

A Reflection from a Millennial That Grew Up at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas

萬佛聖城千禧一代的省思



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I am twenty-seven years old. I was born and raised at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas (CTTB) and studied in the schools there from kindergarten to high school.

When I was seventeen, after going through some of the difficulties of life, I questioned my faith for the first time. I can't say that all people, young or old, must go through doubt to find faith, but I think overcoming doubt strengthens faith, or causes us to have a newfound respect and understanding for the depth of feeling that faith entails.

You aren't necessarily more Buddhist just because you go to many ceremonies. If you don't attempt to get rid of greed, anger, and stupidity, and yet you go to ceremonies, how can you call yourself a cultivator? But you also aren't more Buddhist just because you claim to understand emptiness and yet never attend the ceremonies.

Nowadays, many young people aren't into religion. A 2018-2019 Pew Research Center telephone survey found

我今年27歲。我在萬佛聖城出生長大，從幼兒園到高中都在這裡就讀。17歲時，在經歷一些困境之後，首次對自己的信仰有疑惑。不能說所有的人，無論老少，都必須歷經有所懷疑才能找到信仰。但我認為克服懷疑，才能加強信心，或者讓我們對信仰所帶來的深層感受有了新的尊重和理解。

你不會因為參加了很多法會就能變得更像個佛弟子。如果你只是參加法會而不去除自己的貪、瞋、癡，你又怎能稱自己是個修道者或修行人？但是，你也不能說你已是個老修行，只因為你聲稱你明白空性，就不去上殿過堂。

現今，許多年輕人對宗教不感興趣。皮尤研究中心（Pew Research Center）一份2018-2019年的電話問卷指出，目前

that in the United States, the percentage of those who do not identify with a religion is now at 26%, up from 17% in 2009.

The data seems to suggest that the number of people who do not identify with a religion will continue to increase over the years. Is this the end? Is the Dharma Ending Age going to happen in the twenty-first century? One day, will the percentage of those who do not identify with a religion going to be near 100%? Statistically, that's unlikely, because we have no idea if the rate of growth is linear, exponential, or random. If that is the case, what can we do about it?

Many young people feel CTTB isn't for them. As a young person myself, I can relate to them. One experience that many young people go through is feeling like they don't belong—they're looking for a place to belong or feel accepted.

When young people go through difficulty, sometimes it's hard to find someone to whom they can relate, because CTTB has a significantly older population. Young people are more likely to listen to someone who's closer than them in age than someone who's as old as a parent or grandparent.

If you hope young people will stay and volunteer in the temple or leave home one day, and you tell them that the outside world is full of suffering, it will not work in the long run, because everyone's experiences are different. When kids grow up and feel the outside world is a happy place, they won't want to come back to CTTB if everything they are taught feels wrong to them. It's better to be realistic and let young people know the outside world has "happiness" and "suffering," just as Buddhism teaches us about the human realm.

When giving advice to young people, you can't give them the same standard advice you give to every single person. You have to understand where they're coming from, know that each person is unique, and let them choose their own path. The gentle approach is better than a direct approach in most cases.

The only solution I can think of to help prevent so many young people from leaving and never coming back is that we have to make people feel welcome in CTTB. There are many difficulties that come with that though. I don't have any issues with any of the older cultivators at CTTB, but I am closer to friends in virtue or volunteers/students who are closer to me in age. We relate to each other better.

People are also more likely to stay if they feel that they

美國沒有宗教信仰的人口比例為26%，高於2009年的17%。數據似乎顯示，沒有宗教信仰的人口正逐年增加。這意味著結束嗎？末法時代會出現在21世紀嗎？無宗教信仰的人口比例是否有朝一日會接近100%（從統計學來看，這不太可能，因為我們不知道這樣的增長率是屬於線性的、指數的還是隨機的）？那麼，我們可以做些什麼呢？

有許多年輕人覺得萬佛聖城不適合他們。身為一個年輕人，我想我可以理解他們的感受。多數年輕人覺得自己沒有歸屬感——他們正在尋找一個歸屬感或被接納的地方。當年輕人遇到了困難，有時很難找到可以與之幫助的人，因為聖城的住眾年紀偏長。相較於父母或祖父母輩，年輕人更願意來聆聽那些與自己年齡相近的人。

如果你希望年輕人（聖城內的孩子們）將來能留在寺院做志工或甚至出家，而你卻告訴他們說外面世界是如何充滿著苦，這從長遠來看，是行不通的，因為每個人的經歷都不一樣。等孩子們長大後，當他們覺得外面的世界也是快樂的，以前被教導的一切並不正確，他們就不會想回到聖城。最好能實際一點，讓年輕人知道外面的世界是苦樂參半，就像佛教告訴我們的人世間一樣。

