

慈濟基金會 2015 年靜思語英語朗讀選文

【國小中年級組】

4-1 :Excerpt from Article ***“Benevolence Towards Material Goods”*** from the book *“Three Ways to the Pure Land”*

We should regard benevolence as a duty. We should nurture love in our daily lives and offer it to all living beings. We must also respect the lives of all living things, even nature itself. The very Earth we live on needs to be healthy and to breathe, just like any living creature. It breathes through trees, which filter out impurities from the air and provide fresh oxygen for us. Thus, we must take good care of our Earth and trees and maintain the health of all nature for our own well-being.

Recently, I read a wonderful true story about the “resurrection” of the nature. There was a farmer, a good Buddhist, who was quite perplexed because insects were destroying his crops. Furthermore, he was afraid that if the insects invaded surrounding farms, his neighbors would complain. He decided to use chemical pesticides and fertilizers to solve his problems. The result was that the land became completely burned out and lifeless, and the farmer’s investments were all ruined.

His Buddhist dharma master told him, “You must firmly uphold the ideal of not killing in order to change your karma.” Thereafter, whenever the farmer became furious with insects eating his crops, the master’s words would ring in his ears and he would slowly calm down. He sprinkled Compassion Water [created by reciting the mantra of the Great Compassion Bodhisattva seven times over a container of water, which then has the power of the mantra and can be used for any purpose] on his field. He also tried to treat the insects with equanimity and love, and he even prayed for them. As his animosity towards the insects gradually disappeared, his problems with them decreased and his crops actually improved.

Only half a year later, life returned to the land. First there were aphids, then came ladybugs, ants and spiders, and finally cuckoos, sparrows and grackles also appeared. Frogs croaked, insects buzzed, and flowers and vegetables gave off their fragrance. The life signs of nature finally reappeared on this land.

All these transformations allowed this farmer to have more confidence in Buddhism, and he respected his master’s compassion even more. Furthermore, neighboring farmers were encouraged to practice organic farming as well. Everything in this world has its life and abilities. That is why we must cherish every flower, plant and tree.

Besides living creatures, we should also cherish material goods, including the daily necessities around us. If we care, we will treat them gently and extend their “life spans.” For example, the doors in any public place tend to fall apart very quickly because no one cares about them. If we can focus our thoughts on what we are doing and open or close doors gently, we can maintain their usefulness.

To sum up, in our daily lives, we must learn to treat people, animals and things with love and benevolence.

4-2 : Excerpt from Article ***“Kindness, compassion, joy and giving”*** from the *“Three Ways to the Pure Land”*

Human minds are very complex. Some people are kind, and some are evil.

The third component, doing all that works for the good of all living beings, helps to guide human habits and thoughts towards one common goal: stopping evil, doing good deeds, and transforming confusion into wisdom.

For instance, the Tzu Chi Foundation is able to gather the minds of its members together to work for one common goal: for Buddhism and for all living creatures. This is also an example of doing all that works for the good of all living beings.

There are four ways to work for the good of all living beings: kindness, compassion, joy and unselfish giving.

Kindness means providing happiness, utilizing one's love and wisdom to bring joy to all living creatures.

There is a saying: "To give is more blessed than to receive." There is also another saying: "Helping others is the source of happiness." We can truly sense deep and everlasting joy only when we contribute our talents and abilities to the service of all people. Not only do we have to eliminate their physical pains to make them healthy and joyful, we must also activate their compassionate love so that they can live happily and peacefully.

Compassion means relieving all living creatures from their suffering. Without compassion, we feel indifferent to other people's illness, hunger or poverty. This kind of ignorant attitude towards other living beings is rather cruel. We should treat all living beings with compassion.

