

A Life of Quality and Value

Written by Master Cheng Yen
Friday, 25 April 2008 00:00

[Master's Teaching]



We should all learn to subdue ourselves and practice self-discipline by getting rid of bad habits and wasteful desires. If we try to find happiness by pampering ourselves extravagantly, we let our precious lives pass by in vain, and we even accumulate bad karma. Only when we live with simplicity and frugality will we be able to put minimum strain and impact on the environment and prevent disasters from happening. When we lead a frugal but diligent life and take every opportunity to help others, we set a good example for our children to follow and pass down the formula for happiness from generation to generation.

With Lunar New Year approaching in February, I am grateful for having led a peaceful life throughout the year. If we can be free of torments or disasters, we can pass our days quite comfortably. However, many people around the world weren't so fortunate in the past year when many countries were tormented with natural calamities. Torrential rains, hurricanes, droughts, and forest fires drove people from their homes or, worse, took people's lives. For those hit by catastrophes and living without food or shelter, a single day could feel like a torturous year that seemed to drag on without end.

Those natural disasters serve as Mother Earth's repeated warnings to human beings that she has been hurt badly. How can people repair the damage that they have inflicted on the planet? It can only be done with love.

Three years ago, a huge undersea earthquake centered off the west coast of Sumatra, Indonesia, triggered a series of devastating tsunamis. Hundreds and thousands of people living across 11 countries adjacent to the Indian Ocean perished within just a few minutes. Our volunteers at [Tzu Chi branch offices](#) in such countries as Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia rushed immediately to the disaster scenes to offer all necessary help. Tens of thousands of people in Sri Lanka also died in the tsunamis. Although Tzu Chi had no branch office or volunteers in that country at the time when the disaster hit, lots of our love went in soon afterwards.

Within 60 hours, Tzu Chi managed to mobilize many volunteers to transport emergency supplies and medical care to the disaster sites in Sri Lanka. Those relief missions would not have been possible without the efforts made by Tzu Chi volunteers and many kind-hearted people, including Taiwanese businessmen working in Sri Lanka, people who donated money or goods, physicians and other medical personnel at Tzu Chi hospitals, members of the Tzu Chi International Medical Association, and people who helped transport goods and medical supplies to the survivors. In sum, it was a great mission made possible only by a lot of teamwork.

No sooner had the volunteers settled the victims in temporary quarters than they began initiating a plan for constructing permanent homes for them. The Tzu Chi Great Love Village in Sri Lanka opened in 2007. More than 600 tsunami-displaced families moved into their new homes. Tzu Chi National School, built within the compound of the village, was opened in

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January 2008.

Over the last three years, Tzu Chi people have kept their promise to accompany the survivors through the hardest times of their lives. Emerging from the wilderness, a vibrant, well-organized new community has been created. It is a great delight to see flowers blooming in each family yard and animals roaming about the community lake and beyond.



During the planning and construction of the community and school, several Tzu Chi construction commissioners such as Lin Zhong-chi (林宗奇) and Wang Ming-de (王明德) made numerous trips back and forth between Taiwan and Sri Lanka to ensure the quality of the project. These commissioners mindfully took all the prospective residents' needs into consideration when inspecting the quality of the construction as if they were building the community and school for themselves.

Donations made or solicited by Tzu Chi volunteers throughout the world made our aid to Sri Lanka possible. Every penny of the donations has been used to help the residents of the Great Love Village settle down both physically and mentally, make their lives stable in good-quality houses, and provide their children with a school where they can study. I believe this act of Great Love--giving while asking for nothing in return--will take root in this piece of land and will be passed on from generation to generation.

A small seed of goodness and compassion, when pooled together with many others, will generate a force powerful enough to benefit numerous needy people. I do hope all of you can help scatter seeds of love all around the globe. The world can still be full of hope if we can motivate more people to improve our world.

Life can be reset just as garbage can be recycled. We can regain happiness by getting rid of worries, and we can cultivate a sense of goodness by eliminating our bad habits.

Earlier this year, Naples, Italy, faced a major public health crisis. All their garbage piled up in the streets because people had nowhere to throw it away. Trash collection ceased in December 2007 as all the city's landfills were full. The government prepared to reopen some dump sites that had been closed for many years. This of course provoked strong protests from residents who lived close to those sites. Police attempted to stop people from dumping and even burning rubbish on the streets. This again induced violent confrontations.

Garbage disposal has become a difficult problem to deal with in many places indeed. Fortunately, Taiwan has many recycling volunteers. They carefully sort out garbage and reclaim resources. In this way, they succeed in reducing the quantity of disposed items and keeping communities clean. Manufacturing goods from recycled materials also effectively reduces the consumption of the earth's resources.

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