

慈濟基金會 2015 年靜思語英語朗讀選文

【國中組】

6-1 : Excerpt from Article *"The Young Pleasing the Old, Many Generations under One Roof"*
"from the book "The Essence of Filial Piety"

"The most beautiful things in heaven are the stars; the most beautiful thing on Earth is affection." How wonderful it is when grandparents, parents, and children live together in harmony under one roof, abiding by family ethics as the young respect the old!

Modern society is mainly made up of nuclear families, but I think we should revert to the wonderful tradition of large families. I often advise people to live with their elders, whether it is three, four, or even five generations living together. We can appreciate life's fullness even more when we enjoy the happiness of a large family.

In addition, "having an elder in the home is like having a treasure in the family." When a young couple leaves home for work, they must put their children into a nursery or hire a nanny, which adds to their financial burden. If there are elders at home, not only can they help take care of their grandchildren, they can also pass on a lot of valuable life experiences. Elders are like a treasury of wisdom, an encyclopedia of life. If we can revert to the traditional family structure of several generations living together, then elders can enjoy playing with their grandchildren, and children can enjoy the dotting of their grandparents. The ethics of filial piety will be passed down from generation to generation through everyday living.

After the devastating Eastern China flood of 1991, Tzu Chi entered China for the first time and built a Tzu Chi village for the victims in Guandu Village in Quanjiao County, Anhui Province. Since then, these villagers have always been on our mind. Once, during a visit to the village, we noticed that one household had a shiny brass plate on their door which identified the residents as a "model family."

In this family of three generations, the daughter-in-law managed the home diligently and frugally; she was filial in every way. After cooking each meal, she would first feed her mother-in-law, who had earlier suffered a stroke. She even took her elderly mother-in-law for a walk every day as a form of physical therapy. She would tie a cloth strap to her mother-in-law with one hand while pulling on the cloth strap with the other to help her step forward.

This family was impoverished, but the husband and wife were both responsible parents. They worked in the field during the day and supplemented their income with odd jobs at night. No matter how hard they had to work, they were determined to send their children to school.

Not wanting her parents to work so hard, their oldest daughter thought about quitting school, even though her grades were excellent, so that she could work to help out her family. However, her parents always insisted that their children have proper schooling. They believed, "No matter how poor you are, you can never skip on education; no matter how hard life is, you can never make your children suffer." They believed that they must toil on the farm for their whole life precisely because they never attended school. Therefore, they were adamant that their children not labor as they had. Thankfully, with Tzu Chi's aid, their three children were able to attend primary and secondary schools.

Their youngest daughter decided to study medicine after secondary school. Since her grandmother was in poor health and her parents getting on in years, she hoped that by studying medicine she could take care of her own elders and also save lives. This family has admirable children because they have aspirations and they strive to become better people. Modern families like these exhibit the traditional virtue of filial piety. Not only are they living happily in harmony, they are filial examples to others.

6-2 : Excerpt from Article ***"Developing a Heart of Equality"*** from Global Tzu Chi Website

http://tw.tzuchi.org/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1114%3Adeveloping-a-heart-of-equality&catid=115%3Aspiritual-practice&Itemid=323&lang=en

With Tzu Chi volunteers in over 50 countries, when disasters happen locally, volunteers nearby will mobilize to bring aid and comfort to people in need. It was through such disaster relief distributions by Tzu Chi volunteers that a local government official came to know more about Tzu Chi. Touched and inspired by the spirit of selfless love that he witnessed in Tzu Chi volunteers and in the work they do, and though neither Asian nor Buddhist, this official expressed to Dharma Master Cheng Yen his wish to become her disciple. Accepting him, the Master took time to explain the following concepts to him so that as a disciple, he would have the right view toward religion and walk on the right path when he returned to his country:

“The truth is that all human beings, no matter their race or religion, are in essence equal. Religion, in fact, is about the true principles of life. When a religion offers a correct teaching of these principles, by following the teachings, people will be able to do a lot of good and benefit all humankind. But, some people, speaking in the name of religion, use it to establish a sense of supremacy or superiority. True, authentic religions always hope people can understand that all human beings are inherently equal and possess the same true nature. They will teach people that they too are capable of achieving the kind of unsurpassed wisdom that the most exalted sage or holy person has achieved—in other words, each and every one of us has the same capacity to become a Buddha, an ‘Enlightened One’.”

“The potential for enlightenment is just the same in all of us, it is only that our hearts have fallen away from what is true and right. Once our minds deviate from that right direction, our thinking and intentions start becoming complicated and we will wish to exert our will over others. That’s how the struggle for power starts, and this engenders conflict, strife, and oppression, creating violent unrest, crisis, and human misery.”

“It all started with us human beings being self-centered and selfish. So, we want things to be under our control. Our material desires are also endless. With everyone pursuing his or her self-gain, a huge disparity between rich and poor results, leading to great inequality, tension, and struggle. All this came about because our heart and mind fell away from what is true and right.”

