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TZU CHI

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FEATURE

My Superb Mum

EVENT

Resolute Every Step of the Way

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Jing Si Aphorism



Photograph by Choo Kok Choi

人都是在原谅自己的那一分钟开始懈怠。

We start to slacken the minute we try to find excuses for ourselves.

~ Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen



Make a solemn vow with great compassionate wisdom and courage to serve the people; and together with patience and forbearance, you can soften the hearts of the stubborn. With steely determination, do the right things.

Wisdom, Compassion and Courage

On March 5, more than 20,000 Tzu Chi people from 11 countries/regions participated in the training for Tzu Chi people throughout Taiwan, through tele-conference. Volunteers from Malaysia and Myanmar were also there at the Jing Si Abode to compare notes on promoting Tzu Chi missions in their respective countries.

In 2008, Myanmar was hit by Cyclone Nargis, one of the deadliest cyclones in recorded history. Tzu Chi people took an active role in the country's relief and recovery operations. Due to Malaysia's close proximity to Myanmar, its Tzu Chi volunteers have been involved in long-term care. Many local people were touched by the selfless acts of the volunteers, so together with the volunteers, the local people did their best to alleviate the suffering of the people affected by the disaster.

Tzu Chi volunteers helped the poor farmers to re-plough their paddy fields. The local people call the rice seeds supplied by Tzu Chi the "blessed seeds". Thanks to Tzu Chi's assistance, some of the farmers had bumper rice harvests and they, in turn, helped their poorer fellow countrymen. Inspired by the spirit of Tzu Chi in amassing little kindness to help the less fortunate, they too will set aside some uncooked rice in plastic containers. When the containers are full, the rice will be distributed free of charge to help the poor families.

Besides helping the poor and hungry in Myanmar, Tzu Chi has also been providing or subsidizing medical care to the people. Since 2008, Tzu Chi volunteers in Myanmar have been helping patients to pay their medical expenses; and as of last year, the Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA) has been offering free clinics regularly in rural areas. For the past nine years, more than 5,000 patients have been helped financially to undergo

cataract operations. Many of them have since regained their eyesight.

Using a space in a local hospital to conduct free clinics, Tzu Chi discovered that the medical equipment were very basic. In addition, it could not even provide regular meals to feed the hungry patients. Hence, Tzu Chi people started to provide a nutritious porridge to the patients once a week, hoping that they would regain their strength. Within nine months, a total of more than 70,000 meals of porridge had been supplied.

Myanmar is a Buddhist country where the people are plain and simple. On one occasion, two people would share a bowl of porridge. The volunteer who distributed the porridge was somewhat taken aback as each person was entitled to a bowl of porridge. So he asked why? Their reply was that a bowl of porridge was sufficient for both of them, and the surplus could go to others who were in dire need. Their empathy for others who were even more unfortunate was remarkable and touching.

Our thanks to the volunteers from Malaysia for they have been sowing the seeds of loving-kindness in Myanmar. These seeds of loving-kindness will motivate everyone to cultivate *bodhicitta*, the enlightened mind that strives towards awakening and compassion for the benefit of all sentient beings.

The chapter on “Encouragement to Uphold the Sutra” from *Lotus Sutra* describes the Dharma Assembly held in the Sacred Mountain. In the assembly, both the monks and the nuns were assured by the Buddha of attaining Buddhahood in the future. They made great vow to promulgate the Sutra in other world to benefit the sentient beings there, but were very reluctant to do it in this [evil] world because they claimed that the people here were very stubborn and arrogant, making their attempt to save these people almost impossible.

The Buddha had made great vow to deliver all beings from the sea of suffering in his numerous lifetimes. He too had guided his disciples patiently and skilfully to continue to promulgate the Dharma after his passing in this saha-world. But the disciples did not dare to accept this heavy responsibility of preaching the Dharma in the saha-world. They feared that the stubbornness, arrogance and ignorance of the sentient beings here were beyond their endurance and thus they might commit mistakes inadvertently.

The Buddha looked around his disciples without saying a word. He hoped someone or a group of people could understand his intention and who would take the initiative to take up the heavy and tiresome responsibility. At this time, a group of Bodhisattvas rose from their seats

and saluted the Buddha, saying, “World-honoured One, we are honoured to promulgate this wonderful sutra to all the worlds including the saha-world. We firmly believe that there is no place where we can’t preach and no-one whom we can’t save.”

The Buddha would never give up on anyone and he expected his disciples to do likewise. In fact, he expected them to make the “Four Great Vows” namely, “Sentient beings are countless, we vow to save them; mental afflictions are endless, we vow to uproot them; Dharma doors (teachings of various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas) are infinite, we vow to learn them; Buddha-way is unsurpassed, we vow to accomplish it.”

But, it is human nature to want to avoid hardship and danger, and to remain in their comfort zones. This is true even for spiritual practitioners who know that this saha-world is full of insanity and they strive hard to avoid being attached to worldly affairs. But when we think of many sentient beings who are still in the sea of suffering, the thought breaks our hearts. We should understand the profound and noble intention of the Buddha, and use great wisdom, compassion and courage to promulgate the Dharma.

We are now living in a Dharma-ending Age – complexity of the human heart, false belief/faith runs wild. With the help of technology, defamation is getting more and more destructive.

Despite all these, and since we have made a vow to walk the Bodhisattva Path, we must commit ourselves to extraordinary endurance, and not be swayed by the evil influence of the saha-world. When confronted with anger, stubbornness, ignorance, and so on, we counteract these with patience, understanding and acceptance.

When you are defamed, reflect upon yourself and be understanding towards the other party; do not hold grudges and instead, show kindness. Also, continue to do what is right without complaining.

To have absolute faith in the Buddha is like wearing armoured clothes that enable us to endure patiently every kind of hardships and bitterness. We also need to cultivate the “four spiritual practices” both internally and externally. Internal spiritual practice is used to preserve the innate purity of our hearts while externally we strive to protect all beings.

As the clock ticks away, a day is passed, so does your life. Life is short, so make full use of it. Immerse yourself totally in the Dharma and integrate it into your daily life to serve humanity so as to make your life more meaningful and purposeful.

When in the Dharma training site, train diligently; once outside, mobilize more people to care for the poor and the sick. Tzu Chi volunteers serve selflessly in different countries. They know very well that the road ahead is bumpy and fraught with obstacles, nevertheless it does not deter them from moving forward. In 1994, when Tzu Chi's disaster relief mission set foot in Cambodia, the people there had suffered from the ravages of a civil war in addition to a severe flood, followed by a severe drought. How unfortunate and sad!

Tzu Chi had extended aid to Cambodia on eight occasions between 1994 and 1997. The footprints of Tzu Chi volunteers could be found in more than ten provinces in the country. Unfortunately, the relief and restoration mission had to grind to a halt due to political upheaval and chaos. In recent years, Cambodia has become much more stable and peaceful, so Tzu Chi resumed its aid to the country. In the middle of March this year, TIMA members from Taiwan, Malaysia, Vietnam and Singapore collaborated with the local Tzu Chi volunteers and an NGO to set up free clinics, offering medical services to the poor and needy.

In Banteay Meanchey Province, more than 3,000 treatments were provided in a three-day free clinic. The service relieved the illness and pain plaguing the impoverished patients. Our thanks should also go to the local young volunteers who served as interpreters between the patients and the doctors. Both the medical staff and the local volunteers had shown the patients and those suffering in general the meaning of true and sincere love.

At the same time in Ecuador, Tzu Chi volunteers from the US helped to rebuild the Canoa Church as they realized it is the spiritual home of the local people. A groundbreaking ceremony was held to commemorate the event. In mid-April last year, a strong earthquake struck Ecuador. Volunteers from the US rushed to the disaster zones. They initiated cash-for-work programme to help local residents to clean up the streets and surrounding areas so as to restore the towns' former bustling activities. The reconstruction of Canoa Church, which was badly damaged by the strong quake, was put off indefinitely.

Despite differences in languages and religions, Tzu Chi had nevertheless succeeded in engraving love in their hearts and mind so that they could have peace of mind. On March 10, Archbishop Monsignor Lorenzo officiated and blessed the groundbreaking ceremony of the church. Over 500 local residents witnessed the event, and everyone was in a festive mood and the atmosphere was heart-warming.

Let our energy of love vibrate in harmony with others so as to give our world the much needed warmth, hope and light. 

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We look forward to hear from you!
Every one of us has a story of our
own; whether touching, agonizing or
inspiring, you are most welcome to
submit them to our English Editors at:
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Thank you.

My Superb Mum

*“Every day is Mother’s Day, be filial; every day is Buddha’s Day, be grateful; every day is Tzu Chi’s Day, be diligent in spiritual cultivation!”
~ Dharma Master Cheng Yen*



Mother’s day, which falls on the second Sunday of May, is also a day of special significance to Tzu Chi volunteers. In 2005, Master Cheng Yen made the second Sunday of May a joint occasion for the celebration of Mother’s Day, Buddha’s Day and Global Tzu Chi’s Day, so as to encourage more people to honour the grace of the Buddha, parents and all sentient beings. Since then, a joint celebration for the three occasions is held annually by Tzu Chi Chapters worldwide.

While our physical existence comes from our parents, Buddha’s teachings show us the truth of life and nurture our wisdom-life; and the Tzu Chi’s Dharma lineage shows us the purpose and goals in life, guiding us to lead a meaningful life through selfless giving.

After ten months of pregnancy and going through a battle with death to give birth to a child, a mother is faced with another great challenge, that is, to educate the child. In this issue, the editorial board would like to share with you the stories of three pairs of parent-child, namely, Wong Chai Fong and daughter, Law Siew Lee and son, and Liao Shu Yu and son. These mothers, who initially faced different challenges in educating their children, later realized that as parents, they themselves should take responsibilities instead of blaming their children, for parents are children’s role models. Having found their ways in Tzu Chi, they learnt to improve themselves, humble themselves in interactions with their children, and eventually become superb mothers in the eyes of their children.



Mum, you are the one I love the most!

[Photograph by Loke Xin Ling]

In reflection, Wong Chai Fong felt sorry for her inappropriate educational approach on her children. Being an authoritative and controlling mother, she had only brought upon herself mental stress and deteriorating health.

It has been almost a year since 24-year-old Wong Yee Munn joined the workforce as a Marketing Planner. Sometimes, she is required to work over weekends, while her mother, Wong Chai Fong, is always busy juggling between her career and Tzu Chi's missions.

Despite not being able to spend much time together, the mother and daughter remain close. Yee Munn would share with her mother her encounters through WhatsApp Messenger (a mobile communication application), and the mother would offer her advice, much like a personal consultant to the daughter. However, this was not the case in the earlier days.

When Yee Munn was in her secondary school, the mother and daughter were unhappy with each other, and their conversations often ended in conflicts followed by a cold silence. Their relationship worsened when Yee Munn was in Form 3. On one occasion, Chai Fong lost her temper and yelled at Yee Munn, "Are you born to claim karmic debts?" and a rebellious Yee Munn responded with harsh words too. The frequent disputes between them filled their home with unpleasant disharmony.

It was common back then for Yee Munn to just leave her school bag aside and go straight to her bedroom after school, to avoid taking meals with her family. Being a short-tempered, stubborn and dominating person, Chai Fong had exceedingly high expectations on her children, and demanded that they followed her way, for she loved them and would only offer them what was good for them.

When the children did not live up to her expectations, she would flare up and cane them, and often, she would scold them sternly. On occasions when her children had no appetite for food and turned their heads away at the dining table, she would twist their heads straight and force them to finish the food. Her husband's reminder for her to be gentler would only earn him reproach.

In terms of academic performance, she demanded Yee Munn to obtain a perfect 100 percent score in her examinations, and would cane her for anything less than that, even a 99.5 percent score. Yee Munn recounted, "Mum wanted me to be the best of the best in whatever I took up. I was banned from leaving home to play with the kids next door."

A tough life following a business fraud

Chai Fong's husband started his business from scratch. When the family's financial standing was strong, she gave her children the best they could afford. Unfortunately, her husband was later swindled by his business partners, and the unforeseen setback turned him into a recluse. At that time, Yee Munn was going through a rebellious



Wong Chai Fong's family of five are seen here practising sign language movements in preparation for the "Dharma as Water" sutra adaptation performance in the 2012 Year-end Blessing Ceremony. [Photograph by Yap Tsi Ti]

stage. Those, coupled with the birth of the youngest child, led the family to a low point in life.

Shouldering the family responsibilities single-handedly, Chai Fong suffered from emotional distress. She also experienced acid reflux, loss of appetite and insomnia. At 18 back then, Yee Munn began to get a taste of nightlife with her peers, many of whom came from well-off families. Oblivious to her family's financial crisis, she continued to indulge herself in luxury goods and requested to withdraw her studies in a local private university to join her peers to study in the US.

She told her mother, "I am not going to say more about it. I will look for a university myself. All you need to do is to fund my tuition fee and air ticket. That's it." Her words left the mother with another sleepless night. Although Chai Fong had wanted to communicate with her peacefully, she ended up having altercations with her daughter.

Chai Fong, who did not have the opportunity to receive much formal education, was aware of the importance of academic qualification. Thus, she immediately went around finding out more about the tuition fee in the US before talking to her daughter again. In her heart, a physically and mentally exhausted Chai Fong cried: "What can I do in order for you to become more mature? I would rather die in exchange for your good character."

Chai Fong was born to a poor family with seven children. Being the second child in the family, she had started since young to help the family by tapping the rubber trees, feeding pigs, carrying water and handling other rough chores. Her parents, who struggled to make ends meet, had no time to think about the children's other needs. Owing to her personal experience, Chai Fong firmly believes that one can be deprived of money, but never of education because only education could guarantee a better future.

At that time of despair, Chai Fong contemplated suicide so that her children could pay for their education using her savings in the Employee Provident Fund (EPF). After several discussions with Yee Munn, they finally came to a consensus that the daughter be transferred to a more prominent local private university.

Volunteer with Tzu Chi together

In 2011, Chai Fong enrolled into Tzu Chi's Parent-child Bonding Class (PCBC) together with her then 9-year-old youngest son, with the hope of learning to interact with and educate her children. Through the lessons, Chai Fong came to realize that parents should be the first to change instead of expecting their children to change. She said, "Parents should let go of their status and learn to see things from the children's perspectives. Only then could they have better interactions with the children."

When Yee Munn saw Chai Fong's close interaction with the son, especially when they were practising sign language movements at home, she was curious. She had never seen her mother having any physical interactions with the children, and her mother would always turn down their requests for a hug.

