

Passion and Compassion

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sixteen years ago, as a young lay woman, I left home and entered the monastic Sangha, and sixteen years later, as a middle-age Buddhist nun, I left the nunnery and entered another world; comparing those two scenes, I see that they are the same journey of “leaving home” .

After living as a Buddhist nun in a nunnery in Taiwan for fifteen years, I came to the United States to study Buddhism at Naropa University. I found that the most difficult adaptations for me to make while living the U.S. have been the different life styles of temple and campus and the different cultures of East and West. Stepping out of Asian Buddhist society, which is based on maintaining a sense of community, and has distinctive roles for monastic and lay people, I walked into the open Western world which has more of a focus on individuality and is a new field for Buddhist society. I felt I was stumbling as I unconsciously tried to hold onto my monastic identity. During the first month, when I missed my homeland and my life in the nunnery, I would listen to a CD of the morning chants of my nunnery every day so I could experience practicing with my teacher and all my Dharma sisters. This experience of attachment to my former life gave me an opportunity to contemplate again the questions, “Why am I ordained?” and “How do I transmute passion into compassion?”

In the U.S., the phenomenon of monastics that disrobe and return to lay status is common. One year ago at a workshop, I had a talk with a Tibetan monk who served as an attendant to the Rinpoche who was leading the workshop. He mentioned that there are many Tibetan monastics who have disrobed in the West, including his teacher and Dharma brother. Directly, I asked him, “Do you think about disrobing, too?” “I am not as knowledgeable as my teacher and not as talented as my Dharma brother. If I disrobe, I will fall to nothing.” Unwillingly to submit to the idea that maintaining the monastic status is just a way to get support, I kept asking impertinently “How do you feel about serving a lay teacher while you are wearing a monastic robe?” Without any irritation, he gently said, “I have served my teacher for more than ten years. When my teacher decided to disrobe, he asked me whether I wanted to continue to be his attendant. I told

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釋見可

十六年前，一位年輕的女居士，離開俗家，踏入僧團；
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身為佛教尼僧，在居住於台灣佛寺的十五年後，我前往美國那諾巴大學繼續佛學的進修。我發現，住在美國最難以調適的是：寺院和校園不同的生活方式，以及東西方文化的差異。跨出以維護團體為重，僧俗角色分明的亞洲佛教社會，我走入了一個著重個人，尚是佛教處女地的開放的西方世界。當習以為常地執持出家身分時，我感到自己有些絆腳。初到美國的第一個月，每當思念母國和寺院生活時，我總是聆聽僧團出版的早課梵唱CD，重溫與師父和師兄們共修的感覺。然而這份依戀的經驗，給了自己再度思維：「出家所為何來？」並且體驗了「如何轉換俗情為法情」的心路歷程。

在美國，出家後還俗，是相當普遍的現象。在一次營活動中，偶遇一位到此服侍授課仁波切的藏傳比丘，我們有了簡短的對話。他提到許多藏傳比丘移居美國後就還俗了，包括他的師父和師兄。我直截了當地問他：「您也考慮過還俗嗎？」「我沒有師父的博學和師兄的才華，如果我還俗了，會跌入一無所有。」因心中不服氣維持出家身分只為得到護持的這種說法，我無禮地追問：「身著袈裟服侍在家居士，您有何感覺？」他面不改色，溫文地答道：「我奉侍家師超過十年了。當家師決定還俗時，他問我，是否願意續任侍者，我說，自己相當珍惜這份機緣。」臉上綻放著堅定的神情，他接著說：「家師的智慧如此深廣，是我該學的；其弘法度眾的悲願如此真切，是我該幫

him that I cherished this opportunity.” The certainty sparkled on his face as he continued, “My teacher’ s wisdom, so vast and profound, is something I need; his compassionate aspiration to spread the Dharma is something I can help him with. Taking off an outer garment never would change my faith in my teacher.”

His answers surprised me initially, but soon I felt extremely embarrassed about my proud attitude, which derived from clinging to the outer form of the monastic robe. Although I still insist that monastics play indispensable roles, his strong faith in his teacher, his patience and humility as he follows the path of Dharma, and his down-to-earth attitude toward his own limitations were so admirable. The selfless aspiration, exemplified by both the monk and his teacher, dissolved my dualistic distinction between being a monastic and being a lay person.

The conversation also brought me back to an important dialogue between my teacher and me. When I turned in my ordination aspiration papers to Wu Shi Fu, she seriously asked me, “Ordination is easy to take, but difficult to keep. If all your Dharma sisters disrobe and I disrobe, do you still want to be a Buddhist nun?” “YES” I answered firmly. This dialogue occurred in 1990, my last day of teaching at Pao Chung Junior High School in Yunlin and my first day on the journey of “leaving home”

After the graduation ceremony, I washed out the light layer of cosmetics on my face, cut short my long hair, took off my elegant clothes and packed all my belongings to send to my eldest sister, who knew that for three years I had been planning to become a nun . Carrying a simple backpack and reciting Amitabha’ s name, I rode a 90 cc motorcycle toward Luminary Temple in Chai-Yi. Unexpectedly, after one hour of driving, dark clouds covered the sky, and it started to rain. I pulled off the road, put on a short raincoat, carefully put my aspiration papers, which I was going to turn in to my teacher, into a waterproof compartment, and then continued chanting while driving. Half an hour later, as the rain became heavier and heavier accompanied by fierce thunder, I reached a remote and wild place. The downpour quickly created a flood, and the engine of my motorcycle stopped. After exerting much effort to drag the motorcycle aside, I sat on a stone at the side of the road and kept reciting the Great Compassion Mantra. My clothes were totally soaked from the rain. Without noticing how much time had passed, I became aware that the feeling of cold and hunger was getting stronger. Then, I had the urge to urinate, but there was no toilet any-

