



Be the First to Worry About the World

先天下之憂而憂

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My name is Victoria. I'm currently a Master's student at Dharma Realm Buddhist University (DRBU), and I'll be graduating from the program in about three months. I'd like to share a bit about my life with you.

My mom carried me for over nine months, and birthed me by C-section. At night, when I cried, she chanted the Great Compassion mantra until I quieted down. Her favorite line from the *Diamond Sutra* is "All conditioned dharmas are like dreams, illusions, bubbles, and shadows," and her idol is Earth Store

我叫龐賀童，即將於三個月後從法大碩士班畢業。簡單跟大家介紹自己的人生。

我是母親辛苦懷胎九個多月，剖腹產的。每當我夜晚哭鬧時，媽媽會在我身旁持〈大悲咒〉直到我安靜下來。母親最喜歡的經文是《金剛經》中的一句話：「一切有為法，如夢幻泡影」，並且崇敬地藏王菩薩。

她教導我溯本、慕賢，並以身教印證——一個善念能扭轉命運。受到母親的影響，我對佛教及幫助世界充

Bodhisattva.

She wanted me to know the roots of my ancestors, and walk the paths of the sages. She told me, “One kind thought can change your life” and proved it through her life’s actions. From my mother too, my love for Buddhism, and helping the world was born.

Compared to hers my life feels insignificant. The month before I turned twenty-three, I wrote in my diary: “Is it enough to be grateful? I have lived twenty-three years, yet all I recall is the kindness of angels who appeared in my life. As of today, I have accomplished nothing. Is gratitude simply enough?” Dufu said in a poem “I wish to create a building that would cover all red-cheeked scholars from the cold.” Little can we imagine, he was sleeping under frozen and torn blankets, and his thatched roof had just been blown off and then stolen by a bunch of naughty children from southern village. The country was mired in war, yet this was his powerful vow.

In my late teen years, I thought I would go out and save the world. But in reality, there was much more I had to cultivate and learn. To fulfill this goal, I took many classes and joined many clubs, and concluded that politics was the answer, but when I entered the field working for both a US-China Political non-profit and a Civic Engagement Center for Asian American voting, I quickly realized that the world had lost sight of something important: the ability to reflect and repent. The connection we had to our virtuous hearts was too shallow, and my single voice and the voices of our fellow politicians were too meek to make so much as a ripple in the ocean of people struggling to find meaning in the grand race of greed and survival.

Rumi said, “Dust settles upon my head and upon my metaphors, for You are beyond anything we can ever think or say.” That’s how I feel when I am in Amitabha’s midst; he is not just immeasurably great in his vows, the power of which has transformed his land into golden light, golden trees, golden birds, and indeed, golden souls. Compared to him, I am nothing, deserving of nothing, amounting to nothing. The only thing I have is this breath, this vow, and it comes not from the grotesque desires of the heart, nor the shallow judgements of the world I grasp onto—dharma, as we call them in Abhidharma class—but from a deeper place in my heart.

Does this mean that I have no more thoughts? Not necessarily, or else I wouldn’t have enrolled in the master’s class

滿熱忱。

和母親相比，我的人生實在微不足道。在我即將23歲的一個月前，我在日記中寫道：「感恩就夠了嗎？活了23年，回想出現在生命中那些有如天使般的善意；至今，我依然一事無成。僅僅感恩，就夠了嗎？」杜甫曾在詩中說道：「安得廣廈千萬間，大庇天下寒士俱歡顏！」。我們無從想像，他當時睡在冰冷破舊的被子裏，茅草屋頂剛被吹掉，又遭一群南村頑童搶走茅草。當時國家（唐朝）深陷戰火，而這卻是他堅定的願。

青少年時期，我以為自己能拯救世界。但事實上，我的修行和學習還需要努力。我選修許多課程，也參加許多社團，最後得出結論——政治是解決之道。當我踏入這個領域，在一個中美政治非營利組織和一個促進亞裔選民投票的公民活動中心服務時，我很快就意識到，這個世界遺忘一些重要的東西，就是反省與懺悔的能力。我們與自身良知的聯結過於薄弱，在這個充滿貪婪和生存競爭的世道中，但憑我一人和這個時代政壇人物的聲音，微弱地難以激起一絲漣漪。