One day, Yee Munn expressed her interest to participate in Tzu Chi's monthly Recycling Day to her mother. Chai Fong was surprised and did not know that the daughter's actual intention was to find out how Tzu Chi could magically change her mother.

At the recycling point, a volunteer invited Yee Munn to serve at the Jing-Si Books & Caf e at Tropicana City Mall. That eventually led Yee Munn to become a member of Tzu Chi Collegiate Youth Association (Tzu Ching) in 2011. During her visits to the applicants of Tzu Chi Study Grant along with Tzu Chi volunteers, Yee Munn

observed how determined the underprivileged children were to continue their studies. She reflected upon herself and was full of remorse.

She told her mother that she had lived the past 18 years in vain because she had been complaining of having too little pocket money. In fact, the amount was equivalent to the expenditure of a poor family of ten! Chai Fong was thankful that Tzu Chi has given her daughter the opportunity to witness suffering in life and realize how fortunate she is, thus becoming more mature.

Chai Fong, who seldom praised her children, also started to see the good in Yee Munn and would praise her sincerely. Each time, Yee Munn would just respond with silence. Then one day, while Chai Fong was preparing dinner for the family, Yee Munn suddenly came to her and said tearfully, “Mum, actually I changed because I saw the changes in you.”

In recollection, Chai Fong was full of regrets for not realizing her mistakes earlier. Her authoritative approach had only made herself unhappy and taken its toll on her health.

Open up her heart

Recalling the past, Yee Munn related, “I used to complain a lot. My family led a life of abundance when I was younger, and due to peer influence, I viewed branded stuff as a necessity instead of a luxury. When my family faced financial difficulty and mum could not continue to fulfil my material desires, I reacted inconsiderately. I thought that it was my parents’ responsibilities to satisfy my material demands. So, I held grudges towards them and hated staying at home.”

It was not until one fine day that the mother and daughter had a heart-to-heart talk. Both of them were in tears when Yee Munn related to the mother how she harboured resentment against the latter. After a few deep conversations, Yee Munn



Wong Yee Munn becomes more mature thanks to her exposure as a Tzu Ching member. Picture shows her performing in the “Greatness of Parent Love” musical drama in 2013. [Photograph by Tan Sun Pei]

began to see the light and understand why her mother had been so stern on the children. It was all due to her childhood experience that her mother was applying the same approach on the children.

She offered her children the material comfort she lacked during her childhood, set high expectations and was strict on them. She noticed that all her three children, especially Yee Munn, were good in learning. So, she pinned great hopes on Yee Munn, giving her all her thoughts and efforts to nurture her into an outstanding individual with a bright future.

Yee Munn, who was caned the most among her siblings shared, “I knew it wasn’t that mum did not love me. It was just that she used the wrong approach. So, I freed myself from holding resentment against her.” Having understood her mother’s painstaking effort, Yee Munn took up a

part-time job while studying to ease her family's financial burden.

Upon observing her mellowed temper, their daughter's improved behaviour, and the happy conversations between the mother and the children each time they returned from a Tzu Chi's activity, Chai Fong's husband felt the urge to join them. Thus, for one who was reluctant to even participate in the recycling activity, he started to volunteer with Tzu Chi.

In reflection, Chai Fong realized that it is crucial for parents to put themselves in their children's shoes, and communicate with them with kind and loving words.

"Now, I am like a friend to my children. We always have something to talk about and can share jokes; and you will find us smiling in the photos," said Chai Fong, who was grateful to Tzu Chi for

giving her a down-to-earth life and a happy family.

Since 2014, Chai Fong had requested her children to stop buying her a Mother's Day gift. Instead, they will attend Tzu Chi's Buddha's Day event together, to honour the grace of the Buddha, parents and all sentient beings. Now, all members of the family have joined Tzu Chi – Chai Fong and her husband are certified volunteers; their eldest daughter, Yee Munn, is a Tzu Ching alumni; and their sons are members of Tzu Ching and Tzu Chi Teenagers' Group respectively. To them, attending the Buddha's Day event, which fills them with Dharma joy, is the most meaningful way to celebrate Mother's Day.

Chai Fong smiled gratifyingly as she reiterated what her daughter had said to her: "Mum, you are the one I love the most!" It was the best Mother's Day gift she has ever received.



After joining Tzu Chi, Wong Chai Fong learnt to see the good in her children. She is seen here coaching a boy in colouring during the 2013 Deepavali distribution event. [Photograph by Lin Bin Jie]

By Lim Li Tian Translated by Wong Mun Heng



 **Not a bad boy**

[Photograph by Pek Poh Liang]

The heart of a child is like a plot of land. When it is planted with kind seeds and nurtured well with the Dharma, it will, one day, germinate and grow.

Standing at 182 cm in height is a well-mannered 16-year-old Khor Cheng Yang. He smiled shyly when his mother, Law Siew Lee, stood beside him, looking quite petite in comparison. Cheng Yang, like many other teenagers of his age, loves to play Internet games and collect flash cards. But, there is another side of him which many are not aware of.

Cheng Yang has been a vegetarian for the past three years. He is now truly a vegan as he has abstained from eggs and dairy products too. When asked: “How did you grow to be so tall?” his response was: “Be a vegetarian like me and you will find out.”

Cheng Yang’s conversion to a vegetarian is mainly due to the influence of his mother, who had shared with him that it was mentioned in the *Earth Treasury Sutra* that by observing vegetarianism for 49 days, the next-of-kin can transfer merits for the deceased. When Cheng Yang was in Form 1, his beloved great grandmother passed away. He was in deep sorrow and being very filial, he vowed to observe vegetarianism. However, after 49 days, he still continued with his vegetarian diet till this day despite advice from his father and relatives to stop being a vegan.

Cheng Yang said, “We have a life and so do the animals. Why can’t we be equal? Why can’t we appreciate their lives and share their feelings (fears of being slaughtered)?”

Other than vegetarianism, Cheng Yang is also very firm on what he believes is right. He is a firm advocate of environmental protection and has been strongly promoting within his social circles the need to save the environment by avoiding the use of disposable straws. He became deeply concerned about the use of straws after seeing a video depicting how a turtle was badly injured by a straw that was stuck in its nose. The blood oozing scene cast a strong impact on him and since then, he has become a strong advocate on banning the use of straws.

Siew Lee mentioned that she and her husband would not interfere on this matter and have left it totally to Cheng Yang to handle on his own. From the Internet, Cheng Yang found the distributor for eco-friendly straws which he imported with funds raised from the sale of his precious collection of flash cards. Profit was the least on Cheng Yang’s mind as his sole intention was to protect the Earth and save the sentient beings from pain and suffering.

Cheng Yang may not be outstanding academically but he is definitely a very kind-hearted teenager. In response to the compliments, he felt he could do more. However, he is very appreciative of his mother for not giving up hope on him especially at the height of his rebellious days.

3-step approach did not work

The Cheng Yang of today is well-mannered and likable, a world of difference compared to what he used to be. He is the eldest son of Siew Lee, a spoilt child since young and was hot tempered. He always uttered foul words and was confrontational in nature. To him, bullying his younger siblings was fun and he found everyone in his neighbourhood annoying.

Then, whenever Siew Lee heard the younger children crying, she would scold Cheng Yang and this would be followed by caning. Siew Lee said, “My 3-step approach was always advising, scolding and caning. I used to be very fierce then and frequently never minced my words when scolding and always beat him hard.”

After he moved on to independent secondary school, Cheng Yang’s disposition deteriorated; his school work not done and he played with his hand-phone during class. Worse still, he even led other students in the class to gang up against the teachers and embarrass them, all of which affected the progress of other students.

Hence, Siew Lee frequently received phone

calls from his teachers and many a time, she would get this remark: “Teacher Law, as a teacher you teach other people’s kids, but why can’t you teach your own kid?” Siew Lee, who was a tuition teacher, was hurt by such remarks. As corporal punishment was not allowed in school, Cheng Yang had frequently been suspended from class or had disciplinary actions taken against him, like cleaning duties, with one occasion for as long as a week.

Towards the year-end of Form 1, Cheng Yang’s school grading had dropped drastically, and his disciplinary conduct rated “unacceptable”. Siew Lee and her husband were called to school to see five teachers including the discipline master, class teacher and subject teachers; and none had anything pleasant to say about Cheng Yang. All the teachers could not stand him anymore and they wanted the parents to work harder, or else Cheng Yang would be asked to leave the school the following year.

Siew Lee said, “Luckily at that time I had already joined Tzu Chi. So I was very apologetic to the teachers. Although Cheng Yang was prepared to repeat one year, I knew it was unlikely that he would change within such a short time,

not to mention he already had bad blood with the teachers. I therefore advised him to get transferred to a government secondary school instead.”

In fact, Siew Lee was aware of Cheng Yang’s problems for quite a while. Just when she felt helpless, she came to know of Tzu Chi. But Cheng Yang could not be enrolled for the PCBC as he was already in Primary 5 and the class only accepted up to Primary 4 students (currently this has been revised to Primary 6). So, Siew Lee enrolled her daughter and started getting involved in promoting *Jing Si Aphorisms* in schools.

Letting go and follow son’s lingo

Finally, Cheng Yang progressed to secondary school and was eligible to join the Tzu Chi Teenager Class. Siew Lee needed to tempt him to attend the classes. She knew this was not a good approach but she had no other choice. It was not easy to get Cheng Yang to attend the classes at Tzu Chi community centre. He was caught fiddling with his phone non-stop. Once, he was even caught hiding in the storeroom and played truant in class.

Cheng Yang complained to Siew Lee that the class was boring and he gave a lot of trouble to Tzu Chi volunteers. After two years with the Teenager Class, there was still no sign of improvement with his conduct.

In the process of accompanying Cheng Yang in attending the classes, Siew Lee has progressed from accepting Tzu Chi philosophy to receiving certification as a Tzu Chi Commissioner. She has been in charge of the PCBC curriculum, became an editor of the Bodhi Seed lesson plans, and had even gone to the Philippines to promote the teaching of *Jing Si Aphorisms* in schools. Her



Thanks to their participation in Tzu Chi activities, Law Siew Lee’s family of five always have endless topics to talk about. [Photograph provided by Law Siew Lee]



In 2014, Law Siew Lee, together with members of Tzu Chi Teachers' Association, went to the Philippines to promote Jing Si Aphorisms to the local teachers and students. [Photograph provided by Lee Geok Cheng]

selfless contribution has enabled her to grasp much of the Master's Dharma teachings and thus, changed her approach in handling Cheng Yang.

Siew Lee related, "In the past when I asked him, 'Why do you sleep so late?' or 'Why do you play with the phone instead of studying?', his answer would always be: 'What the heck!' And I would say, 'Can you not say like that?' I find it impolite."

Later, Siew Lee learnt to let go of her status and started to use the son's lingo to respond to him. Initially, Cheng Yang thought it was pretty funny. But later, he could feel the impact of such foul language and gradually stopped uttering such words.

Siew Lee said smilingly, "At first, I dared not use some of the lingo used by the youngsters, such as, gg.com (referring to game over), 'lan sou' (蓝瘦, homophonic of 难受, which means feeling bad), 'xiang gu' (香菇, homophonic of 想哭, which means feel like crying) because I was

afraid if those were foul words. Later, I asked my students and realized it was not the case."

Overnight change shocked the neighbours

The turning point was in July 2016, when Tzu Chi KL & Selangor organized the 3D2N Tzu Chi Teenagers' Camp. Although Cheng Yang was reluctant to attend initially, the outcome was surprisingly astonishing. Since coming back from the camp, he has become a totally changed person, even the neighbours were shocked.

Now, Cheng Yang would greet everyone nicely. He also offers to take care of the AV systems at the PCBC, and frequently helps out at Tzu Chi's activities. Many people told Siew Lee, "Your son has changed. What kind of camp did he attend? It is so powerful. I want my son to attend too."

But, Siew Lee looks at Cheng Yang's change in a different light. She believes that every child

possesses the innate nature of kindness; and is just waiting for the right timing for it to be exposed. “I feel it was not the camp that woke him up. It is the three years spent in Tzu Chi that had exposed him to the environment of kindness where he has gradually absorbed what he hears and sees.”

At the right timing, right place and with right people around engaging in fruitful dialogue, the child has suddenly grown up.

Initially, Siew Lee was worried that the sudden change of her child could be just temporary. But, till today, Cheng Yang is still behaving well. Siew Lee remarked, “His temperament has improved a lot, and he has shown much respect to his teachers now. The biggest change is his willingness to help others; unlike in the past where he was very self-centred and totally unwilling to think of others.”

Use the Dharma to reason with her son

Once, when hand-phone usage was a subject of discussion at the Tzu Chi Teenager Class, Cheng Yang, being a heavy user, started to reflect on his own conduct. Normally, towards the examination season, most parents would confiscate their children’s hand-phones, but Siew Lee did not. She said, “I knew if I were to confiscate his hand-phone, he would create a ruckus. Therefore, I just told him, ‘I would not keep your phone as I respect you. But, that does not mean I allow you to play with your phone freely. I would hope you know your limit and know when to stop.’”

Siew Lee knew there was a popular mobile app available in the market, where parents could monitor and control their children’s Internet usage. So she

told Cheng Yang, “I am tempted to download such app, but I respect you and your privacy. However, if you don’t restrain yourself, then I may have to take action.”

Not long after that, when the school examination was due to start soon, Cheng Yang, on his own initiative, handed his hand-phone for Siew Lee’s safe keeping and only requested for it upon finishing the revision of his studies. Interaction between a parent and child requires patience, mutual respect and wisdom. Siew Lee understands that it is more effective to reason with children instead of scolding them like what she did before.

She firmly believes that the heart of a child is like a plot of land. When it is planted with kind seeds and nurtured well with the Dharma, it will, one day, germinate and grow. Siew Lee, who attends the morning Dharma talk by Master Cheng Yen, frequently shares with Cheng Yang the Master’s teachings to inculcate positive values in him. Whenever Cheng Yang is upset, Siew Lee would share with him the Master’s Dharma talk on “Devadatta”, a chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*.



Khor Cheng Yang participated in the clean-up in the aftermath of the 2014 East Coast flood. [Photograph provided by Law Siew Lee]

“I told him, although Devadatta had caused much trouble to the Buddha, the Buddha bestowed the prophecies of Enlightenment on him. The Buddha was very appreciative of the many challenges given by Devadatta as those were the opportunities for attaining Buddhahood. In a similar manner, whenever I got angry, Cheng Yang would quote the same to remind me.”

