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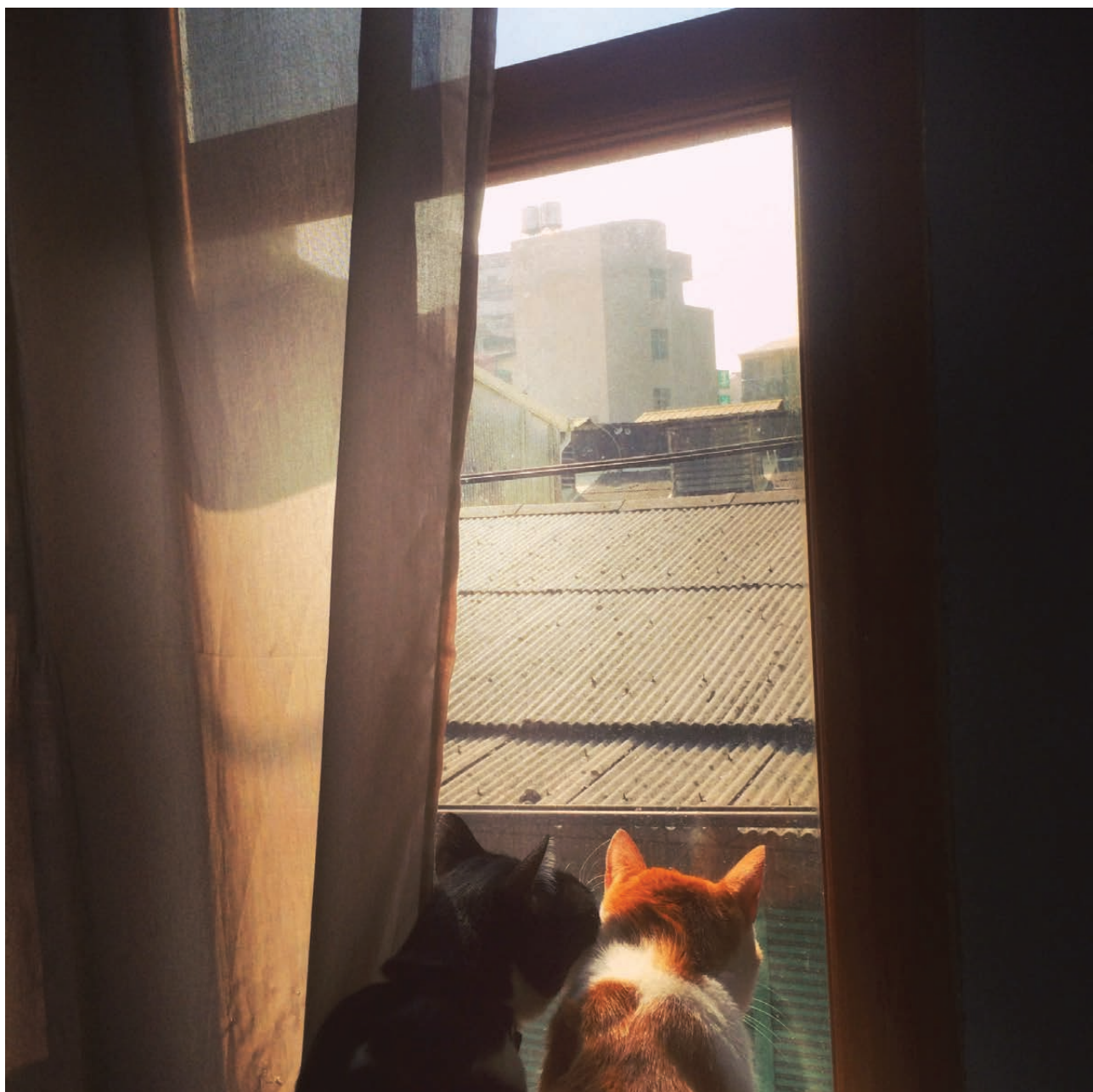
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## EDITOR'S NOTE

陳旨均 Chen Zhijun

你對自己有信心嗎？不論我們自信與否，有時候難免會感受到自己某方面的不足——身材、工作、情感、金錢、地位、等等。在不長不短的人生裡，總是有很多事情發生，讓我們有機會感受到欠缺與不安。

雖然明白生命無常且不受我們控制，但是我們依然很努力地去護衛自己，希望不被傷害。我們透過不同的方法，操練身心，包括教育和做運動，也懂得在外表下功夫。這些都是有用的策略，問題是它們的效果不持久，所以我們要不停地做。奇怪的是，永無止境的努力，換來的卻是原地踏步的感覺。

前些日子，一位朋友告訴我，她有一位長得很漂亮的舊同學。從其他同學口中，我朋友得知這位儷人近來去整容了，因為想把自己變得更加漂亮。我的朋友感歎：「真讓人費解，她為甚麼要這樣做？她本來就已經很美了。」

其實我可以理解她朋友那種「永遠不夠」的感覺，因為我也有同感，雖然我沒有去整容。而且這種想法也不限制於相貌。

把自己的安全感依附在外界的現象或不停地拿自己的特質與別人比較，似乎不是明智之舉。我們應該認真的思索，人活著是不是都要認命於一種不安於現狀的感覺，或許我們可以選擇不同的對待。

這期的雜誌的主題是「信任」——對自己、對別人與對生命的信任。如果我們可以重新喚醒我們內在的信心，我相信我們會活得更加輕鬆、自在，不論在人生的高峰或谷底。我們也許會有更大的勇氣面對痛苦的經驗，也更加願意接受自己與別人的失誤，並且願意共同承擔後果。這需要莫大的自信。雜誌裡的每篇文章都和這個邁向自信的道路有關。

面對內心的不安不單有益於自己，也有益於社會，尤其是在瀰漫著互不相信的現代社會。內心的不平衡會導致行動上的強硬和虛偽，強化社會的分歧。要改變，先別要求別人改變，要先從自己做起。畢竟，我們擁有那麼好的素料。

詠給·明就仁波切在《世界上最快樂的人》一書中提及：「所有被現代科學家深入研究過的生物當中，我們可以肯定地說，只有人類具備審慎選擇自己人生方向的能力，也只有人類能夠分辨哪些抉擇是通往短暫快樂的山谷，而哪些又是進入恆常寧靜與福祉的樂土。雖然基因的影響可能會讓我們執著於短暫的快樂，但我們也天生具備認識內在更深刻恆久的自信、寧靜和福祉的能力。」

他說：「在一切有情眾生之中，人類因清楚認識到在理智、情緒和生存本能之間建立聯繫的必要性而一枝獨秀，也因而創造出一個宇宙……在這宇宙中，一切有情眾生都可以滿足安然地和平共存。」

We all know what it feels like to be insecure. Even for those of us with generally healthy self-esteem, there seems to be an inordinately long list of things to be insecure about – our bodies, jobs, relationships, investments, social status, and so on. Such are the realities of an interconnected and ever changing life.

We do our best anyway. We improve ourselves with education, exercise to ward off disease, and boost our confidence with the help of nice clothes and make-up. These strategies work – up to a point. The fact is we can never keep up.

A friend recently told me she went to school with a really pretty girl who had since had plastic surgery to improve her looks. This was a topic of conversation at a gathering with some former classmates. "She already looked so good," my friend said. "None of us could understand why she did it."

We may have more in common with her than we think; at least I do. I have not resorted to plastic surgery, but the feeling of "never enough" is an old friend. And I am not just talking about looks.

It seems foolish to rely solely on plainly unreliable external circumstances – or even personal attributes, because we never judge these attributes on their own, but in comparison to someone else – for our peace of mind. We should ask if we are condemned to live with this nagging sense of discontent, and if there is another way.

Thus we talk about trust in this issue of the magazine – trust in ourselves, in others and in all that life brings. If we can rediscover this trust within ourselves, chances are we can feel more relaxed, whatever life throws at us. We may feel less of a need to shield ourselves from a bad experience, and become more willing to accommodate the consequences of our own failings and those of others. In their own way, each of the articles here touches on the journey to reconnect with trust.

Facing up to our own insecurities is not just useful for our own well-being, but also badly needed in societies where trust levels are low. Often, our insecurity leads us to act in ways that aggravate rather than resolve differences. Personal insecurities often manifest as aggression, pretence or hypocrisy. It's no good, too, pointing out these faults in other people. We work with ourselves, because that is the material with which we are born. And what fine material, too!

"Among all living creatures studied thus far by modern scientists, only human beings can be said with absolute certainty to have been endowed with the ability to make deliberate choices about the direction of their lives, and to discern whether those choices will lead them through the valley of transitory happiness or into a realm of a lasting peace and well-being," the meditation master Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche writes in his book, *The Joy of Living*.

"Though we may be genetically wired for temporary happiness, we've also been gifted with the ability to recognize within ourselves a more profound and lasting sense of confidence, peace, and well-being. Among sentient beings, human beings appear to stand alone in their ability to recognize the necessity to forge a bond between reason, emotion, and the instinct to survive, and so doing create a universe... in which we all are able to coexist contentedly and peaceably."