Compassion also means relief: helping people with what they need. Thus, the name of our foundation, "Compassion Relief" [the literal translation of "Tzu Chi"], also means providing happiness, eliminating pain and compassionately supplying what people need. If they need goods, we give them goods; if they are spiritually empty, we activate their love. On the surface we appear to be creating good fortune for them, but in reality we are activating our own wisdom through doing these deeds. Thus, "Tzu" means cultivating wisdom and "Chi" means cultivating blessings. When these two go together, Tzu Chi people cultivate both wisdom and blessings. Hence, kindness and compassion are the foundation of Tzu Chi, and Tzu Chi people cultivate blessings and wisdom and apply compassion and wisdom.

The Buddha told us that human life is impermanent. If we can help other people now, we must do it now. We cannot wait until next year, or until our current responsibilities to our homes or businesses have been taken care of. By the time our responsibilities are over, our lives may also be approaching the end. Although we may live peacefully now, do we know what will happen in the next few minutes?

In sum, we must do good deeds and carry out spiritual cultivation now. If we have compassion towards all living beings, we won't waste time on anything meaningless, but will instead get actively involved with charity work. We can thus accumulate more and more blessings.

4-3 : Excerpt from Article "***A Snake Saves Lives***" from the book "*The Master Tells Stories*"

In the early years of the Chinese Republic, there was a monk named Miao Lien who lived in the Tzuyun Temple on Changchounan Mountain, Fukien Province. At eighty years of age, he was still quite healthy. He often preached to the local people about compassion, the Buddhist law of cause and effect, and the prohibition against killing.

Master Miao Lien walked on the mountain every morning, rain or shine. One day, he saw a six-foot snake. Its head and tail were bleeding and the snake was dying.

The master compassionately decided to heal the snake. He brought over some herbs, ground them and spread them on the snake's head and tail. He then went back to the temple. When he went back to see the snake the next day, it was gone.

Half a month later, the monk was preaching when a snake suddenly crawled into the temple. Although the people were frightened, no one harmed it. The monk saw that it was the same snake he had saved before, so he said to the crowd, "There's no need to fear, just let it come in."

The snake's wounds were healed. It crawled to the monk, curled itself up and raised its head, looking at the master with gratitude.

The snake seemed to understand the sermon. When it was over, it crawled out. After that, whenever there was a service in the temple, the snake would come to listen to the old monk preach. When the monk talked about the prohibition against killing, the snake seemed to understand.

One year, an epidemic suddenly spread through the area. The symptoms were thirst and high fever. All medicines were useless and many people died. No one knew what to do. Master Miao Lien and his disciples visited many sick people, but they couldn't cure them either. Heartsick and frightened, the people could only watch each other die.

One day, the snake brought some herbs to the monk. It raised its head and looked at him, as if it wanted to say something. The monk examined the herbs and discovered that all of them were for reducing fever. He gave them to the sick, and when the sick boiled the herbs and drank the soup, they were cured.

The monk then collected the same kinds of herbs and ground and dried them. The product became the famous Changchou "Mon Medicine," which saved a great number of people.

Master Miao Lien loved and cared for all living beings, not only human beings, but even insects, fish, birds and animals. Because he compassionately saved that snake and moved its heart, "Monk Medicine" was created and saved many lives.

All creatures have Buddha-nature and great love. The snake was a good example. I hope that everyone can love and care for all living beings, and not just human beings. We must respect even the tiniest creatures, such as ants.

Compassionately caring for all life will bring good fortune. When you kill or harm any creature, suffering will certainly result.

4-4 : Excerpt from Article "**Great Love is the Best Remedy**" from the Tzu Chi Medical Care Magazine Vol.14 Aug. 2012 at <http://www.tzuchi.com.tw/file/tcmed/201208-14e/4.pdf>

In the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings, it says, "A Great Healer diagnoses diseases accurately, discerns the properties of medicines, and prescribes medicines to treat the ailment."

Doctors serving in the Tzu Chi Hospitals not only have excellent skills, but also have kindness that echoes with Buddha's compassion. With their wisdom and selfless great love, they treat patients like their family members and cure people of their sickness.

One good example is a 17-year-old patient of a single-parent family with financial hardships.