Siew Lee further explained to Cheng Yang, “What you see now is the ‘karmic effect’, but we must be able to see the ‘karmic cause’. We, lay people, are afraid of the karmic effect, but Bodhisattvas are afraid of the karmic cause. If you know the karmic effect is not what you want, then you must not create such karmic cause.”

Cheng Yang enjoys listening to his mother’s sharing on Buddhist stories. There was a time when Siew Lee was quite fond of talking bad about her husband in front of her son. The latter would just keep quiet and listen to her grouses, but when Siew Lee started repeating the story, which he could no longer bear to hear, he would glare at her and say, “Mum, you know what? Master said, never plant seeds of hatred in front of the children.”

Siew Lee was shocked to hear that. She shared, “His comprehension is excellent and he has wisdom. I really shouldn’t talk bad of his father right in front of him. Master’s teachings have benefitted not just him, but the whole family too.”

Parents are the role models for the kids. Siew Lee feels her selfless contribution in Tzu Chi and her usage of the Master’s teachings when communicating with her children, have been well assimilated, bringing a seed of kindness into the heart of her children.



Law Siew Lee accompanied children of the Parent-child Bonding Class on a visit to the recycling centre. [Photograph provided by Law Siew Lee]

Previously for Mother’s Day celebration, the whole family would dine out and Cheng Yang together with his sister would present a Jing-Si product to their mother. For this year, both the mother and son will be on duty in the coming Buddha’s Day event organized by Tzu Chi. It is indeed very meaningful for the mother and son to walk together on the Bodhisattva Path. Siew Lee expressed gratefulness to Tzu Chi for bringing back her adorable Cheng Yang and a harmonious family.

You may watch the story of Law Siew Lee and son, featured in the “*Blossom*” video series, at:



By Yap Cai Hoon Translated by Lim Wen Xin & Yi Qin



My angels

[Photograph provided by Liao Shu Yu]

Adults habitually focus on children's weaknesses, not knowing that it is their deepest fear to have these weaknesses exposed. To quote a Jing Si Aphorism: "A chipped cup still looks perfect when viewed from another angle." As parents, we need to learn to magnify our children's strengths and accept their weaknesses.

Liao Shu Yu covered her son's tiny hand with her giant palm, and holding a pencil drew each stroke on the exercise book. The boy's hand was not strong enough, so the physical pain he had to suffer turned into an overflowing river of tears.

Huge drops of tears fell and wet the paper, leaving behind several patches of marks. Shu Yu felt terrible having to watch her son, whose small muscle development was incomplete, crying out in pain whenever he wrote, so she, too, cried tears of distress. The boy had congenital disorder and had to undergo treatment. The learning intervention was tough and slow. Shu Yu questioned: "Why doesn't the same set of teaching methods bring up the same children?"

Shu Yu gave birth to her daughter in 1997. She never had to worry about the eldest child, whether it was schoolwork or lifestyle. No matter how busy life was, she insisted on having their personal and private mother-daughter time daily so they could chat and talk about their life and problems. Their relationship was very close and it was a smooth journey bringing her up.

Everything changed when the boy was born. The boy's hot temperament once made his sister complained, "Mum, can you stuff brother back into your stomach?" They also had to deal with frequent midnight visits to the emergency department because of the weak brother. These challenges once intensified their tense mother-son relationship, until the boy was sent to kindergarten and Dharma lessons.

Shu Yu realized that her son would get angry, and because of his weak body, he fell sick easily. Before he was ready for formal education, Shu Yu taught him the way she did with her daughter,

that is, sending him to kindergarten and Dharma lessons. It was then that she realized that the son could not learn like the rest of the kids. He could not recite anything and also could not sit and learn properly. As she had not found out the real reason for his behaviour then, she could not understand why he was different from other kids. She began to force him to study, but the stricter she was, the stronger he rebelled. They were in constant war.

Son's great challenge

Once when Shu Yu was chatting with a parent from a Dharma lesson, the latter shared her experience of having a grumpy daughter and decided to have her receive early treatment. Out of curiosity, she arranged for her son to get his anger issues medically assessed. He was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and was confirmed that he could not attend schooling like the rest of the kids. She was worried that the doctor may have misdiagnosed so she had her boy checked at six different hospitals, but the results were all the same.

Shu Yu recounted, "My son had to receive sensory integration therapy (see note 1) and undergo limb rehabilitation immediately. It would hurt a whole lot, but I knew it was a must for him. Therefore, I forced him to complete it daily. It often resulted in both of us crying – he cried because of the physical pain, I cried because I could not bear seeing him in pain."

Shu Yu still had to work. Given that her husband worked abroad most of the time and she had trouble getting along with her mother-in-law, the pressure of taking care of the two kids on her own became unbearable. She became depressed,

¹ Sensory integration refers to the process by which the brain receives information through one's senses (visual, taste, smell, touch, etc.), organizes and processes the information, and turns them into appropriate motor and behavioural responses.

helpless, discouraged, and ultimately suffered from depression.

Fortunately, she met Tzu Chi at her lowest point in life. One day in 2006, Shu Yu had, as usual, taken her kids for a meal at a nearby restaurant. As the restaurant worker often saw her alone with the two young children, she took the initiative to care for her, and the two ladies began to chat. As it turned out, the worker was a Tzu Chi volunteer. She invited Shu Yu to join Tzu Chi's activities and to attend PCBC with her kids. Shu Yu was then reconnected to Tzu Chi. Although she did not participate in any Tzu Chi's activities, Shu Yu has been a Tzu Chi member since 1999; and, in a glimpse of an eye, eight years had passed.

Shu Yu appreciated her fate with Tzu Chi the second time. She attended special education lessons with her boy, and took the two kids to the PCBC. Through the *Jing Si Aphorism*, "Use a parent's love to care for another's child, use the Buddha's wisdom to teach your own child," she realized that because she had been using the wrong education method to bring up her boy, both mother and son had much to suffer.

Shu Yu began to change her ways of teaching, her own state of mind and direction. She stopped forcing her son to strengthen his weaknesses. Instead, she helped find her son's highlights in life. To make goals more achievable and to build up his confidence, boring traditional learning methods were replaced with learning-with-points games. Through discussing redemption prizes of the collected points with her kids, she discovered that her children's requests were really simple. To avoid making her daughter feel neglected, she taught and treated the former the exact same way.

Shu Yu informed, "Master said to give 12 points of praises to a kid who delivered a 7-point performance. I started the point-collecting games with simple goals to allow my son to build self-confidence and believe that he could do it."

Shu Yu shared that normally, kids would request materialistic prizes, but her son and daughter would write something like: I hope mum would bring me to the park for a walk, go shopping, or eat a certain food. For Shu Yu, these are very simple requests.

She said, "When they were young, my husband and I used to concentrate all our efforts on our careers and spent very little time with them, so their wishes were simply for us to spend a little more time with them."

Daughter's voiced objection

When Shu Yu first discovered the right ways to accompany her son, her daughter who had always been well-behaved and obedient became problematic. Back then, the 9-year-old girl



Liao Shu Yu and her family visited the Trickeye Museum in Korea early this year.
[Photograph provided by Liao Shu Yu]

would watch her mum and brother “play” but she could never own those “toys”; she thought her mum was biased and had stopped loving her.

Thinking about her daughter’s reaction, Shu Yu shrugged. The “playing sessions” that her daughter had witnessed were really her helping her son with the homework and exercises from the sensory integration course, and sending him to these courses. Because of her daughter’s voiced objection, Shu Yu signed up both of them for the course and took the daughter along. She was glad that her daughter attended the course together. Although the girl was two years older than the boy, she had, in the process realized that her brother was weaker. Actions that she could perform easily were tough for her brother. Her brother’s situation began to sink in and she began to accompany her brother to “play these games”.

Shu Yu related, “When my daughter saw her brother crying because he lacked the energy to accomplish simple activities, such as, doing the ploughing calf activity (see note 2) and casting a ball, she would comfort him by saying, ‘Brother, are you alright? Tell me what’s wrong?’ I am really glad that my daughter has been a great help to me.”

The daughter always looked forward to fetching her brother home from the kindergarten. Every time when she saw the brother, she would hug and kiss him, and help him carry his bag. She also insisted on carrying her brother on her little back to the school gate. This was how she expressed her love for her brother. Whenever Shu Yu was occupied with work or feeling blue, the daughter would tug her brother into bed, and remind him to behave

himself and not to disturb their mother.

Shu Yu appreciated her daughter’s thoughtfulness, which had eased her burden. Even though the daughter is currently attending university in Taiwan, the mother and daughter have maintained a close relationship. Their interactions on Facebook always made the daughter’s friends envious.

Shu Yu shared, “There was once I replied to my daughter’s Facebook status with: ‘You said you missed me but you are deceiving my feelings. You said you will call me but I waited eagerly for the whole night for nothing.’ Her friends were curious as to who I was, and when they discovered that I was the mother, they were surprised and envious at the same time because their mothers would never do the same.”

The joy still lingered as Shu Yu recalled that episode. She added, “My daughter then told her friends to get their mothers to join Tzu Chi so that their mother-daughter relationships will improve too.”

As far as Shu Yu could remember, she and her daughter have had only one heated argument, which caused the daughter to burst into tears. She has forgotten what led them into that argument but the memory of her daughter knocking on her bedroom door when it was time for bed and uttering tearfully, “Mum, good night, I love you,” was etched in her heart.

Every day, Shu Yu is accumulating “savings of love” with her children by showering on them loads of motherly love. This would save her enough “deposits of love” to maintain a close relationship with her children in times of conflicts.

Since Shu Yu came to Malaysia from Taiwan

² *Ploughing calf refers to the activity where a parent helps to lift a child’s legs up when the child holds himself/herself up in a push-up position so that he/she can move forward using his/her hands, while maintaining his/her trunk in a straight horizontal line. This serves to train the trunk and hand strength at one go.*



Liao Shu Yu is seen here giving the Tzu Chi Teenagers' Group from Johor Bahru a guided tour around the KL Tzu-Chi Jing Si Hall. [Photograph by Wang Kum Choon]

in 2008, she has been assuming the planning role for Tzu Chi's joint celebration of Buddha's Day, Mother's Day and Global Tzu Chi's Day. Hence, she had not had the chance to celebrate Mother's Day with her family. Then her daughter, who was in secondary school, proposed that they participated and volunteered at the event together. That way, they could see their mother on Mother's Day and express their gratitude for her.

Once after attending the Buddha's Day event, the daughter made Shu Yu a card with a photo showing Shu Yu bathing her father's feet. Thank-you card, loving notes, and so on, have been channels of communication between Shu Yu and her children. Occasionally, when Shu Yu returned home from activities late in the night, she would be greeted with warm messages on the dining table, such as, "Mummy dearest, the hot tea is for you!" and her physical exhaustion would be gone instantly.

In 2008, Shu Yu took up the role as the sign language team convener for a sutra adaptation

performance. In order for the daughter to also partake in the performance, she told the latter, "The performance is drawing near but we are still short of performers. What should I do?" Upon hearing that, her daughter, who had no intention

of participating in the performance initially, registered herself to ease her mother's worries.

Shu Yu shared, "Whenever I am at home, I will surely shower all my love on my two children. Our life is always filled with happiness and gratitude."

Teach by example

Shu Yu's son, a student with the Chinese Taipei School Kuala Lumpur, will be 18 years old in July 2017. This year, he will also sit for his university admission test. Shu Yu remembers what the Master has said: "Education is no more than loving and setting example." Thanks to the Master's teachings, she does not demand her children to achieve outstanding academic performance, but for them to be courteous and to have good character.

In response to the teachers' reminder for Shu Yu to take note of her son's studies as the admission examination is approaching, Shu Yu decided to discuss with her son on whether

she should withdraw from Tzu Chi's activities temporarily to accompany him in his studies.

Although her son is aware that the examination results will have a significant impact on his enrolment into a university next year, his learning ability is limited. Shu Yu too, does not force her children to study but has set a good example for them through her commitments in Tzu Chi.

In November 2016, Shu Yu told her son, "I have the grit to let go of my most loved Tzu Chi to accompany you at home, but do you have the determination to keep your hand-phone and computer aside and concentrate fully in your studies?" Shu Yu has chosen to use the men's way of communication with her son, by competing with him in terms of grit and determination. She also made it clear to him that she has put a whole lot of efforts and thoughts in Tzu Chi because she has taken Tzu Chi's missions as her own missions. Hence, her decision to take a break from Tzu Chi to accompany him will only be worthwhile if he

too, takes his studies as his responsibilities.

She said, "I told my son, I want to volunteer with Tzu Chi for life. So, I must put in tremendous efforts and take it seriously. We must have goals in life although our efforts may not guarantee our success. There is no way we can achieve our goals without actions." For her son, who has yet to find his direction in life, Shu Yu could only coach and encourage him constantly. She is thankful that the teachers have also shown the same support for her son, and that has put her mind at peace.

Shu Yu acknowledged that she has learnt and improved a lot through her involvement in Tzu Chi's activities, especially the PCBC. She said, "What I have learnt most from the PCBC is the recognition of my children's strengths. As adults, we tend to focus on children's weaknesses, not knowing that it is their deepest fears to have these weaknesses exposed and magnified. To quote the *Jing Si Aphorism*, 'A chipped cup still looks perfect when viewed from another angle,' each child too, has his/her own strengths

and weaknesses. We should learn to tolerate their weaknesses and magnify their strengths."

Shu Yu is grateful to have encountered Tzu Chi and Master Cheng Yen. It has helped her to overcome obstacles in life and solve crisis with love. Her greatest wish is for her children to take good care of themselves, and to grow up healthily and happily. 🌸



Liao Shu Yu's children made her a card with a poem that they composed themselves to express their appreciation and love for her. [Photograph provided by Liao Shu Yu]

Resolute Every Step of the Way



In conjunction with Tzu Chi Foundation's 51st Anniversary, Tzu Chi KL & Selangor organized a prostrating pilgrimage on April 23, 2017. It was followed by a volunteers' training session, where Hong Jing Yuan, Head of Tzu Chi Dharma Lineage Historical Archival and Research Centre, was invited to share on the archival and spirit of Jing Si Dharma Lineage.



On April 23, 2017, some 3,500 Tzu Chi volunteers and public members assembled at KL Tzu-Chi Jing Si Hall before daybreak to participate in the prostrating pilgrimage to commemorate Tzu Chi Foundation's 51st Anniversary, as well as, honour Master Cheng Yen's birthday. It was an occasion where everyone was filled with gratitude, recollecting what the Master had done in leading her disciples to contribute towards a peaceful and harmonious society in the past half a century.