詩人魯米曾寫道：「塵埃落在我的頭上，也落在我的隱喻之上，因為您超越我們言語所能表達的一切。」（節自魯米《心的旅程》。）這幾句詩呈現我被阿彌陀佛環繞時的感受：他的宏大願力將其國土化為金光、金樹、金鳥，甚至國土中的眾生也放金光。相較於佛，我一無所成，微不足道。我唯一擁有的就是當下的呼吸、此刻的願，這不是源自心中的妄念，也不是來自對世界膚淺的批判，或是在阿毗達摩課上稱之為「法」的現象；而是源自我內心深處。

at DRBU in the summer of 2023. We do a lot of thinking and talking in class, and sometimes I feel that I wish I could do something about all our suffering and I grow impatient. Yet, there is merit in our thoughts, because they permeate our consciousness with images, traits, and values of the Buddhas, the Bodhisattvas, the devas, dharma protectors, and sages.

I remember a line from the *Lotus Sutra* we recently read: “We shall endure all these difficulties. Not cherishing the body or life itself, But caring only for the supreme path.” The supreme path is the One Buddha Vehicle in the *Lotus Sutra*, which does not discriminate between sects in Buddhism, but lights up different dharmas that interweave to a perfect actualization of our original luminous natures; the One Great Matter, according to this same sutra is, and I quote: “the wish to lead living beings to open the knowledge and vision of the Buddhas and gain purity.”

When I finally began studying the *Lotus Sutra*, I felt almost like the world had been born anew, all I knew before had collapsed, and new hope rose like a giant sun in the sky — my heart’s horizon. This is what I must cultivate. But how would I do that? When I close my eyes and think of CTTB, I first think of the bhikshus and bhikshunis. You are all my inspiration. Although we may not know each other, yet, how your selflessness has changed me and my entire outlook on life! How tireless; how humble; how kind; how hardworking you are; there is not an ounce of difference I see in your actions and the Bodhisattvas. I’ve reflected since: the paramitas of patience, vigor, wisdom, concentration, virtue, and generosity are the first step.

I remember a Dharma Master said to us, “Our karma is like snowflakes; beautiful, yet cold; striking, yet impermanent; we need only to let it pass through on its own course. When life gets tough, resilience is what we cultivate. And only when we have enough resilience can we be there for others during times of weakness, for suffering is the condition of this life. We must not forget.”

When I had such negative thoughts, I think of Fanzhongyan’s quote about the sages: “They did not delight in material gains, nor grow melancholic at their own conditions; while in the halls of high court, they worried about the people; while dwelling faraway by the river banks and lakesides, they worried for their ruler. They worried when making progress

這意味著我沒有其他想法嗎？也不盡然，否則我不會在2023年夏天申請就讀法大碩士班。在課堂上，我們進行許多思考與討論。有時，我希望能為我們的困境帶來突破，卻又感到不耐煩。然而，我們的念頭是有功德的，因為這些善念讓我的八識中充滿佛、菩薩、天人、護法和聖賢的形象、特質和救世觀。

我記得最近讀到《法華經》中的一句話：「忍此諸難事。我不愛身命，但惜無上道。」這個無上道指的是《法華經》中的「一佛乘」，不分佛教宗派，而是照見種種法門的圓融無礙，圓滿顯現我們本具的光明自性。這也是此部經所提到的「一大事因緣」，也就是「欲令眾生開佛知見，得清淨故」。

當我終於開始研讀《法華經》時，感覺眼前的世界宛若新生，以前的知見隨之而逝，新的希望像旭日般從心中冉冉升起。我必須修行，但是該怎麼做呢？當我閉上雙眼，想著萬佛城，心中最先浮現的是比丘、比丘尼，您們都是啟發我的善知識。儘管我們可能互不相識，您們無私的奉獻，改變了我，也改變我的人生觀！您們如此精進、謙卑、慈悲與努力；在我看來，您們所行與諸佛菩薩無二無別。由此，我深切反省：忍辱、精進、智慧、禪定、持戒和布施這六波羅密，正是修行的第一步。

