

All in Our Hearts

Written by Master Cheng Yen
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[Master's Teaching]

One will be truly happy and at ease if one is contented and has no expectation. We should live in a moderate manner and avoid losing ourselves in the pursuit of material things.

The lifestyle of people today is getting really extravagant. They can travel or fly miles away to look for delicacies. Apparently, there was a restaurant offering a delicacy wrapped in gold foil that was said to be very delicious and healthy. Even at NT\$200,000 (RM21,400), this offer had attracted overwhelming response, and the customers had to book their orders ahead. Aren't they trying to show off their wealth in this manner? Sad to say, they did not know that they were indeed wasting their blessings in doing so.

What one actually needs is quite basic, like a bed of 6.5ft long x 3ft wide. But then, there are beds of all shapes and sizes, plus various designs and quality in the market. In fact, there is a bath tub priced at NT\$2million. I asked, "So expensive! Is there any buyer?"

The boss replied, "I sell because there is a demand for it, and it is still not the most expensive."

I thought to myself that there are many poor families who would have been quite satisfied with only NT\$30-50,000 to enable them to have a shelter over their heads.

In addition to their pursuit for fame and status, some also indulge in all kinds of enjoyment. Will they be satisfied with all these entertainment? Surely not.

In the past, going to outer space was a dream, but now it is a reality. So some rich tycoons spent billions for a journey to outer space. There were some who would put on expensive jewelleries just to show off their wealth. Is it worthwhile spending so much for such a trip; or, will one be happy wearing all the jewelleries? I wonder.

Recently I came across these two news reports. One was an overseas fashion show where a model was wearing a glittering dress worth millions of pounds. Why is it so expensive? It is because the dress and shoes came with precious gem stones! The other was a report by UN humanitarian organizations which stated that about 800 million people are in famine. It is really sad to see such a great contrast!

According to the report, in every four seconds, a child dies of starvation in this world. In the last two years, because of adverse weather conditions, there has been a severe drought in East Africa that could possibly cause 10 million people to die of starvation. More than US\$50 billions are needed to help the victims of famine, but there are more problems to be faced in the soliciting process.

One will be truly happy and at ease if one is contented and has no expectation. We should not be obsessed with material things but instead be moderate in everything that we need. We

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should lead a simple lifestyle, and when turning on the tap, there should not be a gushing flow of water as that is too wasteful. Always remind ourselves of the situation as if there is no water supply and we need to conserve every bit of resources.

Once the philosophy of Voluntary Simplicity becomes popular in Japan, one will be encouraged to lead a simple and frugal living, and cultivate a clear and carefree mind. We should translate this philosophy and put it into practice in our daily life.

Simple and frugal living does not mean living in poverty. The one with money may not be considered rich. When he/she is obsessed with material things, he/she will create a lot of rubbish and pollute the environment. The money thus spent is considered useless. We should choose to be a useful person, a person who can choose to lead a simple and frugal lifestyle and actively participate in work that benefits others and society. Then he/she will have a higher level of mentality.

Having understood the meaning of Voluntary Simplicity, one must endeavor to put it into practice. It is never too difficult so long as there is conviction. In fact, there was a Dharma story that goes like this: Once there was a king and he wanted to look for someone who is not easily swayed by external temptations. He asked his minister, "Where can I find someone who is not easily influenced by external elements?"

A learned minister replied, "Your highness, we can test it out on a convict sentenced to death."

The king asked, "How to test?"

The minister found a convict and told him that if he could walk a distance with a bowl filled with oil without spilling a drop of it, his life would be spared. Pretty girls were asked to sing and dance along the way. This convict was already regretful for his wrongdoing. So when given the only chance to gain back his life, he walked very mindfully and completed the journey without spilling a single drop of oil.

The king exclaimed, "You are fantastic, with so many pretty dancers and singers dancing and singing along the way and you're not distracted. You mean you never heard or saw anything?"

He replied, "I didn't see or hear anything."

The king asked, "Why?"

He said, "I could only hear my heartbeats, and I concentrated totally on how to avoid spilling the oil as this is my only chance of survival."

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For the sake of his life, a convict sentenced to death was not at all influenced by external elements. We must take care of our wisdom-life and be very focused and single-minded in taking care of the Earth and not be influenced by others and external temptations.

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We should lead a simple and carefree life. Let us try to simplify matters and focus on spiritual cultivation and character building; we will then be free from desires and gossips.

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