



最佳抉擇

The Best Choice



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培德中學 英譯 ENGLISH TRANSLATION PROVIDED BY DEVELOPING VIRTUE SECONDARY SCHOOL

幾年前就有個心願，希望大女兒能到萬佛聖城上學。以前她不愛說話，有張嚴肅的臉，再加上是個吃素學佛的中國人，與同學之間的人際關係成為她最大的苦惱，進而影響她的睡眠和功課；小小年紀居然有失眠的問題。我常提醒她臉上有點笑容，她說：「有什麼好笑呢？」她真的不大快樂。前年她去聖城打了「觀音七」和「佛七」後，開始感受到清淨法喜。

去年七月為她和妹妹報名參加聖城的夏令營，出發前和她談申請到聖城讀書之事。她哭了五分鐘後說：「我想我是應該去那兒讀書，誘惑就會斷乾淨了。」去年秋天她進入培德中學讀九年級，花了一段時間適應，但她快樂多了。今年暑假回來她經常「未語先笑」，整個人煥然一新。週末常和一群朋友玩，看她笑鬧得像小時候一樣，我很為她感到高興。她也不再睡

Years ago I already wished that my eldest daughter could go to school in the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas (CTTB). She had a serious appearance and never liked to talk, traits that were made worse by the fact that she is a Chinese, a Buddhist and a vegetarian. The relationship between her and her classmates had been her biggest anxiety and it affected her, causing sleepless nights and depressing grades. I often reminded her to put a smile on her face, but she said: "What's there to smile about?" She really wasn't happy at all. Last year, when she attended the Guanyin Session and Amitabha Session in CTTB, she started to feel joy and peace during both sessions.

She and her younger sister attended the CTTB Youth Summer Camp last July. Before going, I asked her if she wanted to go to school there. After hearing it, she started to cry for five minutes and then said, "I guess I should go." She further added, "That's strange. The craving for the Internet and all the other stuff were gone at the moment I decided to go." Last fall, she entered ninth grade in Developing Virtue Secondary School. Though it took a while for her to adapt to the customs and life there, she became much happier than ever before. She is now having summer vacation at home. She frequently smiles before speaking, and her whole attitude and personality seems like that of a new person. We often invite many kids to our house on weekends, and she plays and laughs with



到日上三竿，早早就起床了，並說：「奇怪！一旦我決定去了，電腦網路、早起做早課，和背楞嚴咒都不成問題了。」她現在還負責家裏除草、洗碗、洗廁所的工作，比以前勤快多了。她把以前訂的漫畫書都扔掉，也不要求我們載她去圖書館上網。講究品質的她，現今也很自然的和我們去舊貨店買東西。

明年她將參加中國文化常識比賽，在跟她講解中國文化、歷史、地理中，不僅是她，我也學習很多。她說若不是參加比賽，她可能不會如此努力了解中國的一切，這真是讓她充實自己的大好機會。

今天是她生日，她給自己的生日禮物是把「楞嚴咒」背會了。她認為煩惱和我執是自己苦的根源，需要楞嚴大定來幫助自己恢復清淨心。我知道當她會背「楞嚴咒」，並持之以恆時，她的樓房已打好穩固的地基了。

小女兒能到育良小學讀書，是個附加獎。她本無意願，而我們也無此計劃。前年我們全家去聖城打「觀音七」，她喜歡那兒自然優美的環境，而在法會期間也很少缺席。去年七月她參加聖城的夏令營，豐富的節目及新認識的好朋友，使她也要求留在聖城讀書。這真是個意外的驚喜。法師和她面談後決定讓她試試，想不到她住校讀六年級後相當獨立，適應良好。

她在聖城很快樂，功課、人緣都不錯，學會彈鋼琴、拉二胡，然而最令我們高興的是她的中文進步神速。在她六歲時，我們舉家搬到美國中部，她沒有寫讀中文的基礎，只有週末兩小時去中文學校上課。上中文對她來說是件痛苦的事，常為此流眼淚。在我追問下終於說她不喜歡去，因為老師很嚴厲，再加上她朋友沒有人說中文，學了也沒有用，所以對中文有些抗拒。到聖城幾個

them like a little child. I'm very happy for her. During this summer, she does not sleep till noon like she did before; instead she gets up earlier to memorize mantras or help out with chores -- she's responsible for mowing the lawn, washing the dishes, and cleaning the restrooms. She has definitely improved her long-time laziness and become healthy and active. She threw away her Manga (Japanese comics) book, and doesn't beg to go on the Internet in the library (we don't have Internet at home). As a person who used to be picky about quality and fashion, she now shops with us in stores that sell secondhand things.

In the next school year, she will be attending the Chinese Cultural Competition. In the midst of telling her about Chinese culture, history, and geography, not only is she learning things, I am as well. She said that if it were not for the competition, she probably wouldn't have bothered learning all these things about China. This is such a good opportunity for her to extend her knowledge.

Today is her birthday. The birthday gift she gave herself is the fact that she finished memorizing the Shurangama Mantra. She believed that most of her suffering came from her ego and afflictions, and so she needed the great stillness of this mantra to purify her mind and obtain peace and tranquility. I know that when she memorizes the Shurangama Mantra and recites it every day, she will set a firm foundation for her future.

