



從牙買加到萬佛城

—我的學佛之路

From Jamaica to CTTB—
My Path of Studying Buddhism

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我生長於加勒比海上一個叫牙買加的小島，牙買加是英屬殖民地，1965年才宣布獨立。我就讀於一所英國聖公會的住宿學校，之後我和母親及兄弟姊妹移民來美國。對我而言，美國文化很不一樣，很不容易適應，我經過一段艱辛的適應期。我媽媽經常鼓勵我：「別太安靜，有自信一點，有什麼事就說出來，妳在美國不是在牙買加，妳想在此生存就得善用妳的口。」即使母親擔心和努力保護我，在美國化的過程中仍是相當辛苦。我的兄弟姊妹們就比我容易多了。

數年過去了，接受教育、工作、人際關係等變成我的生活重心，但在內心深處，我一直渴望心靈的滿足。基督教義無法填補我心靈的空虛，我學習印度教，我想知道希伯來哲理，我閱讀可蘭經，還到清真寺，我也讀新世紀的資料，但沒有一樣能感動我。我想找到一位精神導師，「當學生預備好時，老師就會出現！」這句話常提醒著我，所以我決定等待，心想：

「也許我會等到下一生」，不過我願意等。我一直有一尊小雕像，大約十五年前，我在紐約市的中國城買的，我不知道他是誰，只是覺得他有一個大肚子及臉上帶著大笑容很可愛，我並不知道他就是彌勒佛，只覺得他很珍貴，所以我很珍惜。

我的工作是學校的語言治療師，但漸漸渴望找到自己的「使命」，我並不在乎金錢

I was born and raised on the little Caribbean island of Jamaica. Jamaica is one of the English speaking islands, having been under British rule until its independence in 1965. In Jamaica I attended Anglican Boarding School before immigrating to the U.S. with my mother and siblings. America was a very difficult place for me to be—the culture was so new, so different, and I had a hard time adjusting to this new life in the U.S. My mother constantly encouraged me: “Speak up, don’t be so quiet, be more assertive. You are not in Jamaica; you are in America now and in order to survive you have to use your mouth,” she would tell me, in an effort to protect me. But despite her worry, I had a hard time becoming Americanized. My siblings assimilated a lot better than I did, into American culture.

The years passed by and I journeyed on, with education, profession and relationship being my major focus. Underlying all this, deep within, I yearned for spiritual fulfillment. Christianity did not satisfy that “void”, so I wandered on through life “soul searching”. I encountered Hinduism, I looked into Rosicrucianism, I wondered about the teachings of the Kaballah, I looked at the Holy Koran and attended Mosque with Islamic friends, I read New Age materials, but was not moved by any of these. I wondered if I would ever have a spiritual teacher, but was always reminded that “when the student is ready, the Teacher will appear”—so I decided to wait—“maybe I would even have to wait till next life time,” I thought. I was willing to do that too. I have always had a tiny statue with me. About 15 years ago when I worked in a school near New York City’s Chinatown, one day after work I walked into Chinatown and bought this statue—I didn’t know who he was, but I thought he was cute and chubby, with a big stomach and a big smile on his face. I did not know anything about this happy faced Buddha, except that he felt like a “precious jewel”, and so I prized this tiny statue throughout the years.

My work as a school speech therapist began to feel unfulfilling. I began to wonder and wish for my “Life’s Work”—the work that



的報酬，而是要找尋今生的工作「呼召」。在2000年時，我經歷了一段坎坷的人生旅程，許多的挫折終於讓我下定決心去做兩件我最想做的事—(1)做義工(2)離開美國。於是我到世界和平組織去登記當義工，就在我準備出發去當義工時，我的健康出了問題以致無法成行。