The Master also instructed:

“We need to respect all people and give unselfishly with love for all—this is ‘Great Love’. We must care for people with genuine love, and truly do it without any self-interests. Our motives must be unselfish. This is what the Buddha teaches us. The Buddha also teaches us that he isn’t the only person that can attain enlightened understanding of all truths. He says that he is no supreme being

but is the same as us: he and all human beings in the world are equal. Like him, we can all become enlightened and become an 'Enlightened One' or Buddha."

"As all people are inherently equal, we need to respect each and every person. We also need to be grateful to every person, because it is only with every person's support and contribution that we have the means to do good deeds that can help people. So, we need to learn to have gratitude and respect for everyone."

"Recognizing the inherent equality of all living beings, and having gratitude, love, and respect for each and every person—these are core values in Buddhism, and very important teachings to practice."

Receiving this teaching with joy, the official thanked the Master and vowed to spread the spirit of Great Love when he returned to his country.

6-3 : Excerpt from Article "***Being Grateful and Repaying Kindness***" from the book "*The Essence of Filial Piety*"

Filial Piety is making your parents happy and at ease. If we can make good use of the bodies that our parents gave us to make contributions to society and humanity, this is the greatest act of filial piety.

There is a Mr. Chen on Jibei Island in Penghu. His life has been a difficult journey. His three brothers passed away one after another, his elderly father suffered a stroke, and his mother has mobility problems. Because he himself suffers from muscular dystrophy, his hands and feet are weak and he has difficulty walking. But he does not let himself be defeated by fate. He earns a livelihood for his family and takes care of his parents.

Despite the difficulties in caring for his family, Mr. Chen carefully calculated that he could save NT\$10 each day from the cost of their three meals and contribute NY\$300 (about US\$10) each month to help others. He says, "Even though I'm poor, we still have food to eat. In other countries there are people who have to search through the trash just to find something to eat!"

Several years ago, after a Tzu Chi commissioner brought the recycling concept to Penghu, Mr. Chen saw that the environment in Jibei was much cleaner after Tzu Chi volunteers had initiated recycling there. He realized that environmental protection is in essence to love and protect the earth. Therefore, he took action and devoted himself to recycling, too.

In 2008, it was discovered that Mr. Chen had a nasopharyngeal carcinoma, but he remained broad-hearted, peaceful, and at ease. Even though his body suffered, he still enjoyed being filial and doing good deeds. He seized every moment and vowed to work every day he was still alive. This is what it means to be spiritually rich though materially poor.

Many years ago, there was a mother and son whose conduct was greatly admirable. Early one morning as I walked into the Great Hall, I saw a taxi pulling into Jing Si Abode. A middle-aged man got out of the taxi and very politely asked, "Is this the Jing Si Abode?" When he was told that it was, he very considerately helped his mother out of the taxi. It turned out that they had come to the

Abode because they wanted to arrange to donate their remains to be used for research at Tzu Chi College of Medicine.

The mother and son had read a report about body donation in an issue of Tzu Chi Monthly; they felt that it would be a shame to cremate or bury their bodies and that it would be more worthwhile if they could donate them to a medical school to be used for dissection research. So, the son suggested to his mother that they sign an agreement to donate their bodies. Hearing this, the mother was very moved, and they came together to the Jing Si Abode.

The old lady told me that no matter what her aspiration, her son would always help her achieve it. He also frequently told her, "Mother, the money I give you is for you to give away as charity. Only when you have given it away is it truly yours." The mother and son quietly gave for Tzu Chi. Though they had never been to Jing Si Abode, they had been earnestly supportive.

A heart of great filial piety is a heart of Great Love. Carrying out filial piety is not just caring for your mother and father but loving and respecting the older generation all across the world as if they were your own parents. The Buddha says that all people are future Buddhas, so we should see all our elders as Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

6-4 : Excerpt from Article ***"Cleansing Our Inner Hearts"*** from the book *"The Power of the Heart"*

In life, we often make mistakes. By not being honest about our mistakes, we continue to act in the same way—repeating our mistakes, reinforcing our unwholesome tendencies, and accumulating ever more impurities in our hearts.

Our hearts are like a glass bottle containing dirty water. To clean a bottle, we have to pour out the dirty water first. To cleanse our hearts, we need to repent the wrongs we have done, internally and through action. We can do this by expressing sincere remorse to the people we have hurt.

A glass bottle, once cleaned, can be used to store pure water. In the same way, after repenting and cleansing, our hearts can now take in the Dharma, the teachings the Buddha gave. These teachings, based on the Buddha's insights into universal truths, enlighten us and help us rediscover our innate wisdom and goodness. By eliminating the impurities inside us and replacing them with Dharma, we become a better person.

There is a story about Shakyamuni Buddha teaching this to his disciple, Rahula. Rahula was the Buddha's son, whom the Buddha had brought to the monastic community to become a novice. One of the Buddha's foremost disciples, Shariputra, was put in charge of teaching the young boy.

