

A Place I Call Home

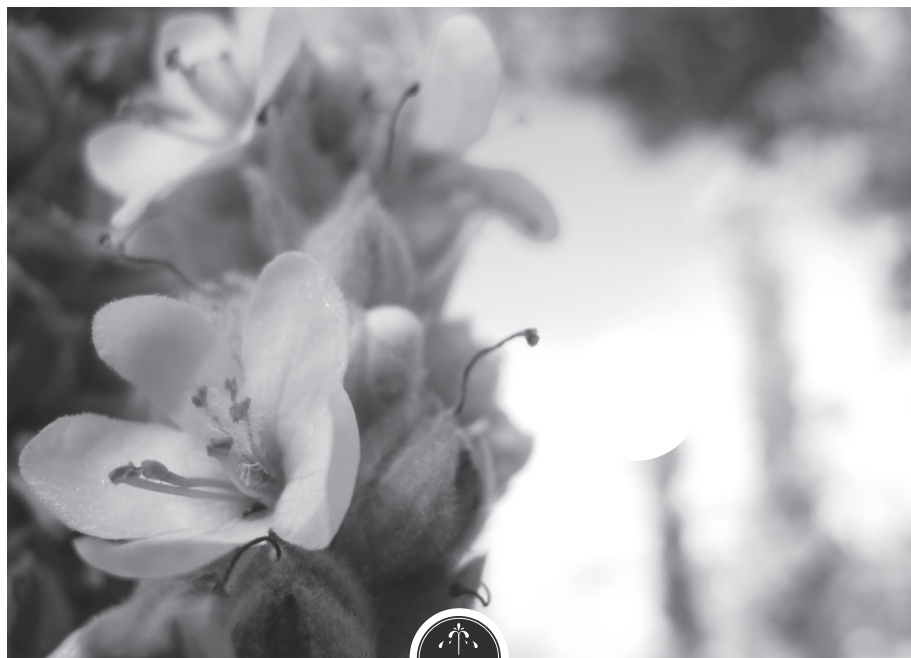
一個叫「家」的地方

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A Talk Given by Amanda Setera on April 12, 2016 at Buddha Hall of CTTB

Chinese Translation by Elaine Jiang



Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Venerable Master Hsuan Hua, all Dharma Masters, all Dharma protectors, and fellow Dharma friends, good evening. Tonight I would like to say why the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas is so special to me. I would say everything fell into place a year after my near death experience in 2013. I encountered many wake-up calls along the way. Those experiences summed up my topic for tonight.

Most of the incidents took place while I was working in the DRBU Library. Everything began with this particular incident when a Dharma Master toured me around the Library and she was so kind to bring me in into the Tripitaka Room. At first, I was very reluctant to enter the General Tripitaka Room but I entered anyway. I felt some mixed emotions started to play inside me and when I entered into the Dragon Tripitaka Room, that was what struck me the most. I broke down crying so hard. At that time, I was still unsure what was going on. The next day, the Dharma Master asked me what happened, I

諸佛菩薩、上人、各位法師、各位護法、各位法友，晚上好。今天想談為什麼萬佛聖城對我來說如此特別。二零一三年那次腦瘤手術之後，所有的事情依次出現。一路上遇到很多讓我覺醒的事情，這也匯聚成我今晚要講的話題。

大部份的事情，發生在我工作的法大圖書館。一次，法師帶我參觀圖書館，她很慈悲地帶我去藏經閣；一開始我不太願意，但最後還是走進去了。當走進樓上的龍藏室時，有一些混合的情緒在我心裡翻湧，忽然間不能自己，我哭得很厲害。那時候，我也不知道自己發生了什麼事；第二天，當法師問我怎麼了，我不假思索地說：「我找到家了。」

spontaneously said, I found my HOME.

When I took up the job in the library, one of my jobs was to be in-charge of the *Vajra Bodhi Sea* section. During that period of re-arranging the monthly journals, many of the Venerable Master's verses just appeared to me one after another. Here is one of the many verses that popped up to me.

*All things pass by in their own time
but a bad temper is truly hard to change
If you can really not get angry
then you have found a priceless treasure
Once you stop putting blame on others
then everything goes your way
And if you never let your mind get afflicted,
karma born of hatred won't return to trouble you
But if you always dwell on other's faults you only prove
that your own suffering has not yet reached its end.*

Each line has its strong message to me, so true and so profound. I won't deny that I am still struggling trying to put what I've learned into practice.