Since he was eight, he started having blurred vision because of diabetes. At age 14, he was completely blind. Because of the disease, he became temperamental and increasingly seclusive. When he visited Taipei Tzu Chi General Hospital last year, he was still very rebellious and had suicidal thoughts.

Our medical team understood his physical and psychological pain. So not only did the doctors look after him very carefully, some nurses even accompanied him after their shifts. He gradually realizes that there are still people who love and care about him.

The doctor-in-charge cared about this young man. No matter how busy the doctor was, he would find time to teach the teenager to self-administer insulin at home. If the doctor was not available, the doctor's own brother would show up along with other volunteers for his home visit. Their effort pays off as the young man finally opens himself up.

The doctor said to him, "I can control your blood sugar, but you must work with me to go through the urinary catheterization treatment."

Having developed a genuine patient-doctor trust, the young patient accepted the treatment plan. His diabetes was gradually under control. With Tzu Chi volunteers' frequent visits and encouragement, he realizes the adversities, and hardship on his mother. Now he helps his mother, who suffers from a tailbone injury, to carry heavy things. He also volunteers at the Tzu Chi recycling center. All of these changes can be attributed to our medical team's mindful and loving companionship, and their willingness to listen.

The Great Healer's medical skills, loving heart, and humanistic practice can also be passed down from generation to generation. I am glad to see senior doctors in Dalin Tzu Chi General Hospital teaching young doctors their clinical skills as well as their loving attitude without reservation. Reciprocally, the young doctors also diligently practice what they have learned with respect and gratitude.

Now, Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital has gone through 25 years of operation and Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital is celebrating its 11th year. The newest patients building at Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital is also in completion. What has not changed is the intimate relationship of all six Tzu Chi Hospitals working closely as one family, and the mission of all medical personnel safeguarding people's lives, health, and love.

4-5 : Excerpt from Article ***“Awareness of Karmic Affinities”*** from *“The Power of the Heart”*

There is a story about the Buddha, his disciple Ananda, and a poor woman that illustrates the power of karmic affinities. When the Buddha came into her village, the impoverished woman could not stand the sight of the Buddha. Immediately upon seeing him, she disliked him and could not take in any of his teachings. When the woman saw Ananda, however, she liked him very much and was drawn to him. When he shared the Buddha’s teachings with her, she was very happy to listen and found the teachings to be quite beneficial.

The situation was due to the karmic affinities the three had formed in a former life. In that life, the woman had lost her child and was consumed by grief. A spiritual cultivator passing her by on the side of the road saw her crying and stopped to ask why she was. But after learning that her tears were over the death of her child, he stoically explained that there was no need to grieve, for death was but a natural law of life.

His detached manner and direct words felt very harsh and cold to her, making her feel angry and hurt. Later, another cultivator happened along the same road and likewise stopped to ask the reason for her tears. Upon learning of her child’s death, this cultivator compassionately comforted her while sharing with her the Buddhist perspective on life and death. The first cultivator was Shakyamuni Buddha in that life; the second was Ananda. Because of the karmic affinities they had formed in that interaction, in this lifetime, the woman disliked the Buddha on sight, despite his being a Buddha.

Such is the impact of karmic affinities.

The making of karmic affinities has much to do with our attitude and behavior. The tiniest of comments or a moment’s harshness in tone could mean the forming of negative karmic affinities. Therefore, we need to be very mindful and aware in our daily life.

We must also understand that the good and bad feelings we have toward people in our lives are in fact due to the karmic affinities formed in past lives. The karmic affinities color our perception of them as good or bad people. If we can realize this, then even though we may feel a strong dislike toward someone, we can start to change our perception of them and become successful in overcoming our negative feelings.

Then we can begin to transform the karmic affinities between us—for at every moment, we in fact have the chance to create new karmic affinities with people.

But, if we continued to hold on to the belief that the other person is truly a bad person and refuse to consider that our perception is influenced by karmic affinities, we will just continue to perpetuate the negative karmic affinities.

If we can truly understand the existence and impact of karmic affinities, we can transform our relationships with others. This is the kind of mindful practice we should do in our daily life.