achieving Perfect Realization Based on the Auditory Faculty.

The *Surangama Sutra* documents Guanyin's method of achieving Perfect Realization Based on the Auditory Faculty: "First, I redirected my hearing inward to dissolve into the nature of hearing, then the external sounds disappeared. After the sounds disappeared, I could see clearly the arising and disappearing of both sounds and thoughts with a detached mind." This technique

regarding the act of listening is primarily used for individual cultivation: "Merely turn your hearing around, to listen to your genuine true nature, which is the destination of the Path that is supreme." I will elaborate on this later during the lecture.

The Lotus Sutra's Universal Gate of Guanyin Bodhisattva, on a different note, primarily focuses on two aspects of Guanyin Bodhisattva. First, it describes how Guanyin Bodhisattva takes on different forms to compassionately liberate sentient beings, as "The Universal Gate is limitless, and Great Compassion pervades all." Second, it elucidates Guanyin Bodhisattva's commitment to hearing and aiding anyone who calls for help. So long as sentient beings undergoing hardship invoke Guanyin Bodhisattva's name, they will be rescued, as the text says, "Good men, if there are countless hundreds of millions of billions of living beings, experiencing all manner of suffering, who hear of Guanyin Bodhisattva and call his name with single-minded effort, then Guanyin Bodhisattva will instantly observe the sound of their cries, and they

will all be liberated."

Thus, the name of Guanyin represents the dual objectives of benefiting oneself and benefiting others. The practice of Perfect Realization Based on the Auditory Faculty is primarily about benefiting oneself, while responding to the cries of suffering beings leans towards benefiting others. These two objectives define the journey of a bodhisattva. Considering the vast amount of suffering in our world, it is no wonder Guanyin Bodhisattva is held in high esteem.

# III

### Guanyin Bodhisattva's Dharma Gate

The term "Guanyin's Dharma Gate" is now often misused. Many folk religions, pseudo-Buddhist sects, and even cult organizations, recognizing the credibility and market appeal of the name "Guanyin," have been fraudulently using this label for their own gain. This is something we must be especially vigilant against and discerning towards. So, what is the true "Guanyin's Dharma Gate"? Here, based on different scriptures, I will briefly introduce a few variations for everyone.

#### 1. Guanyin's Dharma Gate in the Heart Sutra

The goal of Buddhist practice is very clear: to perfect the qualities of Buddhas and bodhisattvas within ourselves. Before the practice, our character and life qualities are rooted in delusion, with greed, anger, and ignorance as the core traits. This reality makes us ordinary beings, awash with confusion, and bound to perpetually create afflictions, experience suffering, and endure the cycle of rebirth. Unless we change our state of being, life has no hope. Because greed, anger, and ignorance have no end, so do afflictions, suffering, and the cycle of rebirth.

When we truly grasp the perils of our current existence and aspire for the liberation and ease of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, it becomes essential to make fundamental changes to our lives. Studying Buddhism provides a path for us to transform from ordinary beings into saints. Transforming from ordinary means changing the life quality of ordinary beings, and becoming saints means achieving the life quality of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, which is enlightenment and liberation. Although

Buddhas and ordinary beings seem worlds apart, the initial distinction is only a single thought of either delusion or enlightenment. With delusion, we remain ordinary beings; once enlightened, we become Buddhas. Yet, this wisdom alone is certainly not sufficient, as we must further perfect our great loving-kindness and compassion to attain true Buddhahood. Overall, the life of an ordinary being evolves from ignorance, which generates a system of delusion and forms the character of the ordinary being. Understanding this principle gives us a clear idea of what we need to focus on in our practice.

In the *Heart Sutra*, "Guanyin" is rendered in Chinese by Xuanzang as "Guanzizai." The opening line is:

Guanzizai Bodhisattva, when practicing deeply the Prajna Paramita, perceives that all five aggregates are empty and is liberated from all suffering and distress.

Kumarajiva of Yao Qin Dynasty translated Guanyin as "Guanshiyin," while Xuanzang of Tang Dynasty

translated it as "Guanzizai." These two individuals both hold a prominent place in the annals of Chinese Buddhist translation. Kumarajiva was known for his fluid translations that were not only clear but also poetically resonant; Xuanzang, on the other hand, favored literal translations, striving to remain as true as possible to the original text.