I have several roles to fulfill being here in the City. My family is my first priority. Without them I wouldn't be here. Being a wife is the most challenging part. That was what lead me into Buddhism. Thank you Steve for your patience and understanding. Somehow, the verse has been my main guide, my mentor toward my role as a wife, my role as a mother, as a volunteer and my role as a disciple. I found it very helpful, especially being part of this community here at the City.

In 2014 I started to seriously learn from the Venerable Master's teaching. I read most of his books and I listened to the audio recording of his Dharma talks and commentaries. I started to attend most of the daily ceremonies and memorize them. By putting all of his teachings into practice I realized that to be a good human being, I need effort and faith to change from the deviant to the proper. Because of all the defilements planted life after life due to my ignorance, I failed to recognize my own faults and kept blaming others, taking what is true and to be false, and what is right to be wrong. I was rather confused. The biggest lesson I learned from Venerable Master Hsuan Hua is to be kind and compassionate. These were the two values I was lacking.

I recall back to the incident when I was awake in the ICU after a major operation for my aneurysm, I saw a person in a red sash and as he came closely to me, I recognized him as our current Abbot. Very naturally, I tried to get up and put my palms together to pay my respects. He only said these two words three times before being chased out by the medical staff. "Be kind and compassionate", "Remember" was his final word. These two words spoken three years ago, and I questioned it a lot, why just these two words? I finally understand it now.

I used to consider myself a very righteous person. I always wanted to be right and prove others wrong! My weakness was that I kept pointing out others' wrong doings and discussing the faults of others. My ignorance told me it's ok and I

那段時間在圖書館幫忙重新整理《金剛菩提海》月刊，很多上人的偈頌接連出現，這裡是其中一首：

事事都好去，脾氣難化了；
真能不生氣，就得無價寶。
再要不怨人，事事都能好；
煩惱永不生，冤孽從那找。
盡揪人不對，自己苦沒了。

每一行對我都像醍醐灌頂，說的既真實又含意深遠。其實到現在，要把這些落實在日常生活中，對我來說還是很掙扎、有困難的。

在聖城，我有幾個不同的角色。我把家庭放在首要，因為如果沒有他們，我不會住在這裡。妻子的這個角色最具挑戰性，但也是因為這個角色我才來到聖城，我想謝謝Steve的耐心和理解。作為一個妻子、一個母親、一個義工和一個佛弟子，我把上人這偈頌當作指引，當成座右銘，對我非常有幫助，尤其身為聖城這個社區的一份子。

二零一四年起，我開始認真地學習上人的教導，大部份是從佛經翻譯委員會出版的書上讀到的，我也聽上人的錄音，也參加大殿日常功課，並且儘量地背下來。通過把上人所教的付諸實踐，我明白自己要做一個好人，必須依靠信仰和努力來改邪歸正。因為生生世世所造的惡業，源於我的無明，我看不到自己的錯誤，只知道責怪他人。什麼是真的，什麼是假的，什麼是錯，什麼是對，我自己都很迷惑。在上人所有教化中，我學到最重要的一課就是要「慈悲」，這也是我最欠缺的。

回想三年前動脈瘤手術之後在加護病房醒來，我看到一個搭紅色袈裟的人走近我，我認為是方丈和尚，因此本能地想起身對他合掌。在醫務人員請他出去之前，他講了兩句話，講了三遍：「要慈悲，記住。」我很奇怪為什麼是這兩句，現在我終於明白了。



was just doing them a favor. Without realizing, I was just the same as them. Here's another quote from the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua:

*Truly recognize your own faults,
And don't discuss the faults of others,
Others' faults are just my own:
Being one with everyone is Great Compassion.*

I truly felt Venerable Master's great compassion. He saved my life twice. He not only saved my life but enabled me to live like a normal person. A miracle happened when my insurance card arrived when I was admitted into the hospital. This took care of all my medical bills which were now in 6 figures.

I felt truly blessed and grateful for all the things that he has done for me. He knew how confused I was in the past. I would say all my past karmic offenses could easily fill up the entire empty space. His acts of kindness and compassion, really transformed me. How could I repay his kindness? My gratitude towards the Venerable Master and to everyone here has been my main force to keep me moving forward : to do my best in all areas, such as to be in service for others, to put in practice what I have learned and to cultivate diligently.

One of his phrases, which is, "Everything is O.K.!" has been a very useful "tool" for me to counteract my own afflictions. Instead of becoming afflicted over things that didn't go my way or a conflict or even an unpleasant incident. Well, such things do happen here in the City, I would say it's not easy to endure but I am sure if I am content and just have faith in Venerable Master's teachings I'll be on the right path to end my own sufferings.