Little Rahula lived with the monks and learned the Buddha's teachings, but he was very naughty. When people came to the monastery to see the Buddha and asked him if the Buddha was available, he would give them the wrong answer. When the Buddha was at the monastery, he would tell people that the Buddha was away. When the Buddha was away, he would tell them they could find the Buddha in the monastery. It amused him to see people going to the monastery, only to find out the Buddha was not there. He had no real malicious intentions. He was just being naughty and thought it all great fun.

As the other monks learned about this, they tried to tell Rahula what he was doing was wrong. They asked him to stop, but being naughty, Rahula continued nonetheless. The other monks cared about him and were concerned that if he continued this habit of lying to people, it would become very problematic when he grew up. So, they told the Buddha.

Learning of this, the Buddha called Rahula to him. At the time, the Buddha had just returned to the monastery, so he told the boy to bring him a basin of water to wash his feet.

After washing his feet in the basin, the Buddha asked him, “Rahula, is the water in the basin drinkable?”

Rahula replied, “No, this water is dirty and isn’t drinkable.”

The Buddha then told Rahula to pour out the dirty water and bring him the empty basin. When Rahula did so, the Buddha suddenly kicked the basin, overturning it. Startled, Rahula became scared that he had done something wrong. The Buddha then told the boy to pour water into the basin. “But the basin is overturned. I cannot pour water in unless I turn it over,” he said.

“You, Rahula, are like this overturned basin,” said the Buddha. “You started out with a pure and clean heart, like the clean water in the basin. But why do you like to lie to people? When you tell lies, your heart becomes tainted and dirty, like the dirty water. For the basin to hold clean water again, you have to turn it over and clean it. You need to deeply repent, Rahula. Do you understand?”

Hearing this, Rahula lowered his head and reflected upon his behavior. He realized how wrongly he had acted, and from then on, changed his ways.

In spiritual cultivation, we need to do the same. When we open our hearts to repent and change, we can clean out the impurities within and become a better person.

6-5 : Excerpt from Article ***“Freeing Ourselves from Habitual Tendencies”*** from the book, *“The Power of the Heart”*

While major mistakes may make us reflect and repent, we often don’t pay much attention to our habitual tendencies; the more subtle ones even escape our notice. In fact, we may even think of all these as “just the way we are”. Spiritual cultivation is about eliminating unwholesome tendencies.

In his day, Shakyamuni Buddha also had disciples with unwholesome habitual tendencies which caused them to lose sight of spiritual practice. One such disciple was Sundarananda, the Buddha’s half-brother.

Before Sundarananda became a monk, he was a prince and enjoyed a life of pleasure and comfort. His was an indulged existence, full of beautiful women, material luxuries, and worldly amusements.

After the Buddha attained enlightenment, he wished to share universal truths with his kinsmen, so that they would not continue to live blindly in pursuit of transient pleasures. He went back to his kingdom to expound the Dharma, and many members of the royal family decided to join his monastic order. One of them was Sundarananda.

Though Sundarananda left the royal life to follow the Buddha in spiritual practice, the change in lifestyle did not bring an immediate change in mentality. Due to his royal background, he felt himself superior to others and this arrogance was a habit he continued to have as a monk. Also, accustomed to a life of luxury and comfort, he still preferred fine things even after becoming a monk. While other monks wore robes patched together from coarse cloth, Sundarananda wore fine robes of quality fabric. His alms bowl was a very elegant one, and when going out for alms, he enjoyed being noticed among the other monks. He would proudly tell people he met that he was the Buddha's half-brother.

As this was not the way a monk should conduct himself, the other monks told the Buddha about Sundarananda's behavior. When the Buddha learned of this, he called Sundarananda to him and asked him if he truly behaved as the other monks described. Sundarananda admitted as much.

The Buddha told Sundarananda, "Now that you are a monk, you should not behave so. You are still caught in your arrogance and attachment to material desires. This is not the way of spiritual cultivation. Practice by wearing a patched robe like the other monks. When going for alms, go to the houses of the poor. You take pride in being my half-brother; so you ought to practice even more diligently than others."

The Buddha then instructed Sundarananda to practice by meditating on the reality that whether rich or poor, all people die one day. Buried in a graveyard, the body eventually becomes nothing but a pile of bones. The Buddha wanted him to contemplate this and realize that he would eventually die like all other people. If Sundarananda could let go of the illusion that he was above others, he could overcome his arrogance.

Sundarananda took the Buddha's words to heart and began to practice in this way, leaving the monastery to cultivate on his own.

Sometime later, Sundarananda returned to the Buddha. Wearing a patched robe, his entire demeanor had completely changed. During his time away from the monastery, Sundarananda had diligently practiced day and night, working on his heart and mind. When he ate, he controlled his mind and did it moderately, without being picky about his food. He reined in his mind like this for all his senses, focusing on spiritual cultivation. Practicing in this way, his heart and mind gradually became more and more pure. Over time, Sundarananda completely overcame his desire and arrogance.

With such perseverance of practice, Sundarananda became the most spiritually enlightened among the monks who had come from a privileged background. Though his life as a prince had caused him to develop arrogance and desire for material pleasures, after practicing as the Buddha taught, he was able to eliminate these unwholesome habitual tendencies.