How do bodhisattvas experience such freedom (Zizai)? The key lies in the practice of "observation," or "Vipashyana," which means observing with wisdom. When we use wisdom to observe everything inside and outside our bodies and minds, we can liberate ourselves from all restraints, thereby achieving absolute freedom. But, how can we hone the skill of observation? This question takes us to the teachings of prajna (wisdom), which highlights three forms of wisdom: learned prajna, reflective prajna, and cultivational prajna (prajna gained by direct experience).

To learn Buddhism, one must first attain right views by

listening to and contemplating the teachings. This process fosters the first type of wisdom: learned prajna. Ordinary people, veiled by delusion, cannot perceive their bodies, minds, and the surrounding world with clarity. Consequently, they mistakenly associate temporary aspects like social status, position, and physical appearance as their "self," which leads to the rise of greed, anger and ignorance, along with a myriad of incorrect views, emotional distress, and afflictions. With such flawed views, they perceive the world not in its authentic form, but through a distorted lens crafted by their misconceptions. However, they often hold onto these false ideas, believing that what they see is the ultimate reality. These tendencies are referred to in Buddhism as attachment to the self and attachment to phenomena. These ubiquitous attachments known as parikalpita, existing everywhere and at all times, are the fundamental source of all afflictions. These afflictions in turn lead to negative karma, trapping us in the cycle of rebirth. This is how the system of delusion unfolds in our lives.

Buddhism emphasizes on seeing things as they truly are. It guides us towards rectifying our misconceptions and accurately perceiving ourselves, the world, and the true essence of life and the universe. In this sense, practicing Buddhist teachings fundamentally revolves around acquiring right views and cultivating wisdom. Although there are three main Buddhist traditions - Mahayana, Theravada, and Vajrayana – each with numerous sub-sects, their core teachings are the same: impermanence, no-self, consciousness-only, dependent-origination, empty of intrinsic nature, and the inherent Buddha-nature in all sentient beings. By actively listening and reflecting on these teachings, we will obtain these learned wisdoms, which guide us in accurately observing everything inside and outside our bodies and minds. More importantly, we should embrace and apply this newfound understanding, replace our entrenched misconceptions, and employ this wisdom to reflect upon life and tackle its challenges.

Then, to transform learned prajna into reflective prajna, we must have a foundation in samatha, or concentration.

Samatha refers to the sustained and stable focus we aim to develop through meditation. During meditation, we can select an anchor such as the Buddha's image, his name, or our breath and continuously train our mind to focus on it. As distracting thoughts gradually subside, a clear awareness will arise in our mind. Furthermore, using this awareness to observe every action and thought, we will realize that the physical body is merely a provisional synthesis of form, feeling, perception, mental formation, and consciousness, where no inherent "self" can be found. Meanwhile, we will recognize that thoughts are constantly changing and that all sensations ultimately lead to suffering. This is reflective prajna, observing everything without emotionally attaching to anything. As our observational skill grows, greed, anger, and delusion will lose their support and gradually melt away, leading to increasing freedom and ease in life.

It was precisely through observation that the Guanyin Bodhisattva perceived the emptiness of the five aggregates (form, feeling, perception, mental formation, and consciousness). However, his observation was not an ordinary one; it was deep prajna paramita. While ordinary people also meditate and cultivate observational skills, they are only observing at the conscious level, not practicing deep prajna paramita. Only by transcending consciousness can we enter the realm of cultivational prajna, or deep prajna paramita.

Indeed, with reflective prajna, we too can discern the emptiness of the five aggregates. However, this recognition of emptiness is not thorough. It represents an understanding limited to the realm of conventional truth, which merely acknowledges that all phenomena are dependently-originated, illusory, and lacking an intrinsic nature. By entering deep prajna paramita, however, we can directly perceive the emptiness of the five aggregates. Then, by residing in this state of emptiness, we free ourselves from all suffering. This is Guanyin Bodhisattva's method of cultivation.

We may not be at Guanyin Bodhisattva's stage, and deep

prajna paramita may be beyond us now, but we can start by practicing reflective prajna. With persistent effort in this direction, and as our reflective prajna grows stronger, we will definitely experience more and more tranquility, and eventually achieve a life of perfect liberation and ease. As stated in the *Heart Sutra*, "Away from delusive thinking, they ultimately attain nirvana." The "Guanzizai Meditation Camp" at Xiyuan Temple holds true to this principle, prioritizing the training of reflective prajna. The program begins with introspection and gradually progresses towards Chan (Zen) meditation. This approach is accessible to beginners but has great depth, making it a clear, sequenced, and effective method.

