

Pulling Out Poisonous Arrows and Building a Bodhimanda of Intrinsic Nature

拔諸毒箭 啟建自性道場



By Valerie Tseng on December 1, 2012 at CTTB Buddha Hall
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BODHI FIELD | 菩提田

A few years ago, in a special report, *the National Geographic*, a well known US magazine wrote: “Sacred sites lay scattered across the globe, spread like seeds to the wind as if by the hands of gods. From the cradles of ancient civilizations in Asia, Africa, and Europe to the newer world of America to the farthest reaches of Oceania, the world’s holiest places transcend national and cultural boundaries. Some are hallowed by reports of modern miracles, and others are as old as the Earth itself. Yet each, when encountered, is a place where the human spirit can soar with a sense of the sublime.”

I jumped with joy when I spotted CTTB on that world

幾年前，美國非常有名的雜誌《國家地理》刊登了一則特別報導：「宗教聖地分佈在世界各地；這些散落在世界各處的宗教聖地，就像眾神用手在風中撒落的種子一樣。從古老的亞洲、非洲、歐洲到新的美洲地區，再到遙遠的大洋洲。這些神聖之地，穿越了國家和文化的疆界，有些被視作神聖的現代奇跡，有些則被認為和地球一樣的古老；然而，每一處皆是人類崇高偉大精神所誕生的場域。」

當我在那則報導中發現萬佛聖城被列入世界宗教聖地之一時，我高興地跳了起來。我想：終於，我最喜歡的地方，得到了全世界的認同。在萬佛聖城，大大小小的

map, named as one of those sacred sites. I thought, “At last, a worldly recognition of one of my favorite places.” Some animals, small and large take refuge here. The morning tranquility and natural beauty here is a wonder. When I am mindful, I wake up grateful for my life and cherish spending most of my waking hours in such a truly beautiful place – beauty inside and out. While so many people are in suffering and while so many global disasters strike, I constantly remind myself not to take for granted what I have. To me, humble CTTB is still an undiscovered treasure and often misunderstood. I hope our monastery will continue to ripple sublime goodness and bring hope to humanity far and near.

It was just over a year ago, in August that I moved to Ukiah from the Bay Area. My daughter made a last minute decision to attend Instilling Goodness Elementary during our retreat at Buddha Root Farm. Actually, it occurred on the last day of the retreat, after everyone shared personal reflection of the week. Interestingly, the theme of the retreat was the Bodhi Resolve. So, here I am at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, volunteering. I mainly teach elementary students at our girl school and assist with DRBU's new program which is applying for accreditation.

My transition here was surprisingly smooth. Perhaps it was because the lifestyle here resonates with me. In fact, CTTB encourages me to live a richer life practicing the Dharma, to live more simply, to be more environmental, to consume less, to be more frugal, to be more understanding, more mindful, more grateful, etc. Nevertheless, there were concerns that I might not survive. Coming from a high tech environment to the countryside itself, is a significant shift. Growing up in a non-Asian country puts me at a cultural disadvantage. In the end, I believe I got help from the Venerable Master. He knows of all my foolishness and idealism, so he has been the voice of reason. To be happy at CTTB, I found that it is important to have pure intentions and work from a heart of sincerity, integrity, good faith, and honesty.

It is easy to take things for granted as time passes by and lose that enthusiasm that shone at the beginning. So, my daughter brought me here. From the very start, it was not about wanting to become something or to achieve great things. It was just about doing what I could, trying to contribute within my capacity. To be honest, it's nothing complicated. I was inspired to mirror my surrounding. When help is needed, people at CTTB just see what's needed and do it. It's that simple. When residents come across needs and find that something ought to be done, they do it. That kind of simple heart is the most beautiful, I think, and doing what needs to be done is the best way.

Hence, I'm busy every day. Though I am a credentialed teacher and I have half the class size I had teaching in public school, I have a

動物都把這裡當成避難所。清晨的靜謐與自然的美麗，是此處的奇觀。當我心念專一時，晨起甦醒，我便對自己的存在，心懷感激；我亦珍惜在這片景色端麗，內外兼美的地方，奉獻絕大部份的工時。然而於此同時，這世界上很多人正在受苦受難，全球性的自然災害也不停向我們襲來。我經常提醒我自己，不要將現前擁有的視作理所當然。於我而言，低調的萬佛聖城，依然是一個未被發掘的寶藏，而且經常被誤解。我祈望這個道場能夠持續堅持崇高的美德，為四面八方的人，綻放人性的希望。

去年八月，我從灣區搬到了瑜伽鎮。當我們在「佛根地」修行的時候，我女兒在最後一刻決定就讀「育良小學」。事實上，這個事情是發生在「佛根地」靜修的最後一天，在這一天，每一個人都要分享這段時間的所思所得；有趣的是這次在「佛根地」靜修的主題是發菩提心。所以，現在我來了，並在萬佛城做義工，主要負責在女校小學部任教，同時也協助法界大學通過認可評鑑。