在提供建議給年輕人時，沒有所謂人人可行的標準答案。你必須了解他們的背景，意識到每個人都是獨一無二的，並讓他有選擇他自己的道路。在多數情況下，溫和的建議都比直接的意見更適合。

為了避免年輕人去而不返，我能想到的唯一解決方案就是——讓人們覺得自己在城內是被接納的。不過，這個意見伴隨著許多的問題。我對聖城年長的修行者沒有任何意見，但我比較親近的同修道友都是和我年齡相近的人，我們彼此的關係也更融洽。

如果人們覺得自己是小組（在聖城這個大團體中）的一員或許更願意留下來，人們可以是許多小群組的成員。問題是，

are part of a mini-group (within the large group that is CTTB)—and people can be part of multiple mini-groups. However, the problem is that young people in CTTB don't really have a mini-group. After they graduate from our schools, they go off to a university outside of CTTB.

I first volunteered shortly after I graduated high school, and while I was attending Mendocino College in Ukiah. Even back then, there were only a handful of young volunteers in their late teens or early twenties. They are all gone now.

I work in the Administration Office in CTTB. People pay for their room and board here before they attend our retreats. I've talked to a lot of parents. Often, mothers want to send their kids to attend our schools here, while fathers don't want to live in CTTB.

Sometimes, people say they want to live in CTTB after they retire. That isn't necessarily a problem in itself, as we welcome people of all ages. However, having a significantly elderly population without a younger population to support them makes it very difficult for a community to sustain itself.

It's very difficult to cultivate in the twenty-first century, due to technology. How will we find our true minds or calm ourselves when we are constantly looking for the next hit of dopamine from getting likes, shares, reposts, new friends, or comments on social media? How will we cultivate when there is always something new that draws our attention?

I know the lure of technology all too well because I'm a millennial. When I was growing up, I played with a Gameboy Advance SP, a Nintendo DS, an Xbox 360, and more, so I know technology makes it hard to cultivate.

Social media can lead young people down particular paths or think a certain way, and when there is nobody to guide them or monitor them, or to explain the pros and cons of social media, if you just tell them not to use it or say it's "bad" without giving a reason why, people will want to use it more or will do the opposite of what you teach them.

Social media, while it has its uses, can also make

聖城的孩子並沒有所謂的小群組（如果有，就是學校的同學）；他們從我們的學校畢業之後，就去外面上大學。我高中畢業不久就開始做志工，當時我正在瑜伽市（Ukiah）的門多西諾學院（Mendocino College）就讀。即使在那個時候，也只有少數十幾二十出頭的年輕志工，他們現在都不在聖城。

現在，我在聖城的行政辦公室工作。人們在參加法會前，在這裡支付他們的食宿費用。我和很多家長談過。大多是母親想把孩子送到我們這裡的學校讀書，父親則不想住在聖城。有時，人們說他們想退休後住在聖城。這個想法本身並不是問題，因為我們對所有年齡層的人都歡迎。但是，由於人口明顯較年長，倘若沒有年輕人來支援，這個團體就很難自我維持。

由於科技進步，在21世紀是很難修行。當我們不斷地通過社群媒體上取得所謂的點讚、分享、轉發、新朋友或品評中，來尋找下一個讓自己開心的多巴胺（dopamine）時，我們該如何找到自己的真心或讓自己平靜？當總有新東西博取我們的眼球時，我們又該如何修行？

我深知科技的誘惑，因為我是千禧一代（millennial）。我玩過任天堂主機遊戲（Gameboy Advance SP）、任天堂掌上遊戲（Nintendo DS）、索尼掌上遊戲（Xbox 360）等等，所以我知道玩這類技術是難以修行的。

社群媒體（Social media）可以促動年輕人走上特定路徑或某種思維模式，特別是在無人引導、監督或解釋社群媒體利弊時。如果你只是告訴他們不要使用或者說社群媒體是「不好的」而沒有說明原由，年輕人只會更想使用它，或者甚至做出與你所教的背道而馳的事。

社群媒體雖然有其用途，但也足以令你付出相當不健康的方式來注入時間和精力；當霸凌者充滿了暗能量時，社群媒體給了他們機會說出這類暗黑想法的出口。在互聯網上說出一些驚悚的話總比當面說要容易得多；因為當你在使用鍵盤打字時，有時在大腦和敲字之間會有鏈斷而影響到你本想表達詞彙的結果。

我們應該思考，未來幾年，年輕人將如何受到科技變化的影響。我們不要忘了上人曾說過，「電腦是大妖怪（大惡魔），電視是小妖怪（小惡

you focus your time and energy in unhealthy ways, and when bullies are filled with dark energy, it gives them the outlet to speak their dark thoughts. It's much easier to say something terrible on the internet than to say it in person, because when you're using a device to type sometimes the brain and typing results in a disconnect from the consequences of the words you might use.