It had been raining in the morning for days in KL, but miraculously, the weather was dry and cloudy on April 23 morning, and the air was refreshing. This spiritual assembly was truly a divine blessing.

The prostrating pilgrimage was planned back-to-back with volunteers' training course, thus volunteers from other Tzu Chi Chapters outside Klang Valley were able to spend a meaningful day in enriching the cultivation of wisdom.

Participants included people from all walks of life, from different races and all ages

ranging from 3 years of age to 80 years. The procession was magnificent, with the parade filling up the external circumference of the Jing Si Hall, portraying the eternal love of a mother hugging her child.

At 6 am, the procession was orderly arranged with ten people in a row. The crowd was silent and waited patiently for the commencement of the spiritual practice.

Following the sound of the "wooden fish" (a Dharma instrument) and the chime of the bell at 7 am after the recitation of the "Sutra Opening Verses", 200 male volunteers led the procession to walk three steps followed with a prostration, guided by the chanting of the Buddha's name. With gratefulness and determination, the volunteers and participants walked and performed prostration in the right order. Some were repenting while doing their prostration, some were touched by the humble prostrations, and some endured physical pain with determination to complete the walking and prostrations.

There were also some who could not kneel or prostrate because of their advanced age or



On behalf of Master Cheng Yen, Hong Jing Yuan presented the compilation text on Jing Si Dharma Lineage to Echo Chien, CEO of Tzu Chi KL & Selangor. [Photograph by Lee Wei Kean]



Hong Jing Yuan's humorous sharing drew much laughter from the audience, while learning the Master's teachings. [Photograph by Lee Wei Kean]

physical limitations, yet they walked and bowed with sincerity.

Volunteer Chia Mui Kheng, who injured her right hand, could only prostrate with the support of her left hand. She said, “I kept telling myself that I must follow the procession because if I left, the procession would be incomplete. I must complete the solemn pilgrimage.”

Ye Jun Hui from Tzu Chi Collegiate Youth Association shared that the walking and prostrating was not an easy task, just like walking the Bodhisattva Path. However, one must overcome the challenges along the way and keep moving forward. It was a difficult path but it was achievable.

By 8 am, the procession reached the main entrance of the Jing Si Hall. The crowd of 3,500 people finished with a birthday wish to Master Cheng Yen. Everyone wished the Master good health and long life, and for the Master to always share the Dharma with us.

Handing down the Jing Si Dharma Lineage

After the prostrating pilgrimage, over 2,000 volunteers stayed back to attend the volunteers’ training session. The Head of Tzu Chi Dharma Lineage Historical Archival and Research Centre, Hong Jing Yuan from Taiwan, gave two lectures entitled, “Spreading Seeds of Kindness and Paving for Spiritual Cultivation” and “Mission and Conviction”.

She emphasized on the essence of the Dharma, and hoped that volunteers could understand the teachings, apply them in their daily life, and spread the teachings to others. Whilst involved in Tzu Chi work, volunteers could reach out to others and bring hope to people’s life. She said, “When you attain a peace of mind, that means you have acquired spiritual

wisdom and found a path to spiritual home.”

Besides the sharing at volunteers’ training session, Jing Yuan also had a series of talks at different Tzu Chi Chapters, namely in Johor Bahru, Malacca, KL & Selangor and Singapore, to share the essence of Jing Si Dharma Lineage. Then on April 22, she shared in the Commissioners’ training course on how she got into the compilation work of the Master’s Dharma discourses and her experience in the compilation work.

In explaining “humbleness”, she said that “lowering down one’s voice” is outward bearing but “transforming the mind (by letting go the sense of self-importance)” is true spiritual cultivation. So, we should internalize the quality of being humble before we could truly translate it into action. In her sharing, her sense of humour in relating to the Master’s teachings sparked off laughter from the audience.

Her sharing session ended with a ceremony where five sets of compilation text were presented to Echo Chien, CEO of KL & Selangor, and persons-in-charge of four other Tzu Chi Chapters. She emphasized that the collection contains the essence of Jing Si Dharma Lineage, and all disciples of the Master shall learn and grasp the teachings. All the commissioners present knelt down with utmost respect along with the CEO and persons-in-charge as the latter received the compilation work presented to them by Jing Yuan on behalf of the Master.

In her closing remarks, Echo Chien was grateful to have Jing Yuan deliver the lectures despite her busy schedule. As Malaysia was Jing Yuan’s first overseas stop, Echo Chien urged the volunteers to cherish the opportunity given to them to listen to the essence of the Dharma and the Master’s teachings, so that they will stay and spread for a long time.

Participants' Feedbacks



Volunteer, Tan Siew Kheng

With the support of a walking aid in her left hand, 67-year-old volunteer Tan Siew Kheng happily held fellow volunteer, Loo Swoi Siam's hand and said, "I did it! I did it!"

She is unable to stand for an extended period of time since a spine operation 20 years ago; and early this year, the doctor found some problems with her neck and lower back spine. That made performing the prostrating pilgrimage near impossible for her.

With Swoi Siam's company, she courageously signed up for the prostrating pilgrimage. She experienced numbness and spasm in her lower limbs on two occasions when performing the pilgrimage. However, with Swoi Siam by her side, she managed to regain confidence to complete the pilgrimage. "It has strengthened my faith in continuing the Bodhisattva Path," she said.

She was eager to share her blessings with the Master, who is her driving force in life.

Entrepreneur, Lim Kun Lian

Entrepreneur volunteer, Lim Kun Lian was enlightened during his trip to Hualien, Taiwan. He then appointed his children to manage his business while he makes time to involve himself in Tzu Chi's activities. Two months ago, he had a major operation on his left knee. Despite this, he managed to perform his pilgrimage with the help of a walking aid. His surgical site gave him a lot of pain but he endured it and insisted in continuing his pilgrimage. To him, this pilgrimage served to earn him blessings and test his resolve in spiritual cultivation. He hopes to invite his employees to join the pilgrimage next year.



Member of the public, Wong Lian Shin

Wong Lian Shin participated in the prostrating pilgrimage for the first time, hoping to find solace for her once broken heart. She admired the Master's great compassion in reaching out to the needy and hoped to gain some insights into karmic forces through Dharma learning. In performing the pilgrimage, she wished not only for her good health, but also for the Master and her parents to be well and safe. She related, "I have hurt others, and I hope they will forgive me. For those who have hurt me, I have already forgiven them."



TIMA member, T. Selvin a/p Subramaniam

T. Selvin a/p Subramaniam is a nurse from Klang. When she accepted the invitation to participate in the prostrating pilgrimage, her friends were sceptical about her. But she was determined to perform the pilgrimage to earn blessings for the Master.

As she came without breakfast, she felt sick after performing her pilgrimage for some time. Being a devoted Hindu, she prayed to her God to gain her strength to continue and to complete her pilgrimage, while sincerely conveying her well wishes for the Master. She was filled with gratitude and was amazed by the solemnity of the pilgrimage.

Volunteers, Hong Sik Hong & wife

Hong Sik Hong (4th left) and Yeo Lew Sim (3rd left), a couple from Pahang, came with other family members for the pilgrimage. There were nine of them from three generations of their family tree.

Lew Sim, who was performing pilgrimage for the first time, came to realize that the rough road surface symbolized the ups and downs in life. With perseverance, she could overcome all obstacles.

Her son, Hong Siang Yee (1st left) was lost at first, but managed to follow the pilgrimage procession with guidance from volunteers. He related, "The distance I walked symbolizes my path in life. I need guidance to the right path, and I have to walk the path myself."



Volunteers, Pang Chan Hon & wife

Pang Chan Hon (1st right) and his wife, Chan Mee Kuen (1st left), performed the pilgrimage for the second time following their first participation last year. To Mee Kuen, performing pilgrimage is part of cultivation of wisdom. While prostrating, she reminded herself to be humble and reach out to the needy with a grateful heart. She hoped to accumulate blessings for the Master. She said, "Master has a lot to do despite her advanced age. We shall be her limbs to help the needy. I got emotional every time Master reminds us that there is little time left. I need to do more Tzu Chi work with more courage and with unconditional love."

Chan Hon was motivated to continue walking the Bodhisattva Path. He said, "I admire Master's compassion and Great Love in alleviating the suffering of others. She never gives up on anyone." He vowed to give his service in communities to help others.





A Family of Earth Guardians

[Photograph by Low Siew Lian]

The Kee family in Melaka has been collecting recyclables for the past 21 years and yet, never gets tired of doing it. The initial thought was just to do it as a charity. As days go by, more family members participated and now, it has become a family day.

The Kee family has always stressed on teamwork. The whole family offers help and support to the father, who works as a truck driver-cum-delivery man, and the mother, who takes on multiple jobs, like washing clothes, doing packaging and childcare.

The Kee family started getting involved in the initial night time recycling activity in 1995, when it was first initiated by Tzu Chi Melaka. Kee Lee Hoon, who worked in volunteer David Liu's garment factory was one of the pioneers. During large-scale activities, Tzu Chi volunteers would display samples of recyclables, and staff

of the garment factory would collect them after work. Sometimes, there would also be requests to collect them from homes or shops. Knowing that the proceeds would be used for charitable causes, Lee Hoon was keen to participate. However, there was no driver. Hence, she approached her brother, Kee Wei Tiong, for help. The latter accepted her request readily, and the siblings started to collect recyclables together after work. A year later, their father, Kee Hock Seng, joined the duo.

Initially, they used the garment factory's pickup to collect recyclables. But due to the large quantity of recyclables to be collected, they needed

to make many trips. It was always midnight by the time all recyclables were sent to the garment factory and with basic sorting done. David Liu would get ready supper to share with them and he would ask them to rest early.

With the gradual increase in recycling volunteers, the team was divided into groups, each in-charge of a different route. Lee Hoon's brother-in-law, Kwong Teng Keh, also joined the team and generously offered his one-ton truck to transport the recyclables. Thus, Lee Hoon would team up with her younger sister and brother-in-law to collect recyclables at night once a week, and another day with her father and brother.

It wasn't that easy in the beginning

It was a great challenge in the early days to cope with the requests to collect recyclables due to poor telecommunication system. The father, Hock Seng, recalled the difficulties in locating the houses, where they had to use public phones to contact the requesters, sometimes a few times before they finally reached their destinations. Telephone failure and losing their way were common, and at times, they ended up spending almost the whole day from morning till night looking for the houses.

Wei Tiong also disclosed some remarkable experiences he encountered. Initially, there was a shortage of manpower. As such, when they had to collect plenty of recyclables from high-rise apartments without a lift, they would tie

the newspapers up in bundles and roll them down the staircases. There were also occasions where a three-person team had to carry a fridge up a slope; where recyclables were piled up too high on the truck that they did not realize someone was left behind; and when the truck was overloaded, they dared not stop when people waved to them, signaling them to collect recyclables.

As Wei Tiong recounted the past, his 14-year-old son, Kee Jian Yan, curiously asked when those incidents took place. He responded smilingly, "You were not born yet at that time!"

Hearing everyone recalling the fond memories, Lee Hoon joined in the conversation, sharing that in the early days, the recyclables collected were dirtier. But their main concern was the safe handling of the recyclables. She would climb up the tall heaps of recyclables on the truck to ensure that they were properly covered with canvas sheets before the truck left for the recycling centre. This was to ensure that items did not fall off the truck when it was moving, thereby avoiding



Tzu Chi Melaka started its Environmental Protection Mission in 1995, with collection of recyclables at night. Kee Lee Hoon (back row, centre), staff of volunteer David Liu's garment factory, was one of the pioneers. [Photograph provided by Tzu Chi Melaka]

causing inconvenience and trouble to others, and leaving a bad impression to the public.

“We are representing Tzu Chi in what we do. If we do not do it well, it would spoil Tzu Chi and Master Cheng Yen’s reputation,” explained a cautious Lee Hoon.

With increasing amount of recyclables and wider coverage areas, volunteers began to set up recycling points and centres to accommodate the need and for the convenience of the public. Nonetheless, Lee Hoon continues to collect recyclables from homes and businesses during the night on a weekly basis.

Growing team with new family members

Despite the fluctuating number of recycling volunteers, the Kee family has been participating in recycling consistently in the past 20-plus years.

This family has made it their mission to collect recyclables at night till this day. It is handled by Lee Hoon, her elder sister Lee Fong, brother Wei Tiong, and their families of three generations. Every Tuesday after office hours, Lee Hoon and her husband would go to her brother’s house, while her father would drive his son-in-law’s truck over. Wei Tiong would then tie the Tzu Chi’s recycling banner on it, and the family would go off collecting recyclables.

They would head to different routes to collect recyclables, and meet up near an agreed shop lot in Bukit Rambai, before unloading the recyclables at the recycling centre in Malim. Upon seeing his extended family members’ commitment to environmental protection, Lee Fong’s husband decided to change his one-ton truck to a five-ton truck to reduce the loading trips.

The three siblings and their respective families have their own daily schedules and serve in different missions in Tzu Chi. But every Tuesday

evening, they would meet up for recycling. It is like a family day for them, and a full attendance signifies everyone is healthy and well.

Eighty-year-old Hock Seng had to undergo a major surgery to have part of his liver removed 17 years ago, due to Hepatitis B. The doctor advised that he would need to be hospitalized for a week for observation after the operation. However, he was discharged after five days. His family believed that his physical labour on normal days had contributed to his speedy recovery; and he continued doing recycling work after a short break.

After the garment factory closed down in 2001, Lee Hoon found a job in Singapore. In her absence, her father, brother and community volunteers took over her regular routine of collecting recyclables after work.

In 2009, Wei Tiong needed to undergo a spinal decompression surgery. As he was the only truck driver back then, Lee Hoon and Lee Fong persuaded their husbands to take over the job. Since then, more members from the Kee family are involved in recycling.

Upon seeing their elders’ regular schedule in the evening, the children of Lee Fong and Wei Tiong joined them out of curiosity, and have followed suit till now. Jian Yan acknowledged that the most time and energy consuming task is sorting out the recyclables. He has emulated the examples of the elders at home, and with knowledge and awareness on global warming, he has been mindful in resource consumption. For instance, he would not use the air-conditioning at will or go after the latest model of handphone.