# 完整的信任

文字 王詠鏞 攝影 Xyza Cruz Bacani

人與人之間的不信任，和對與錯無關，  
反而源自於一種內在缺乏的心態。  
細心觀察，一場社會裡嚴峻的衝突，  
能夠讓我們遇見自己



無論是「我要真普選」、「2017，一定要得」、「向假普選說『不』！」，還是「有票，真係唔要？」，我們能完全相信任何一個嗎？自去年8月31日全國人民代表大會就2017年香港行政長官普選決議後，一直出現了各種口號、對抗、紛爭，以及形形色色的街頭抗命。社會上瀰漫著不信任、不妥協、「為反而反」等不同立場和意見，但相信每一個口號或聲音背後，總沒有存在百分之百的相信或不相信，所以同時間一定會有支持者和反對者，以及沉默的一群，誰是誰非，並沒有絕對的答案。

每人也可以有不同的觀點、立場，但是面對著再不能用自小所學懂的知識、累積的經驗和認知來判斷情況時，相信不少人，如我自己也曾置身於一個迷失的局面，不但不容易在法理與公義之間取得平衡，而且開始質疑自己的判斷，不相信自己，甚至被自己所做的事而嚇倒。例如，我斗膽與警察對抗，露宿在行車的天橋下、凌晨時分衝去示威會場等。然而，心裡卻生起一種知法犯法的罪惡感，形成自己不停地對抗自己。曾試過因為突如其來的畏縮，害怕被警察逮捕而離隊後，不願外出，困了自己在家的數天，一邊看著電視新聞，一邊總覺得自己怎樣做都是錯，亦覺得沒有人能告訴我如何做才是對。

當一切過往可解決問題的技能都用不著，頃刻發現習慣的自信及判斷力無所依靠時，便會一下子崩潰。究竟自己在做甚麼？為何不相信別人、不相信自己？

回想那段日子，我的心總是忐忑著，經常隨境而轉。各方的見解，加上互聯網、社交媒體和傳統電子媒體，這些信息泛濫的挑戰，更令我的五官及思考面對前所未有的衝擊。自信，不其然地被視覺和情感牽引著。心裡感到憤怒、恐懼、想逃避，甚至因為害怕失去，而拼命的抓緊。我執著自己所看到的、聽到的及感受到的，想證明自己是對的。

「這種極力想要向自己證明走對了的做法，顯示我們有著非常內向的心態……」禪修大師邱陽創巴仁波切在他的經典著作《突破修道上的唯物》裡寫到。大師雖然指的是修行之道，

和我的情況並不同，可是這句話令我反思我當時怎麼了。引用它，我發現，不斷向外尋求方法證明自己沒錯的同時，其實我一直在試圖保護自己，保護一顆沒有開放的心。的確，內在的動搖導致我無法對外開放。

要成為對社會有用的人，恐怕先要挑戰自己心裡的不平衡。真正的自信到底是建基於甚麼呢？

「自信，原本就有(本質是有的)，只是你不認識它而已。」之前在德噶香港禪修中心擔任導師的雪樂喇嘛分享了一個英籍印度人在六十年代的故事。他說這個印度教的出家人，為了世界和平，不惜用一雙腳，走遍世界各地，宣揚反核訊息。這個出家人出發前並答應了他師傅的一個條件，只帶著信任上路，要身無分文地完成旅程。一無所有的他，在路上一直得到不少人幫忙，一年半後，計劃順利完成，但可惜他一點也不覺得成功。反而覺察到只因自己是一個沒有殺傷力的人，才能得到別人的幫助。他領悟到真正的和平，根本就甚麼也不需要，跟自己和平相處就可以了。

其後師傅向他解釋從沒有阻止他前行的原因。「這是一種學習的緣份，既然念頭已萌起，便讓它發生吧。」發生，就是一個在生活上認識自己的學習機會。因為一切的關係，是由自己開始，所以無論是自己與自己的思想上衝突，或是人與人之間的鬥爭，也是來自自己，源於未能好好內觀自己。因此才出現太多的應該或是不應該等批判。

此外，雪樂喇嘛又解釋，其實沒有公平、公義的存在，所有的好與壞，都是相對的，沒有完美的。我們習慣了因著學校、家庭和社會所累積的經驗來判斷，被道理、真憑實據所淹蓋了「仁」，造成了自卑的驕慢，這並不是完整、健康的自信。因為「真實的自信，是沒有懷疑的」。

「有完整自信的人，是不會不快樂的。」而且人前人後，是不會有異。因為有完整自信的人，能誠實地面對自己，所以何來會介意別人對他的看法，還需要在不同人前擺出不同的模樣呢？雪樂喇嘛表示，禪修大師詠給·明就仁

波切就是一個在甚麼時候和情況下都保持著快樂的人。

臨床心理學家張依勵博士表示，以現時香港社會的情況來看，不適用自信或信心的說法來闡釋，因為這並不僅是心理的範疇。然而她認為能在任何情況下也帶給身邊的人平靜和輕鬆，就是有自信的人。張博士強調，能接受當下的自己以及明白自己的限制是一項重要的自信表現。這並不是單憑財力、權力和知識便代表有自信。而這一點，她到災區提供災後心理輔導時，更容易察覺得到，因為災民不會因物資缺乏和天災而令他們缺乏自信。

此外，張博士指出，各種情緒均有存在的價值。沒有好壞、正負之分，只要不過量、不影響生活便可以。她舉例，如喪親家屬，他們會有一段很長的時間處於憂傷，而這段時間正好是一段緩衝時間，讓他們好好休息。又如野人社會中，人類見到獅子會逃，這種恐懼，便成為一種保護生命的能力，所以恐懼也可以是好事。

另一方面，張博士說，在心理治療方面，近年發現「靜觀」能有助治療情緒病反覆的患者。讓他們由覺知開始，重新建立與情緒一起的習慣，久而久之便能提昇他們的觀察能力，明白眼前有不同的路徑可選擇。在佛學的角度來說，這便是智慧。

在情緒問題上，她更勸喻我們要相信我們有自癒的能力。開心、刺激、緊張會使人心跳加速，但隨著時間，跳動始終會平復、正常下來。所以最需要的，是好好跟自己的情緒相處，接受自己。不論發生何事，也能明白且感受到「I am OK」。

禪修的練習讓我們重新認識自己，發現自己原本具有的寶藏。「開心禪」創辦人明就仁波切在他的暢銷著作《世界上最快樂的人》裡寫道：「基本上，佛法是非常實用的……佛法修持的重點，並不在於刻意改變想法或行為，以使自己成為更好的人，而是要認識到，無論你如何看待影響自己生命的那些遭遇，你原本就是良善、完整，且圓滿具足的。佛法修持是去認出自心原本具有的潛能，換句話說，佛教注



重的並不是讓自己變得更好，而是認識到此時此刻的你，就如你自己一直深切期望的，是完整、良善，且本質上是完好健全的。」

為何會忘記了本質的自信呢？德噶香港禪修中心的雅諦喇嘛說，善的智慧不足夠時，就會被「無明」蒙蔽了我們的覺知。

我還記得最初會因著情緒的影響跑上街去支持抗議的學生，因著想出一點力，便參加義務工作小組，保存抗議運動所用的物品。過程中，不停地迷失，不停地尋找，反覆的在問自己：「我在做甚麼？」

往日的我，總能努力地捉緊一些東西，以支持自己的做法。可是不知為何，這趟沒有那麼順暢，還覺得很吃力。不知道是否「開心禪」對我造成的影響，令我很快便察覺到自己的害怕及不信任，霎時間停下來、跳出來，觀察、反思、接受、再前行。不過，我還是個禪修的初學者，所以每遇上新衝擊，思想又對抗起來，再次迷失於當下。但是，每一次的衝擊，如果我們帶著覺知去經歷，都可讓我們遇見「自己」。

認識自己，確是一條很漫長的道路，根本

的自信，亦不是跟你說「你原是有的」就可以。除了座上禪修，還要持續在生活上學習和實踐。就好像能覺知現時社會的衝突、分裂，和覺知著自己的情緒和心態的變化，便是很好的第一步。如何在面對、處理人與事的同時，好好重拾我們原有的自信，這便是我們的功課。

# THE WAY TO TRUST

Text Jamie Wong Translation Chen Zhijun Photography Xyza Cruz Bacani

Distrust of ourselves and of others has little to do with arguments of who's right or wrong. Instead, it reflects an unwillingness to open our hearts to others. Social conflicts can be used as a mirror to show us something about ourselves

"I want true universal suffrage". "Say 'no' to fake universal suffrage!", "The vote is at hand – do you really want to veto it?" There has been no end of sloganeering since last August, when the National People's Congress in Beijing made its decision on the framework for electoral reform in Hong Kong. But which slogan is right? Are any of them entirely wrong or right?

Everyone is entitled to their own views. Yet, how can we take a reasonable position when we know there are limits to our own knowledge, experience and understanding? And how can we find a reasonable position when discussion is so difficult, with trust between people at such a dispiritingly low level? No one appears willing to compromise. Many people have staked out their positions and are sticking to them – no matter what anyone else says.

I grappled with these dilemmas as I took part in pro-democracy street demonstrations in Hong Kong. But I began to doubt my own judgment even as I tried hard to strike a balance between justice and the law. I was shocked by some of the things I did: I protested on the streets, defying police calls to disperse. I slept on the road along with the other protesters. I rushed to the protest site, sometimes in the middle of the night, when I felt I was needed. And always, I felt guilty about knowingly breaking the law.

Inside, I was at war with myself. Once, seized by a fear of being arrested, I left the protest site to go home. For days afterwards, I did not want to

leave the house and spent hour after hour glued to the news on television. I was confused: I felt all my decisions were wrong, but no one could tell me how to make them right. I was at breaking point. "What am I doing?" I asked myself.

Recalling the experience of those several months, I can see how my thoughts and feelings went on a rollercoaster ride, agitated by everything that was happening around me. Everyone had an opinion, and every event and view was amplified in the echo room of so much social media.

My sense perceptions and judgment were under assault like never before. It was as if my self-confidence was being held hostage by my senses and emotions. I felt anger, fear and a desire to escape these feelings. Was I fighting to protect democracy, or something else?

Then something occurred to me. While searching for the "right" thing to do, I realised, I was actually trying to prove myself right; I was no longer searching for my true answer, but trying to justify my feelings. Despite my confusion, I had found it hard to accept views that did not naturally accord with my own. It came down to: why should I suffer the consequences of other people's mistaken views? Clearly, if I wish to contribute to society, I must first regain a sense of mental balance; regain trust. But what should trust in people rest on?

I spoke to Lama Sherab, who was at the time a meditation instructor at the Tergar Meditation Centre in Hong Kong, and he gave me some

valuable advice: "Trust in ourselves is a quality that all of us have, yet not all of us recognise it."

Then he told me a story about a remarkable man, the Indian-born peace advocate Satish Kumar, who made a peace walk in the 1960s calling for nuclear disarmament. The Jain monk planned to walk to the capital cities of four nuclear-armed countries, carrying his message of peace to their leaders. His teacher gave him one condition: he was to carry no money on the journey, taking only his trust that people would help him. And in fact he received so much help that he completed his mission.

Reflecting on the journey later, Satish Kumar realised that though the walk itself did not accomplish the goal of nuclear disarmament, it made him see that true peace starts from the self: when we are at peace with ourselves, others will also be willing to help us and walk in peace with us. True peace does not require us to do anything except be at peace ourselves.

His teacher knew there was little chance of Satish Kumar convincing world leaders to change their minds about nuclear weapons. Yet he did not stop him from going on the walk. Life handed him an opportunity for learning, Lama Sherab said. "If the desire to do something has risen, then, if one can, one sees it through. It is a lesson the person needs to learn."

By paying attention, we will see that everything that has happened to us in our lifetime provides us with an opportunity to learn something





of ourselves. How we relate to others depends on how we relate to ourselves. Often, we find that our conflict with others originates from a conflict within ourselves. When we fail to notice the link, it is easy to criticise and judge others.