That my youngest daughter could study in Instilling Goodness Elementary School (IGS) was really a bonus for us. Before last summer she had no intention to go to IGS, and we didn't plan on it either. In 2004, our whole family went to attend the Guanyin Session in CTTB. She liked the beautiful environment and hardly missed a day during the session. In 2005, she attended the Youth Summer Camp with her sister in CTTB. Since the activities were so lively and rich and she made many good friends, she requested to go to the school too. This was a pleasant surprise to us for sure. The Dharma Masters interviewed her and decided to let her try. She went to sixth grade last fall, and astonishingly she was quite independent and fit in well in the school.

She is very happy in IGS and obtained good grades, plus making many close friends. She learned how to play the piano and *er hu* (a two-stringed bowed Chinese instrument), and the most pleasing thing for us was her amazing progress in Chinese. When she was six, our family moved to the Midwestern United States, and at that time she was not able to write or read Chinese. She then attended a weekend Chinese school for two-hour lessons. Learning Chinese had been hard for her and because of that, she often wept about it. After I asked her several times what was wrong, she finally answered that her teacher was very strict and that since most of her friends didn't speak Chinese anyways, there was no point for her to learn Chinese after all. Thus, she had built a wall against learning Chinese. After she had studied for a few months in IGS, I found that her Chinese speaking



月後，我們發現她的中文說得流利了，也會以中文寫卡片給我們，漸漸會讀有注音或拼音的中文書。她說老師對她們既慈悲又有耐心，並不規定用什麼方式學，也常給她們看一些有趣的中文書，所以她現在覺得中文很好玩。昨天她告訴我：「從我們學校畢業的學生，每個中英文都很棒哦！」以前我們很遺憾她是個中文「文盲」，如今看看她的表現，想想她將會是「很棒」中的一位，感到非常神奇。

美國友人問我，怎麼捨得讓兩個女兒去那麼遠的地方讀書？我說：「萬佛聖城有清淨優美的環境，注重道德教育，又有佛法、中文、打坐課程，這種完美的教育是別處找不到的。爲了她們好，有些東西是須割捨的。中國人說天下無不散的宴席，我們的小孩即使現在和我們在一起，上大學時不也多半要離開我們嗎？她們不過是提早幾年離開罷了。」他們雖不是佛教徒，看到這嚴重污染的世界，倒也能了解我的想法。

老師和義工們接過照顧和教育女兒的重擔後，我開始有時間讀較大部的經如《楞嚴經》、《法華經》。常常沉浸在法喜中。老師和義工們的辛勞不僅成就學生，也成就我。

記得去年夏天法師決定接受她們入學申請時，我真是太高興了。多年的願望終於實現，像在做夢一樣。當晚我同修夢見上人對他說：「你們兩個女兒能順利的申請進萬佛聖城讀書，是佛菩薩加被。」然而我知道，除了佛菩薩，上人也幫了大忙，因爲幾年來我曾爲此事多次祈求上人。

兩個女兒到聖城讀了一年的書，各方面都有進步。她們感恩父母爲她們做了最佳抉擇，而我們蒙受佛菩薩、上人、法師、老師、義工們的深恩，亦有無盡的感謝。

became pretty fluent and she could write us cards in Chinese as well. Gradually she learned both Zhu Yin (Chinese phonetics) and Pin Yin (English alphabet pronunciation) and could read Chinese books which contained them. She said the teachers in IGS were very patient and compassionate and didn't set a specific way for them to learn Chinese, and also gave them fun Chinese books to read. As a result, she lost the distance she had with Chinese and thought of it as a more amusing and interesting aspect of her life. Yesterday, she told me, "The graduates from our school are all bilingual and both their Chinese and English are superb!" Before, we were regretting that she might be a Chinese illiterate, but now we are amazed to see her achievements and know that she probably will be one of the "superb ones" too.

My American friends asked me why I wanted to send my daughters to a school so far away. I replied, "The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas has a pure and beautiful environment, and the school emphasizes developing virtue and instilling goodness. Plus, the students also study Buddhism, Chinese and Meditation there. This wonderful kind of education is not something you can find anywhere else in America. For their sake, some things need to be sacrificed. An old Chinese saying goes: "A banquet won't last forever." Although we are together with our children now, when they go to college don't we have to part with them then? Our daughters just left us a few years earlier, that's all." Although they are not Buddhists, they too feel that this world has become so polluted and thus understand my decision.

After the teachers and staff in CTTB took over the burden of teaching and taking care of our two daughters, I started to have time to read and study longer sutras like the *Shurangama Sutra* and the *Flower Adornment Sutra*. Often, I found myself absorbed in pure bliss from the Dharma. The teachers, staff, and volunteers have worked so hard to assist and teach the students and have also assisted me.

I remember last summer when I heard that they were accepted to the school, I was thrilled and overjoyed beyond words. The wish that I had many years ago finally came true. That night, my husband dreamed of the Venerable Master who said, "Your daughters being able to go to school in the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas is all because of the blessings and help from the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas." But I knew that, not only did the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas help us, the Venerable Master did us a big favor, too, for I had been praying to the Venerable Master about this matter for the past few years.

Our two girls have finished their first year in the City and have improved in every way. They feel grateful to us for making the best choice for them, which could never have been realized without help from the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, the Venerable Master, Dharma Masters, teachers, and volunteers. We are eternally grateful to every one of them.