Wei Tiong is so committed to his recycling mission that he would avoid travelling outstation on the days when the night recyclable collection is scheduled. Out of curiosity, his client, Khoo Cheng Kiong, a timber supplier, followed him

to a recycling activity. He was touched by Hock Seng's hard work and commitment despite his age, and the joint efforts of the three generations in the Kee family to preserve Mother Earth. Thus, he joined the ranks of recycling and has been volunteering for six years now.

Persisted through 21 years

Wei Tiong shared his interesting observation that they would get more of a certain type of recyclables at certain time. He related, "For instance, there will be more text books and exercise books during school holidays, more old clothes before Chinese New Year, and more aluminium cans after Chinese New Year."

Lee Hoon admired Master Cheng Yen's wise guidance for her disciples to stop using polystyrene food packaging, and to always bring along reuseable bags, and so on, since 20 years ago. She commented that one should not buy more than necessary, "There are many things that we actually do not need that much. Think about it, if everyone buys an extra item that he/she wants, a hundred people will buy a hundred extra items. How much rubbish will be created in 1 year, 10 years or 20 years? How long would it take for these plastics, metals and other resources to biodegrade?"

Hock Seng's commitment to recycling in the past 21 years despite

difficulties is a good motivation for us to carry on the effort. To Lai Hoon, the happiest thing is that her family members would always be there to help with unloading each time the truck loaded with recyclables arrives at the recycling centre. The indescribable family warmth always runs through their bodies and keeps them going albeit physically tired.

Lee Hoon expressed that it all started with a single intention to do good deed, and with her mind set on the mission, she will persevere with determination. She is most grateful to Tzu Chi volunteers and her family members for their long-term support in action. Now, her family members are all contributing to environmental protection, which is also a means of family bonding.

True to the saying, "A family that practises kindness will certainly enjoy an exuberance of blessings," Lee Hoon's aged father and brother, who are both guardians of the Earth, were blessed with successful surgical operations and speedy recovery. 🌿



Started 21 years ago with the intention of doing good deed, recycling has become a precious bonding activity for the Kee family. Picture shows the three generations of the Kee family and Kee Wei Tiong's client, Khoo Cheng Kiong (1st right) after a recycling activity. [Photograph by Tan Lian Hee]

Refugees Had Fun at Sports Day

KL & Selangor 2017.04.15 Reported by Teh Seng Lim Photograph by Ong Siew Geok & Look Foot Seong



UNHCR Tzu-Chi Education Centres jointly held a sports day for refugee students from Harmony Centre in Selayang and Unity Centre in Ampang, at SRJK(C) Jinjang Selatan. Teachers, parents and students were seen actively and happily involved in all the games just for the joy and fun, and not for the medals. It was like a family day, and the children were pleased to see their parents' smiling faces during the games. Mimi Zarina Azmin from UNHCR Education Unit said in her closing remarks that every participant was a winner because they had all demonstrated the team and sports spirit.

Air Disaster Response Training

KL & Selangor 2017.04.12 Reported by Heng Chin Inn Photograph by Ngeu Yet Fatt



Following the signing of the fourth Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Malaysia Airlines and Tzu Chi KL & Selangor in July 2016, the first emergency response training course was conducted for two days from April 12. Other than Tzu Chi volunteers, lecturers and students from HELP University were also invited to participate in the training to learn about the roles of caregivers and the know-how in dealing with the affected

families. Small group discussions, role play and simulated scene training were also included to enhance the participants' understanding and reinforce the course contents.

Witnessing the Fruits of Character Education

KL & Selangor 2017.04.06 Reported by Ng Cau Hong Photograph by Tan Ken Teik

The school authorities of SRJK(C) Batang Kali conducted a speech contest, where the students were required to present the *Jing Si Aphorisms* they picked on the spot. It was to gauge the students' understanding and application of the *Jing Si Aphorisms* taught to them by Tzu Chi volunteers. A student shared that the aphorism, "Nothing is impossible with confidence, perseverance and courage", has equipped him with the confidence to join the competition. Through their speeches, the participants could share with their peers the essence of the inspiring aphorisms.



Continuous Efforts to Promote Goodness in Campuses

KL & Selangor 2017.03.24 – 03.26 Reported by Tzu Chi Documenting Team Photograph by Lee Wei Chiang



Tzu Chi Collegiate Youth Association (Tzu Ching) of Central and Southern Malaysia marched into its 20th year in 2017. A 3-day camp, commencing March 24, was held at KL Tzu-Chi Jing Si Hall, with attendance from some 200 Tzu Ching members from 37 tertiary institutions. The theme of the camp was "sustainable development with faith, vow and action". Experienced seniors were invited to share with their juniors on how they guard their initial aspiration as Tzu Ching members, and how they strike a balance between their career and commitment to Tzu Chi's missions. It is hoped that the participants would be inspired to make plans for their life, assimilate Tzu Chi's spirit, and keep on promoting goodness in their respective campuses.

Inspired to Advocate Environmental Protection at Construction Site

KL & Selangor 2017.03.26 Reported by Ng Cau Hong Photograph by Chen Kuei Chou



During his participation in the entrepreneurs' camp in Hualien, Taiwan, building constructor, Wie Hock Beng learnt about the idea of promoting environmental protection concepts in companies. Upon returning to Malaysia, he invited Tzu Chi volunteers to give an environmental talk to more than 700 construction workers and staff at his construction site. Besides volunteers' sharing on Tzu Chi's environmental

protection concepts and ways to implement recycling at the construction site, the company also provided lunch packed in reusable lunch boxes and drinks in reusable water bottles to each employee, hoping that they will stop using disposable items and start conserving Mother Earth.

Banners Turned Recycling Bags

KL & Selangor 2017.03.10 Reported by Ng Cau Hong Photograph by Lim Heng Lai

It is common to see banners hanging on lamp posts or buildings in the streets in Malaysia. Entrepreneur Chua Suii Choon and wife, Chye Goet Lee, then offered Tzu Chi volunteers a free lesson on how to sew recycling bags using disposed banners. This serves to reduce rubbish and give new life to resources. Goet Lee disclosed that she was inspired by an article on "prolonging the lifespan of resources" to conduct the lesson. The couple also decided to donate 100 units of sewing machines to low-income families to help them to be self-reliant.



Taiwan 2017.04.07 – 04.11

Global Tzu Chi Chapters Reporting Meeting

The 2017 Global Tzu Chi Chapters Reporting Meeting was held at the Jing Si Abode in Hualien from April 7 to 11. Over 400 volunteers from 20 countries/regions attended the meeting and shared the progress and development of Tzu Chi's missions in their respective countries.

On April 9, Malaysian Tzu Chi volunteers reported on the recruitment of Tzu Chi members, Happy Schooling Scheme, 2017 TIMA Conference, touching stories concerning refugees, Mission of Humanistic Culture and the documenting team, as well as, the concerted efforts in raising building fund for the Muar Tzu-Chi Jing Si Hall.

In line with the concept of self-reliance, Tzu Chi volunteers worldwide have been carrying out Tzu Chi's missions through their own efforts, while at the same time, adapting to their respective countries' conditions, rules and regulations. Master Cheng Yen once said that faced with different situations in terms of cultural backgrounds and religious beliefs, the overseas volunteers need to be open-minded and deal with suffering with boundless love. As long as we practise with broadmindedness and Great Love, there would not be any differentiation in religious or racial differences; the sole focus is on uprooting suffering.

As Tzu Chi

volunteers need to refer to Tzu Chi Headquarters in Hualien from time to time, it is imperative that an annual reporting meeting be held to allow volunteers worldwide to share, have exchanges and learn from one another, for the benefit of all. Thus, the first meeting was held in 2010, with participation from Tzu Chi Chapters from ten countries/regions. However, no such meeting was held in 2016 due to the Foundation's 50th Anniversary celebration, where Tzu Chi Branches all around the world were busily planning and conducting relevant activities for the occasion.

In 2012, the Master commended that "Each year, we can see that everyone is firm in their commitment and is working in the right direction though they are in different countries." The annual meeting, where Jing Si disciples from around the world get-together, is truly an occasion for all to share their spiritual joy and inspire one another to be diligent on the path of spiritual cultivation.



New Zealand 2017.03.18

Flood Victims Vowed to Practise Great Love

On March 18, Tzu Chi New Zealand held an emergency relief distribution of cash and food supplies at the Promise Keeper Mount Eden Auckland, for the 12 households badly affected by floods that occurred in New Lynn, located towards the West of Auckland, six days earlier.

Prior to the relief distribution, Mr Rohan from the Civil Defence Bureau explained what had led to the distribution of cash cards which were respectfully presented by Zhang Wen De, CEO of Tzu Chi New Zealand, to the flood victims. The love from the public eased the victims' helplessness and sadness. The volunteers felt deeply for the flood victims, some of whom were seen smiling happily, while some were moved to tears.

When one of the victims, Patumporn from Thailand, received the cash card, she was so touched that she turned teary-eyed. Upon seeing that, volunteer Wang Ping immediately offered her a warm embrace. Patumporn said that she would share with her family members what she had witnessed at the event and would impart Tzu Chi's spirit of Great Love to them.

Before leaving, the flood victims adopted bamboo banks to take home so that they could deposit coins daily, thereby contributing to a good cause and sowing blessings for themselves. They left with a happy heart and were charged with full confidence to face the challenges ahead. The following day, the branch office received an e-mail with the following contents:



Well wishes to Tzu Chi Foundation.

I am Dhruv Sabharwal, one of those affected by the recent floods in the west of Auckland. Last Saturday, my wife, Roochika, and I were present at the relief distribution held by Tzu Chi at the Promise Keeper Mount Eden Auckland. We wish to express our utmost gratitude towards your timely provision of assistance and concern at this critical time in our life.

I would love to offer my support to Tzu Chi Foundation. Although there is not much I can give at the present moment, please let me know how I can become a member of Tzu Chi.

Your gifts, which were inclusive of a cash card amounting to NZ\$1,000 (around RM3,000) and a food pack, have allowed us to purchase household items and other necessities. Once again, we sincerely thank you for all you have done for us.

Regards,
Dhruvand Roochika

Indonesia 2017.04.01

The First Great Love Home in Biak



A 65-year-old Tzu Chi care recipient, Daniel Rumadas, was the beneficiary of the first Great Love home built by Tzu Chi Biak. Tzu Chi volunteers were at Desa Swapodibo for the handing over of the home. Volunteers have been offering material aid and care to Daniel's family on a monthly basis. His home was old and in poor condition with leaking roofs, making it uncomfortable to stay in especially during the rainy season. The reconstruction of his house took about two months to complete, after which, Tzu Chi volunteers furnished it with beds, wardrobes, a dining table and a sofa. The family was grateful to the volunteers for rebuilding their home, giving them a comfortable and clean living environment.

Argentina 2017.03.26

Volunteers Pleased to See the Children's Smiles



The commencement of the new school term in Argentina, South America, in March, was supposed to be a happy occasion for the school children. However, this was not the case with the poor residents of Villa Lujan, Quilmes, who were unable to allocate funds for the purchase of stationery. Upon learning about the parents' predicament, and in upholding the Master's educational philosophy that

children must not be deprived of education, Tzu Chi volunteers immediately prepared 140 sets of stationery and proceeded to Quilmes for distribution to the students. They also presented some lovely, specially-designed cards with *Jing Si Aphorisms* to spread the positive vibe to the children.

Naraja a/I Ayard, an Indian Tzu Chi care recipient, succumbed to his illness on November 13, 2016, putting an end to eight years of Tzu Chi volunteers' companionship. Volunteers took turns to lift the physically-immobile Naraja over flights of stairs to the dialysis centre; and such love continued till the final days of Naraja as volunteers sent him off on his final journey.

Remembering Naraja: A Final Journey

[Photograph by Loh Hon Fui]

Naraja a/I Ayard was born in 1960 to a family living in a rubber estate in Kedah. When he was 16 months old, his mother passed away due to wound infection. His maternal grandmother then became his caregiver and companion.

As he was brought up in an estate, Naraja naturally took up rubber-tapping. At the age of 21, he left home for Kuala Lumpur in search of a better life. He worked as a truck driver during the day, and at night, he washed dishes at a local restaurant to make extra income.

After ten years of hard work and frugal living, Naraja and his wife finally saved up enough to purchase a truck, which was the

beginning of their own transportation and tent rental business. Despite being a boss, Naraja continued to work relentlessly day and night, running his business during the day and driving around town to collect recyclables at night.

Sickness took a financial toll

As the couple was about to savour the fruits of their hard work, Naraja was diagnosed with kidney disease in 2003. He began searching high and low for a cure to his ailment, from traditional Indian medicine to spiritual healers. Yet, after spending tens of thousands of Ringgit, his health continued to deteriorate. By 2006, he

had no choice but to begin dialysis.

With no means of support, Naraja and his wife, Vijaya Kumari, had to drain their savings, sell off their truck and jewellery, and eventually rely on credit card debt to pay for his treatments. When friends and relatives learnt of his plight, they began to distance themselves. Naraja was resentful of such unfair adversity, as he was a helpful person in the past.

Naraja had five elder brothers, but four of them had passed away, except for the eldest one. When his second brother passed away in 1998, Naraja adopted both of his sons, aged seven and eight. However, his strict parenting and severe punishment was poorly received, eventually resulting in irreversible damage to their relationships. Both the adopted sons left the family after completing their secondary education, and all contacts with them were lost for the past ten years. Naraja and his wife were devastated with the parting.

Amidst seemingly endless despair, volunteer Goh Chee Tiong, who happened to live in the same condominium in Subang, came to his rescue. Chee Tiong noticed a once healthy Naraja was struggling to walk up the stairs, as their condominium was not fitted with an elevator. Occasionally, Naraja would borrow money or goods from him. Chee Tiong then took the initiative to find out more and decided to refer his case to Tzu Chi. Naraja then became a Tzu Chi's care recipient in 2009.

Although the material aid had brought timely relief, it stopped short in relieving his physical and mental anguish. Whenever volunteers came to visit, Naraja would vent his frustrations, even admitting that he had contemplated suicide. Dumbfounded by his revelation, volunteers decided to shower him with more care and companionship.

Khor Lee Choon, a volunteer who had cared for Naraja for a long time, recollected their earlier visits, "Naraja was too depressed to take any

interest in us. Feeling life is meaningless, he even contemplated suicide."

In 2011, Naraja had lost the will to live, and had refused to undergo dialysis for a whole week. Despite his wife's repeated pleas, he would not budge. Vijaya had no choice but to seek help from the volunteers. Fortunately, volunteers Soon Kian Heng and Ding Kung Jen arrived in time to chauffeur him to the hospital before his condition took a turn for the worse.