Lama Sherab also said that notions of fairness and justice do not really exist as independent entities, and that all good and bad are relative notions; perfection is elusive. Our upbringing and education teaches us to judge what is right and wrong based on rational discussion and evidence, sometimes to the extent that we forget about kindness and empathy. When we judge using only partial understanding, yet believing what we know to be absolutely right, we become arrogant. This kind of self-confidence is incomplete, and easily shaken.

By contrast, real trust in oneself is unshakeable, Lama Sherab said. "Someone with complete trust and confidence in himself is never unhappy." Such a person does not need to live life wearing a mask. This is because someone who trusts himself is honest with himself, and does not mind how others see him, hence there's no need to pretend in front of others. One example of a trusting person is Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche, the meditation master who founded Tergar, Lama Sherab said. No matter where he finds himself, Mingyur Rinpoche is able to retain his sense of joy and peace.

Clinical psychologist Dr Eliza Cheung agrees. She said while social conflicts arise from a combination of factors, and go beyond the realm of psychology, trust is nevertheless something that improves relationships between people. A self-confident person is someone who brings calm and ease to others, under even the worst circumstances.

Dr Cheung also made the point that all truly confident people accept themselves as they are, including their own limits. This kind of trust in oneself has little to do with how much money, power or knowledge we have. She made this observation while working to provide psychological support to communities that had been devastated by natural disasters. Even in the

face of tremendous loss, Dr Cheung said, some people never lose their trust that they can weather the storm.

Besides, all emotions are useful, even those we regard as negative emotions, as long as they are not excessive or debilitating. For example, we take time out from our regular activities when grieving for a departed loved one, and this period of rest gives us time to heal ourselves.

In recent years, many psychologists have turned to mindfulness practices to help treat patients with emotional disorders. Dr Cheung said with some awareness training, we would be able to develop new habits that allow us to manage our emotions better. Turning our powers of observation on ourselves, we begin to see that we have choice in the way we respond to people and situations. In Buddhist teachings, such an insight is the dawning of wisdom.

Dr Cheung said it is important that we trust in our ability to recover. Our hearts beat faster when we are happy, excited or nervous, but they will slow down when we start to calm down, she said. So if we accept ourselves and the coming and going of emotions, relating to them as friends, we will feel we're OK even when unpleasant things happen. We know we will be able to handle whatever comes our way.

Meditation practice helps us to discover these abilities within us. As the Tibetan Buddhist teacher Mingyur Rinpoche puts it in his book, *The Joy of Living*: "At its heart, Buddhism is very practical... The essence of Buddhist practice is not so much an effort at changing your thoughts or your behaviour so that you can become a better person, but in realising that no matter what you might think about the circumstances that define your life, you're already good, whole, and complete. It's about recognising the inherent potential of your mind. In other words, Buddhism is not so much concerned with getting well as with recognising that you are, right here, right now, as whole, as good, as essentially well as you could ever hope to be."

If such goodness is our birthright, how did we end up forgetting we have it? Tergar's Lama Yadie

said ignorance of our true nature is like clouds that cover up our awareness, and we need to work at discovering our compassion and wisdom.

I remember the overpowering emotions that led me to join the Occupy Central movement. I felt I needed to do something to help the protesting students. So I became a part of the volunteer groups that kept the protest camps running. In the process, however, I felt lost and confused. And I repeatedly asked myself: "What exactly am I doing?"

In the past, I would work hard to find justifications to support my course of action. But this time, the justifications did not come as easily as they did before. I don't know if it was because of the "Joy of Living" meditation course I took last year, but I found myself more quickly noticing my thoughts and feelings. I began to pay more attention to myself, and often it made me stop – even for a little while – and reconsider what I was doing.

This is not to say I am now a person completely at ease with herself. My meditation practice is limited, after all. I continue to ride the rollercoaster of life's ups and downs, and often feel lost, especially in the face of overpowering emotions. But of this I am certain: if we remember to be aware as we experience life, we discover something precious about ourselves.

It takes time to really understand ourselves, perhaps a lifetime. Meditation practitioners may tell us that we are trusting by nature, but it's only a concept if we don't make the effort to reconnect with ourselves – through experience, not logic.

Apart from the sitting practice of meditation, being aware of the rivers of our thoughts and feelings of daily life is also a useful practice. It's one step towards rediscovering our basic, natural self-confidence.

# 一個番薯的啟發

口述 番薯 撰文 陳旨均

事業上的追求，促使他對自己的要求特別嚴厲，也導致他忽略了如何關注身邊的人。看見自己在這方面的不足後，他發現——要用心，才足以圓滿與家人的關係

我對自己的要求很高。一直以來，我不斷地改變自己去提升競爭力，因為我覺得，要培養出我有而別人沒有的質素，才可以在這個社會裡生存。我明白要改變我的人生，我自己便要努力，不能靠別人！

有些事，我逼自己做。例如：中學畢業後，我便開始在銀行工作。三十多年前，電子計算機並不普及，我們用的都是舊款的計算機（adding machine）。我是個右撇子，順理成章地應該用右手操作計算機，可是我卻選擇學用左手來計算，因為這樣我可以同時用兩隻手——左手計算，右手寫字，可以省時間，比別人快。我逼自己練習——平時沒事做的時候，我也會拿起計算機操練我的左手。經過訓練後，我的速度令人驚歎。

後來老闆吩咐我教一位新同事怎麼用左手計算，可是他卻不願意學。

我認為，人不可以因為習慣而不讓自己嘗試一些新的東西。

從我離開學校踏進社會開始，就一直上課，至53歲才停止。最繁忙的時段，我一個星期上五天課。其實星期六也上課——讀樂理，因為我喜歡音樂；星期天我就學彈吉他。我的大專文憑、大學的學士和碩士學位也是我半工讀捱回來的。

我逼自己逼得很辛苦。年輕時想到澳洲唸書，可是家裡環境不允許，所以我中學畢業出來做事後，就跟自己說，我要找一條自己可以走的路。

事業上畢竟不是一路平順。我有過三次的失業經歷，每一次都很痛。

第一次丟了工作是因為公司合併。我那時三十多歲，已經坐上一家小銀行的第八把交椅。我有房屋貸款，又要養家，擔心到晚上睡不着，要看醫生吃藥。第二次失業也是因為公司合併。當時我抱怨了，想不通為甚麼又是

我，心想，為甚麼老天要這樣對我？不過我還是逼自己正面面對。

第三次因為公司架構重組失業時，我已接近50歲了，心裡覺得自己沒做錯，所以還是抱怨了，很不容易接受。我告訴自己這會是一個長期作戰，我要操練自己——我早上游泳，逼自己吃個豐富早餐，然後寫信、上網找工作。那時的我就像一個軍人一樣。一個多月後，我終於找到工作了。

就是因為我這個個性——把自己抓得很緊，凡事都想得很嚴重——我的腦子經常停不下來。幾年前，看見我工作忙碌且責任漸大，太太怕我會垮，就鼓勵我去學禪修。開始禪修不久後，我還參加了一個源自台灣的生命課程。感謝這些啟發，我看到自己——原來我不懂得用心與家人同在。

我發現，以往在事業上的追求，我想的都是怎麼處理自己的意願，往往忽略了身邊的人。我只在乎自己，把自己帶到一個高高在上的位子，把身邊的人扔在一旁。我顧著自己，傷害了他們。

對待他們，我發現我的表達能力極度差；或說，我的表達方式不是他們所需要的，所以他們感覺不到我對他們的愛。

在上課之前，太太曾經告訴我她覺得我對外人比對家裡的人好，態度有點問題。可是，真正看到這一點，是透過我上課時的一個發生。

第一天的課程結束後，一位學長鼓勵我寄短訊給太太，跟她說「我愛妳」。我照做了，太太的回答竟然是：「你在做功課吧？」第二天，我又發了個短訊跟太太說：「我希望我們來世也做夫妻。」你猜我太太怎麼回答？她說：「你先把今生做好吧。」

那一刻，我才發現原來她的感受是那麼差，事情是那麼糟糕。雖然我鬥贏了自己，可是對身邊的人，我是失敗的。

在公司裡，我是個精神領袖，可是回到家裡，我是個失敗者。我把公司的態度帶回家——那是行不通的。以往我為了自己而改變自己；如今我要為了他人做改變，學會怎麼去好好地表達愛。

我覺得愛的表達是靠一些細微的動作，很難突然地去做。

有一次我很真情的和太太交流。我承認我的表達能力差，沒有給她安全感，那是我的弱點。我試著解釋我做事情的動機。她告訴我，我給予她的，原來不是她需要的。比如，我以為買一些漂亮的東西給家人已經盡了責，原來不是這樣的。我需要給他們真正的需要——關心。

這令我想起我和岳母的一個故事。十年前，她做了一個大手術後，搬來我們家住了一個多月。有一天，我看見她很不开心，問她為甚麼，她說她沒胃口吃。我問她要不要蒸個番薯給她吃？她說好。蒸好後我們一起吃，她頓時開朗了。

過後，她不斷在家人面前稱讚我，所以家人都叫我「番薯女婿」。給予別人的需要原來是這樣。那時她的子女買給她那麼多的補品、燕窩，可是讓她開懷的卻是一個不值什麼錢的番薯。

我以前只想著如何拿一些好的東西來裝備自己、充實自己；現在我理想把內心的豐富拿出來，分享給家裡的人和朋友們。

# WHAT A SWEET POTATO TOLD ME

Text Sweet Potato, as told to Chen Zhijun Translation Chen Zhijun

His focus on work made him extremely hard on himself and walled him off from his family. After years of being oblivious to the feelings of his loved ones, he began to see, for the first time, how he had misunderstood his relationship with his family

I expect a lot of myself. I'm constantly forcing myself to improve at work because I believe I can survive the competition only by learning skills that others don't have. If I want to change my life, I know I have only myself to rely on.

So I have forced myself to work hard. Take my first job at a bank. This was over 30 years ago, and calculators were not at all common; adding machines were everywhere, of course. I'm right-handed, so the natural thing to do would be to use the adding machine with my right hand, but I chose to train my left hand so that I could use both hands at the same time – the left hand to work the machine and the right hand to write. This would let me work faster than my colleagues. I practised at every opportunity; after months of drilling, I could do the sums amazingly quickly.

When a new colleague joined the company, my boss asked me to teach him to do the same thing, but he didn't want to learn.

One should never refuse to learn out of habit – that's my view.