的。脫下外在的服飾，絕不會改變我對家師的虔信。」

對他的回覆，我由最初的驚訝，瞬間轉為極度慚愧——懺於自己因執取袈裟的外在形式，所生的傲骨態度。雖然，我仍堅持出家身分扮演著無可替代的角色，但他對上師的虔信，在求法道上的安忍與謙遜，以及面對自己的有限的老實態度，是如此令人敬仰。這位比丘及其上師所示現的無私悲願，化除了我對僧俗的二分區別。

這份對談，也引領著我回到一幕重要的師徒對話的場景。當我呈出家發願文給 悟師父時，師父很是嚴肅地詢問：「出家容易，修道難。如果，僧團所有的法師，包括我，都還俗了，你還要出家嗎？」「是的！」我篤定地回答。這份對談發生在民國七十九年，我任教於雲林褒忠國中的最後一天，也是我「出家之旅」的第一天。

參加完學校的畢結業典禮，洗去臉上的淡妝，剪短了長髮，換下端莊的套裝，打包所有財物，郵寄給知道我已計劃出家三年的大姐。肩帶著簡單的背包，誦誦著阿彌陀佛聖號，我騎著一輛九十CC的摩托車朝向嘉義香光寺。未料，一小時後烏雲遮天，接著雨點灑落開來。我將機車停放路旁，披上一件簡短的雨衣，小心翼翼地把將要提交師父的發願文，放入防水的底座空間，然後繼續邊念佛邊上路。半小時後，雨勢愈來愈大還夾帶著兇猛的雷聲，我正置身荒野無人之地。傾盆大雨馬上積聚水患，摩托車的引擎接著熄火了。我費了九牛二虎之力，將摩托車推到一邊，自個兒坐在路旁的石塊上持誦著大悲咒，全身的衣服被雨水浸濕了。不知過了多久，又冷又餓的感覺漸襲而來，愈來愈強烈。接著，我又感到內急，可是放眼四處無廁。當再也憋不住時，我也只能任尿液暢流而出。看著澄黃的液體融入積聚的雨水裡，禁不住奪眶而出的淚水也加入了這豪水的行列中。其實這是

where. Finally when the need was overpowering, I just allowed the urine to freely flow. When I saw the yellow urine emerge with the flood, my tears couldn't be stopped from participating in the torrent of water. They were actually tears of devotion mixed with both joy and sorrow, tears caused by my renewing my strong aspiration. My firm faith in the Triple Jewels granted me incredible courage and strength. Nobody could stop my determination to take this journey which was going against the current of birth and death. About one hour later, the torrential rain stopped. The dark clouds parted, and the sun shone out. Magically, a beautiful rainbow formed ahead of me, hanging in the direction of my way to the temple. With appreciation, I received it as Buddha's blessing. .

So, sixteen years ago, as a young lay woman, I left home and entered the monastic Sangha, and sixteen years later, as a middle-age Buddhist nun, I left the nunnery and entered another world; comparing those two scenes, I see that they are the same journey of "leaving home" . But what I need to let go of now is not the beautiful hair and decorations, but my strong attachment to my nunnery and my familiar culture. "Letting go" doesn't mean "giving up" or "cutting down" , but transmuting the passionate attachment to a specific object into devotional compassion for all beings, for all states of existence.

John Welwood (*John Welwood. Toward a Psychology of Awakening. (Boston& London: Shambhala, 2002). P265.*) explained clearly the unbreakable relationship between passion and compassion. "As you learn to distinguish between grasping and devotion, you begin to understand the deeper nature of passion- as a doorway into the experience of surrender...And the only way to do that is by devoting ourselves to that greater life, and to removing our inner barriers to greater openness, awareness, and genuineness.¹" As I wrote in my ordination aspiration papers: "May I follow the path of Bodhisattva from one life to the next. May I attain enlightenment for the sake of liberating all beings" .

一份悲欣交感的虔敬淚水，是因為再注入弘願活力而生的淚水。當時對三寶的誠信，賜予我無與倫比的勇氣與力量，無人可阻擋我那份迎向「逆生死之流」的決心。一小時後，豪雨停了，烏雲開了，太陽出來了。不可思議地，前方天邊織出一道漂亮的彩虹，正掛在我前往香光寺之路的方向。懷著感恩心，我納受它作為佛陀的加持與祝福。

相較這兩幕場景：十六年前，一位年輕的女居士，離開俗家，踏入僧團；十六年後，一位中年比丘尼，踏出僧院，走入另一個世界。同樣是「出家之旅」啊！但目前得放下的，不再是外在的美麗長髮和妝扮，而是個人對僧團和對熟悉文化的強烈執取。要練習揣摩的是「放下」更微細的素質，不是「放棄」或「斬斷」，而是將對於特定對象執取的俗情，昇華為對一切有情、一切存在現象虔敬的法情。

約翰維爾吾清楚地解釋「俗情」與「法情」密不可分的關係：「當你學會分辨執取與虔敬的不同時，你開始明瞭『俗情』深刻的本質—通向放捨經驗的入口處。……我們唯一能做的，是將自己獻身於更廣大的生活，遣除內在的局限，朝向更廣大的開朗、覺醒與真實。」就如自己的出家誓願文的首行：「願生生世世修菩薩道，終成佛果，廣度一切眾生。」