

My Story ~ 7. I Will Repay My Motherland For Nurturing Me



“Australia is my father, and China is my mother. If you ask me whom I tend to love more, then you are actually asking whether I tend to love my mother more than my father. This is a really tough question.”

My hometown is Shanxi. In October, 1990, I came to Australia as a visiting scholar sent by the State Education Commission. Three months later, I received an Australian scholarship, after which I transferred my study to a self-financed model and started my PhD program. After graduation, I found a job. My major was chemical engineering and I focused on the consultation work for the device of this field. Later on, I had my own shares and earned a lot. At present, we bid for the projects as partners, and choose the one which won the bidding. Then we subcontract and manufacture the products. Generally, there are four to five countries responsible for the same number of parts. The products are made in different countries, there are so many products to make, but only when the selected country has the expertise and ability to produce the product. Therefore, several countries combine to make the products. I am satisfied with my job. Through all the hardships over the years, my partner and I have reached a tacit agreement and things are going well between my subordinates and me. Now, I live in Perth, Western Australia with two kids and a happy family.

Actually, I planned to go to America as a visiting scholar in the first place. But due to many reasons, my visa was cancelled and was transferred to any other English-speaking country except for America. Via the reassignment by the State Education Commission, I came to Australia. My settlement in Australia was not without difficulties, because the State Education Commission disapproved of me staying in Australia and demanded that I return to China after graduation, even if the Australian government granted me a scholarship. Fortunately, the policy at home was soon relaxed. At the time, Deng Xiaoping delivered a speech, saying that the country should give the overseas students freedom to come and go as they wish, since they were rooted in China. As a result, I paid 800 Yuan as the

national training expense, after which the Education Commission agreed to let me stay in Australia.

Australian people are patient and greatly assisted me when I arrived in Australia. They helped me with such things as cultural background, rules and regulations. Bit by bit, I gained a favorable impression of this country. However, during the first six months, I felt kind of lonely. After all, there were cultural differences, especially when I spoke with a strong accent—my colleagues could hardly understand me. But gradually, they became used to it. I have to say, Australians have a high level of tolerance towards these kind of difficulties. Now my family is here, and we have already blended into the Australian society. But up to now, my mind still boggles when it comes to the Australian Aboriginal language because I really cannot understand it. However, the Aboriginal language is part of the Australian culture. So I have to give it my best effort and become used to it, since I chose Australia and she accepted me.

From the moment I placed my feet on Australian soil, I could feel the peace the kindness of Australia. I was introduced to my supervisor who was just like my parents for his kindness and tolerance I am forever grateful. On my arrival in Australia, he came to the airport in person to pick me up. He even helped me find a student dormitory. My supervisor has been retired for many years. A while ago, he was diagnosed with cancer but the cancer is now under control and we even had dinner together last year. The overseas student union also cared for me at that time.

I observed this unfamiliar country with curiosity, the country that was drawn on a map or appeared briefly on the TV news. I witnessed the advancement and affluence of this country. In those years, there was free tea and coffee in public places, and people could even use a micro-wave oven to cook meals in Australia.....I was so curious about so many things that I strongly felt that China really should learn from the outside world after so many years of isolation. I found out that the science and technology here were truly more advanced than that in China.

Australians are conscientious, dedicated and have a strong sense of responsibility. They never take shortcuts. They will finish a project complying strictly with the required procedures. So there are never any quality problems on their projects, which I really appreciate and I learn a lot from them. They might have a dispute over some issues, but once they sign the agreement, they will do their job with

due diligence. Another feeling when I came to Australia is that the Australians have a stronger ability to use their own initiative than that of Chinese people. In Australia when we do some research, the lab manager will give you a manual. Then you read it, and figure out how to operate the device, with no additional explanation. If you cannot tackle the problem by yourself, you can find an engineer to explain it in general, but he will not teach you the basics. On the contrary, in China, the instruments and equipment are put in the lab and are managed by specially-assigned operators. You fetch the sample and the person will test it for you, in case that you accidentally break it. I think this is reasonable, since we have different national conditions. The instruments and equipment are very expensive to China. But the labor cost is not very high, so appointing the specially-assigned operators to supervise the devices can prolong their working life, while the labor cost is very high in Australia where the salary of an engineer could buy a device.

The Australians are also romantic. One of the directors of our company is an Australian. His wife is an Australian painter. Once for her birthday, he wanted to give her a surprise and sent her paintings to Xi'an, China, planning to hold an art exhibition. His wife's mother was 84 years old. It was the first time that she had left Australia for China to attend her daughter's exhibition as a celebration of her birthday. All of the organization and planning were done in secret. On the D-day, he invited many top-notch painters in Australia and in Xi'an and also invited the head of Xi'an Agency for Cultural Affairs to preside over the exhibition ceremony in a five-star hotel. In the evening when the exhibition was on view, his wife asked: "Do you know that today is my birthday?" He answered: "I know. So tonight we can have our meal in this hotel." At last, when the exhibition hall gate was opened, his wife was really astonished: "These are all my paintings!" Over one hundred guests started to applaud. Tears were running down her cheeks. It was a very emotional occasion.