Since I left school, I did not stop studying to improve myself until I was 53. At my busiest, I was going to class five days a week. In fact, the weekends weren't free either: I had music theory class on Saturdays and guitar class on Sundays. I got my diploma and bachelor and master degrees all while working full-time.

It was very tough. When I was young, I wanted to study in Australia but my family couldn't afford the fees.

So I started work after completing high school, and told myself I would have to forge my own way, whatever it took.

The path was not smooth. I lost my job three times, and each time was painful.

The first time happened when the bank where I worked merged with another. I was in my 30s, and, since the bank was small, I already held a senior position there. I had a housing loan to service and a family to feed. I was so worried that I

couldn't sleep at night, and a doctor had to put me on medication.

I lost my job a second time also because of a merger. I was really upset, thinking, "Why me? Why is life so unfair to me?" But I forced myself to be positive.

The third time I lost my job, due to a company restructuring, I was nearing 50. I felt really wronged; it wasn't my fault, so why me? It was difficult to accept. But, again, I forced myself to brace up. I told myself I was facing a tough battle, and I had to be battle-ready. I kept to a routine – a swim in the morning, a good breakfast and then I scoured the papers and the internet for jobs, and sent out applications by the tens. I felt as if I was in the army.

I am hard on myself and I tend to take things too seriously. This character trait makes my mind extremely restless, and I sometimes can't stop thinking. As my responsibility at work grew over the years, so did the pressure. A few years ago, my wife, worried that I would have a breakdown, encouraged me to give meditation a try. I did, and soon after, I joined a life education course that greatly inspired me.

Thanks to these teachings, I became more grounded, which helps me to see the world and myself more clearly than before. I saw for the first time how I had simply not been there for my family.

The pursuit of my career goals was so single-minded that I had neglected them. I constantly worried about how I could improve myself, and didn't think about how that kind of self-absorption might have hurt them.

I found out that the way I expressed my care was in fact not what they needed. That was why they could not feel my love for them.

Before I attended the life education course, my wife had told me she felt I was nicer to other people than to my own family. I only really understood how serious she was because of something that happened while I was attending the course.

At the end of the first day at the course, a

volunteer encouraged me to text my wife to tell her that I love her. I did, and her reply was: "Is this homework?" The next day, I sent her another message, saying I hoped we could still be husband and wife in our next lives. Guess what my wife said to that? "You just take care of this life first." At that moment, I understood how bad things were, and how terrible my wife really felt about our relationship. I may have achieved something for myself, but I understood then that I had failed my family in some way.

At work, people look up to me, but at home... It had become clear to me that I could not treat my family like the office.

I had a heart-to-heart talk with my wife. I admitted that I found it hard to express my love, and perhaps did not give her the security she wanted. She pointed out that what I had given her was not what she wanted. For instance, I thought buying something nice for my family was good enough to show them I cared, but it wasn't what they needed from me.

I am reminded of a little anecdote with my mother-in-law. She had a major surgery about 10 years ago and came to live with us for over a month after the surgery while she recovered. One day, she was very down and had no appetite. I asked her, "Would you like me to make you some steamed sweet potatoes?" She said OK, so I cooked the sweet potatoes and we shared them. For some reason, that made her very happy. She repeatedly told others in the family how much she appreciated my effort, so much so that some of my relatives now call me the "sweet potato son-in-law". At the time, her children had bought her many expensive tonics, but in the end it was the modest sweet potato that touched her heart.

In the past, I used to put my own needs first; today, I know that my family's needs are also important to me. I need a balanced life between family and work, and when it comes to the crunch, my family will be my top priority.

# 無限的可能性

節錄自《世界上最快樂的人》第十八章

攝影 謝至德

**當你選擇認證自己真正的潛能時，你就會逐漸發現自己輕視自己的次數減少了，對自己的觀感也變得較為健康：你的自信增長了，單純的生活之樂也愈來愈多，詠給·明就仁波切寫道**

所有被現代科學家深入研究過的生物當中，我們可以肯定地說，只有人類具備審慎選擇自己人生方向的能力，也只有人類能夠分辨哪些抉擇是通往短暫快樂的山谷，而哪些又是進入恆常寧靜與福祉的樂土。雖然基因的影響可能會讓我們執著於短暫的快樂，但我們也天生具備認識內在更深刻恆久的自信、寧靜和福祉的能力。

在一切有情眾生之中，人類因清楚認識到理智、情緒和生存本能之間建立聯繫的必要性而一枝獨秀，也因而創造出一個宇宙——不僅是為了自己和後代的子子孫孫，也為了所有能感受到煩惱、恐懼和痛苦的其他生物——在這宇宙中，一切有情眾生都可以滿足安然地和共存。

即使我們渾然不覺，這個宇宙已經存在了。佛法的目標，就在於發展認識這個宇宙的能力，這個宇宙只是原本就存在於自心的無限可能性。為了認識它，我們必須學會如何安住自心，唯有透過安住自心於本然的覺知，我們才能開始認識到「我」不是「我的念頭」「我的感覺」「我所接收的對境」。念頭、情緒和感知的對境只是身體的功能。身為佛教徒，我所學到的一切，以及我所知道關於現代科學的一切，都向我顯示人並非只是身體而已。

本書所提到的禪修練習，只是讓你邁向了悟自心全然潛能——「佛性」的第一階段。光是熟悉這些安定自心的法門，並培養出慈心和悲心，就已經足以讓你的生命產生意想不到的改變了。有誰不想在面對困境時能夠感到自信

鎮定？有誰不想減低或消除自己的孤立感？有誰不想要直接或間接地幫助他人得到快樂，並因而創造出良好的環境，讓我們自己，更讓我們所關愛的眾生與未來的世代子孫都可以興盛成長？誰不想要這樣？想要創造這些奇跡的話，我們只需要一點點安忍的毅力、一點點精進的精神，還有一點點放下對自己和週遭世界既定成見的意願。我們只需練習一下如何在人生的大夢中清醒過來，並認出夢中體驗和做夢者的心之間並無不同就行了。

就如同夢中的景色是無所不有的，你的佛性也是如此。過去許多佛教大師神奇的生平故事中，都曾提到過這些大師能夠在水面上行走、毫髮無傷地穿越火焰，還可以用心電感應跟遙遠的弟子溝通。而我父親也能夠在沒有麻醉的狀態下接受眼部手術，當醫生切人敏感的眼部皮膚和肌肉組織時，他一點兒也不感到疼痛。

我還可以和你分享幾個有趣的故事，故事主角生於二十世紀，並以有情眾生的身份證得了全然的了悟：這個人就是十六世噶瑪巴，是藏傳佛教噶舉派的前一任法王。

一九五零年代末期西藏動亂不安之際，法王和一大群追隨者抵達北印度的錫金 (Sikkim)。安頓下來之後，法王創建了一座大寺院、幾所學校，以及數個不同機構，藉以幫助西藏流亡人民社區的發展。錫金的社區穩定之後，噶瑪巴便開始旅行世界各地，教導當時逐漸增加，對藏傳佛教特色有所注意的人們。噶瑪巴在歐洲與北美行遊時，多次展現了所謂的奇蹟，比如在堅硬的石頭上留下腳印、為美國西南方嚴重乾旱的區域帶來雨水。

十六世噶瑪巴的圓寂，更對那些見證者生動展現了自心本性的特質。一九八一年，噶瑪巴在芝加哥市郊的一家醫院中接受癌症治療。但他的病情讓醫療小組困惑極了，因為他的症狀時而出現，時而消失，卻查不出明顯原因。有時候症狀全部消失了，但稍後又在尚未受到感染的身體部位出現。根據描述，這種狀態「就好像他的身體在跟醫療設備開玩笑似的」。在種種磨難之中，噶瑪巴卻從未抱怨過任何疼痛，他比較關心的反而是醫院員工的福祉。許多醫

院員工經常來探望他，為的就是要感受他從內心發散出來的那種不為病痛折磨的極度寧靜與慈悲。

噶瑪巴圓寂之後，隨侍在側的人請求院方，是否能依照西藏大師圓寂時的習俗，將噶瑪巴的遺體靜置三天，不要受到任何打擾。由於醫院員工對噶瑪巴有著極為深刻的印象，行政部門答應了這項特殊的請求，沒有馬上將他的遺體移到太平間，而是留在病房中，維持圓寂時的禪修坐姿。

醫生們在這三天之中持續觀察了噶瑪巴的遺體。根據他們的紀錄，噶瑪巴的身體並沒有死後僵硬的現象，而且心臟部位的體溫跟活人幾乎一樣。即使是二十多年後的今天，噶瑪巴遺體的狀態仍是醫學所無法解釋的，也在所有見證者心中留下難以磨滅的深刻印象。

我認為十六世噶瑪巴決定接受西方醫學的治療，並於西方醫院中圓寂，是他留給人類最後，也是最美好的禮物。他對西方科學界展現了一項事實：我們人類確實擁有一些常理無法解釋的能力。

## 選擇快樂

只要看小孩子玩電動時，沉溺在按鈕殺敵或贏得點數，你就知道這些電動多麼令人著迷。然後你退一步想，錢財、感情或其他你曾經玩過的成人「遊戲」，是不是也同樣讓人上癮？成人和小孩子之間最大的不同就在於，成人已有過這樣的經驗，也知道要從這些遊戲中退出。成人可以選擇更客觀地觀察自己的心，而且能夠對那些還做不到這樣選擇的人生起慈悲心。

本書前面說過，一旦下定決心要開發對自心佛性的覺知，你勢必會在日常生活中看到自己的改變：以前曾經困擾你的人、事、物，會逐漸失去對你的影響力；你會更具有直覺性的智慧，更放鬆，心胸更寬廣，你也開始可以認出「障礙即是成長的契機」。隨著假相的受限感和脆弱感逐漸消退，你就會發現內心深處那個真正自我的莊嚴偉大。



“ 我們選擇愚癡，是因為我們「可以」愚癡；  
我們選擇覺知，是因為我們「可以」覺知。  
輪迴和涅槃只不過是我們選擇如何檢視和瞭解  
自身經驗的兩種不同觀點罷了。 ”

最棒的是，由於開始看到自己的潛能，你也會在週遭每個人身上認出這樣的潛能。佛性不是少數人才能擁有的特權，「真正」認出自心的佛性時，你會體會到佛性有多麼普遍平常，你會看到每個眾生都具有佛性，只不過並非每個眾生都有能力認出自心本具的佛性罷了。因此，曾經對你大吼大叫或做出傷害性舉動的人，你都不會再對他們關閉心門了，你的心會變得更加寬廣。你會認出，他們並非混蛋，他們跟你一樣，都想要快樂與平靜，而他們之所以會做出那些混蛋的行為，是因為他們尚未認出自己的真實本性，因而被脆弱感和恐懼感淹沒了。

