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萬佛聖城初旅憶事

Reminiscences of My First Trip to CTTB

一九九〇年，家母、姨母以及大姊剛由萬佛聖城參加萬佛寶懺與佛陀聖誕慶祝會歸來；家母告知，師父上宣下化老和尚，已經給予我及大姊兩人前往法界佛教大學就學的全額獎學金，我欣喜若狂，因為我的願望達成了。我們在一九九〇年七月三十一日抵達美國。

在機場，一位美國女居士接我們往萬佛聖城。她協助我們在小齋堂用完晚齋後，帶我們去寮房。我永遠難忘她的慈悲。翌日上午，我被一些我已往未曾聽過的奇異聲音吵醒，此外，空氣也很不一樣，很清涼很純淨。我聽到昆蟲的叫聲，嘿！我又再度聽到那尖銳的叫聲，我後來方知那是孔雀的叫聲。

從此，我開始在萬佛聖城適應新生活，迎接我的，是個新環境、不同的生活方式，以及不熟悉的面孔。這也是我未來四年求學的地方。在城內無電視、收音機或電腦（編按：當年城內尚無電腦設備）我可使用；但是我卻有上課、做功課、個人研究、參與佛殿的活動以及廟宇內的工作來填滿我的日子，而且我還有如家人般的認真修行者為伴。時光飛逝，我發覺在萬佛聖城每日的活動更可以充實我的精神生活，沒有世俗娛樂的膚淺和追逐逸樂毫無意義的事。

萬佛聖城是一個很獨特的處所，必須走很多路後才能食用早、午齋，此地的人在進食時也不交談。這樣有兩個好處，一則可以避免消化不良，二則因為靜默可以提高專心，因而協助我們如以往師父住世時，或是透過現在午齋時所聆聽的錄音帶，而得到上人的法食。我發現這很有趣，而且確實對我們的身體和精

The year is 1990: My mother, aunt, and elder sister have just returned from the Ten Thousand Buddhas Jeweled Repentance and Shakyamuni Buddha's birthday celebration in the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas (CTTB). My mother tells me that Shr Fu, the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua, has granted a full scholarship to my elder sister and me to study in Dharma Realm Buddhist University (DRBU). I am overjoyed, as my wish has been fulfilled. We reached America on July 31, 1990.

An American laywoman picks us up at the airport and drives us straight to CTTB. She helps us get dinner at the small dining hall and takes us to our living quarters. I can never forget her kindness. The next morning, I awake to some strange sounds that I have never heard before. In addition, the air is different. It is cool and pure. I hear the sounds of insects and hey, I hear the screeching sounds again. It is a peacock calling, as I am told later.

Hence, I start adapting to a new life in CTTB. New surroundings, a different lifestyle, and unfamiliar faces greet me. This is the place which I will spend my next four years studying. There is no television, radio, or computer that I can gain access to. In replacement, I have classes, assignments, personal study, Buddha hall activities, and temple work to fill my day and truly serious cultivators as my extended family. The days pass by in a flash. I find the daily activities in CTTB more fulfilling to the spirit, unlike the shallowness of worldly entertainment and leisure pursuits which are truly meaningless.

This is a unique place where I have to cultivate quite a bit and walk quite a distance before I can take my morning and

神都有助益。

不久，法界大學開始秋季班註冊。我瞭解這所大學是不同於馬來西亞的大學。因為這裏沒有一般大學裏老生戲弄或欺凌新生的傳統。來美國之前，我參加過馬來亞大學的新生訓練，在這一週的期間內，學生不准與家人接觸。新生必須屈服於老生的要求與命令，我也聽說過，有老生要一位新生喝下馬桶水的故事。我由我所見與經歷覺醒過來，並向觀世音菩薩祈禱，如果我可以到法界大學唸書的話，我將會真正努力修行。第二天，我的祈求奇蹟似的應驗了。很欣慰能夠瞭解到在這個充滿災難的世界裏，仍然有一所提倡平等、人道、仁愛和慈悲的大學，尊重人道和和互融互容不同的宗教。我迄今未曾對我離開馬來亞大學，來到陌生的國度進行佛學研究和實踐的抉擇感到遺憾。

我真正歡喜我在此地的所作所為。上課的教室可能是佛殿、是妙語堂，甚至是在女校高中，因此，從不會覺得無聊。因為有很多機會與萬佛聖城的人員聽講華語，我現在的中文比以前好得多了。我真的很喜歡我所學的，尤其是英文、中文與《楞嚴經》。