## 2. The Practice of Perfect Realization Based on the Auditory Faculty in the *Surangama Sutra*

The practice of Perfect Realization Based on the Auditory Faculty, which is rooted in the principle of Tathagatagarbha, has a very high starting point and aims directly at our innate nature. This is why Chan masters

throughout history have held this method in high esteem.

There are two systems within our lives. The ordinary person dwells within the system of delusion and unenlightenment. Yet the Buddha, upon his enlightenment, saw that all sentient beings have the inherent potential to become awakened, although this potential often remains concealed. Recognizing this, Buddhist cultivation has been divided into two methods: sudden awakening (subitism) and gradual practice (gradualism). The method of sudden awakening guides practitioners to directly discern life's inherent awakened nature, leaping straight into the realm of the Tathagata. Gradual practice, to the contrary, targets the system of delusion, helping practitioners understand and dismantle each delusion, piece by piece. As it gradually washes away the inner impurities, practitioners would steadily approach and ultimately realize their awakened nature. These two methods cater to practitioners with sharp and dull faculties, respectively. Indeed, the Buddha imparted 84,000 Dharma methods, aimed at guiding different individuals in the most suitable way for each of them, adapting the teachings to the aptitude of the students.

So, what distinguishes those with sharp faculties from those with dull faculties? It all comes down to the amount of impurities within one's mind. Individuals with sharp faculties have a thin veil of mental impurity that can be pierced with a single insight, making them receptive to teachings that directly target their original nature. Conversely, those with dull faculties have a thick shell of mental impurities, making them impervious to profound teachings. Hence, they must begin with fundamental practices to build a solid foundation. But remember, faculties are not innate, but represent life's accumulations. Even if your faculties are dull, with the right method and gradual practice, you can still purify your mind. Master Shen Xiu's words ring true, "The body is a bodhi tree; the mind is like a standing mirror. Always try to keep them clean, so that no dust remains." Through constant effort in clearing away mental impurities, anyone can unveil their awakened nature.

The practice of Perfect Realization Based on the Auditory Faculty pertains to sudden awakening, not gradual practice. In the sixth volume of the *Surangama Sutra*, 25 bodhisattvas shared their cultivation experiences in past lives. Mahasthamaprapta Bodhisattva, for instance, outlined his practice of chanting the Buddha's name. His method – from reciting the Buddha's name, recalling the Buddha's presence, calming the six sense faculties, to continuous chanting with a pure mind – has exerted a significant influence on the Pure Land Sect. Guanyin Bodhisattva, on the other hand, introduced the practice of Perfect Realization Based on the Auditory Faculty, which greatly influenced Chan Buddhism. The relevant verses are quite profound, and I will provide a brief introduction after:

At that time, a Buddha appeared in the world by the name of Guanyin Buddha. Before this Buddha, I made the resolution to cultivate bodhicitta, and he instructed me to realize samadhi through the practice of hearing, contemplating, and practicing. First, I redirected my hearing inward to dissolve into the nature of hearing, then the external sounds disappeared. After the sounds disappeared, I could see clearly the arising and disappearing of both sounds and thoughts with a detached mind. As I gradually progressed, the consciousness that hears and the sounds that are heard vanished in the contemplation through the hearing nature. After the consciousness that hears and the sounds that are heard vanished, my mind became non-abiding. Furthermore, I realized that my awareness and the objects of my awareness were empty in nature. After I had perfectly realized that my awareness and the objects of my awareness were empty, such emptiness and the objects of emptiness became empty as well. When the delusional mind of arising and ceasing was completely empty in nature, the true mind of ultimate nirvana fully emerged. My awakened nature fully manifested, transcending both this world and the realm beyond this world, illuminating the worlds of ten directions with complete brightness. I realized two supreme powers. The

first was that I attained the same inherent and wondrous true mind with all Buddhas of the ten directions, sharing the same power of loving-kindness. The second was that I attained the same power of compassion for all sentient beings of the ten directions in the six realms.