我習慣把自己當成一個正義的人，我的毛病就是指出他人做錯的地方，然後講別人的毛病。我愚癡地告訴自己：「這沒關係，因為我是在幫助他們。」卻沒有意識到我其實和他們一樣。這是上人的另一首偈頌：

真認自己錯，莫論他人非，
他非即我非，同體名大悲。

我真切地感受到上人的大悲心。他救了我兩次性命，二零一三年我動了兩次動脈瘤手術，上人不僅救了我的命，並且讓我能像正常人一樣地生活。我幸運地在被送到醫院手術前拿到保險卡，幫我付了六位數的醫療費，這實在是個奇蹟。

我很有福報，也很感恩上人為我做的一切。他知道我過去是多麼的愚癡，可以說，我所造的那些惡業，輕易地就可以把虛空都給填滿。但是，上人的慈悲改變了我。我要怎麼回報他呢？對上人和這裡每一位的感恩，是我前進的動力，我將盡力在各方面努力，例如服務大眾、把所學的付諸實踐和精進修行。

另外，當我起煩惱時，上人常說的「Everything is OK!（什麼都可以）」是非常管用的秘訣，讓我不會因為事情不如意，

This Way Place was not created by Venerable Master to be a nice, quiet and peaceful where everything goes smoothly without any conflicts and free from all defilements. If really such a place was created, then we don't have much to learn. This Way Place is a place where we can all learn and reflect from one another and learn how to be selfless, getting rid of the "I", "Me" and "Mine". All Dharma taught by Venerable Master is a tool for us to sharpen our Vajra Prajna, to upkeep our morals, to uphold our precepts and strengthen our Samadhi, so that we aren't easily moved by states. Such a conducive place to cultivate the Bodhisattva Path is nowhere to be found except here.

The Venerable Master set himself as an example for me to see how he used kindness and compassion to cross over living beings. He sees us as future Buddhas. Each living being has the Buddha nature and can become Buddhas. I once experienced a flashback when in 2014 I saw everyone illuminating bright lights from within during the 10,000 Buddhas Repentance. This concluded my understanding that we are all the same. No different. We are all of one substance. I also experienced seeing myself in each and every one of you. A reflection of me being in all corners kept reminding me to reflect from within.

Besides working in the DRBU Library, I am also one of the ushers in the Buddha Hall during Dharma assemblies. My duty is to assist the visitors in all the activities during the assemblies to make sure that things run smoothly. Being an usher I apply kindness and compassion to all visitors who came here from afar. All the way from their home to pay homage to the Triple Jewel and Venerable Master Hsuan Hua and taking their vacation to attend the Dharma assemblies is something that I truly respect and rejoice.

I also assist some elderly nuns to their

或者衝突，或者不愉快而被境界所轉。這些事情確實會在聖城發生，也不容易忍受，但是因為對上人有信心，讓我能夠知足，堅持正道，吃苦了苦。

上人創立萬佛聖城，並不表示這裡一切就如此美好、安寧又祥和。如果真是這樣，我們反而沒有太多機會學習。這個道場是讓我們可以互相觀摩、學習，學著不自私，學習去除我相。上人教我們的法，就是要我們去鍛煉金剛般若，嚴持戒律，堅固定力，這樣就不會輕易地被境界所轉。這是一個可以來修行菩薩道的道場，並且是獨一無二的。

上人給我示範一個榜樣，如何用慈悲來度化眾生。上人看我們是未來的佛，人人都有佛性，都能成佛。二零一四年的萬佛寶懺期間，有一剎那我靈光驟現，看到每個人發出的光明，這讓我知道我們大家都是一樣的，沒有不同，我們是一體的。還有一次，我在每個人身上看到了自己。這些方方面面，時常提醒我要迴光返照。

除了在法大圖書館工作，法會期間我還充當大殿引領員的角色，就是協助外來的客人，保持法會順利進行。這個工作，讓我練習用慈悲心對待遠來的客人，看到他們利用假期來參加法會，恭敬三寶，恭敬上人，讓我打從心底尊重他們，也隨喜他們的功德。

偶而我也會帶一些年長的比丘尼去看醫生，可以為她們服務讓我很榮幸。這份工作，讓我學到老和病；看到她們經歷病苦掙扎，仍然精進修行，這些很激勵我在修行的路上繼續往前。

二零一四年七月，我有機會受在家菩薩戒。所有戒子都要上五天很密集的戒律課程，一天天過去，我



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doctor's visit from time to time. Being able to be in service to them is my great honor. From them, I learned about old age and sickness. Seeing them going through their pain and agony and yet diligently cultivate really inspired me to keep moving forward in my practice.