我來到聖城的過程出乎意料地平順，可能是因為這個地方的生活方式與我相互共鳴。實際上，住在萬佛城可以激勵我過一個更豐富如法的人生。我在這裡生活得更簡單、更環保，消費亦少；我也更懂得節儉，更善解人意，更專注，也更懂得感恩。然而，要來這裡之前，我還有些顧慮，我擔心適應不了這個新環境或新的生活方式。因為我從一個高科技的環境，搬到了寧靜的鄉村，這對我來說是一個很大的改變。我成長在一個不是亞洲的國家，這個對於我來說，成了一個很大的文化弱勢。但最後，我相信上人幫助我在這裡生活得很好。他知道我的愚鈍和我的理想主義，所以他經常成為我腦中智慧的聲音。我發現，要在萬佛城快樂地生活，很重要的一點是，必需懷有一個很純樸的本性及源自內心的正直、誠實與善良。

隨著時間的流逝，人們很容易會把很多事情視為理所當然，並失去對事物所稟持的初心及熱忱。因為女兒的緣故，我來到這裡。最初，我沒有要成就什麼、或者完成一些很偉大的工作；我只是做一些力所能及的事情。老實說，所有事情都不是很複雜。我經常被周圍的環境所鼓舞，當有人需要幫助的時候，在萬佛城的人就主動地去幫助他們，事情就是這麼簡單。住在萬佛城的人經常互相溝通，當他們遇到一些問題的時候，就共同協商解決問題。我認為那樣單純的心至美無比；做需要做的事，

challenging class this year. The dynamics of my students make everyday seems a challenge to stay tranquil. Instead of chatty talks, I have to nurture purposeful conversations. I have to direct energetic, playful 2nd and 3rd graders to put on hold their natural tendency to socialize, to stay on task with their class work, to be attentive. Our teachers are responsible not only for students' academic achievement, but also their character development. Helping today's generation form wholesome character can be quite an endeavor. So, when students fight or hurt each other, we have to be peace makers. When they become lost in their cyclic emotions, we have to help them find reason and light. There are days when teachers are exhausted from all the drama in our class, but every day is like a blank sheet of paper. Ultimately, students have brought great insights about the human nature and helped me cultivate.

When the fifth Patriarch transmitted the Dharma to the Sixth Patriarch he said to him, "Do not speak too soon, for the Buddha dharma arises from difficulty." This inspires me to move forward. In his lifetime, the Buddha met many different kinds of people. Some were kings and ministers of court; some were people who lived in poverty, yet others were prominent and influential people of society. In fact, the Buddha interacted with people from all walks of life. Depending on the people he encountered, he offered the teaching most suited to their conditions in life. But no matter who he spoke to, his purpose in giving teachings was always the same—such as to help people awaken from delusion so they may aspire to learn the Dharma, realize the true nature of life, and begin walking the path of enlightenment.

The Buddha teaches me that in daily life, though I am often

境界
一切是考驗
看爾怎麼辦
靚面若不識
須再從頭煉

Everything is a test, To see what you will do.

If you fail to recognize what is before you, You will have to start anew!

—by the Venerable Master Hua

也是最好的行事之道。

所以，我每天生活得很繁忙。儘管我是有教書執照的教師，並且在這裡所教的學生只有過去在公立學校學生的一半，但是今年我所帶的班級充滿挑戰。每天面對不同學生的差異性，讓保持平靜這件事充滿艱鉅；因為他們很難保持安靜，也很愛聊天。我必須將他們之間的閒談轉化成為有意義的對話，我經常需要導引這些精力旺盛、喜好嬉戲的二年級、三年級學生，將他們與生俱來

的聯誼傾向，轉化成她們在學業及課堂活動上的正面能量。老師們不僅要對學生的課業成就負責，同時也要兼顧培養他們的人格。幫助新世代的年輕人形塑完整的人格是需要付出極大的努力。所以當學生發生爭執、傷害彼此時，我們需要當調停者；當學生在他們起伏不定的感情中迷失的時候，我們需要幫助他們找回理性及光明。有時候，老師會在學生這樣戲劇性的波動當中，感覺非常疲憊。但是，對我來說每一天都活像一張全新的白紙。歸根結柢，學生們讓我深刻地瞭解人性，而且幫助了我的修行。

五祖曾經對六祖說：「不宜速說。佛法難起。」這句話一直影響著我、激勵著我前行。佛在他的一生中，曾經遇見很多不同的人，有些是國王，有些是高官大臣，或是在社會上具有影響力及表現特出的人；然而另一些人則是生活在貧困當中的人。實際上，佛以不同的方式影響著形形色色的人。佛遇到哪種人，佛就根據每一個人不同的生活方式，提供每一個眾生最對機的教育。但是不管佛與哪一個人互動，他教化這個人的目的都是一樣的，就是要幫助這個人從癡愚和幻覺中醒悟，然後激勵他認識和學習佛法，從而認識生命的真諦，並逐漸走向覺悟之道。

not aware of it, there are poisoned arrows constantly coming at us—they are arrows of love (very strong liking), delusion, craving, greed, anger, ignorance, arrogance, opinion, arising and disappearing. At any moment, we could get hit by one of these poisoned arrows and become seriously injured.