老師們也都是很好的人。我對一位有精進修為的居士教授印象特別深刻。她是一位非常仁慈、有耐心和智慧的教育家，她能將佛教、英語與文學連貫起來。她是一個稀有且令人尊敬的人，願意為她的學生犧牲自己的寶貴時間。例如，當我們交出秋季班指定的「李爾王」書面報告給她時，她把我們所交的書面報告經修訂、並加以繕打後還給我們，讓我們感到十分驚訝。

一個人若生活在一個非常安全的環境，置身於重視他人福祉甚於個人的有德者之中，想起來這是太棒了。更甚者，將兩性分開，對我們的修行與學習都有幫助。

我記得有次在晚課後與大眾列隊前往妙語堂聽晚上的講演，師父的房舍正好在講堂隔壁。當講課開始時，他會來靜靜坐在前排位置面對眾人，並默誦為法會祈福。有時候，他會到處走動，並親自為眾人祈福。能坐在位子上聽法是很好的，雖然每當講師以抽籤方式，要學員回答問題或提出意見時，我會覺得焦慮；然而，這仍是一個很好的經歷。

我在萬佛聖城度過我二十一歲生日。雖然我的家人與朋友都不在此與我一同慶祝，但我仍有如在家的感覺一樣。或許，我與此地的人們有宿世的因緣吧！我記得在戒律課的測驗那天，我回到寮房，接到我在馬來西亞家人寄來的生日卡，我的妹妹寫道：「您十分幸運，能夠在聖城，自精神慈父處，接受法鑰。」

noon meals. In addition, the people here do not talk when they eat. This rule has a two-pronged benefit. Besides preventing indigestion, our silence promotes concentration, which in turn helps us to obtain Dharma food from Shr Fu whether live, like in the past or through his tapes during our noon meal nowadays. I find it interesting and beneficial indeed to our body and mind.

Soon, DRBU opens its fall registration. I realize that this university is different from those in Malaysia. Why is that so? For one thing, it does not have ragging which entails bullying of juniors by seniors. Prior to coming to America, I went for orientation in the University of Malaya. No contact was allowed with the family for an entire week. The juniors had to succumb to seniors' wishes and demands and I heard stories about how seniors forced a junior to drink toilet water. I was disillusioned by what I saw, and prayed to Guanyin Bodhisattva that I would really cultivate hard if I could study in CTTB instead.

The next day, a miraculous response occurs. It is so comforting to realize that in this troubled world, there is still a university, which promotes equality, humaneness, kindness and compassion, respect for humanity and tolerance for all religions. I have hitherto never regretted my decision to withdraw from the University of Malaya and to pursue Buddhist Study and Practice in a foreign land.

I truly enjoy what I am doing here. The classroom can be in the Buddha Hall, the Wonderful Words Hall and even in the girls' high school. Thus, it is never boring. I am much better in the Chinese language now since I get to hear and speak more of it with the CTTB residents. I really like what I am studying especially English, Chinese, and the *Shurangama Sutra*.

The teachers are very nice people. I am especially impressed by the lay professor who is a cultivated and refined lady. An exceptionally kind, patient, and a wise educator, she can connect Buddhism with English language and literature. She is a rare and admirable person who sacrifices her precious time for the sake of her students. For instance, we submit our fall semester written papers on King Lear to her and she surprises us by returning a well-typed version of our written assignments duly amended!

It is nice to imagine that one is living in a very safe environment, amidst virtuous people who are concerned with the welfare of others besides themselves. Furthermore, the separation of sexes is good for our cultivation and studies as well.

I recall walking in line with the rest of the people to the Wonderful Words Hall after the daily evening recitation for the night lecture. Shr Fu's house is just next door to the lecture hall. He will come and sit quietly in front facing everyone while the lecture goes on and recites silently to bless the assembly. At times, he will walk around and physically bless the people. It is nice to sit on the bench and hear Dharma lectures. However,

我完全同意，我是十分幸運，能在聖城過我的生日——尤其是後來當我瞭解我無法在聖城過另一個生日之後。

此地的食物很好。齋堂提供有很多令人垂涎的素食佳餚。我後來回家時，家父對自己女兒胖嘟嘟的外表感到印象深刻。不過回家後，我已經減除過重的體重。

在聖城的第一個冬天是很困難的。我來自一個炎熱潮濕的國家，對於此地冬天的寒冷不太適應。尤其是在清晨，我必須頂著風寒步行到總務處與廚房工作。一位女居士在得知我在寒風中瑟瑟發抖後，給了我們姊妹兩人有襯裏的長褲禦寒，我們也向廟裏借了一些冬衣。我後來瞭解到，如果有適當的禦寒衣物，寒冬的氣候還是可以忍受的。