We should think about how young people will be impacted by the changes in technology in the coming years.

Let's not forget the Venerable Master said that computers were the biggest demons, and that televisions were small demons. He said this back before computers were even all that good. There weren't even smartphones or tablets. Although there are some benefits to technology for non-cultivators, we have fewer sages and true cultivators in the twenty-first century than we did hundreds of years ago.

The Buddha didn't need technology to be happy. He gave up the life of affluence, the life of a king, in order to end birth and death. It would be wonderful if more people want to be like him. Let's emulate him, instead of believing that we can never be like him in this lifetime. If we don't try, we won't make any progress.

When CTTB used to be a hospital, before it became CTTB, I heard there were a hundred people maintaining the grounds. Now, we have barely a handful. It takes a lot of people to work in different departments, like the kitchens, maintenance, Administration Office, Buddha Hall, schools, translation, and more.

A friend of mine who worked at the Administration Office in CTTB once told me a man told him, "I don't want to donate any cars to CTTB because they don't take care of them."

Now that I work at the Administration Office, I try to take care of all the cars. But it's extremely difficult because maintaining and cleaning cars is a full-time job in and of itself.

While CTTB is grateful to accept donations, it's easy for people to gossip without understanding the complexities involved in maintaining donated property. If people have the time to complain, then they should use their energy in a more constructive manner and help out. More problems would be solved if people worked as hard as they talked.

Sometimes people view CTTB through rose-tinted lenses. They think CTTB is perfect, so when they come here they are disappointed and leave.

魔)」。在電腦還沒有成形完善之前，上人就說過這樣的話；當時也沒有智能手機或平板電腦。

雖然科技對非修道者而言有些益處，但與數百年前相比，我們在21世紀中擁有的聖者和真修道者就更少了。佛陀不需要科技就能獲得快樂；為能了生脫死，他捨棄了財富和王位。如果有更多的人也想要跟佛陀一樣，那就太好了。就讓我們效仿他，而不是認為我們這輩子永遠不可能像他一樣。如果不去嘗試，我們將不會有任何進步。

萬佛聖城前身是一家醫院，它在成為一座寺院之前，我聽說有上百人在維護這個地方。現在，我們的人力屈指可數。每個不同部門都需要許多人力支援，比如廚房、維修、行政辦公室、佛殿、學校、翻譯等等部門。

一位在聖城行政辦公室工作的朋友曾告訴我，有個男眾對他說：「我不想捐贈任何汽車給聖城，因為他們不保養汽車。」現在我在行政辦公室工作，我試著去照顧所有的車；但這是非常困難，因為單是保養和清潔汽車本身就是一份全職工作。

雖然聖城很感謝捐贈，但人們很容易在不瞭解保養捐贈物所涉及複雜性的情況下說三道四。如果人有時間抱怨，那麼他們應該將精力用在更有建設性的地方，多去幫忙。如果人們工作都能像聊天講話一樣努力，那麼再更多的問題也會得到解決。有時，人們會透過玫瑰色濾鏡的鏡頭來觀看聖城，天真就以為聖城一切都是完美無瑕的，所以當他們來到這裡感到失望時就會離開。

當我還是一名大學生時，我在沃爾瑪商場做過收銀員。我記得被顧客大聲咆哮的滋味；可是，還必須每天去上班，也不能抱怨，否則就領不到薪酬。試想，如果有位脾氣暴躁的人突然想改變自己人生軌跡，要在廟上修行，你能期望他的脾氣即刻就消失嗎？

I worked as a cashier in Walmart when I was a university student. I remember what it feels like to be yelled at by entitled customers. You have to go to work every day, and you can't complain or else you won't get paid. You would be surprised how many rude people you find in grocery stores. What if someone with a big temper suddenly wants to change their life and cultivate in a temple? Do you expect their anger will immediately disappear?

Cultivation takes lifetimes. When people come to CTTB, they shouldn't come with any expectations. Don't take things personally or let people get to you. We aren't perfect. Don't expect people to have no afflictions just because they've cultivated a few years longer than you or because they live in a temple.

I've been in CTTB longer than many of the newer residents. Don't think that I'm saying CTTB is full of angry people, because that's not true. We are all just ordinary people trying to better our lives, and some people learn faster than others, whereas other people don't learn from their mistakes. You will find imperfect people wherever you go in the world.

I encourage people to not think CTTB is perfect. If you think CTTB is perfect, your dreams will be shattered when you get here. But I also encourage people to not blame CTTB for individual people's mistakes, or think one circumstance here and there means the entire temple is a certain way. Don't have unrealistic expectations of CTTB. In statistics, I learned to think more logically. Always ask yourself, "Is there enough evidence to support the claim that x is true?" Sometimes people assume everyone or everything in CTTB is one way, just because they see one person or one thing that isn't perfect. Remember, everyone who comes to CTTB wants to cultivate. They bring their flaws with them. They are not perfect. You should not fault them for not being perfect.