記得一位法師說的話：「眾生的業力如同雪花，美麗卻冰涼；奪目卻無常；我們只需隨其流轉。當生命遇到困境，我們要修持不退的心。只有當我們擁有足夠的韌性，我們才能在他人需要的時候成為依靠。苦難是人生常態，千萬不可忘記。」

當有負面念頭的時候，我會想想范仲淹關於仁者的名言：「不以物喜，不以己悲，居廟堂之高則憂其民，處江湖之遠則憂其君。是進亦憂，退亦憂，然

at home, and worried in retreats far away. Then when were they happy? It must be said thus: “Be the first to worry about the world and last to enjoy the taste of happiness.”

That’s why the Bodhisattvas will spend lifetimes doing what they do; that’s why the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas exists; we must respect the Bodhisattvas, we must respect the Venerable Master; to venerate the master is to venerate the vows of all the sages and Bodhisattvas past; someone reminded me recently that through Venerable Master, we have come to know about the Buddhas, face our defilements, and cultivate our virtue. A classmate told me, on top of recalling the Buddhas’ images, mantra chanting helps us embody and contemplate the traits the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, deities, and sages have perfected in their past lives, and which lay just within us too.

At age 22, dismayed by what I found in my time working, I found comfort in putting the blame on others for our precarious world situation: wars abroad, deteriorating public education, gun violence out of control, slandering of religion and faith, misconduct in every corner of the world...In the short span of four years since reading my idealistic poetry in college, my morale and hope had collapsed and nearly extinguished itself — I was so weak, yet the world is too broken for me to be weak.

I want to tell everyone here that from my personal experience and reflections only, I believe many people in the world have good hearts, but they do not know the laws of karma. They do not contemplate their minds apart from attachments, and it is precisely these attachments that bind us to samsara, according to the twelve links of dependent arising. The practices of the secular realm —our tasks, duties, jobs, and reality and the cultivation of otherworldly dharmas —ceremonies, repentance, meditation, mantra recitation, watching our thoughts —go hand in hand. Worldly dharmas help us perfect transcendent dharmas, while worldly dharmas are named due to the existence of sentient beings and suffering.

We may have once been government officials or teachers and laborers in our past lives since beginningless time. Knowing the karmic ties we may all secretly share with each other, the *Exhortation to Resolve on Bodhi* told us to be grateful for our parents, our karmic benefactors, and to be compassionate to all the suffering beings in the dharma realms. Gratitude was also a major and central theme of my class. Thus, I reflect: my father and mother gave me life and shaped it to be, fortunately,

則何時而樂耶？其必曰：『先天下之憂而憂，後天下之樂而樂』歟！」

這就是何以菩薩能夠生生世世行菩薩行，也正是萬佛城存在的理由。我們必須禮敬諸佛菩薩，恭敬宣公上人；恭敬上人就是恭敬過去一切聖賢菩薩的誓願。最近有位善知識提醒我：透過上人（的教誨），我們認識諸佛菩薩、面對自己的無明愚痴，並且培養自己的德行。有位同學告訴我，除了憶念佛，持咒可以幫助我們體會和觀照佛、菩薩、天神、聖賢在過去生中所圓滿的德行，而這些特質其實就埋藏在我們的自性裡。

22歲那年，眼見國際戰火紛飛、公共教育式微、槍枝暴力失控、宗教信仰受誹謗、為非作歹處處可見，我對工作時所見到的這些亂象感到沮喪，於是將失控的世界局勢歸咎於他人，以從中得到安慰。在大學時，我還在讀誦理想主義的詩歌，然而短短四年，我的道德感與希望幾乎消失殆盡——我是如此無力，但這個世界太殘破，我不能示弱。

在此，我想告訴在座的各位，憑我的親身經歷和體會，我相信世界上許多人都很善良，但是他們卻不曉得業果法則。而十二因緣告訴我們，正是這些執著將我們束縛在輪迴裡。世間法的修煉——像是學業、職責、工作、現實，與出世間法的修持——拜懺、禪修、念佛持咒、觀照心念——是相輔相成的。世間法幫助我們成就出世間法；世間法是因為眾生與痛苦的存在而得名。

無量劫以來，我們可能曾為政府官員、教師或勞工。要了解人與人之間都有深深的業網交織。《勸發菩提心文》教導我們要感謝父母、世間和出世師長恩德，並對法界一切受苦的眾生起慈悲心；感恩也是我一

on the path of the Dharma; my will is at the commands of my parents, and of the Buddha; to truly honor your parents is to be like Venerable Master Hsuan Hua — by completing our dharmic and civic duties out of filial piety.