你可以簡單的祈願作為修持的第一步，祈願自己下次做得更好，祈願自己能夠以更加正念覺察的心來從事所有的活動，祈願自己可以更寬大地對待他人。動機，是決定我們到底會痛苦還是平靜的，也是唯一的因素。正念覺察和悲心其實是同步發展的，你愈是能正念覺察，就愈容易變得更加慈悲。而你愈是能夠心胸寬廣地對待他人，從事任何活動時就愈能夠覺知。

無論何時，你都可以自行選擇要隨著那些會強化自我脆弱感和受限感的念頭、情緒和感官細覺而到處流轉，還是記得你的真實本性是清淨、無限且無法被損傷的。你可以繼續在無明愚癡中沉睡，也可以記得你當下就是覺醒的，而且一直都是覺醒的。無論身處哪一種狀態，你都是在展現自身真實本性無限的本質，愚癡、脆弱、恐懼、嗔恨及慾望等，也都是你佛性無限潛能的展現，而無論哪一種選擇，都沒有本質上的對或錯。佛法修持的成果，就是認出所有煩惱只不過是我們現有的選擇罷了，因為我們真實本性的境界是無限寬廣的。

我們選擇愚癡，是因為我們「可以」愚癡；我們選擇覺知，是因為我們「可以」覺知。輪迴和涅槃只不過是我們選擇如何檢視和瞭解自身經驗的兩種不同觀點罷了。涅槃並不神奇，輪迴也沒啥不好，如果你決定把自己想成是受限的、害怕的、脆弱的，或由於過去的經驗而感到驚恐的話，你要知道，是你自己「選擇」要這麼認為的。但是也要記得，你永遠都有機會選擇以不同方式來體驗自己。

佛法之道，主要是讓我們可以在熟悉感與實際性之間自行做選擇。毫無疑問地，維持熟悉的念頭和行為模式會讓我們擁有某種舒適和穩定感，一旦跨出舒適、熟悉的範圍，勢必就得踏入陌生經驗的領域，而這可能會讓我們感到非常恐懼。這就像是我在閉關時體驗到那個不安的灰色地帶一樣，你不知道到底應該退回自己雖恐懼卻熟悉的狀態，還是乾脆一咬牙，迎頭面對可能只因不熟悉才感到的恐怖經驗。

### 了斷傷害自己的感情

好幾個學生告訴我，就某種意義而言，放下熟悉的過去，選擇認出自己全然的潛能，有點像是結束一段受傷的感情一樣，在做了斷時，同樣都會感到既失敗又不甘願。然而這兩者之間最重要的差別在於，當你進入佛法修持之道時，是你與你自己了斷那段傷害自己的感情。當你選擇認證自己真正的潛能時，你就會逐漸發現自己輕視自己的次數減少了，對自己的觀感也變得較為正向且健康：你的自信增長了，單純的生活之樂也愈來愈多。同時，你也開始認出

週遭每個人都擁有同樣的潛能，無論他們對它是否有所瞭解。你不再把旁人視為某種威脅或對手，你發現自己開始有能力「認出」並「同情」他們的恐懼和痛苦，並且能夠自然地以建設性的方式回應他們，向他們強調問題的解決之道，而非製造更多問題。

快樂的追尋，到最後其實只剩下兩種選擇，你可以選擇「覺察煩惱時產生的不安」，或選擇「被煩惱控制的不安」。雖然我們說要單純地安住在覺察念頭、感受和所接收對境的覺性中，並認出這些都是身心之間互動的產物，但我不能擔保這過程一直都很愉快。事實上，我可以向你保證，以這種方式觀照自己，有時候是極度痛苦的，就像開始任何新的嘗試，比如到健身房運動、開始一個新工作或開始節食一樣。

最初幾個月總是很困難。為了幹好一份工作，必須學習所有必要的技巧其實是很辛苦的；要激勵自己去運動也不容易，而要你每天都吃健康飲食也很難。但過了一陣子，困難消退之後，你就會逐漸感受到喜悅的成就感，這時，你整個「自我的觀感」也會開始轉變。

禪修也是如此。

最特殊的是，不論你禪修時間多久，不論你運用什麼禪修技巧，也不論我們覺察與否，每一種佛法的禪修技巧最後都會引發慈悲心。每當你看著自己的心時，實在無法不看到自己與他人的相同點；當你看到自己「渴求快樂」的慾望時，一定也會看到他人有著相同的慾望；當你清楚觀照自己的恐懼、憤怒或嗔恨時，實在無法不看到週遭的也都有著相同的恐懼、憤怒與嗔恨。當你看著自己的心時，所有虛構的自身與他人的差異就會自動消融。

# INFINITE POSSIBILITIES

An excerpt from *The Joy of Living* Chapter 18

Photography Ducky Tse

When we choose to recognize our true potential, we gradually find that we belittle ourselves less frequently, our opinion of ourselves becomes more positive and wholesome, and our sheer joy of being alive increases, Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche writes

Among all living creatures studied thus far by modern scientists, only human beings can be said with absolute certainty to have been endowed with the ability to make deliberate choices about the direction of their lives, and to discern whether those choices will lead them through the valley of transitory happiness or into a realm of a lasting peace and well-being. Though we may be genetically wired for temporary happiness, we've also been gifted with the ability to recognize within ourselves a more profound and lasting sense of confidence, peace, and well-being.

Among sentient beings, human beings appear to stand alone in their ability to recognize the necessity to forge a bond between reason, emotion, and the instinct to survive, and so doing create a universe – not only for themselves and the human generations that follow, but also for all creatures who feel pain, fear, and suffering – in which we all are able to coexist contentedly and peaceably.

This universe already exists, even if we don't realize it at present. The aim of Buddhist teachings is to develop the capacity to recognize that this universe – which is really nothing more or less than the infinite possibility inherent within our own being – exists in the here and now. In

order to recognize it, however, it is necessary to learn how to rest the mind. Only through resting the mind in its natural awareness can we begin to recognize that we are not our thoughts, not our feelings, and not our perceptions. Thoughts, feelings, and perceptions are functions of the body. And everything I've learned as a Buddhist and everything I've learned about modern science tells me that human beings are more than just their bodies.

The exercises I've presented in this book represent only the first stage of the path toward realization of your full potential, your Buddha nature. On their own, these exercises about learning to calm your mind, becoming familiar with it, and developing a sense of loving-kindness and compassion can effect undreamed-of changes in your life. Who wouldn't want to feel confident and calm in the face of difficulties, reduce or eliminate their sense of isolation, or contribute, however indirectly, to the happiness and well-being of others, providing thereby an environment in which we ourselves, those we love and care for, and generations as yet unborn can flourish? All it takes to accomplish these marvels is a little patience, a little diligence, a little willingness to let go of conditioned ideas about yourself and the world around you. All it takes is a bit of practice in waking up in the middle of the dreamscape of your life and recognizing that there is no difference between the experience of the dream and the mind of the dreamer.

Just as the landscape of a dream is infinite in scope, so is your Buddha nature. The stories surrounding Buddhist masters of the past are full of wonderful tales of men and women who walked on water, passed through fire unharmed, and communicated telepathically with their followers across great distances. My own father was able to undergo the experience of a surgeon slicing through the sensitive layers of skin and muscle around his eye without feeling pain.

I can also share with you a few interesting stories about a man who lived in the twentieth century who achieved his full potential as a sentient being. That man was the Sixteenth

Karmapa, the previous head of the Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. In the wake of the difficulties that shook Tibet in the late 1950s, he and a large group of followers resettled in Sikkim, in northern India, where he founded a large monastery, several schools, and a variety of institutions to support a thriving community for exiled Tibetans.

Once the community in Sikkim was securely established, the Karmapa began traveling the world, teaching the growing number of people who at that time were just beginning to become aware of the special nature of Tibetan Buddhism. In the course of his travels through Europe and North America, he performed what might be described as miracles, such as leaving his footprints in solid rock, and bringing rain to drought-stricken areas of the American Southwest.

But it was the manner of the Sixteenth Karmapa's death that offered those who witnessed it the most vivid demonstration of the qualities of natural mind. In 1981 he was treated for cancer at a hospital outside of Chicago. The course of his illness bewildered his medical team, as his symptoms seemed to come and go for no apparent reason, disappearing altogether at times, only to reappear later in some previously unaffected area of his body – as though, according to one description, "his body were joking with the machines." Throughout the ordeal, the Karmapa never complained of pain.

When he died, the lamas and other Tibetans who'd stayed with him throughout his treatment asked that his body remain undisturbed for three days, as is the Tibetan custom after the passage of a great master. Because the Karmapa had made such a profound impression on the hospital staff, the administration granted their request, and, rather than immediately removing his remains to the hospital morgue, they allowed his body to remain in his room, seated in the meditation posture in which he'd died.

As documented by the doctors who examined him over the course of those three days, the Karmapa's body never underwent rigor mortis, and the area around his heart remained nearly as warm as that of a living person. More than twenty

years later, the condition of his body after death defies medical explanation, and still leaves a profound impact on those who witnessed it.

I suspect that his decision to be treated and to leave his body in a Western hospital was the Sixteenth Karmapa's last, and perhaps greatest, gift to humanity: a demonstration to the Western scientific community that we do indeed possess capacities that cannot be explained in ordinary terms.

## Choosing happiness

Just watch a child playing a video game, obsessed with pushing buttons to kill enemies and win points, and you'll see how addictive such games can be. Then take a step back and see how the financial, romantic, or other "games" you've been playing as an adult are just as addictive. The main difference between an adult and a child is that an adult has the experience and understanding to step away from the game. An adult can choose to look more objectively at his or her mind, and in doing so develop a sense of compassion for others who haven't been able to make that choice.

As described throughout the preceding pages, once you commit yourself to developing an awareness of your Buddha nature, you'll inevitably start to see changes in your day-to-day experience. Things that used to trouble you gradually lose their power to upset you. You'll become intuitively wiser, more relaxed, and more open-hearted. You'll begin to recognize obstacles as opportunities for further growth. And as your illusory sense of limitation and vulnerability gradually fades away, you'll discover deep within yourself the true grandeur of who and what you are.

Best of all, as you start to see your own potential, you'll also begin to recognize it in everyone around you. Buddha nature is not a special quality available to a privileged few. The true mark of recognizing your Buddha nature is to realize how ordinary it really is – the ability to see that every living creature shares it, though not

everyone recognizes it in themselves. So instead of closing your heart to people who yell at you or act in some other harmful way, you find yourself becoming more open. You recognize that they aren't just jerks, but are people who, like you, want to be happy and peaceful; they're only acting like jerks because they haven't recognized their true nature and are overwhelmed by sensations of vulnerability and fear.