First, we are told about a Buddha in the past, known as "Guanyin Buddha." Guanyin Bodhisattva, during his path to enlightenment, once practiced under this ancient Buddha. In the presence of this Buddha, Guanyin gave rise to bodhicitta, the wish to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all beings. Guanyin Buddha then guided Guanyin Bodhisattva to embark on the path of liberation "to realize samadhi through the practice of hearing, contemplating, and practicing." This method is standard in Buddhist practice. All Buddhist practitioners strive towards three types of wisdom: the wisdom from hearing the Dharma, the wisdom from contemplating the Dharma, and the wisdom from following and practicing the Dharma. Thus, at first glance, Guanyin Bodhisattva's cultivation method may seem like the norm.

What makes this sutra extraordinary is how it interprets the techniques of hearing, contemplating, and practicing. First, how do we "hear"? As you hear my voice right now, your mind tunes to the sound. Similar things occur with all the sounds we hear every day. When we hear, our minds gravitate towards the sound, giving rise to various fantasies and distinctions. This is consciousness at work. Now, let us look at how the Guanyin Buddha instructed Guanyin Bodhisattva on hearing.

"First, I redirected my hearing inward to dissolve into the nature of hearing, then the external sounds disappeared." Entering the "nature of hearing" means going against the typical direction of hearing. When someone hears a sound, their mind instinctively reaches outward to identify the sound and make assumptions based on it. In contrast, going against the typical direction of hearing means hearing inward, asking who is hearing the sound and what is the nature that can hear. By examining the function of hearing, we can return to the nature of hearing. In fact, "hearing" comprises two aspects:

the consciousness of hearing and the nature of hearing. When our minds latch onto sounds, generating all sorts of distinctions, we are using the consciousness of hearing. However, it is important to understand that the root of this consciousness is the nature of hearing. The consciousness of hearing is a function of the awakened nature; the nature of hearing is a manifestation of the awakened nature. Therefore, when the awakened nature manifests in hearing, it becomes the nature of hearing. When it manifests in seeing, it becomes the nature of seeing. Essentially, the goal of Chan practice is to directly reveal this awakened nature.

The consciousness of hearing ebbs and flows with the sounds that we perceive. For example, when we hear a sound, a corresponding consciousness arises; and when the sound fades, that consciousness dissolves. However, whether there is sound or not, whether we can hear it or not, the nature of hearing and the hearing function are still present. Because otherwise, how would we recognize silence? Similarly, the function of seeing has allowed us

to recognize many people in this dignified lecture hall. But when we close our eyes, does the function of seeing persist? Yes, it does, only now it reveals total darkness. If the function of seeing disappears when we close our eyes, how could we recognize the darkness? Since we can still perceive darkness, the function of seeing must be operational. To summarize, the ability to distinguish is a function of consciousness, but the root of consciousness is our awakened nature. The sutra writes, "First, I redirected my hearing inward to dissolve into the nature of hearing, then the external sounds disappeared." "Entering the nature of hearing" refers to realizing the hearing's nature. Upon realizing such an awakened nature, our attachment to external sounds will diminish. As we return to the nature of hearing, all sounds become less distinct, even go unnoticed altogether. And, even when sounds are present around us, they become mere reflections that can barely affect us.

"After the sounds disappeared, I could see clearly the arising and disappearing of both sounds and thoughts with

a detached mind." As long as we do not succumb to our attachment to sounds, our minds can return to the hearing's nature, our awakened nature. This allows us to perceive all things clearly, whether our thoughts or the external world are active or still. When sounds emerge, we hear them, and give rise to thoughts – we understand that our mind is in an active state. When there is no sound, our mind is in a state of tranquility – we understand that our mind is at rest. Regardless of our mind's condition, we perceive it with clarity without fixating on anything in particular. As we remain grounded in the awakened nature, our mind remains unattached, no matter what arises.

"As I gradually progressed, the consciousness that hears and the sounds that are heard vanished in the contemplation through the hearing nature." Since we have never revealed the nature of hearing before, we must now persistently familiarize ourselves with it through meditation. Every time a sound arises, we should ask ourselves – Who am I? Who is the one that can hear the sound?

Through this continuous questioning, our nature of hearing strengthens. Meanwhile, both the delusive consciousness that hears and the sounds that are heard will gradually dissolve under the observation of our nature of hearing. As such, the disturbances caused by the consciousness of hearing and sounds themselves lessen, making our minds increasingly empty, calm, and pure. The extent of this emptiness and purity depends on the power of our nature of hearing.

