



Pre-BA assignment feedback form

(to be completed by marker)

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<i>For completion by marker:</i> <i>Comments:</i>	
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Reflective Workbook

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The Venerable Chengde said in class: ‘We ought to cherish this rare opportunity and our good nature in this life. We cannot go against the Buddha, our parents and teachers’ kindness and trust.’ But how can we not miss the opportunity then live up to the expectations of the Buddha and all the people who helped us? So, I conduct self-reflection from three aspects in order to improve myself and live up to everyone’s trust.

1. The sense of responsibility

The first point is about the sense of responsibility. The Venerable Master Chin kung once said: ‘Unusual era require unusual responsibilities.’ The Venerable Chengde also said: ‘Taking one’s responsibility is the beginning of growth.’ Since we have the chance to learn from the teachings of sages, we have the responsibility and obligation to help others and solve the problems arising in this era. Before taking this course, I just wanted to learn and promote traditional culture, but after learning this course, I realize that it is more of my obligation than just a will. Just like Venerable Chengde said in class: ‘Do not wish for accomplishments, but only wish for not making mistakes.’

But just knowing this is not enough, I find that I have not taken this into action in my daily life. I always think that I am too young to benefit people in a large scale. But one day in the class, Venerable Chengde said that we did not have to wait to benefit the public in the future. Rather, we can start our action right now, because every little thing in our daily life can have a good influence on others. For example, when we use

water, we should think that even saving a little amount of water can benefit people all over the world.

In addition, the sense of responsibility is also reflected in the dedication to the work. I think that I did not do this well. I am the life committee member, so sometimes the person in charge will send me some messages on Ding Talk to ask me to find out about some aspects of class. But since I rarely use Ding Talk, I did not see the news of the person in charge and did not report the situation to her in time. From this, I reflected that I have very low sense of responsibility. I just thought that the person in charge would tell me what tasks I should do every day when we meet each other, but I did not think that there would be some emergencies to deal with. So since then, I have developed a habit to check if there are any tasks after turning on the computer every day.

The Venerable Chengde once said: ‘How can we take responsibility if we make people around us worry?’. Teachers and classmates often tell us to go to bed early and not to stay up late, but I often go to bed late for dealing with some learning matters and makes them worry. So, I need to take care of myself and do not let others worry about me before I can help them. Moreover, some classmates would have completed their homework about one or two weeks before the submission deadline some people asked them why they completed it so early, and they replied that they thought that if they finish it earlier, they could help those students who had not finished it yet. After hearing this, I admire my classmates very much, and I think I ought to learn from them.

2. Every thought is for the sake of others

The second point is to reflect that I have not followed the saying ‘every thought is for the sake of others’. The Venerable Chengde said in class: ‘A person’s maturity is

embodied in whether he can understand the difficulties of others. When we interact with other people, we ought to put ourselves in other people's shoes and understand them. Also, we need to be able to always see the strengths and advantages of others.' Although I am eighteen years old, I am still immature in getting along with other people.

I remember that when I was in the school, one day I was in charge of cooking lunch. Before cooking, I asked a classmate if she would have lunch. She said yes, but when I was ready, she suddenly said that she did not want to eat it anymore. However, our school has regulations for those who cook to eat leftovers by themselves. So, I am not happy about it. Later, I reflected on the fact that I was unhappy at that time because I only thought about myself and did not think about the classmate. She might not be having lunch because she was unwell or for other reasons. I should care about whether she needed help instead of blaming her.

Venerable Chengde also said that a mature person knows how to introspect himself and blame the faults on himself. As an old saying goes, 'The wise men blame himself and the fools argues.' But I think I had never examined myself before. I always felt that I was quite good and rarely lost my temper. But then I heard the Venerable Chengde quoted one saying of Xia Lianju 夏蓮居 in class: 'Scholars must first break the barrier of self-deception before they can start discussing learning. You must see that you are full of mistakes before you could know that how to study.' I just know that my study is going downhill in the days when I felt that I have no faults. Just like the old saying goes, 'Learning is like rowing upstream. If you do not progress, you will go backwards.'

About seeing our own faults, when Venerable Chengde's comments about the *Taishang ganyingpian* 太上感應篇, made me reflect a lot. He said: 'Do not think that

the evil actions mentioned in the classics are not related to us so you will not reflect on them. We must think about that whether we have even a bit of the thoughts behind those evil actions.’ I always feel that those behaviours are really bad, and I certainly would not do it. But after being reminded by the teacher, I found that I did have a lot of bad thoughts that I had not noticed.