後來我回到美國住在佛教徒的朋友家，在她的小佛堂內有許多尊佛像，她告訴我這些佛菩薩的事蹟，我感到非常震撼。她借我宣公上人的書，令我愛不釋手。我也抄錄〈楞嚴咒〉，以免以後沒有機會再看到它。她也借我錄音帶，雖然我不清楚念佛的意義，我也跟著念佛，我非常地投入，日以繼夜不停地聽，一聲聲的佛號已經刻印在腦海裡了，即使半夜醒來覺得還聽到「阿彌陀佛」的念佛聲。我好喜歡朋友教我的佛法和她的書。有時半夜醒來，我會到我朋友的小佛堂去禮佛，即使我並不知道該如何禮佛，我只覺得在諸佛面前自己的卑微與感恩。

有一次，當朋友和我談到戒律時，我很興奮的說「學校裡應該教導這些戒律才是！」當她告訴我的確有學校是以這些為教育宗旨時，我真是太欣喜了。有一天，我獨自在佛堂禮佛並向佛菩薩尋求幫助，我五體投地的趴在地上，祈求指示我此生真正的道路，如果能夠滿我的願，無論如何要「有所表示」。我想即使我並不懂得正確的禮佛規矩，佛菩薩不會見怪的。我就像小孩子一般懇求佛菩薩原諒我過去所犯的錯，我願意奉獻自己來做利益眾生的各種事，我想做個更好的人，只行善事，我現在不知道該怎麼辦？過了一會兒我爬起來，走到書架前拿一本《宣化上人開示錄》，一翻開正好是法總的各分支道場的通訊處，太棒了！我打了好幾天電話，經人指引後我來到萬佛聖城。

我來聖城兩個月後受三皈五戒。我很高興也很感恩能住在這裡，這份感恩是言語無法形容的。

I came into this lifetime to do. Financial rewards were meaningless to me; I just wanted to find this work, this “Calling”. Then in the year 2000 things collapsed around me and I finally felt freed to do the 2 things I most wanted to do (1) to do volunteer work and (2) to live outside the U.S. so I signed up with the Peace Corps. Then, just before I was to leave for my volunteer assignment, a medical issue arose for me and so I was unable to go.

Later I returned to the States and stayed at a friend’s house—she happens to be a Buddhist. In her meditation room, the pictures and statues of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas caught my attention. My friend began telling me about these Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and I was awestruck. She showed me books written by Master Hua and I couldn’t stop reading them. I began writing out the Shurangama Mantra in case I never got the opportunity to see it again. She lent me tapes and I played them continuously, reciting the Buddha’s name even though I did not understand its significance. I was so captivated that I remember waking during the night and hearing “Namo Amitofo” being chanted, perhaps because I’d been listening to it nonstop for many days. I would hear these beautiful sounds in my head whether the tape was being played or not, for the next few weeks. I became consumed with the Buddhism being taught to me by my friend and by her books. I would awaken at night and go to the meditation room and bow to the Buddhas, as I’d seen my friend doing. I didn’t even know how to bow! I just knew that I felt humbled and grateful in the presence of these Buddhas.

On one occasion when my friend spoke to me about the precepts, I excitedly said, “They should be teaching these in school.” When she told me that there were schools where these principles were being taught, I was overjoyed. One day, I bowed to the Buddhas to ask their help. I poured out my heart to them asking them if they could help me find my True Path in this life. I asked them to show me a sign if they could help me. I somehow felt that they would forgive me if I didn’t know how to bow properly. I came before them like a child would—I told them that I wanted to serve and help humanity in any small way that I could; I asked forgiveness for wrongs that I had done. I asked from the depths of my heart to be shown how to be a better person and how to do only good. I asked them what I should do now. Sometime afterwards, I got up and walked over to the bookshelf where I picked up a copy of *Ven. Master Hua’s Dharma Talks*. I flipped the pages and came across a list of Buddhist Monasteries. I could not believe my eyes! I thought “great!” So I called at a branch and was directed to CTTB.

Two months after arriving at CTTB, I took Refuge with the Triple Jewel, and took the Five Precepts as well. I am deeply grateful to be here. There are no words to describe the gratitude that I feel.