"After the consciousness that hears and the sounds that are heard vanished, my mind became non-abiding. Furthermore, I realized that my awareness and the objects of my awareness were empty in nature." We have recognized that our consciousness of hearing and the objects it perceives are gradually dissolving. This is due to the inherent power of awareness within us. However, this type of awareness is not ultimate, so we need to progress to the next step – the state the Guanyin Bodhisattva described as "my awareness and the objects of my awareness were empty in nature." If there is still awareness, it means that

we are still consciously performing reflective prajna which is still a transitional phase. So we must not stop here. We need to transition from discriminative to non-discriminative observation in order to truly tap into the awakened nature. Yet, how can we return to the awakened nature from awareness itself? The answer is to empty our awareness as well, so that we neither dwell on the awareness nor on the objects of the awareness.

"After I had perfectly realized that my awareness and the objects of my awareness were empty, such emptiness and the objects of emptiness became empty as well." When we have emptied both our awareness and its objects, is there still something we call emptiness? If such emptiness persists, it means we have not achieved the ultimate truth but rather ended up in "imbalanced emptiness." And, this emptiness must also be emptied. The thoughtless mind we strive to attain is non-abiding and devoid of form. It neither settles in emptiness nor in existence, neither in motion nor in stillness. It surpasses all forms, illuminating without attachment. Only through this can we

understand our mind's essence, its non-duality of emptiness and awareness. The Platform Sutra tells us that the awakened nature consists of nature and function: it is empty in nature, yet infinitely useful in function. Clinging to emptiness can strip it of its marvelous uses. Within the context of Buddhist practice, attaching to emptiness can be more disastrous than attaching to intrinsic existence. As per the Madhyamika Shastra, "The Buddha taught the Dharma of emptiness to liberate beings from false views. But if one instead clings to the view of emptiness itself, they are considered beyond the Buddhas' remedy." The Buddha imparts the Dharma of emptiness to free us from attachment to intrinsic existence. If this instead makes us cling to emptiness, dismiss causality, and adopt an indifferent attitude towards everything, then even the Buddhas would not be able to help you.

"When the delusional mind of arising and ceasing was completely empty in nature, the true mind of ultimate nirvana fully emerged." This is the most important part. Our attachments to existence and emptiness, motion and stillness, are all facets of the ordinary mind, a mind of arising and ceasing. Now, we must dispel all forms of attachments, whether it is to emptiness, existence, motion, stillness, the mundane, the sacred, the attainment of Buddhahood, or the deliverance of all beings. The existence of any attachment can be a foundation for the ordinary mind. Once the ordinary mind gains a foothold, it obstructs our attainment of the awakened nature. Hence, all such footholds need to be removed, just like the Chan proverb, "If Buddha appears, kill the Buddha. If demons appear, kill the demons." Only then can ceasing and arising end, revealing the ultimate nirvana. The concept of ceasing and arising refers to the mind of ceasing and arising; only when this deluded mind is completely swept away can the true mind of ultimate nirvana fully emerge.

"My awakened nature fully manifested, transcending both this world and the realm beyond this world, illuminating the worlds of ten directions with complete brightness." When the awakened nature is fully revealed, it transcends both the worldly and the otherworldly. Like the void, it pervades all ten directions, illuminating brightly and perfectly complete.

"I realized two supreme powers. The first was that I attained the same inherent and wondrous true mind with all Buddhas of the ten directions, sharing the same power of loving-kindness. The second was that I attained the same power of compassion for all sentient beings of the ten directions in the six realms." We can acquire two remarkable powers. The first is to realize the same awakened nature as the Buddhas of the ten directions and experience the same great loving-kindness and compassion that these Buddhas possess. The second is to achieve oneness with all Buddhas of the ten directions and all sentient beings in the six realms. This allows us to breathe in unison with the Buddhas and resonate deeply with all sentient beings, fostering a compassion for them as though they were extensions of our own bodies. The division that exists between us and other sentient beings is due to the loss of such unity, which makes us misunderstand our own identities and form self-attachment. This self-attachment is the root of many conflicts, including those among nations, regions, and ethnic groups.

