

The Beauty of Ethics

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
Tuesday, 02 February 2010 00:00



Ethics is what guides one's conduct. One who is well-mannered understands proper ethics and morals and leads a life of supreme truth, goodness and beauty.

In Buddhism, sentient beings refer to all things with feeling. Human beings differ from animals in that humans know to observe propriety and to cultivate good manners. They are able to display civility through their body language. For example, one can extend goodwill to another by giving a smile.

When people interact with each other, one is a mirror of the other. When you smile, I smile back; when you express kindness, I likewise respond with kindness. If everyone values good manners, no one will be treated discourteously.

Good manners start with a good education. In Thailand, where the majority of the population is Buddhist, good moral principles have been preserved from ancient times. Schools, I believe, have a duty to help preserve and propagate these ethical guidelines. The Tzu Chi School in Chiang Mai, northern Thailand, is a good example. The school puts a great deal of emphasis on teaching ethics and good manners.

From the footage taken of the school, we saw how well-educated the students are and how polite they are toward their teachers. Students bow to their teachers whenever they meet. If a teacher is seated, the students kneel down to show their respect.

The students do not use impolite or vulgar words when they talk. They pay attention to their tone and manner of speech and refrain from slurring their words. The education they receive at the school has taught them to show good character in their everyday life.

In a typical Buddhist family in Thailand, family members offer their respect daily to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha [the assembly of monks and nuns]. They also meditate for at least 5 minutes before they retire for the day, using the opportunity to reflect on their behavior and on what they have done for the day. They ask themselves if they have done anything wrong in speech or deed, if they have displayed any improper manners when dealing with others, and if they have taken good care of themselves both physically and spiritually.

The education one receives at home is just as important as that received at school. Parents should reflect on their own behavior and make sure that they are setting a good example for their children. If the parents can set a good example, their children will follow and display proper manners. Such children will show respect and gratitude for their parents and teachers. Harmony will surely reign in the family in which both parents and children uphold good moral and behavioral principles.

The beauty of ethics is fading in modern society. If we don't start instilling in the public the importance of good ethics, we will run the risk of having them completely disappear. To

The Beauty of Ethics

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
Tuesday, 02 February 2010 00:00

reestablish good ethics is a challenging task, but we must persevere to overcome all difficulties. Good moral and ethical principles are keys to a blissful life. One who is impolite or has no ethics is sure to be one whose character is in question. On the contrary, one who is well-mannered and always follows moral principles is sure to have a good character and be liked and respected by all.

The value of life lies in possessing a sincere, loving heart. People who can love themselves, lead an ordered life, and behave civilly and politely are acting with love toward themselves and others.

In sum, I hope that truth, kindness, and beauty abound in our human world. I hope that our society will be filled with civil, gracious people who embrace good ethics.

*Extract from the Master's teachings at 02/25/2008
Source: Singapore Tzu Chi World Journal