In July 2014, I had the opportunity to receive the Transmission of Bodhisattva Lay Precepts. All the preceptees were required to attend the 5-day intensive course. Day by day, I felt like an onion with its skin being pulled off layer by layer, until I could see my original self. In the past I had a different view of what precepts are. But now, I understand their importance. Precepts act as a guideline to keep us on right track towards achieving ultimate liberation. To be a Bodhisattva is far difficult without all these precepts set out by the Buddha.

After listening to all the explanation from different Dharma Masters on each precept, I realized that I have violated most of the precepts being taught. I felt deep remorse and shame. My ignorance used to tell me "a little bit is OK". What I didn't know was that it all starts from a little bit here, a little bit there and soon it will become big, not "a little" anymore.

Upon the completion of the transmission of the Lay Bodhisattva Precepts, I felt very different. I wasn't like who I used to be. Everyone was so happy; their eyes were filled with joy. But not for me. My feeling was rather neutral and both my shoulders felt heavy. A great sense of commitment and huge responsibility to be, to do and to think like a Bodhisattva, all of a sudden overwhelming. At that point of time, I felt like a brand new ME entering into a whole new world. A new chapter of my life has begun since then.

I really treasure all my experiences which money cannot buy. I have shared with my daughter, Abigail, what I have been through in the past. Most importantly she is aware of what is right and what is wrong, what is proper and what is deviant and realizes the law of cause and effect, which means what goes around comes around. This year will be her last year in Developing Virtue Secondary School. She will be graduating soon in June. And she has decided which university she is going to and what major she is going to take. My advice to her is no matter what she does in the future, she has to make sure that the end result is to benefit others.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge her for being such a good daughter all this while. She has this unique personality which is totally the opposite of me... quiet and gentle. She is the one who brought love into my life. To love myself and to love others. To Steve, thank you for being such a caring, loving and responsible father to Abigail. All your effort paid off.

Last but not least, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua for creating such a unique Way Place. A City within a city where monks and nuns stay together with lay people from all walks of life in a large community learning and cultivating the Buddhadharma together on this sacred land. From all the experiences I have had throughout my stay here in the City since July 2010, I conclude that I have found a place that I can call HOME. ❀

感覺自己像洋蔥一層層地被剝掉外皮，直到見到真正的自己。過去我對戒律有不同的看法，但現在我了解它的重要性，是讓我們保持在正道並且最終解脫的指導。如果沒有佛制的戒律，做一個菩薩就極其艱難。

聽法師一條條講解戒律，我意識到自己犯了絕大部份的戒，我感到深深的懊悔。我的無明告訴我犯一點點沒有關係，可是卻沒意識到，所有的就是從一點點開始；少少的匯聚成大的，就不再是少少的。

受戒之後，感覺很不一樣，感覺不再是以前的我。每個人都很開心，眼神裡充滿喜悅。但對我而言，這種喜悅不是這麼明顯，反而是肩頭上的責任似乎變得沉重，一股強烈的使命感和責任感要學習菩薩的思想和行為。從那時起，我感到一個全新的我，進入一個嶄新的世界，從此翻開人生的新篇章。

我很珍惜這些用錢買不到的經歷。當我和女兒Abigail分享這些時，我發現她非常清楚是非、正邪，也明白所做的最終都會回到自己身上的因果定律。今年是她是在培德中學的最後一年，很快六月就要畢業了。她已經決定要上什麼樣的大學，選擇什麼樣的專業。而我給她建議，就是無論以後做什麼，都要確保結果是利益他人。

我想藉這個機會說，她一直以來都是我的好女兒，她人很特別，完全和我相反，很安靜溫和。她把愛帶進我的生活，讓我看到自己，也去愛護別人。也想謝謝Steve，謝謝你在Abigail的生命中扮演一位呵護、慈愛又有責任的父親，謝謝你所有的付出。

最後深深感恩上人創立這座獨特的道場，一個城市中的小社區，裡面不僅只有出家人，而且各式不同人生經歷的在家人、家庭和個人也居住在一塊兒，一起在這塊聖地上學習修行佛法。從二零一零年來到聖城，我想說我終於找到一個地方，這個地方被我稱作——「家」。❀