我們每日需早睡早起，因此我們的健康也得到改善。我比在家時健康許多，在此實行日中一食也比在家裏容易的多。在此緊湊的課程，不容許一個人偷懶或陷入妄想。雖然有時候緊湊的課程讓我覺得疲倦，但是我感到快樂。當我在法會中嘗試唱誦，我感到十分舒適、平靜和輕鬆，心想：「啊！這才是我應該做的事，而不是追逐一些世俗的事物。」

時光飛逝，在一九九一年的春季班時，我得知家母身體不適的消息，我開始思念她，並決定返家。我到柏林根去請求師父的允許，讓我回家。師父准許了，所以我在九九一年的五月十五日離開萬佛聖城。當家母很高興帶我去看我們家中的各項改變，我反而覺得在自己家像個陌生人。事實是過去的十個月裏，我已經習慣於萬佛聖城的生活方式。隔天，我想到我已經離開萬佛聖城，讓我覺得很難過，不禁淚下。

此後，我有五次以客人身份回到萬佛聖城，我會常常珍惜我初次到萬佛聖城成為法界大學學生的愉悅回憶。雖然我沒有足夠的福報、善根、智慧與道德可以長期居住在萬佛聖城，但是我仍認為自己是屬於少數幸運的人，有機會踏入地球上一個最光明的地方。我希望所有來萬佛聖城居住和學習的人，都能夠珍惜他們的好運，不要入寶山空手而回。

阿彌陀佛！

I feel quite anxious whenever one lecturer decides to draw sticks with names, to get people to answer questions or give comments. Nevertheless, it is good experience.

I spend my 21st birthday in CTTB. Although my family and friends are not here to celebrate with me, still I feel very much at home. Probably, I have affinities with the residents here from past lives. I recall sitting for the Precept Class test that day and upon returning to my room, I receive a birthday card from my family in Malaysia. My younger sister writes,

You are extremely lucky
To receive the Dharma key
From your Spiritual Daddy
At the Sagely City!

I totally agree with her. I am extremely fortunate to be at the holy City especially on my birthday for I realize later that I can never spend another birthday here again.

The food is simply great. There is a huge variety and mouth-watering array of vegetarian cuisine in the dining room. When I return home later, my father is so impressed with his daughter's chubby appearance. Since returning home, I have shed all the extra pounds.

The first winter spent here is difficult. Coming from a hot and humid country, I am not used to the bitter chill. I have to brave the cold when walking to the financial office and the kitchen to work especially in the mornings. Upon realizing that I am shuddering with cold, a lay-woman kindly provides my sister and me with padded pants. We also borrow some warm clothing from the temple. I realize then that the cold weather will be more bearable if one wears the appropriate clothing.

We have to sleep and rise early each day. By doing so, one's health is improved. I am healthier here than back home. Taking one meal a day here is certainly easier than at home.

The tight schedule here does not permit one to laze around or indulge in false thinking. Although I feel tired sometimes from the rigorous schedule, I feel happy. As I circumambulate and recite along with the assembly, I feel so comfortable, peaceful and at ease, thinking, "Ah, this is what I should be doing instead of the worldly mundane matters."

Time flies. Now I am in my spring semester of 1991. I get news that my mother is not well. I start to miss her and decide to go home. I went to Burlingame to seek Shr Fu's approval to return home. He allows me to do so and I leave CTTB on May 15, 1991. As my dear mother happily shows me the changes in our house, I feel like a stranger in my own home. The truth is I have grown accustomed to the lifestyle at CTTB for the past ten months. The next day, at the thought of having left CTTB, I become so miserable that I resort to tears.

Since then, I have made another five trips to CTTB as a guest. I will always cherish fond memories of my first trip to CTTB, to become a DRBU student. Although I did not have sufficient blessings, good roots, wisdom, and virtue to stay in CTTB for long, still I count myself among the fortunate ones to be able to step foot into the brightest place on earth. I hope that all who come to live and study in CTTB will cherish their good fortune and not leave the mountain of jewels empty-handed.

Amitabha!