Every time this particular incident was brought up, Naraja could not thank Kian Heng enough. He shared, "He came in to help me get dressed and drove me to Serdang Hospital. Who would do this for anyone? I can never forget that moment. A brother like him is hard to find!"

Carried him down flights of stairs

As time progressed, dialysis had weakened his legs, and he needed help from his wife to use the toilet. He was again deeply moved as volunteers helped to replace the squat toilet in his home with a sitting one. Besides financial support, Tzu Chi had improved his well-being and living condition.

In April 2015, Naraja and family were dealt another blow as Naraja was diagnosed with blockages in three heart vessels which exacerbated his immobility. He was overwhelmed with worries and felt helpless that a thought of leaving home for dialysis could be too daunting. "How do I get down the stairs? I just can't do it." Naraja would think.

To carry a 70-kg person over five flights of narrow stairs was definitely no easy feat, but as Naraja's life was at stake, volunteers resorted to taking him down on a stainless-steel chair.

Thrice a week, four volunteers would arrive at Naraja's home at 5 am to carry him downstairs, and another volunteer would drive him to the dialysis centre in Shah Alam. Four hours later, another group of volunteers would

pick him up and carry him back home.

Since such a physically demanding task required timely mobilization of manpower, the team leader used a mobile messaging application to maintain a pool of human resources. Volunteers also enlisted the help of their families, colleagues, friends and neighbours, as well as, Tzu Chi youths. Kian Heng revealed, “Although the 5 am routine was challenging, it was nothing compared to the ordeal Naraja had to endure.”

On some occasions, members of the group had over-asserted or strained their muscles, but Naraja’s safety remained their priority.

Vijaya was very grateful to this group of strangers who helped her husband selflessly, yet feeling sorry for them to have to bear such an arduous task. She said, “He was indeed lucky to have these brothers and sisters from Tzu Chi. Yet I felt sorry for the pain we put them through.”

As the stainless-steel chair was made of thin rods, volunteers had to endure much pain while grasping the rods with their fingers. To ease the

task and improve safety, Ho Kean Seng, who works in the construction industry, tried to make use of high-quality wood left from his work and an office chair sourced from the recycling centre to customize a chair. The finished chair was put into use after numerous trials of carrying volunteers to ensure its safety and strength.

Over the years, volunteers continued to perfect the chair. The fourth piece was a medical chair donated by and bought from Singapore by Kian Heng’s sister, Soon Yi Zhen. The chair with reclining mechanism offered Naraja better comfort and safety, and at the same time, made volunteers’ routine less taxing.

Sadly, Naraja’s health continued to go downhill. On one fateful day in May 2015, he was bedridden the whole day due to severe pain all over his body. A trip to the hospital did not alleviate his pain. As a result, he became extremely vulnerable with unusual outburst of bad temper.

“I have known him long enough to live with his random tantrums. No one could understand



On November 15, 2015, volunteers gathered at Naraja’s place to celebrate Deepavali with him. [Photograph provided by Lim Heng Lai]

his pain better than himself,” said Vijaya, who could only suffer in silence.

Vijaya had been very supportive ever since Naraja started undergoing dialysis a decade ago. However, she could only keep her sorrow to herself. She said, “I was scared as well. I couldn’t stand to stay home alone without having anything to do. At times, I thought I was going crazy, and I just wanted to shout. To stop feeling that way, I would wash my face and go for a walk to relax myself.”

Other than two Deepavali celebrations spent with volunteers, Naraja had not celebrated the festival for many years. Besides, he wanted to seize the occasion to express his appreciation. On learning of his wish, volunteers decided to put together a celebration to brighten his gloomy days.

On the eve of Deepavali in November 2015, Lee Choon accompanied Vijaya to shop for ingredients in the market. She returned the next morning to help out with food preparation. By noon, volunteers gathered at Naraja’s place for the celebration.

Surrounded by familiar faces, Vijaya said happily, “Naraja used to be sad and lonely as his relatives had left him. But since Tzu Chi volunteers walked into our life, he has become happier.” Naraja added, “This is the most unforgettable Deepavali for me!”

When Vijaya realized that Tzu Chi’s funds are accumulation of little contributions from many individuals, she started making daily deposits into her bamboo bank to help the needy. Sometimes, she would bring along the bamboo bank to the dialysis centre, hoping to solicit kindness from



Volunteer Soon Kian Heng visited the ailing Naraja, who was admitted to the hospital on October 22, 2016, and succumbed to his illness on November 13. [Photograph provided by Chan Yoke Mei]

the staff and other patients. Naraja would also promote Tzu Chi by sharing Tzu Chi’s bamboo bank spirit, recycling work, monthly donation, and so on, with other patients.

Even though life was hard on him, he did his best to reciprocate Tzu Chi’s kindness by calling upon people around him, especially the Indians, to donate for a good cause. He said, “Regardless of our skin colours, our ‘hearts’ remain the same.”

Soon, another year had passed and Deepavali was around the corner. But on October 22, 2016, Naraja was admitted to the hospital once again. This time, he could not make it to the celebration and breathed his last on November 13, leaving Vijaya in devastation and loss.

“I knew he will suffer no more, yet I felt miserable to let him go...” said Vijaya, with tears running down her face.

Naraja was comforted to learn that besides Tzu Chi volunteers, his long-lost family and relatives whom he thought were indifferent, had come to see him at his deathbed. His eldest brother too, travelled afar to see him. Regrettably, his adopted sons did not show up.

At his wake, over 40 volunteers gathered

to chant the Buddha's name for him. Despite the differences in religion, Naraja was sent off with abundant blessings.

Volunteers returned the next day to carry his casket down the same flights of stairs they had taken him down countless times before. But this time, it was not a journey to the dialysis centre anymore. It was Naraja's final journey in life.

Wong Lee Choo, who was in charge of manpower coordination, was grateful to fellow volunteers for working together to accomplish the mission. Their spirit of unconditional giving deeply moved her. Such undertaking had taught her to embrace challenges in life with a positive outlook. She said, "Positive thinking never fails to get us through challenging times."

By manifesting the suffering in life, the couple had inspired Lee Choo, who remarked, "Naraja once told us that the volunteers' commitment in sending him to the dialysis centre come rain or shine, had motivated him not to give up. His positive attitude evoked the kindness in me, and inspired me to give with sincerity and love."

Diana Ooi Poh Lian, one of the volunteers who completed the most number of shifts, revealed, "Every trip I made with Naraja and his wife was my opportunity to sow seeds of love in their hearts. Even though he had left us, I believe those seeds had sprouted and

would follow him on his next journey."

Diana added, "I found it immensely rewarding helping them out, and learning the Dharma means to practise the teachings."

"I won't be around without Tzu Chi," was what Naraja always said. Although it will take time for Vijaya to recover from bereavement, she is ready to turn her grief and gratitude into strength and selfless love. She is prepared to find a job, and join the ranks of Tzu Chi volunteers. "No words could express my gratitude for Tzu Chi. The best way to reciprocate is to give of myself to serve others in need."

Mobilizing over 1,600 man-shifts to carry Naraja through more than 35,000 steps over the course of 20 months, was indeed a living proof that Great Love transcends race and religion, and that kindness exists. 🌸

To learn more about Naraja's story, please watch "Tzu Chi in Malaysia – Love through Flights of Stairs".



Over 40 volunteers chanted the Buddha's name for Naraja. Despite differences in religion, they sent him off with abundant blessings. [Photograph by How Siew Geok]

Recycling: From Hospital to Community

I was “conned” into going to Taiwan to attend the Annual TIMA Convention in 2007, but it was wonderful being “conned” because it was there that I learnt about myself. I was told that the participants were always moved to tears throughout the event, but I did not cry at all. Instead, I cried in my heart seeing what the volunteers in the US, Philippines, Indonesia and other countries had done, and, on reflection, what I had not done. That really whipped me up from my sleep, thinking that I was a great person, which I was not.

I remember the theme of the TIMA Convention was “Medicine and Environmental Protection”. Before that, I always believed that recycling was the local government’s job, not mine; and although I had heard about ozone layer depletion, greenhouse gases, and so on, I did not bother to find out more and did not know what I, as a mortal being, could do. The wonderful environmental talk by Brother Hsieh Ching-Kui deeply impressed and inspired me. The visit to Tzu Chi’s recycling centre in Neihu was another eye-opener. It was the biggest recycling centre that I had ever seen in my life and I could not believe my eyes when I saw the amount of recyclables at the centre.

I always thought that I was rich enough, so why should I reduce and reuse? Until I visited the recycling centre, I did not see the point of repairing a faulty item because I could always afford a new one. I realized that when one starts doing recycling, one would naturally practise the other four Rs of recycling, that is, refuse, reduce, reuse and repair.

At the centre, I also met an 85-year-old elderly woman who was suffering from kyphosis.



[Photograph by Wong Poh Fatt]

Within a few years of doing recycling, she was standing on her own. That was really amazing and she was truly an inspiration!

Upon returning to Malaysia, I was motivated to start doing recycling. However back then, Tzu Chi had not yet set up so many recycling centres around Klang Valley. There were mainly recycling points that operated on a monthly basis. And as we were a few doctors involved in Tzu Chi’s medical missions at that time, we were often occupied with free clinics, home visits and other activities, in addition to our hectic work schedules. As such, it was difficult for us to find time for the monthly recycling activity.

So, as the Turkish proverb goes: “If the mountain won’t come to Muhammad, then

Muhamad must go to the mountain,” I decided to bring recycling to the hospital instead. However, in the beginning, the hospital staff knew very little about environmental protection. When I asked the nurses to collect the recyclables, they did not understand why they should do so. Thus, I started it from myself and led by example. I told myself that I only needed to collect recyclables in a four-storey building. This was no big deal when compared to a very slim female volunteer from Petaling Jaya, who dedicated herself to collect recyclables from four blocks of a 20-plus-storey building daily! If she could do it, there was no reason why I could not.

The main reason that I started doing recycling in the hospital was to introduce Tzu Chi to the doctors and nurses. It was not easy to get them to volunteer at the free clinics. So I knew I should merge recycling with the medical mission. When I went from ward to ward to tell the nurses to collect recyclables, they asked me what I was doing. I told them that it did not matter if they did not support or donate to my charity, but at least keep the recyclables for me. It was not the amount that matters. Even if it was only worth pittance, it was invaluable in terms of sweat, love and kindness. That, to me, is worth more than the cash values of RM100 or RM200.

From there, the nurses slowly responded to my initiative to do charity, and to help the sick and poor. In fact, it appeared strange for Malaysians in general to see a senior consultant collecting recyclables all over the hospital. I drew a lot of attention, stares and gossips. I was named “Alam Flora” (garbage collector in Malaysia), and there were people who asked me, “Dr Ng, are you short of money that you need to collect recyclables?”



[Photograph by Low Mai Yin]

They thought I was a little bit crazy. But I was not bothered because recycling is one way to help disaster victims around the world, besides being there in person to offer our service or collecting funds for them. We are lucky that Malaysia is free from massive natural disasters, but we do not have to wait for disasters to happen to remind ourselves that we need to take care of Mother Earth. We should prevent disasters from happening by practising environmental protection, which includes recycling.

Other than using my lunch breaks and after-work hours to do recycling, I would also go to the hospital earlier every day to sort out the recyclables collected. As time passed, some of the nurses would also think twice before they threw something into the dustbin. Actually, the efforts did not bring much proceeds. But it is what we need to do to save the Earth and the world from more disasters. The effort of one person may be limited, but I always believe that a 0.000001 percent contribution is still more than a zero percent, and it will still make a small difference. It is not enough for us, medical

professionals, to just visit and serve the sick, we have to save the world. That was why I persisted despite the undesirable remarks and names given to me. I knew I was doing a good deed for a good cause, and that was what I wanted to do.


We also started a recycling course at the hospital, and invited Tzu Chi volunteers to advocate environmental protection and teach us about recycling. It has reduced the amount of garbage to be disposed, hence decreasing the garbage handling fees that was charged per kilogramme, and the proceeds from the sale of recyclables could be used to serve people, for the hospital and our patients. Thanks to the positive effect, we launched a recycling group at our Obstetrics & Gynaecology Department a year later. The nurses would bring the recyclables to the collection point, and I no longer had to go from ward to ward to collect them. The effort has continued until now, and the whole hospital has taken up recycling!

Through the process, I have learnt that recycling does not only save the Earth, but also ourselves. It helps us to let go of our ego. The moment our hands touch the ground, our ego goes down. It also makes us more positive people because while doing recycling, we will not dwell in negative thoughts, such as, “Why is this happening to me?” and “Why am I so poor?” In reflection, we often forget to appreciate what we have, and never ask questions like “Why do I have so much while others have so little?” I am really grateful that recycling has helped me to let go of my ego and unhappiness, and to serve people both locally and abroad.

I must also thank recycling for helping my brother, who had a stroke in 2010 while I was away in Singapore for the opening of a clinic. I am not a neurologist or a physician. After seeing a stroke patient who had his/her blood pressure

controlled following a stroke, I would ask the patient to go home, or at the most, refer him/her to the rehabilitation department. I would also ask him/her to seek spiritual help (i.e., praying). I did not know there were so many other things they needed to do on their road to recovery. I just realize I did not practise holistic medicine.

It was not until my brother suffered a stroke that I understood the feeling of a patient’s family, and started the Stroke Support Group (SSG) in July 2013. Many stroke patients, who thought that they could not move, have found their self-worth in recycling. Besides helping in rehabilitation, recycling also strengthens bonds between the patients and their families as they engage in the activity together. The understanding and acceptance of a patient’s family towards his/her needs will help the patient to recover faster.

Of course, other than recycling, I am also involved in other areas, such as, medical outreaches, routine cleaning of the Jing Si Hall, cleaning-up of the flood-hit Temerloh, sign language performance, and so on. All these involvements have helped me discover myself and gain new in-sights into life. People often asked what my motto in life is. I have always believed in this quote by the Buddha: “Whosoever serves the sick and suffering, serves me.” Let us come together to save lives and do what we could to save the world. 