The practice of Perfect Realization Based on the Auditory Faculty in the *Surangama Sutra* is truly wondrous and supreme. Now that you have listened to it once, the wholesome root for the Dharma Gate of sudden awakening has been planted within your heart.

# 3. The Practice of All-Encompassing Great Compassion in the Lotus Sutra's Universal Gate of Guanyin Bodhisattva

The *Universal Gate of Guanyin Bodhisattva* comes from the *Lotus Sutra*, and it details Guanyin Bodhisattva's teachings, which can be summarized as: "The Universal Gate is limitless, and great compassion pervades all." The term "Universal" means all-encompassing. Guanyin Bodhisattva's great compassion is limitless, boundless, extending to all sentient beings equally, without distinction. This means that such great compassion is

quantifiable: if there exists a single being that the Bodhisattva is reluctant to show compassion towards, then he has yet to achieve the complete and perfect great compassion. Obviously, we do not have the chance to interact with all sentient beings. Still, the key question remains, for all those we do encounter, are we able to accept them, sympathize with them, understand them, and assist them unconditionally?

This kind of compassion must be tested in our day-to-day experiences, in every situation, and with every person we come across. By continuously evaluating and refining our compassion, its strength grows. Eventually, our compassion will enable us to engage with more people, even those we once disliked. Such is the process of nurturing and achieving a compassionate mind.

In Buddhist scriptures, great loving-kindness and compassion are portrayed as the thousand hands and eyes of Guanyin Bodhisattva. His thousand eyes represent infinite wisdom, and his thousand arms signify infinite

compassion. The Bodhisattva, in his efforts to benefit all sentient beings, found ordinary eyes and arms insufficient, thus manifesting a thousand of each. This is an emblem of his vow of compassion. Within the *Universal Gate Chapter on Guanyin Bodhisattva*, great loving-kindness and compassion are expressed through his thirty-two forms: "If there are people who must be liberated in a certain way, then Guanyin Bodhisattva will manifest according to that need and teach them the Dharma."

More often than not, we cannot distinguish who Guanyin Bodhisattva is, as a true bodhisattva does not wear a label saying "I am Guanyin." So, what distinguishes Guanyin Bodhisattva? The couplet by Master Taixu in the Hall of Guanyin at the South Putuo Temple provides a clue, "With purity of heart, every place becomes Putuo; with compassion towards all, one becomes Guanyin." This suggests that anyone who embodies the compassionate qualities of Guanyin is the Bodhisattva himself.

What does it mean to embody Guanyin's compassionate

qualities? It extends beyond ordinary compassion, encompassing both "great unconditional loving-kindness" and "great compassion of sameness." "Unconditional" means that there are no requirements or preconditions, and "sameness" means viewing all sentient beings and oneself as a single entity. This sense of sameness is not a visualization exercise but Guanyin's actual state of being. As he has attained the state of unity with all sentient beings across the six realms, this form of compassion naturally ensues. When an itchy or painful spot appears on our body, our hand immediately helps to soothe it without thinking whether it should or what benefit to expect. This is what compassion of sameness looks like - an instinctive reaction. Guanyin shows compassion towards sentient beings in the same way; by fully uniting himself with all beings, he perceives their suffering as his own and their needs as his needs.

Each of us carries some measure of compassionate qualities in our lives. As Mencius once said, "All people have a heart that feels for others." Yet, frequently, this sentiment is rather faint. To expand this limited compassion into something boundless, to cultivate the "great compassion of sameness" that is equal, infinite, no-self, and no-obtain for all beings, requires substantial effort. It begins with giving rise to bodhicitta, which establishes a noble altruistic aspiration to benefit all beings and alleviate their suffering as our personal mission. The next step is performing meditations on emptiness to dispel the barriers between self and others. Only then, can we nurture the mind of equality and no-obtain, elevating conventional bodhicitta to ultimate bodhicitta.

Therefore, Guanyin's great loving-kindness and compassion are not the conventional feeling of love, which is often limited and laden with biases. Instead, his compassion is boundless, impartial, and surpasses any sort of distinction. It is this profound compassion that enables him to hear and respond to cries of suffering, providing relief from all disasters. As written in the *Universal Gate of Guanyin Bodhisattva*, if "sentient beings who suffer a myriad of afflictions heard of Guanyin Bodhisattva and

single-mindedly recited his name, the Bodhisattva would immediately perceive their calls and deliver them from their suffering. If someone maintained the recitation of the name Guanyin Bodhisattva and encountered a great fire, he would not be burned because of the Bodhisattva's extraordinary powers. If one were washed away by a great billow of water and recited the name of this Bodhisattva, he would soon find himself in shallow waters..."