The autumn leaves, which were so bright, like little flags of love and happiness strewn across the floor; the bright, almost translucent green of the grass in spring; the fragrance of the daffodils in full bloom; one handed to me in a simple and innocent gesture of a student at recess; the purple and pink blossoms nestled vulnerably in the open air; the child in me which soared with joy as I trampled along the stream and into the forest; the quiet awe as I walked daintily along the grassy lawns which were so tranquil on their own; the mysterious, sometimes sorrowful, sometimes demanding calls of the peacocks during Professor Powers' lectures on Yongjia's awakening; I thought somewhere, sometime, have I been here before, a long time ago?

I remember chopping mushrooms in the morning during a Guanyin Session with the nuns, and I'll never forget the feeling of realizing the labor and heart which my feet trod upon every day on this piece of land. I recall my professors sending caring emails when I didn't feel well? Little could I have imagined that beneath the earth toned tiles of these gates and buildings lies such a pulsing heart of care.

I am grateful for my classmates at DRBU, for their depth, their compassion, their curiosity, their effort, their seriousness in cultivation, and their humorous take on life. How I'm grateful for my students' crisp laughter in the midday sunshine, their struggles, their tears, their strength, their smiling faces in the Lunar New Year festival; their sweet interactions with each other. My 12 year old student reminded me: you mustn't look at anything through only one lens. Like a piece of paper has two sides, there are always two sides, a positive and a negative to any situation. Life is just about experience. Humbled, I asked myself, who really is the teacher here? My students are my little Bodhisattvas.

I remember clearly that last semester was my angriest semester. I was realizing that I was still in *samsara*, just in a better corner of it, or perhaps an extra set of karma

門課的核心主題。因此，我自省：父母孕育我的生命，讓我有幸走上學佛之路；我願意順從父母，也聽從佛陀的教導。真正孝敬父母，就該像宣公上人一樣——以孝道圓滿我們的修行和公民責任。

秋天的落葉，如此明亮，就像愛與幸福的小旗幟散落在地上。春天的綠草，清新透光；盛開的水仙，如此芬芳。一位學生在課間休息時天真無邪地遞給我花；紫色和粉色的花瓣在露天下嬌怯舒展。當我涉溪走入森林，我的內在小孩喜悅高漲。當我漫步走過茵茵草地，綠草的寧靜存在，讓我感到敬畏。聽著果勒教授講解《永嘉大師證道歌》，孔雀時而感傷時而尖銳的神秘啼叫。我不禁想，往昔自己是否曾經來過這裡？

回顧觀音法會期間的早晨，我和女眾法師們一起切蘑菇。每天在這片土地上的勞動與付出，我永遠不會忘記。回想自己感到不適的時候，教授們發的關懷郵件。我沒料到，在這些質樸的牌樓磚石下，竟蘊藏著如此炙熱的關心。

感恩我的同學們，他們的深度、慈悲、好奇心、努力、對修行的認真、對生活的幽默。感恩我的學生們，在正午陽光下清脆的笑聲，他們的挫折、淚水、堅強還有他們在農曆春節活動時的笑顏、以及學生彼此之間甜蜜的互動。12歲的學生提醒我，看任何事情不能單從一個角度，就像一紙張有兩面，所有的事情都有正反面；而生命在於體驗。捫心自問，誰才是真正的老師？這些學生就是我的小菩薩。

我清楚記得，上學期是我最焦躁的一個學期。我意識到自己仍在輪迴裡流轉，只不過是待了一個更好的角落，也或許某段業力成熟，讓我措手不及；又或許就像他人所說，修行越精進，魔障就越大。是我心魔來襲嗎？還是我無明愚昧？或是兩者皆是？

我拿起一本根據宣公上人教導整理的《居士基本守則》，提到我們對眾生應有的態度：「我不敢輕慢你，因為你是未來佛」。我

had just ruptured in my face and caught me by surprise, or maybe, as some say, the harder you cultivate, the harder it gets. Were the demons coming for me? Or was I just ignorant and foolish, or both?