After so many years living in Australia, I have noticed great changes. The biggest change is the environment in Australia, which is different from that of China. Another change is that our quality of life has developed a lot. But since we were rooted in China, we need to actively make a contribution to our motherland. We bid for projects from Baosteel and bought their steel products and equipment. Sometimes a single order was worth more than 100 million dollars. When I had dinner with Baosteel executives, they asked: "You won't go back to China?"

Actually, China cultivated you.....” And I replied: “Of course I will repay my motherland.” If conditions are on the same in both China and Australia, I will definitely consider my own country. Nowadays, Chinese products have better quality with competitive pricing, which is an important thing.

Many people say that although I became a naturalized Australian, I am still a Chinese inside. One day, my partner and I were watching a cricket final between Australia and Britain. He asked me: “If tonight’s game were between China and Australia, which side would you support?” This is what I told him: “The question you’ve asked is the same as the one that you ask to your children whether they like their mother more or father more. That’s a really tough question.” Since we are living in Australia, we should obey the Australian law. I feel like I have basically got accustomed to the life in Australia and I find myself at ease with my life, so to speak. I think I have come into a carefree status. As a citizen of Australia, I’m concerned about the economic trend of the country. For example, the Australian mining industry slumped recently, yet the petroleum and natural gas industries are not too bad, but do not have long term strength. The agriculture and forestry industry of Australia are prosperous, so the Australian currency maintains its stability. As for government, my principle tends to be: this government is industrious and can withstand pressure. On the issue of government welfare payments, I suggest people work hard because receiving welfare all the time, especially for young people who don’t have jobs, will cause them to become lazy. Therefore, the government should not give them relief funds so easily.

I tend to pay more attention to the multi-culture aspect of Australia. The Australians have a social identity and are aware their multi-culture society, though when people talk about politics, they always say that you are a foreigner or Chinese and seem to be confused in their thinking. Australia is a multicultural country which can tolerate different elements. It is close to Asia and can accept multi-culturalism as a part of the country without question. If I admit that multi-culturalism is part of Australian culture, I mean that I accept its culture. If I discard multi-culturalism, that means I cannot accept its culture. Since I am Chinese, multi-culture is especially important to me. I strive to envisage the differences between the West and China. Anyhow, there has always been differences and prejudice between them because these differences are fundamental. I have argued and discussed matters with foreigners, but was

unable to reach an agreement because of our different way of thinking. Eventually, I had to give up trying.

Sometimes, both parties come to a compromise. For instance, when there is an order or change in regulation made in China, the foreigners have to change their thinking mode since they cannot make a deal with Chinese people if they don't obey the Chinese system. Things are the same if a similar situation occurs in Europe. As a result, we should make it clear which system brings us greater benefits. After all, trading is based on common interests. Nevertheless, respect matters most. Actually, with the opening up and reform of Chinese policy, the cultures between China and the West are getting closer but are still different. Many cultures in China are subtle and need to be felt deeply in the mind, while the western ones are more direct and obvious.

In fact, I now recognise both cultural identities. China is now more powerful than before. Accordingly, our Chinese identity has become an advantage rather than a disadvantage as in the past. Nowadays, more Australian children are starting to learn Chinese, because they think if you don't communicate with Chinese people, it will be a disadvantage. China's economy is developing rapidly, with great competitiveness, so I realize the importance of encouraging my children to learn Chinese. Tracing the source, we are Chinese after all. China is my motherland, the place where my ancestors live. The development of my motherland concerns me at all times.

Australia is my father, and China is my mother. When I stay in Australia, I will do something useful for Australia, because I am Australian citizen. But at the same time, I am rooted in China, so I treat Australia and China as my parents, for they are both important to me.

Many relatives and friends ask me as well whether I thought Australia or China was my home or China and which country I would choose to live in when I'm old. It is probably because I'm older now and miss home very much, that I often go back to visit my friends and relatives. But when my life is coming to an end, I will stay in Australia. The longer I stay here, the more I can blend into her culture. After I die, my ashes will stay here.

No matter how hard I try, there are still differences between my children and me. These differences are caused by our different experiences while growing up and our living backgrounds. Social education has a huge influence on people, especially during childhood. I was almost 30 when I came to Australia. But I have

to admit that until now, my thinking mode is still influenced by my motherland. But my children grew up in Australia. Their recognition of cultural identity is much different from that of my generation. Australian culture is deeply rooted in their minds. For some of the views on China, we sometimes have different opinions. For example, on the issues of Chinese reform and opening up policy and some of the governmental measures and strategies, they disagree with my opinion, for they think that China should try harder on its personal freedom. But I know Chinese culture very well that in China, excessive freedom means abuse and misuse of freedom. However, I never compel my children to do anything. I told my daughter that her generation represents the future and our generation represents the past. So they can exist, and so do we. She can have her own views and so do I. We can retain our own opinions.

I never regret choosing Australia. I feel that every step I've taken in my life is well-planned and well-prepared. I feel enriched and fortunate.