One might ask, how does Guanyin Bodhisattva wield such immense power? How does he alleviate the suffering of sentient beings, resolving their many afflictions and troubles? The key is his great compassion. Reciting the name of Guanyin is to invoke it; practicing Guanyin's methods is to cultivate it; and becoming Guanyin is to fully perfect it. It is built upon the truth of emptiness, which inherently has the power to eliminate all forms of suffering. As a result, within the embrace of great compassion, conflict, hatred, and disaster dissolve. This is the secret weapon of Guanyin Bodhisattva and an invaluable treasure in our lives. Once we attain great compassion, we not

only possess the power to alleviate our own suffering but also hold the capacity to relieve all beings of their distress. This is the way to truly "fill the world with love." Moreover, great compassion does not merely dispel disaster, it also helps us accumulate boundless merits, thus ensuring all our wishes are fulfilled. It is fair to say that great compassion is the greatest field of merit. As we cultivate great compassion, we sow seeds into this fertile soil.

Central to Mahayana Buddhism are the tenets of bodhicitta and great compassion, but regrettably, these elements are often neglected by us. Why do many Buddhists come off as indifferent or pessimistic? It is because we have fallen short of practicing the core tenets of Mahayana Buddhism and failed to establish a deep connection with the fate of all sentient beings, as the Buddhas and bodhisattvas have done. Recognizing this, I have been promoting the cultivation of bodhicitta and urging adherence to the aspirational bodhicitta precepts since 2003. My hope is for all of us to genuinely understand and put into practice the true spirit of Mahayana Buddhism.

The three cultivation methods I have introduced are from the *Heart Sutra*, the *Surangama Sutra*, and the *Lotus Sutra*. These are Guanyin's authentic Dharma teachings. In society today, there are many counterfeit products, and even Buddhism has been exploited by those with ulterior motives, resulting in the emergence of various fake Buddhist sects. I hope that everyone can establish the right view, so they can discern the right from the wrong.

### IV

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHANTING GUANYIN'S SACRED NAME

As Buddhist practitioners, when we chant Guanyin's sacred name and practice his teachings, it is not about seeking blessings or fulfilling personal desires. Instead, there are three significant objectives we should aim to achieve.

First, chanting Guanyin's name strengthens our power of observation. This helps us in developing reflective prajna, which ultimately leads us to attain cultivational prajna, and achieve a life of true liberation and ease.

Second, by reciting Guanyin's name, we are practicing the

Perfect Realization Based on the Auditory Faculty. Rather than fixating on the external world, we turn our focus inward and listen to our inherent nature by questioning: Who is it that hears? What gives rise to the consciousness of hearing? Just as in the Chan school, where practitioners pursue the query "Who is it that recites the Buddha's name?," we should also introspect to unearth the source within the stream of sound. The Buddha, under the bodhi tree, fully realized the twelvefold chain of dependent origination by contemplating it in reverse, moving from aging and death to birth, further to existence, clinging, craving, and finally, ignorance, the ultimate source of samsara. Guanyin's method operates in a similar vein, tracing the source from sound to the consciousness of hearing, then from the arising of this consciousness to further search for the nature of hearing and the nature of awakening.

Third, chanting Guanyin's name is a means of invoking and cultivating great compassion. Rather than praying merely for blessings, we should aspire to learn from

Guanyin, striving to become his messengers and serve as his eyes and hands to help this world. If a person's focus is solely on praying for blessings, it indicates a sense of lack in their life. Learning to be a bodhisattva, on the other hand, means offering assistance to all sentient beings. The wealthiest person is one who can give freely and does not feel the need for anything in their life. After all, our lives inherently possess infinite treasures; the key is to recognize and claim these treasures.

On this auspicious day, we have gained insight into Guanyin Bodhisattva and his teachings, a most fitting way of honoring him. However, merely listening is not enough – we must thoughtfully digest what is learned today, and moreover, start to regard Guanyin as our role model, cultivate great compassion, realize our awakened nature, and strive to embody his characteristics as soon as we can.

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