Of course, I'm not saying that CTTB can't improve, because it definitely can. However, people's successes or "failures" in cultivation are their own personal struggle. You can't rush other people's cultivation, and it's each individual's business to deal with his or her own struggles. People shouldn't gossip about other people's mistakes in cultivation.

If someone had the intent to gain some merit and blessings from helping out in a temple and you discourage them from helping a temple, you are preventing people from earning merit and virtue and not helping the Dharma spread in the West.

修行是一輩子的功課。當人們來到聖城，無須有所期待。不要把事情放在心上，也不要讓別人對你起煩惱，我們並不完美。不要因為別人比你多修行幾年，或者因為他們住在廟上，就認為他們沒有煩惱。

我在聖城的時間比許多新住眾都來得長。請不要認為我說聖城充滿壞脾氣的人，那不是事實！我們都只是試著改善自己生命歷程的普通人，有些人學得比其他人快，有些卻不會從錯誤中汲取教訓。無論你到世界的哪個角落，都會遇到不完美的人。

我鼓勵人們不要認為聖城是完美無缺的，否則當你來到這裡時，這將會打碎你的夢想。但我也鼓勵人們不要把個人的錯誤全歸咎於聖城，或者把某些特定狀況解讀為整個道場都是如此。不要對聖城抱有不切實際的期望。從統計學中，我學會了更合乎邏輯性的思維方式，總是問自己：「是否有足夠的證據來佐證 X 是真的？」有時人們認為聖城中的每個人或每件事都是單向的，這是因為他看到了某個人或某件事的缺點。請記住，每個來到聖城的人都是想修行！但他們也帶來了他們自身的缺點。他們並不完美，你也不必為此責怪他們。

當然，我並不是說聖城不能改進，它肯定可以！但是，修行上所謂的成就或失敗，取決於個人的奮鬥。你無須催促別人修行，每個人都有自己要面對的課題。人們不應該對別人修行中的錯誤講是講非。

還有，如果有人打算藉由在道場的幫忙以獲得一些功德和福報，而你卻決意阻擋他們為廟上做工，這樣你就是在障礙他人得到功德和福報，而不是幫助佛法在西方弘揚。你得有更多建設性的方法來處理你個人與其他人的問題，比如和一個值得信賴的友人或僧眾談論你的困境（瓶頸）。

There are more constructive ways to deal with issues you have with other people, like talking to a trusted friend or a monastic about your personal struggles.

I encourage more people to come to CTTB to volunteer, leave home, attend university, or attend school. I encourage more people to live here. We need help to spread the Buddha's teachings. We need more cultivators to end the cycle of birth and death.

Just remember the Venerable Master once said that people bring their three poisons—greed, anger, and stupidity—with them through the mountain gate.

Before you point your finger at other people, don't forget to take a look at your own life. Do you get angry at home with your spouse, your siblings, or your parents? Can you ask other people to do things you yourself have not mastered?

It's also important to note that CTTB has many calm cultivators. You don't often see them because some of them may be sweeping the streets while reciting.

This is the twenty-first century, and the world is rapidly changing. Humans have a habit of noticing negative things while overlooking positive things. It's like how the news focuses on dramatic stories but doesn't cover peaceful stories often, because conflict sells more news. It would be better if we pay more attention to positive things in life more than just focusing on negative things all of the time, and we will find that this makes us happier. ❀

我鼓勵更多的人來到聖城做志工、出家、上大學或就讀中小學。我也鼓勵更多人住在這裡。我們需要人力的支援以弘揚佛陀的教法。我們也需要更多修行人了生死斷輪迴。只要記得上人曾經說過，人們是帶著他們的貪瞋癡三毒，踏入聖城的大門。

所以，在你把矛頭指向別人之前，也別忘了看看你的所行事——你在家裡對你的伴侶、兄弟姐妹或父母發脾氣嗎？你能要求別人做你連自己也做不到（沒能控制情緒）的事嗎？

更重要的是要注意，聖城有許多默默修行的人。你不常看到他們，因為有些人是一邊掃地一邊正用功持誦呢！

這是21世紀，世界正在迅速變化中。作為人類，我們往往傾向於注意到負面的消息，對於正面消息卻不以為意。這就像新聞媒體關注的焦點總是戲劇性的話題，但鮮少關注和平的事情，因為衝突能賣出更多的新聞。這樣一來，作為人類的我們，應該時刻關注生活中良善的一面，而不僅僅是消極的一面，我們會發現自己活得更積極。❀



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