Your practice can begin with the simple aspiration to do better, to approach all of your activities with a greater sense of mindfulness, and to open your heart more deeply toward others. Motivation is the single most important factor in determining whether your experience is conditioned by suffering or by peace. Mindfulness and compassion actually develop at the same pace. The more mindful you become, the easier you'll find it to be compassionate. And the more you open your heart to others, the more mindful you become in all your activities.

At any given moment, you can choose to follow the chain of thoughts, emotions, and sensations that reinforce a perception of yourself as vulnerable and limited, or to remember that your true nature is pure, unconditioned, and incapable of being harmed. You can remain in the sleep of ignorance, or remember that you are and always have been awake. Either way, you're still expressing the unlimited nature of your true being. Ignorance, vulnerability, fear, anger, and desire are expressions of the infinite potential of your Buddha nature.

There's nothing inherently wrong or right with making such choices. The fruit of Buddhist practice is simply the recognition that these and other mental afflictions are nothing more or less than choices available to us because our real nature is infinite in scope.

We choose ignorance because we *can*. We choose awareness because we *can*. Samsara and nirvana are simply different points of view based on the choices we make in how to examine and understand our experience. There's nothing magical about nirvana and nothing bad or wrong about samsara. If you're determined to think of

yourself as limited, fearful, vulnerable, or scarred by past experience, know only that you have chosen to do so, and that the opportunity to experience yourself differently is always available.

In essence, the Buddhist path offers a choice between familiarity and practicality. There is, without question, a certain comfort and stability in maintaining familiar patterns of thought and behavior. Stepping outside that zone of comfort and familiarity necessarily involves moving into a realm of unfamiliar experience that may seem really scary – an uncomfortable in-between realm like the one I experienced in retreat. You don't know whether to go back to what was familiar but frightening or to forge ahead toward what may be frightening simply because it's unfamiliar.

## Ending an abusive relationship

In a sense, the uncertainty surrounding the choice to recognize your full potential is similar to what several of my students have told me about ending an abusive relationship: There's a certain reluctance or sense of failure associated with letting go of the relationship. The primary difference between severing an abusive relationship and entering the path of Buddhist practice is that when you enter the path of Buddhist practice you're ending an abusive relationship with yourself.

When you choose to recognize your true potential, you gradually begin to find yourself belittling yourself less frequently, your opinion of yourself becomes more positive and wholesome, and your sense of confidence and the sheer joy of being alive increases. At the same time, you begin to recognize that everyone around you has the same potential, whether they know it or not. Instead of dealing with them as threats or adversaries, you'll find yourself able to recognize and empathize with their fear and unhappiness and spontaneously respond to them in ways that emphasize solutions rather than problems.

Ultimately, happiness comes down to choosing between the discomfort of becoming





aware of your mental afflictions and the discomfort of being ruled by them. I can't promise you that it will always be pleasant to simply rest in the awareness of your thoughts, feelings, and perceptions, and to recognize them as interactive creations between your own mind and body. In fact, I can pretty much guarantee that looking at yourself this way will be, at times, extremely unpleasant.

But the same can be said about beginning anything new, whether it's going to the gym, starting a job, or beginning a diet.

The first few months are always difficult. It's

hard to learn all the skills you need to master a job; it's hard to motivate yourself to exercise; it's hard to eat healthfully every day. But after a while the difficulties subside, you start to feel a sense of pleasure or accomplishment, and your entire sense of self begins to change.

Meditation works the same way.

The best part of all is that no matter how long you meditate, or what technique you use, every technique of Buddhist meditation ultimately generates compassion, whether we're aware of it or not. Whenever you look at your mind, you can't help but recognize your similarity to those around

you. When you see your own desire to be happy, you can't avoid seeing the same desire in others, and when you look clearly at your own fear, anger, or aversion, you can't help but see that everyone around you feels the same fear, anger, and aversion. When you look at your own mind, all the imaginary differences between yourself and others automatically dissolve.

# 一路有你

文字 唐彩瑩 插圖 倪鷺露

南亞海嘯過後，彩瑩姐姐家中有一大兩小過身了，家中少了幾個人。她下意識總想為家中補上一兩個成員，可惜幾經努力，卻總是落空。後來，她心想，如果要花錢在人工授孕的療程上，不如把資源放在已經來到世間的孩子身上。於是，她領養了兩個孩子。以下是她的三篇日記，首兩篇是與兩個孩子初次見面的經過和一篇與她們一起生活的逸事點滴。

## 2006

三月初一個下午，領養課的社工周姑娘來電，告知我們領養孩子的申請配對成功，是一個六個星期大的健康女嬰。

還以為今世的好運早就跑掉了，以後的路，只得力盡艱難，堅毅地跑到終點。人生總是有驚喜。周姑娘也沒想到，剛把我們的申請放到配對庫就「一擊即中」！我感覺像是早在前生已經約定了似的。

三月六日下午，我們和周姑娘一同到屯門去探望小女嬰。來到寄養家庭孔太在屯門的家，她帶我們到寶寶床邊看她。酣睡的她瘦瘦小小，躺在小床上。孔太抱起她時，把她從夢中喚醒。她張開一對明亮的大眼，狐疑地看著幾個陌生人，皺起眉頭，但沒有哭。她出生時只有五磅多，先天不足。我把她接過來，她小得我一隻手已經可以抱穩。我感覺到她的體溫，柔柔地傳到我的臂彎。心裡一陣悸動……

「糟糕！嘔奶！」孔太立刻用小毛巾清理，但已經太遲了，她的夾衣已經被弄濕了。孔太幫她更換了一件乾淨的衣服。她一直打量著我們。「噢！又來了（嘔奶）！」孔太說她因為胃部也特別小，很容易會嘔奶。而且她像是很缺乏安全感，特別喜愛人家緊抱她在懷中。這時候，寄養服務課的社工何姑娘也到達了，幾個大人手忙腳亂，一屋子熱鬧起來。

周姑娘講解了一些她生母的情況，不難想像她懷著孩子，每天都在惶恐之中上學，要把小生命保存著，也要相當的勇氣。也是因為這個女孩子的勇敢，小妮子才可以來到這裡，可以躺在我的懷中，期待著以後。我忽然感受到人世間彼此微妙的關聯。三個無關痛癢的故事，

就這樣串聯起來。何姑娘說起小寶寶出生時的情況，還不停地讚賞她聰明貌美，像要給我很多鼓勵。我看過幾本有關領養兒童的書，都說有很多這類孩子，一生也為身份上的一點遺憾所困擾，未必可以快樂生活。我看著她，她迷惑地盯著我，打了個呵欠。不知道她的故事又會如何……

四位女士圍著小女孩團團轉，七咀八舌地交代著一大堆事情：文件、打針咭、出生情況、健康紀錄、上法庭時間表等等。許多人早在她還未來到世界前已經開始為她忙著打點，為的是彌補她出生身份上的一點遺憾。這可也算是另一種幸福。忙碌中，各人都不忘點頭逗她玩，每一位都想要給她許多許多的愛，許多許多的祝福和所有的鼓勵，滿屋子都充滿著愛和祈禱。一個本來頗悲傷的故事，彷彿加上了一個較歡愉的結局（也是一個新的開始）。小妮子也很努力，沒有因為自己瘦小而生氣，也沒有因為嘔奶而哭起來。為著生存下來，她也努力著。

「天行健，君子以自強不息。」小小的生命也讓人感覺到她的力量。希望她可以放下身份上的痲，在人生路上，慢慢走，可以樂天逍遙，每天前行，能夠欣賞一路風光明媚……我給她起名叫天行。

## 2010

一月一個星期日的黃昏，細雨紛飛，微冷。

我和家人兵分三路前往這個殊不普通的地方。我下班後獨自趕緊赴會，我先生接回天天之後便一同前往，Camilla（我姐）與 Leonard（我姐的兒子）二人則從新界出發，三輛的士先

後到達寶雲道五號。走下長樓梯時，冷雨撲面，我的腿有點不自主的不協調，我得找緊扶手。走進幼兒院舍，看見我們家的人都已經齊集了。我有點緊張。

不一會社工莊姑娘（母親的決擇幼兒院舍）和徐姑娘（社署領養課）來了，要先單獨接見爹媽，細說了孩子的背景和現況。「是個三十多週的早產兒，出生時只有三磅，抱她出院時小得像隻小貓咪！健康不算好，在醫院住氧氣箱住了很久。本來是對雙生兒，但細孖出生時夭折了，她卻活存下來，現在七個月大，體重、身長、頭圍都已追趕至正常寶寶的標準內，先後已經病過兩次，她昨天患了感冒，今早看過醫生，現在留在院舍的隔離病房……你們商量後得告訴我，甚麼時候接她回家……」

多麼努力的娃娃！

我的朋友們都比較遲婚，用盡辦法才懷孕成功，之後又擔驚受怕，有些不知幹了甚麼就甩掉了，抹乾眼淚又得再接再厲，有些好幾次還是不能成事。可是這裡的娃娃們卻無論如何都要掙扎著來人間走一趟，可想而知，他們有多麼勇敢，意志有多麼堅決。

要相見了。

大門打開，一個沒頭髮的小妮子，穿著紅色小夾衣被帶進來，臉色蒼白，一看見我們就微笑，露出一個沒牙齒的洞口。她的笑容很熟練，彷彿我們是相識似的。

就是你嗎？就是你無論如何也要來人世間一趟的嗎？明知你生母得離開你也要來？這麼努力是為了與我們相見？

我接過她，她身體很溫暖，很柔軟，看見她笑意盈盈，我忍不住親了親她臉頰，她眯起細眼，笑得更燦爛。我緊抱她一下，她一點也

不輕巧，一點也不似小貓咪，難怪社工和兒科醫生都說她一直都很努力。

我到外面帶天行（暱稱天天）進來見她的妹妹，她帶點興奮地步進大廳。姊妹見面，大家都笑了。

天天對著這小娃娃，有點「肉緊」，把頭湊得很近，瞪著大眼睛看緊她，用頭挨蹭著她的頭，又用力捉緊她短短的手臂，彷彿不知怎樣去表達一種複雜的心情。小娃娃也盯緊她，但皺著眉頭，一臉狐疑，又不敢造次，表情尷尬，爹爹生怕天天孔武有力，「錯手」傷到她，急忙隔開兩人。但分開一會，天天又「發作」。這些將是「家常便飯」嗎？看來這小娃娃或有得受了！來日方長，姊妹倆將會是世仇？是好友？