I picked up a book, the *Basic Conducts of Laypeople* based on Venerable Hsuan Hua's teachings, and read the reflection we should have towards all living beings: "I dare not slight you because you will become a Buddha in the future." I felt my anger dispel. All the long gone lessons of kindness I read when I was 18 flooded back to me: Santideva's teachings on forbearance of our karmic creditors, Bodhidharma's exhortations on endurance of suffering as practice of true Bodhi... Curious, I searched up the benefits of morning ceremony—that faraway feat that seemed truly beyond my wildest imaginations. The CTTB website read: "In the early morning, when the myriad states have not arisen, when our minds are quiet and tranquil, we should awaken and get dressed and immediately commence the recitation of the Śūraṅgama Mantra of the Buddha's Summit. This mantra serves to regulate the five desires before they have had time to arise so that our minds quickly penetrate and directly reveal the wonderful nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One as it truly is. As it is said, "Still and unmoving, there is a response and a spontaneous penetration."

On my 11th day going in a row, I could feel my mind so clearly for the first time, the activities of each thought, the shadows they cast on my daily life. It was my own greed, hatred, and desire that had caused everything to happen the way it did. What little virtuous thoughts I had would always be engulfed by my attachment to the self. The *Diamond Sutra* says, "Subhuti, if a Bodhisattva has a mark of self, a mark of others, a mark of living beings, or a mark of a life, he is not a Bodhisattva." Why is this? Because when you have attachments, you will always fall into delusion, anger, and greed; sentient beings will only be viewed through your own habitual karmic thoughts, and thus, new karma will always be generated.

But who doesn't have ignorance, greed, and hatred? But not everyone has a sacred site like ours to cultivate the proper Dharma on. We desperately need this campus; the world desperately needs us. So I sincerely thank each and every single one of the cultivators who have stepped onto this land for creating and sustaining this kingdom in which we can cultivate. Our merits, blessings, and virtues are insufficient, but I believe every one of us came here for a reason, and that somewhere deep in our hearts also lies a vow. My gratitude knows no bounds and I only pray that we will all attain fruition in our cultivation. ❀

感覺自己的焦躁被平息了。我在十八歲時讀的有關善念的教誨湧上心頭：寂天菩薩（註：古代印度論師）教導我們對冤親債主主要修忍辱，菩提達摩祖師勸勉我們要修得妙明真心，先要修種種苦行……。出於好奇，我上網搜尋做早課的功德，其中的利益超乎我的想像。萬佛城的網頁上寫著：「於晨早萬境未動之際，心猶恬靜，整衣即起，念佛頂楞嚴心咒，治五欲於未萌，速期心精通恣，直顯如來藏妙真如性。所謂寂靜不動感而通念。」

連續十一天上殿做早課，我第一次如此清晰地感受到日常生活中所遇到的種種障礙，都是自己的貪瞋癡所造成。偶爾生起的一絲善念，總是被我執吞噬。《金剛經》上說：「須菩提！若菩薩有我相、人相、眾生相、壽者相，即非菩薩。」為什麼呢？因為我們有執著的時候，貪瞋痴三毒就隨之而來。我們眼中的眾生，只是自身習氣業力反映出來的妄念，而非眾生本身，於是新業又總是由此而生。

誰沒有貪瞋痴呢？但並不是每個人都像我們一樣，有莊嚴的道場可以修持正法。我們非常需要這個道場，世界也迫切需要我們。因此，我衷心感謝每一位來到此地的行者，締造並守護這片修行的淨土。我們的功德、德行或許不足，但我相信每一個人都有其因緣來到這裡，我們內心深處也埋藏著自己所發的願。我的不盡感恩之情難以言表，祈願各位都能圓滿佛果。 ❀