For example, as our eyes make contact with the sensory world with all its forms and sights, in the space of an instant, the arrow of like and dislikes hits us. With this liking, we pursue the thing that we like and run away from what we dislike. In our everyday life, thoughts of this nature are constantly arising. We start to chase after all sorts of things. Our minds know no peace. Just as strong liking is a poisoned arrow, the Buddha says, so is delusion. Craving, greed, anger, ignorance, arrogance, opinion, arising and disappearing are all arrows that can speedily cause us harm. At the moment we give rise to any such thought, we are hit by a poisoned arrow. We lose our wellbeing and peace of mind. We become physically and spiritually off-balance—discontent, distressed, wretched, and miserable. This creates a lot of suffering in us.

Hearing this teaching, many people began to see the truth of what the Buddha said. They started to feel a sense of regret and remorse at having been so lost in the pleasures of their comfortable lives that they were unaware of how they were injuring themselves physically and spiritually. With this seed of awareness, they thought of the Buddha who had once been a prince and enjoyed life's luxuries. Why had the Buddha been willing to give up such a comfortable life to undergo innumerable hardships and difficulties for his spiritual practice? Why was he able to remain so firm in his commitment to spiritual practice? The Buddha once had a very good life. But in the midst of it, he came to realize that if he continued to indulge in pleasures, he was actually wearing himself out physically and spiritually. Such a life does a lot of harm. We could go through our entire life like this, and in doing so, our life would become a waste and we would accumulate a lot of negative karma through our behavior. Somewhat realizing this, I wanted to immediately put a stop to it. I wanted to dodge the arrows, and for the ones I'd already been hit by, to quickly pull them out.

In conclusion, I am grateful to the Venerable Master and everyone at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas for creating this shelter from poisoned arrows. Thank you for this refuge where “the human spirit can soar with a sense of the sublime”, as described by *the National Geographic*. Amitofo! ❀

佛恆常在生活日用中教導我——雖然我經常不自覺，那就是每天生活當中都有毒箭從各個方向射向我們，有的箭是愛（很強烈的癡愛）、是錯覺、是貪婪、是憤怒、是無知、是傲慢、是個人偏見，它們升起，繼而消亡。在任何時候，我們都可能被其中一支毒箭射中，或被中傷。

比如說，當我們的眼睛和這個感官世界相接觸時，我們看到了事物的不同形狀和樣子；在看到這些事物的一瞬間，這些喜歡和不喜歡的箭就射向了我們。當我們遇到我們喜歡的事情的時候，我們就努力地奔向它們，而對不喜歡的事情就快快閃開。在日常生活裏，這樣的想法其實經常地出現，然後我們開始做出各種不同的行為，我們的心因此得不到安寧。如同強烈的喜好就像這些毒箭一樣，佛告訴我們，癡也是一樣。貪婪、憤怒、無知、傲慢、個人偏見，這些生滅無常的箭，會迅速地射向我們，對我們造成傷害。在任何時刻，如若我們生起以上這些念頭，我們就如同被一支有毒的箭射中一樣，我們會失去健康及祥和的心；我們在身體上和精神上都得不到平衡，變得不滿、難過並非常痛苦，這些創造了我們內在的苦楚。

聽到佛陀這些教導，很多人開始意識到其中的真諦。他們開始後悔，後悔他們曾經在這些快感當中迷失。他們曾經以為這些快感帶給他們舒適的生活；實際上他們不知道這是在傷害自己的身體和性靈。有了這個覺知的種子，這些人想到佛陀曾經是一位王子，歷經了人生中的各種奢華，他們不禁會問：為什麼佛陀願意去放棄這麼舒適的生活，而去經歷數不盡的苦難、痛苦以為修行呢？為什麼他能夠這麼堅定地鍛鍊他的意志？佛陀曾經過著極為美好的生活。但在其中，他認識到，如果他繼續沉浸在快樂的生活中，實際上是在消磨自己的精神和體力，這樣的人生有害無益。我們一生若也如此的話，我們將會浪費生命，並且在言行舉止上累積很多惡業。對此有所了解之後，我便會想要馬上停止這些錯誤。我希望能躲開這些箭，並能很快地拔出已射中我的箭。

總之，我非常感激上人和萬佛城的每一個人，為我提供了一個避開這些毒箭的避難所。感謝這個避難所，正如《國家地理》雜誌上所說的「人類的靈魂可以和崇高的精神一起翱翔」。阿彌陀佛！ ❀