懂得紫微斗數的朋友說，她們姊妹倆五行皆屬木，但性格大相逕庭，天天如一棵大樹，妹妹如一朵小花，但兩人應該會很合得來云云。希望人算天算都能盡如大家對她們的好意。

有一晚幫天天洗澡時，天天忽然對我說：「那我以後就用花灑吧，這個浴盤就留給她用好了！」

我忙著幫她抹身怕她著涼：「誰？」

天天說：「小花呀！」我和她爹爹的對話，她都聽在耳裡。

真的要當姐姐了！是催促你成長嗎？媽媽只是想你們倆都有自己的家，可以自由自在，走自己的路。前面縱然山高路遠，荊棘滿途，身邊都總有人非常願意聆聽你們路上的故事，為你們賣力地打氣。今天起，又多一個人和你作伴，沿途希望會有更多樂趣。

我們扶著「小花」坐在梳化中間，大家圍著她，與她說話，她彷彿知道自己是主角，很會招呼人，總是滿臉堆歡，逗得大家都高高興興。通常太快樂的時光總會有事情發生。「嘩！好嗅！」她果然送我們「厚禮」。

我跟隨社工莊姑娘帶她到樓上換尿片，幫她仔細清理。莊姑娘說知道她這個案後，一直想快點把她接回來住。我手忙腳亂地幫她脫衣穿衣，沒經思考就衝口問：「是嗎？為甚麼？」

莊姑娘：「因為我們想給她很多很多的愛嘛！」

我心裡一下悸動……不敢直望莊姑娘，因為感覺到她說得很真心，怕我自己會忍不住眼淚，只能摸著這小天使的臉。也是的，大家都很想你得到好好的照顧！情況與天天很相似，這些無辜的小天使，出生時確是背負著很多遺憾和傷感，但她們身邊總不缺少為她們張羅、要她們幸福的人。

我再把小花抱到大廳時，我們也差不多要走了，與大家話別後，我把小花抱回她的「隔離病房」，放在椅上時，她發著嗚嗚聲嚷著要抱。她哭著臉望著我們離去，目光不離開我們一刻，隔著一道長廊，也感覺到她有一種力量，如一朵野地裡的小花，沐浴在清風微雨間，兼收並蓄存大地的滋養，受著天地運行的感召，堅毅地成長。

既然妳無論如何都要來到世界，應該早就知道此行不會容易，我就祝福你，無論遇上甚麼，都能從容面對，心境一般閑逸，信念篤定，好好經歷一趟。那我們就給你取名「逸行」，排姐姐的「行」字，希望你們姊妹倆雙雙而行，一路彼此照顧。

## 2012

我說過，我跟天天可能是前世約定今世相聚的。跟小花則不然，她珊珊來遲！天天跟小花也應該不是約定的，因為由第二天開始到現在，天天都不斷（質）問我，幹嗎要領養小花。對於有點齷齪的天天來說，被分去了爹媽的時間、關注，分去了玩具、零食，確是件不得了的大事。所以她到現在，偶爾還會嚴正地提醒小花：「我真係好唔鍾意你！」看到這嚴峻的情況，該不會是約定的吧！

孱弱的小花帶著一身未知何緣的病痛來到我家。她來時，臉色蒼白，神態恍惚，忐忑不安，一直警覺地觀察著周圍。小妮子忍耐著，不敢造次。總是安靜地吃，安靜地睡，常常笑臉迎人，從來不給人麻煩的，生怕出什麼狀況會遭人嫌棄似的。我們看著 vpd，隱隱覺得心酸。

也許因為她是早產嬰，生母在懷孕期間根本沒有料理好身體，她出生時非常瘦小，但一到我家來就變成個「大食積」，她爹爹常讚歎說她這麼能吃。一歲多就能自己拿著小條匙自願自吃，吃得特別香！會說話時她更會指著食物對著我們意態從容地說：「This is good!」長大後會當個食評家嗎？她從一開始就是這樣的努力，從沒鬆懈。每次見她那麼努力，就感覺到生命的力量和她對生命的熱誠。

小花的努力很有回報，她把體重都追回來了。現在，她有肥美的大腿，圓潤的身形，天天稱她為「花師奶」，有時叫「Fat花」，小花就會回她說：「我唔係 fat 花，我係徐逸行！」

天天和小花，完全是兩回事。天天愛睡不愛吃，小花愛吃不愛睡；天天愛超人，小花愛公主；天天愛打台拳，殺氣騰騰，小花愛玩「煮飯仔」，你對她凶一點，她就發「嗲功」細聲說「咁我會喊」。畫畫班完了看見她們的作品就更妙，天天畫了機械人，畫工精細，配件講究。小花畫了大漢堡包、汽水，顏色艷麗瀟灑，大刺刺的。朋友看後都說「一個是戰鬥格，一個是享樂派！」野地中這兩生花，生在一起，將來會開出怎樣的花樣？我萬二分好奇。

也因為大家的生活方向很不同，天天一直都不太喜歡跟小花玩耍，但小花卻對家姐充滿好奇，常常想黏連她，即使天天惡言驅趕，即使鬧得哭哭啼啼，小花無論如何還是要跟在天天屁股後面，藤蘿繫甲。

麻麻看著小花遭家姐欺凌，心痛小妹妹吃盡苦頭。也沒法子，各人有自己要學的功課，只有自己才能完成，別人都幫不上忙。她們也有溫馨的時候的，天天有時會做些古靈精怪的動作，會逗得吃著東西滿口肥油的小花格格大笑不停。還有，我們一起玩超級市場，天天總讓小花「看檔」，自己做購物狂；一起玩捉迷藏、「有隻雀仔跌落水」、「123紅綠燈」和「耍盲鷄」等，玩的時候，總是一屋笑聲，不過玩到最後也多是吵鬧收場。

雖然每天都吵吵鬧鬧，但天天還是疼小花的，有一次爹爹用力過猛把小花手肘拉脫臼了，要到急症室去，出門前天天擔心地問我們會不



會帶小花回家。又有幾次，小花發高燒突然要入醫院留醫，天天也是每天問著小花會不會回家，是個口硬心軟的姐姐。

做小的也自然可以學會她們的生存方法。有一次坐升降機時，小花忽然抱著天天腰肢，依偎著她不出聲，天天驚奇又靦腆，臉上緋紅了，向著我們笑，這麼坦誠的愛突然來襲，她感到不知所措。小花身軀圓潤可餐，又暖暖的，摟上去應該蠻舒服的。之後，天天就一直拖著小花的小手，走到地鐵站，留下地上一雙倩影，我緊貼在後，不敢打擾。

暑假某天，姊妹二人在家玩玩具，菲傭看後感「安慰」，之後開飯時對兩個小鬼說：「這

樣和平共處就最好了！」天天聽後馬上變臉，臭起臉對小花說：「我仲係好唔鍾意你！」但小花卻眯起一對笑眼，毫不介意地說：「但係我好鍾意你呀！」說時還用她油亮亮的咀趨近天天的臉。天天氣得頭髮也直豎起來。一個強要收藏裝作剛毅冷酷，一個奔放地表達對人的好意，相處起來，難免會有些折騰磨蹭，但誰說不是好的學習？

有兄弟姊妹就會有這些體驗，有哭的，有笑的，毫無原由地打架、吵吵鬧鬧的，他朝回看，都是最美好的時光。兩隻小鬼，性格大相逕庭，將來會一起走？各有各走？有無限可能。

近日看了些古書，有說我年生八字有兩個

「天乙貴人」，人如有此造，多數最能把不同的人聯繫在一起，做些好事。我們這幾個毫不相干的某某，可以聯在一起，是宿命？是偶然？是學習？

今天天天第一天上小一，小花第一天上K1，又是新的一個街口。清晨送天天到校車站時，小花又抱緊天天腰肢不放，為這新開始又要短暫分離蠻是擔心似的。

晨光灑落，地上這一雙人影，儼似一對戀人。即或鍾意不鍾意，暫時還是要被我這「天乙貴人」逼使糾纏在一起，彼此折騰消磨，一路學習。

我此生做得最好的事，或許就是這兩件事了。

# GOOD COMPANY

Text Tong Choi Ying Translation Chen Zhijun

Choi Ying and her husband had been trying without success to start a family when the Indian Ocean tsunami rocked their world in 2004. That disaster affected her deeply, because the thousands of victims included three members of her sister's family. That loss made Choi Ying even more determined to have a family of her own, so she and her husband decided to adopt. In these excerpts from her diary, Choi Ying relates the first time she met her two adopted daughters and offers a glimpse into their new life together.

## 2006

One afternoon in early March, I received a call from Ms Chou, a social worker from the adoption service. She said they had found a match for our application to adopt a child – a healthy baby girl of six weeks.

Life is full of surprises: I thought my parenting luck had run out for this lifetime, yet here we were, about to become a mother and father. Even Ms Chou was stunned that we succeeded in adopting a child on our first try. This child and I must be fated to meet.

On March 6, Ms Chou took my husband and me to visit the baby in Tuen Mun, where she had been placed in foster care. Mrs Kong, her foster mother, took us into the room to see her. She was sleeping – a tiny baby lying in a small bed. Mrs Kong picked her up, waking her. She opened her big, bright eyes and looked us over, frowning at the sight of two strangers, but she did not cry.

She weighed just over five pounds at birth, below the average weight. I took her in my arms. She was so puny that I could hold her with just one arm. I felt her warmth on my skin, and in my heart.

"Oh no, she's spitting up!" Mrs Kong quickly took out a towel but it was too late, the little one had made a mess of her shirt. So Mrs Kong changed her into a new set of clothes.

Mrs Kong said the baby's digestive system was probably underdeveloped, because she had been having a hard time keeping the milk down. She especially loves to be hugged, which is a sign of insecurity.

Then Ms Ho, a social worker from the foster

care services, arrived and we got busy cleaning up the mess and attending to the baby.

While we worked, Ms Chou told us more about the baby's birth mother, a teenage student who hid her pregnancy from the world. I imagined her going to class every day in fear. How brave she must have been, giving this little one the opportunity to come into the world, now lying in my arms, full of hope for the future.

It was chance that brought the three of us together, a miracle of life. Ms Ho told us about the baby's birth and kept saying what a smart and pretty baby she was. I'm sure those words were meant to encourage me, a new mother. Before this meeting, I'd read in books on adoption that some adopted children never get over the stigma of their identity or the sadness that comes with it.