Dr Ng Poh Yin

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- TIMA member

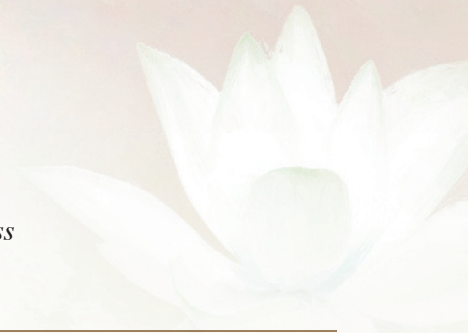
THE FIRST PRINCIPLE

Treat your parents with filial piety

Honour your teachers

Abstain from killing and nurture loving-kindness

Perform the Ten Good Deeds



The virtue of a teacher

In a similar way, spiritual practitioners also need to respect their teachers. If they fail to respect their teachers, how can they truly value their teachings? It is said, “A journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step.” If we only long for that nice place a thousand miles away, but forget the importance of taking the first step, how can we find and follow the right path?

Buddhist masters of the past developed many sects or schools of Buddhism, hoping that students could find a method that suited them, concentrate on that method and learn it well. But if students keep jumping back and forth among the various schools and methods, how can they penetrate deeply into the teachings? While learning the teachings, we need to be calm and peaceful. Once we have chosen a teacher, we must stay with him or her; in this way, our hearts will be at peace. If we have chosen a place for our spiritual practice, but our hearts are not at peace, how can we focus on the teachings and make progress on the path?

For laypeople as well as monastics, Buddhist teachings provide a proper path. While the minds of ordinary people often go

astray, those who wholeheartedly follow the right path will never lose their course.

The lamp inside my heart

As for me, I wholeheartedly abide by the one excellent principle that I received from my guiding teacher, Venerable Yin Shun, whom I regard as the shining lamp in my heart. The teaching I received from him was nothing but a simple phrase: “For Buddha’s teachings, for sentient beings”. This phrase became my lifelong guiding principle. The Tzu Chi Foundation that we have today originated from this single phrase, just like the large tree that comes from one tiny seed. I have always worked very hard and stayed true to my teacher’s instructions because I respect my teacher as a Buddha. I consider what he told me, “For Buddha’s teachings, for sentient beings”, to be the Dharma that I will uphold and practise for the rest of my life.

“A journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step,” but if that first step is in the wrong direction, even if it is just a tiny deviation, it might take us far off course. Hence, we must always be vigilant and take good care of our hearts. If we want to engage in spiritual cultivation, we must start with the most basic principle: respect our teachers and the teachings we receive.

RIGHT VIEW AND RIGHT KNOWLEDGE

Our teachers nurture our wisdom-life. “A journey of a thousand miles begins with the first

step”; it is the same with learning. No matter how profound the knowledge, learning it begins with

the words that we receive from a teacher.

For example, Master Hui Neng, who later became the sixth patriarch of the Zen sect, underwent many hardships when he engaged in spiritual cultivation. He spent most of his time doing laborious chores such as chopping firewood and pounding rice in the kitchen, all without any complaint. It is easy for people to take on physical labours, but what is difficult is to do so without resentment. We should regard Master Hui Neng as a role model of how to respect and follow the teachings that one receives.

In the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, there is a story about the young boy Sudhana. In his quest for Enlightenment, he studied with 53 virtuous spiritual friends. One of them had attained awakening by contemplating a fire. Sudhana asked this friend for teachings from the other side of the fire. The friend said, “You ask me for teachings, but how can you receive them if you don’t even dare to cross the fire pit?” So Sudhana leaped forward and went through the fire. This is another example of someone who attained awakening through personal experience.

Starting over with sincerity

There are many real-life stories that really touch my heart. One day when I was at the Taipei Tzu Chi office, a young nightclub singer came to visit me with her sister and a Tzu Chi Commissioner. When she saw me for the first time, she started crying. When I went back to the Jing Si Abode in Hualien, she came with me and stayed for a few days.

She was very popular and made a lot of money by giving performances in Taiwan and abroad. When she came to the Abode with me,

she realized how confused and lost she was in her life of indulgence. At the Abode, she saw how everyone living there worked selflessly for the sake of helping other people. This open expression of their true nature and sincerity touched her deeply.

She had never recognized the suffering of human life that the Buddha talked about. It was not until she did some voluntary work at the Tzu Chi Hospital that she saw living examples of the impermanence, emptiness and suffering in human life. Realizing all of these led her to think about the meaning of life. She felt she should let go of all her bad habits and start a new life. She pledged to donate NT\$1 million (about US\$31,000) to our foundation. She told me that she did not have the money on hand at the moment, because although she had made a lot of money, she had spent most of it on smoking, drinking and gambling. I told her, “As long as you have this good intention, you can take your time.” “No, I can’t wait,” she insisted. “Life is impermanent. I must do all that I can, right away.” When she returned to Taipei, she sold a shop that she owned and donated the money to Tzu Chi.

Since then, she started coming every day to experience the spirit of Tzu Chi. She made a great effort to change her arrogant attitude and her bad habits, and she learnt to treat other people with sincerity. Her transformation also allowed other people to sense her genuine kindness and beauty. She used to wear the newest, most fashionable dresses, but she was still not particularly liked.

After she began volunteering with us, she put away her makeup and dressed in simple dresses and wore a friendly smile, giving people

a feeling of kindness and sincerity. When a co-worker later came with her to see me, she verified the change in her. Her co-worker said, “I am surprised and touched by her. I was curious about the kind of person who had the power to bring about this much of a change, so that is why I came to visit you today.”

Not long afterwards, the singer came and showed me her hands. “Master, take a look at my hands. I remember that when I came to donate my money, you were looking at my fingernails. Although you did not say a word, I knew in my heart that what you saw was my vanity. So when I got home, I immediately cut my fingernails short and removed the nail polish.”

That was one way of showing her respect towards me as her teacher, and towards the teachings that she received from me. I did not lecture her, but she felt that a look from me was enough guidance. So, in this way, she carefully observed my words and actions and abided by my teachings with respect and faith, and diligently carried out the Bodhisattva Path.

The Dharma is not only found in lectures by Dharma Masters. Through her own self-reflection and realization, this young woman was able to act according to what she saw and heard, and she always kept my teachings in mind. Thus she was able to touch the people around her. So, as we learn the Buddha’s teachings, we not only have to use our ears to hear, but also use our minds to observe, because every single thing a teacher does is a lesson for the students to learn. If we can earnestly and diligently practise even a single

virtuous teaching, we will constantly progress on our spiritual path.

Determine your goal

Whether learning to be Buddhist practitioners or learning to be better people, we must respect our teachers and the teachings we receive. If we lack respect for our teachers, it means that we do not really want to improve ourselves.

When we learn something, we must figure out our course. We must determine what we want to learn and then carefully choose someone who can guide us to our goal. In every profession, there is always an expert who is very skilful. If we are interested in tailoring, we must go and find a good tailor who can teach us the skill. It will do us no good if we go to a carpenter, when we actually want to learn tailoring. So, the teacher we choose depends on what we want to learn. When we find the teacher we need, we must be respectful and attentive and earnestly learn to master these skills.

If we want our teachers to do everything they can to teach us everything they know, we must be earnest, attentive and respectful. If we are irreverent, our teachers will be disappointed in us and will not offer their complete teachings.

It is the same with learning the Buddha’s Way. The Buddha’s wisdom is beyond human understanding. So he taught sentient beings according to their capabilities and needs. In order to help people understand, the ancient sages classified the teachings into various sects or schools. Once spiritual practitioners decide on their goals, they can then choose the appropriate school and start from there. (To be continued in the next issue)

* This article is extracted from the book “Three Ways to the Pure Land (Revised Edition)”.



Like Bees Collecting Honey

We cannot live without food. Nature provides us with an abundance of plants and grains; this is truly something to be grateful for. When we eat, we should be like bees and butterflies when they collect pollen; they do not hurt the flowers and take only as much as they need.

Eating too much is like adding oil to a fire. Excessive nutrients in the body make us more apt to get angry and increase our desires. If the fire of desire has no outlet, it can lead to disease. On the other hand, with inadequate nutrition, we will lack physical strength, which will make it difficult for us to exercise our wisdom.

Eating too much or too little is unhealthy for the body. So, we should keep a balanced diet to maintain physical and mental balance. Then, we will feel free and at ease. 🌸

** This article is extracted from the book "Prayers of the Heart".*



QUESTION & ANSWER

Serene Reflection



Between Master Cheng Yen and Ms Huang Ming on Keeping Missions Honest and Trustworthy

Ms Huang Ming, a US Associated Press delegate, conducted an exclusive interview with Master Cheng Yen.

Q: What percentage of your goal have you accomplished since founding Tzu Chi?

A: There is no percentage to speak of. I will continue on this path as long as I am alive. We should make good use of our lives while we can.

Q: Why did you decide to help China and even participate in international relief work?

A: I just followed the belief in “respecting life”. As long as it is within my ability, I will do my best and urge everyone to participate in these relief efforts.

Q: Why are Tzu Chi volunteers always telling both acquaintances and strangers about Tzu Chi?

A: When good deeds are recognized and promoted, we can encourage and inspire more people to participate in our work to benefit others.

Q: Have you ever encountered difficulties while promoting Tzu Chi’s missions?

A: Working with society, it is inevitable that we encounter difficulties. As long as we are committed and willing to do something, no matter how difficult things are, they can be resolved.

Q: There are so many things that the Taiwanese Government could not do, but Tzu Chi has made happen. Is that the result of Tzu Chi’s large membership and sizable donation funds?

A: No. It is because of the image of sincerity, integrity, faith and steadfastness that Tzu Chi has established over the years. We have earned the trust of people, both domestically and abroad; that is why they support and become involved with

Tzu Chi. This cannot be achieved in just one day. It is actually the result of the continuous commitment and contributions of Tzu Chi volunteers and members. People's trust and acknowledgement make us even more vigilant and dutiful in carrying out our responsibility and doing good deeds. In this way, we can live up to the trust of the public.

Q: There are Christians and Muslims in Tzu Chi. Will their religions create internal conflicts for them? Are their life's directions different?

A: In terms of how things appear, our faiths are different. However, we all believe in the same principles of love and virtue. Many priests and nuns have good relations with us. They all consider themselves part of the Tzu Chi family too.

Q: Some people question why Tzu Chi keeps holding fundraising activities when it has already drawn in a lot of money from Taiwan's philanthropists.

A: Tzu Chi has earned a lot of trust, rather than a lot of money. People are willing to donate to Tzu Chi's causes because society trusts Tzu Chi and its various projects, such as building a state-wide medical network, bone marrow transplant registry, and so on. These are all long-term and high-cost projects. Tzu Chi did not start these projects because we had ample funds and needed something to spend the money on.

I always worry every time a new project is initiated because not only it is physically taxing, it also creates tremendous stress. Why would I want all to go through all these troubles? It is because I cannot stand to see these important causes left neglected. I truly appreciate Tzu Chi's contributors worldwide for understanding that their donations are used where they are most needed.

Q: Even elementary school children know that one should be honest and keep one's words. However, it is really hard to do so.

A: When we are determined and set our mind to it, then it will not be hard.

** This article is extracted from the book "Friends from Afar: Conversations with Dharma Master Cheng Yen".*



The Compassionate Prince Kunala

Prince Kunala gouged out one eye and he suddenly realized: “Why would such a filthy little thing be praised by so many people and bring so much trouble? Since she wants both eyes, I’ll take out the other one too.” When both eyes were gone, everything before him was in total darkness, but his mind was suddenly filled with light.

After Buddha passed away, there was a king named Usika. He was very kind and his government was very compassionate. He had a son with eyes as beautiful as the kunala, an Indian bird famous for its beautiful eyes. Because the king liked this kind of bird, he named his son Kunala. When Prince Kunala grew up, he was very handsome. His conduct was proper and he was very kind.

King Usika was a devoted Buddhist. One day, the king brought his son to a temple, and he asked a monk named Yasa about the Buddhist teachings. Yasa looked at the young prince. “Human life is impermanent,” he said.

“A body goes through the stages of birth, aging, illness and death, and human life is filled with impurity. Who can have the beauty of youth forever? All these are illusions. In the same way, although the prince’s eyes seem beautiful, they are actually full of filth and the source of trouble.”

The prince was quite puzzled. Everyone always praised him for his beautiful eyes, but why would the monk say that they were dirty and the source of trouble?

There were many concubines in the king’s palace. One young lady was deeply attracted by Kunala’s good looks. When she saw him sitting alone in the garden one day, she started to fondle him, trying to seduce him. But the prince was a righteous person and could not agree to such behaviour. He pulled himself together and freed himself from her unwanted attentions.

Later, when the young prince was old enough to marry, King Usika found a wife for him. When the concubine saw the lover of her dreams married to someone else, she became intensely jealous and her love turned to hatred.

Not long after the marriage, the king became sick and the young concubine looked after him carefully until he recovered. He was grateful for her care and said to her, “Because you took care of me for such a long time, I will give you anything you desire.” She said, “I just want to rule the country for seven days.”

The king thought to himself that since he had promised, he could not go back on his word. Besides, it was only for seven days. So he agreed.

When she was on the throne, the young lady wrote a letter filled with both love and hate and sent it to Prince Kunala. She wrote that fury would only be placated if she never saw his eyes again. Now the prince finally realized what that monk had meant, but it was too late. The lady’s



word was like the king's command, and it could not be disobeyed.

Kunala reluctantly gouged out one eye and held it in his hand. "It's so disgusting," he suddenly realized. "Why would such a filthy little thing be praised by so many people and bring so much trouble? Since she wants both eyes, I'll take out the other one too." When both eyes were gone, everything before him was in total darkness, but his mind was suddenly filled with light. He felt the peace that comes from spiritual exaltation.

When his wife heard the news, she ran to the blind prince and started to wail with grief. But the prince was calm and consoled her with the Buddhist teachings. "Human life is brief, so don't harbour hatred or worry, because hatred and worry are your greatest enemies."

At that time, a bodyguard warned the prince, "Your Highness, I'm afraid that if you stay in the palace, your life will be in danger." The prince, of course, was already aware of this, and since he did not want the court lady to continue making bad karma for herself by doing something even worse, he and his wife fled the palace.


They learnt to play the lute and to sing, and they wandered from town to town, making music in the streets. People would throw them a few coins, and in this way, the prince and his wife were able to feed themselves.

A few years later, they came back to the capital. One day, they wandered into the streets alongside the palace and started to sing. When King Usika heard the beautiful and mournful songs, he thought of his son, who had suddenly disappeared years before. He told his attendant to invite the musicians to enter the palace.

When the king saw the lute player, he realized that it was indeed the son that he had been thinking of day and night. When he saw how Prince Kunala had fallen from his royal life and was now only a blind lute-player singing on the streets for a living, the king was very upset.