Furthermore, the practice of ‘every thought is for the sake of others’ is also embodied in not causing others trouble and not letting others feel pressured. The teacher said in class: ‘Wherever the Bodhisattva goes, all living beings are happy.’ Then I reflected on myself in the process of getting along with others. Sometimes because of some of my thoughtless words and behaviours, I might have made other people feel uncomfortable. When I consciously try to avoid these situations, I find that every time when I say something inappropriate, I actually have a little feeling in my heart that whether I say would make them unhappy. Then I realized that if I can think of others all the time, I will not say any inappropriate things.

3. Gratitude

The last point is about gratitude. The Venerable Chengde said in class: ‘We should not take anything for granted. We should always be grateful for everything. We should be grateful for everything including water, sunshine, rain, and dew, not to mention the gift of life from Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, parents, and teachers. We should keep Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and ancestors in our heart, and we must not let down their hopes.’ I have never been able to be grateful for everything before taking this course. I have always taken the sunshine, rain, and other people’s smile to us for granted every day. Therefore, when these gifts are no longer available, I will feel uncomfortable and even resentful. Later, I realized that it was because I was so comfortable in daily life

that I have not gone through any hardships, so I did not reflect on myself often and did not feel grateful.

Now I am trying to let myself have the idea of gratitude. For example, when I read the words of gratitude before a meal, I will imagine the virtues of heaven and earth, the country, parents, teachers and so on, thinking that I do not deserve their trust and support if I do not behave well. And I remind myself everyday not to let them down. But I could not keep these thoughts all the time. I could only think of them at certain times, such as before meals or during morning class. I am very ashamed that I cannot be always as grateful and respectful as Venerable Chengde.

Furthermore, I think I did not give enough gratitude to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas before, nor did I have faith in them. But Venerable Chengde once said in class: ‘One chant of Buddha’s name could eliminate one’s eight-one kalpas of felony of life and death. If you really understand and really believe it, you will keep chanting the Buddha’s name without stopping.’ When I heard this, I felt that Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are really compassionate. As long as we are willing to believe in them, as long as we can be honest, obedient, and recite the Buddha’s name, they use their blessing to help us eliminate karma and save us from endless suffering. Just like the old saying goes, ‘Where there is Buddhism, there is a solution.’

I am deeply aware that I have created a lot of bad karma that could not be easily eliminate. Only by reciting the Buddha’s name can I eliminate it. How can I not be grateful for the kindness of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas? They miss us just like a mother misses her children who travelled far away. Venerable Chengde said: ‘When we see the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, they will definitely immediately ask us why we are here so late. I used to have no confidence in going to the Pure Land. I always regarded it as a kind of spiritual sustenance. I never thought that one day I could go there and

see the Buddha with my own eyes. After listening to the teacher's words, I realized that we must have promised the Buddha to go to the Pure Land a long time ago, but we reneged on our promise and did not go, so I cannot degenerate anymore in this life.

When we know that we should be grateful to the Buddha, we must think about how to repay the grace. The Venerable Master Chin kung once encouraged us: 'Young people should not be too stingy and should lend your bodies to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.'. Therefore, in order to repay my gratitude, I think I have the responsibility to practice hard, correct my mistakes, and fulfil my mission.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, Xia Lianju 夏蓮居 once said: 'As long as you do not find what you have done wrong, you will be satisfied with the status quo. As long as you do not find what you need to correct, there is no opportunity for progress.'¹ In order not to waste this rare opportunity and the kindness of the Buddha, ancestors, parents, teachers, and all sentient beings, I will continue to strengthen my conviction with the attitude of 'Who is there besides me to bring about?'², reflect on and correct my thoughts and behaviours every day seriously.

I am deeply aware that I still have a lot of mistakes to be reflected and corrected, but I have not found out yet. I sincerely hope you can criticize and correct me.

¹ Dizigui gongyiwang (2013) <http://www.dizigui.cn/clsfx_130922m.asp> [accessed 13 October 2021]

² James Legge, *The Chinese Classics* (Shanghai: Huadongshifandaxue chubanshe, 2011), vol. II, P. 232. The Chinese text is '當今之世, 捨我其誰?'

Bibliography

1. *Dizigui gongyiwang* (2013) <http://www.dizigui.cn/clsfx_130922m.asp> [accessed 13 October 2021]
2. James Legge, *The Chinese Classics* (Shanghai: Huadongshifandaxue chubanshe, 2011)