I looked at the baby; she gazed back and yawned. How would her story turn out?

The apartment had become a hive of activity. There was much to discuss and documents to be handed over: birth registration, inoculation notices, health records and court appointments. What a lucky baby: so many people were already working to get her ready for her new life, to make up for the difficulties of her birth. We played with her while we worked. I was suddenly moved by the love and well wishes that seemed to fill the apartment; there we were, all rooting for her. A story that could have ended in tragedy had been given a new beginning of hope.

The little one is a survivor: despite her puny size, she didn't give up on life. She didn't even cry from the discomfort of spitting up. There is spine in this one.

"As the Heaven's movement is ever vigorous, so must a gentleman ceaselessly strive along."

This line from the I-Ching comes to mind. One so young, and already so full of life. So I wish her the ability to live unencumbered by the burden of her difficult beginnings, to take things as they come and to enjoy the journey. I named her "Heaven's movement" – Tin Heng, one who walks the sky.

## 2010

It was a Friday evening in January. The weather has turned a little cold from the drizzle.

My family and I made our way separately to Bowen Road. I went by myself after work; my husband went home to pick up Tin Tin (short for Tin Heng) before going; my sister Camilla and her son Leonard started out from the New Territories. Three taxis, one destination. As I walked down the long staircase to the children's home on Bowen Road, I found my legs shaking a little. I gripped the handrail to steady myself.

I was nervous.

My family and I waited for a while before we met Ms Chung, a social worker from the Mother's Choice children's home, and Ms Tsui, a social worker from the adoption services, who proceeded to brief my husband and me on the baby's background and condition.

"She was born a few weeks before the due date, weighing only three pounds. When we saw her in the hospital, she looked just like a little kitten. Her condition was quite poor, so she spent a long time in an oxygen tank in the hospital. She had a

twin who didn't survive. She's now seven months old – her weight, height and vital statistics are now all within the average ranges. She's been sick twice so far... She caught the flu yesterday. A doctor saw her this morning and put her in an isolation sick room... Please discuss among yourselves and let us know when you want to take her home..."

What a hard-working baby!

Many of my friends married late in life, and most had a hard time getting pregnant. Miscarriage was common. Most don't even know what they did wrong; they dried their tears and tried again. But the babies here are survivors. No matter how tough the journey, they seem determined to see the world. How fierce their courage and will power.

We were about to meet her.

The door opened. I saw a fair-skinned little girl in a red jacket lying in Ms Chung's arms, flashing a toothless grin when she saw us. Her smile was familiar, as if we'd already met.

Was it you who wanted to come into this world no matter the hardship? You came, even knowing your birth mother would leave you? Did you come so that we could meet?

I took her into my arms. She was warm and soft. Seeing her smiling face, I could not help planting a kiss on her cheek. She scrunched up her face and smiled even brighter. I hugged her, and realised she was no lightweight kitten after all. No wonder both the social worker and paediatrician who attended to her called her a hard-working baby.

I took Tin Tin to meet her. The two sisters smiled at each other.

Tin Tin stuck her face right next to the baby's and stared. She rubbed her head against her sister's and gripped her short baby arms, as if she did not quite know how to express the emotions she was feeling inside. The baby looked at Tin Tin, frowning, perhaps a little embarrassed at the attention and seemingly unsure of how to react. Afraid that Tin Tin might unknowingly hurt her sister, their father quickly separated the two. But not for long, as Tin Tin soon found her way to her sister's side again.

Will this be the norm at home? Will the two sisters get along, or will they grow up to be sworn enemies?

A friend who knows how to tell fortunes said though the two sisters are both of the wood element, based on their birth dates, their characters could not be more different. If Tin Tin were a tree, her sister would resemble a little flower. The two should get along, my friend said. I can only hope so.

Last night, I was bathing Tin Tin when she said suddenly: "I'll use the shower from now on, so she can use the bath tub."

My mind was focused on the task of wiping her down. "Who?" I asked.

"Little Flower!" So she overheard my conversations with her father.

Will being a sister help you grow up, Tin Tin? All I want for you both is to make your own way in the world, free to be as you are, and to find a family of your own. Whatever the obstacles ahead, you'll have each other's listening ear and unstinting support.

Back in the room, we put "Little Flower" on a sofa. Surrounded by so many people who were fussing over her, she seemed to understand that she was the star of the night, and beamed the whole time.

It was fun while it lasted – she soon gave us a "gift". "Oh, so smelly!"

I went with Ms Chung to change her diaper. Ms Chung said that as soon as she found out about Little Flower, she had wanted to take her into the children's home. "Oh, why?" I asked without thinking, while cleaning her up.

"Because we want to give her lots and lots of love, of course!" Ms Chung said.

My heart gave a little lurch. I did not dare look at Ms Chung for fear I would cry. I touched the little angel's face. While it's true that she and Tin Tin and the many others who were given up for adoption came into this life to more than their fair share of pain, still they do not lack for cheerleaders around them who wish them well.

Soon it was time to leave. After saying our goodbyes, I took Little Flower back into the

room and put her on a chair. She began to cry, demanding a hug. I could feel her eyes on us as we walked the long corridor on our way out. I felt her will to live, like a wildflower that grows in wind and rain, nurtured by the earth's bounty and shaped by the elements.

Since you chose to come into this world knowing full well the difficulties that lay ahead, I will pray that you deal with whatever challenges you meet with an easy, trusting heart, and live life to the fullest. I name you Yat Heng, one who walks with ease. You share a character in your name with your sister, so like travellers on the same path, may you take good care of each other.

## 2012

I've always thought my meeting with Tin Tin was predestined. Not so with Little Flower; it took the adoption services longer than I expected to find us a match. Destiny probably also played no part in the meeting between the two sisters. Right from the start, Tin Tin liked to ask me why we adopted her sister. It must be difficult for Tin Tin to have to share with another person the time and attention we once devoted solely to her, not to mention the toys and snacks.

Even now, she will occasionally announce to Little Flower: "I really do not like you!" I really doubt the two were meant to be sisters.

Little Flower came to us a sickly baby, pale-faced and unable to settle down, always wary of the environment. She was no troublemaker, however, always eating and sleeping quietly, often smiling. It was as if she did not dare make a fuss for fear of being abandoned. It was heartbreaking to watch.

Her birth mother was likely not able to take proper care of herself while she was pregnant, and Little Flower was born premature. With us, she soon developed quite the appetite. Her father often exclaimed at the amount of food she could eat. At about 18 months old, she was already feeding herself with gusto. After she started talking, she sometimes pointed to the food she

“ Little Flower was admitted to hospital several times for high fever; each time, Tin Tin asked every day, 'Is Little Flower coming back?' This elder sister may act tough, but she has a heart of marshmallow. ”

was eating and said: "This is good!" Will she become a food critic one day?

Every time I see the effort she puts into staying alive, I feel anew the miracle of life.

Thanks to her hard work, her weight has finally caught up, and she now boasts plump legs and a roundish figure. Tin Tin often calls her "Auntie Fa" ("fa" being the Cantonese pronunciation for "flower"), sometimes "Fat Fa", to which Little Flower would reply: "I am not Fat Fa! I am Chui Yat Heng!"

The two are chalk and cheese. Tin Tin loves to sleep but does not like to eat, Little Flower loves food but not sleep; Tin Tin adores Superman, Little Flower is partial to princesses; one loves taekwondo, the other loves to play house, and is not above threatening tears to get her way. There're no better illustration of their different characters than their drawings from art class: Tin Tin produced a meticulous drawing of a complicated robot, while Little Flower drew a hamburger and soda in bright, happy colours. A friend who saw their works said: "One is a warrior, and the other is clearly an epicurean." Will two people who are so different grow more alike one day? I can't wait to find out.

Perhaps because of these differences, Tin Tin does not like to play with her little sister, though Little Flower is always full of curiosity about her big sister, and likes to tag along wherever she goes. Even when Tin Tin throws a tantrum and chases her off, she's back in no time.

Their grandmother could not bear to see

Little Flower bullied. But there's little outsiders can do – we each have our own lessons to learn, no one else can help.

There are moments of joy, of course. Tin Tin sometimes plays by acting the fool. Her sister loves it, laughing uproariously even while eating, her mouth full of grease. Sometimes we play a game of grocery shopping, and Tin Tin will make her sister the shopkeeper while she goes on a spree. There are other games: hide and seek, "a bird falls into the water", "blind chicken" and others. When they play, the house is full of laughter. At the start, at least.

Despite the almost daily fights, Tin Tin's love for her sister comes through. Once, their father accidentally dislocated Little Flower's arm while playing, and we had to go to the hospital. Would we bring Little Flower back? A worried Tin Tin asked as we were leaving the house. Little Flower was admitted to hospital several times for high fever; each time, Tin Tin asked every day, "Is Little Flower coming back?" This elder sister may act tough, but she has a heart of marshmallow.

In any family, the younger siblings tend to be masters at adapting. Once when we were in the elevator, Little Flower suddenly hugged Tin Tin by the waist, and leaned on her without saying a word. Tin Tin was surprised and embarrassed. She blushed, looked at us and smiled, disarmed by this sudden attack of affection. Little Flower is plump and warm, and very huggable. After we got out of the lift, Tin Tin took Little Flower's hand, and the two walked hand in hand to the MTR train station.

I walked two steps behind, for fear of breaking the moment.

One day during the summer holidays, the sisters spent an afternoon at home playing with toys. Our Filipino helper saw it all and told them at dinner time: "Now, isn't it nice to get along?" Tin Tin immediately took offence. She turned to Little Flower and said: "I still really dislike you!" To which Little Flower smiled, moved her face (and greasy mouth) close to her sister's and said: "But I really like you!"

Tin Tin was furious. One who likes to act cool and one who freely expresses her feelings; when they get together, life can hardly be smooth, but who says it can't be a great life lesson?

Anyone who grew up with siblings will know this: there're tears and laughter, and plenty of fights. Yet, looking back, those may be some of the best times of our lives.

Today was the first day of primary school for Tin Tin, while Little Flower was just starting kindergarten. It's another milestone. This morning when I took Tin Tin downstairs to wait for the school bus, Little Flower hugged her sister close and refused to let go, as if worried about the temporary separation that a new beginning sometimes brings.

In the morning light, their shadows are intertwined like lovers. Whether or not they like it, because of me, their lives are now intertwined. From now on, they will have to adjust to each other. There'll be so much learning along the way.

Adopting them may be the best thing I've done in my life.

# JOY OF LIVING

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