"Who did this to you?" he asked the prince. "Who made you lose your sight?" But Kunala refused to talk about it. He just told his father about the truths that he had learnt, hoping his father would calm down.

At last, the ministers and the guards could not endure it anymore and reported the truth to the king. He was furious and wanted to execute that concubine, but the prince begged his father to forgive her.

The king was touched by Kunala's compassion and released the young lady. However, in her own conscience, she was ashamed of herself and finally committed suicide. Because of her impure love, she had created trouble and hatred, hurt another person and destroyed herself. Was it all worth it? 

If love could be pure and calm, and nurture all creatures like clean water, it would be wonderful. I often say that we must guard our minds to bring the spirit of Great Love into full force. We must be careful not to let our minds become confused or filled with hatred. Above all, we must not let our minds become tainted with filthy desires.

* This article is extracted from the book "The Master Tells Stories".



The Essentials of Life Force Diet – Fermentation

We now know that the basic criterion of a life force diet is the presence of oxygen, water and minerals. Besides sprouting, which embraces all the three basic life force elements, fermentation is another important technique in offering life force in our daily diet.

Fermentation is a widely used process of catalysing the growth of naturally occurring, beneficial microbes (i.e., good bacteria/fungi), to serve as a means of preventing the growth of harmful germs in our food. For most people, it is just a traditional technique to preserve food for a longer shelf life.

However, from the perspectives of a life force diet, the benefits of fermentation are way beyond our imagination:

1. Pre-digested forms of nutrients in fermented foods bring about huge energy conservation

Very few people appreciate that every time we eat, our digestive tracks have to secrete a myriad of digestive enzymes in order to breakdown structurally complex food into small molecule nutrients. This process of digestion is highly energy consuming for our body, but we take it for granted!

In our diet, if there are constantly nutrients which are already pre-digested by beneficial microbes, we will be utilizing less energy to absorb more nutrients. The energy saved up could then be diverted into bodily repair, detoxification and overall vitality improvement.

2. Fermentation provides us with growth factors

Fermentation is a lively process. In order to sustain growth, the beneficial microbes in fermenting food would continuously secrete a lot of growth factors that support lives, including nutrients we are all too familiar with, namely,

Vitamin B complex, enzymes, Omega-3 fatty acids, and so on.

Hence, wellness, vitality and longevity are closely related to fermentation process which signifies vibrant growth. A diet deficient of fermented ingredients is hardly up to the mark.

3. Fermentation confers a good defence system

When the beneficial microbes enter our gastrointestinal track, they will naturally compete with any bad germs in there. These beneficial microbes may even suppress the bad germs, mitigating any hazards those bad germs may cause to our body.

Latest researches have also shown that the “by-products” of fermentation (for example, lactic acids, short-chain saturated fats and oligosaccharides) are able to improve detoxification in the liver, repair of the internal lining of the gastro-intestinal track, as well as, activating white blood cells, in turn uplifting our overall immune system.

There is a large variety of fermented foods. Basically throughout the globe, each region has its own fermentation tradition that its people are proud of, including Japanese miso, Korean kimchi, Indian curd, Chinese Liu-bao tea (六堡茶), Russian yoghurt, European rejuvelac, Indonesian tempeh and Malaysian tapai.

With the fermented foods above integrated into our daily diet, we shall live with abundance of life force and have a more concrete foundation of health! 🌿



Wong Kee Yew

- Lecturer and vegetarian nutrition consultant
- Vegetarian cooking instructor, Tzu Chi Continuing Education Centre

Mushroom Clear Soup (serves 3 - 4)

Ingredient A:

Wolfberries 50 g
 Red dates 15 pcs
 Astragalus roots 5 pcs

Ingredient B:

Sweet peas 6 pcs
 Baby corns 5 pcs
 Fresh shiitake mushrooms 4 pcs
 (cut each into 4)
 White beech mushrooms ½ packet
 Shimeji mushrooms ½ packet
 Fresh enokitake mushrooms ½ packet
 Carrot ½ pc

Seasonings:

Vegetarian G seasoning powder to taste
 Salt to taste
 Sesame oil a few drops
 Coriander a few leaves (chopped)

Preparation:

1. Bring 2 big bowls of water to boil. Add Ingredient A. Upon boiling, reduce to low heat and continue to cook for 20 to 25 minutes.
2. Add carrots and baby corns, cook for 2 minutes before adding the rest of Ingredient B. Then season with vegetarian G seasoning powder and salt. Turn heat on high and cook for another 2 minutes.
3. Add some sesame oil and sprinkle coriander leaves over the top before serving.



Tip: The broth can be made in advance and stored in the refrigerator for later use.

My Journey to Fight the Big C By Ng Sook Wai

After having a clear mammogram in December 2013, being diagnosed with breast cancer was the last thing I could imagine. However, a few months later, I found a lump in my left breast during my routine self-examination. I went to see a doctor for a biopsy, and in September 2014, my breast cancer was confirmed. I was very calm and did not cry when I was informed by the doctor of the diagnosis, as I had mentally prepared for the worst since the day I felt the lump.

Like most of the nervous, newly diagnosed cancer patients, I asked a few pursuing relevant questions including: “What is the stage of my cancer?”, “What type of treatment will do for me?” and “What are the expected benefits and side-effects of the treatment?” However, to my amazement and disappointment, the doctor could not answer my questions. Instead, he went out from the consultation room to discuss with his professor in another room. He only returned about 20 minutes later and told me differently that it was not a 100% certainty that it was breast cancer and hence, I needed to redo the biopsy. I was lost at that moment as I was already prepared to face the music right away and wanted to proceed with the appropriate treatments and diagnosis without further delay. With the two different sets of diagnosis within an hour, I had lost confidence in the doctors at that hospital.

Subsequently within a week, I went for a second and third opinion in two different hospitals, and in October 2014, it was confirmed that I had an aggressive type of breast cancer. A month later, I underwent two surgeries; firstly, mastectomy and reconstruction; secondly, a day after the first



Ng Sook Wai (right) was elected as one of the Sunshine Ambassadors.

surgery, another surgery was performed to clear the blood clots at my armpits.

The battle against Big C is definitely not easy as the patient’s life will be changed forever with eventful, traumatic experiences; and his/her entire life will be preoccupied with not only massive bodily pain, but also intense mental suffering.

Massive bodily pain is attributed to wound recovery or healing post-surgery, as well as, side-effects of medications and chemotherapy, which include nausea, headache, and so on. My worst experience was contracting dengue after my last chemotherapy, and that almost ended my life. However, for whatever strange reason, I felt a sense of inner peace despite all these difficult circumstances. I believe the unexpected calmness and peace was the result of my acceptance towards the worst. After all, all those that do not kill one, will make one stronger.

Mental suffering is worse than physical suffering as one is tormented by sadness, worries and fear. I was worried about my physical changes (e.g., baldness, body imperfection or

incompleteness due to mastectomy), uncertainty in the journey to recovery, my future, and death.

As I look back now, I am truly grateful for the Big C. It is the best gift of my life as it has changed my life's perspective. I no longer sweat over small stuff, and I have learnt to appreciate every moment of my life, and not to take life for granted. Everything happens for a reason and gives us a lesson to learn. Most of my life till then, I had been focusing on the material world led by my egoist mind.

Another lesson that I have learnt from my illness is that health is the most valuable asset in our life, and we need to take full charge and lead a healthy lifestyle before dramatic event hits us. Every one of us has to take care of our own health so that we will not become a burden to our family members and society. Everyone has his/her own life and it is simply not fair to have others sacrifice their life journey to take care of us when we fall sick.


I am determined to continue my life as normal. I do not want to lie on the bed to entertain the thought of death. I motivate myself to win the battle against cancer, and always find ways to live with the uncertainties in life. I told myself I had and still have to live my life in the best way I can for however long. I embrace positive thinking and that helps me a lot. Besides that, I am immensely grateful to my family members, relatives, friends and colleagues. Their love, care and support helped to get me through a very hard time in my life and make a rapid recovery. My sisters especially, have stood by me through the pain and joy. I am not alone to fight the battle and overcome the fear.

My life becomes more meaningful after I joined Tzu Chi's Cancer Support Group (CSG). I would like to thank my Oncologist, Dr Lim Yueh Ni, who introduced me to the Support Group; and Sister Mun Jen, who contacted me and brought me to this family in March 2015, when I was

undergoing my chemotherapy and really needed guidance, advice and support. I am also grateful to Brother Yaw Dong and Sister Kwai Chan, for aiding me with transportation to Tzu Chi's community centre in Kelana Jaya for the Support Group's monthly get-together.

I really appreciate the efforts of the healthcare team, including doctors, nutritionists, psychologists, and others, who give talks and share various information during the monthly get-together. Most cancer survivors are worried and fear of a cancer relapse. The information and sharing are important to us as they help reduce the risk of a relapse with preventive measures, to improve health and live happily.

At the CSG, I met new friends who are in the same predicament and have similar experiences. Their sharing on their cancer fighting journey helped me understand the illness better and subdue my fear. I feel blessed to have an incredible network of support from the cancer survivors, whom I met at the CSG. In addition to seeing one another once a month, we always chat, share and motivate one another in our mobile messaging group.

After being diagnosed with a life-threatening illness, I began to cherish my life even more, and it will never be as it was. Participating in the CSG activities has given me opportunities to do things that I had never done before. I have inspired some patients and cancer survivors by sharing my experiences in fighting the Big C, and visiting them to motivate and encourage them to believe that they would get through the ordeals. I also took the courage to be the Mandarin emcee during the CSG get-togethers. And now, I enjoy my life even more than before. Cancer does change my lifestyle, and I am proud to say that I am now leading a healthier, caring and grateful life. For that, I am thankful. 

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Buddhist Tzu-Chi Free Clinic (Klang)

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Da Ai Kindergarten (Melaka)

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Pontian

Tel: 607-687 1013

Kulal

Tel: 607-663 4809

Buddhist Tzu-Chi Dialysis Centre

(Penang) Tel: 604-229 7211 Fax: 604-229 7213

(Butterworth) Tel: 604-323 1013 Fax: 604-324 1013

Tzu Chi Kindergarten

(Penang) Tel: 604-226 7703 Fax: 604-229 5054

(Bayan Lepas) Tel: 604-643 8703

(Butterworth) Tel: 604-331 7703

(Nibong Tebal) Tel: 604-593 7703

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Kedah Branch

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Jitra

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Tzu Chi Kindergarten

(Kedah) Tel: 604-741 0121

(Alor Setar) Tel: 604-772 1113

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Kuala Lumpur

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Kuchai Lama

2-5, Jln Kuchai Maju Satu, Off Jln Kuchai Lama.

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Selangor

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Kajang

No 21-A, Jln Majlis Jaya 1, Tmn Majlis Jaya, Sungai Chua.

Sg Long

69-2, Jln SL 1/4, Bdr Sg Long.

Kota Kemuning

3rd Flr, Lot 28, Type C2, Blk 3, Kota Kemuning Business Park, Sinaran Satu, Persiaran Anggerik Vanilla.

Setia Alam

No 24-2-2A & 24-2-2B, Jln Setia Primary (B) U13/B, Setia Alam, Seksyen U13.

Batu Caves

No 6-2, Jln Dataran Selayang 1, Dataran Selayang.

Sungai Buloh

23-1, Pusat Komersial TSB, Jln Nautika A U20/A, Seksyen U20.

Rawang

No 63-B & 65-B, Jln Bandar Rawang 2.

Kelana Jaya

43-45C, 47-48C, 3rd Flr, Jln SS25/2, Tmn Bukit Emas.

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Roof Top, 55 & 56, Jln USJ 10/1F.

Puchong

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Tanjung Sepat

No 497, Lorong 2.

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Sekinchan

Lot 145/A, (1st & 2nd Flr), Jln Radin 2.

Taman Gembira, Klang

No 2548B, 2550B (1/2 unit) & 2552B, Persiaran Raja Muda Musa.

Taman Eng Ann

No 22, Galeri Empire, Jln Empayar, Off Persiaran Sultan Ibrahim / KU 1.

Banting

No 64A & 64B, Jln Emas 8, Bdr Sungai Emas.

Bandar Botanic

6-1 & 6-2, Jln Jasmin 1/KS6, Bdr Botanic.

Taman Sentosa, Klang

74, Jln Dato Dagang 24, Desa Idaman 2, Tmn Sentosa.

Pahang

Bentong

No P12-1 Pusat Perniagaan Mutiara GE, Jln MG 2, Jln Tras.

Melaka

Cheng

23-1, Jln Seri 5, Tmn Cheng Baru.

Malim

No 3, 2nd Flr, Jln MP16, Tmn Merdeka Permai, Bt Berendam.

Bacang

17-3, 3rd Flr, Jln Kesidang 3/11, Melaka Mall off Jln Tun Perak.

Bandar Melaka

No 394A (Lot 962), Tmn Sinn, Semabok.

Jasin

JB 2333 (1st Flr), Bdr Baru Jasin III.

Durian Tunggal

DT 4287, Jln Murai 3, Tmn Murai Jaya, Durian Tunggal.

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Segamat

No 29, Tkt Atas, Jln Putra 1/3, Bdr Putra Segamat.

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No 12, 1st Flr, Jln Maju Jaya, Tmn Maju Jaya, Labis.

Ulu Tiram

No 17, Jln Beladau 5, Tmn Puteri Wangsa.

Sabah

Penampang

Lot No. 5, 2nd Floor, WK Commercial Centre, Jalan Bundusan.

Sarawak

Bintulu

1st Flr, Jln Tun Ahmad Zaidi, Park City Commercial Square Ph3.

A Self-Sustaining Existence



Photograph provided by Tzu Chi Taiwan Headquarters

The Jing Si Dharma Lineage has always practised the doctrine of self-sustenance. The monastics do not accept offerings, and when Tzu Chi members stay at the Jing Si Abode, it is natural that they uphold the same philosophy by helping to take care of the daily living needs of others — this is an expression of pure Great Love.

In the early years of the Abode, the monastics would be busy with 21 types of handicrafts and Master Cheng Yen would personally engage in the same work as everyone else, be it sewing baby shoes, gloves or diapers. Today, though the Master is busy overseeing the development of Tzu Chi's missions, she has, nevertheless, maintained the same purity of thought and action.

In the past, there were only a few monastics cultivating three hectares of farm land. After Tzu Chi was established, the monastics had to additionally write for its monthly publication and keep a detailed account for every cent of charitable funds received. Though the journey has been a challenging one, relying on the strength of one's initial aspirations and the spirit of unselfish Great Love have brought the organization to where it is today.