

# The Realization of Pure Earth in the Human World

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First, I want to express my deepest gratitude to your foundation for this great honour which you have bestowed on all the members of Tzu Chi and not myself alone. What Tzu Chi has accomplished has not been done by myself alone but all its devoted members. The Peace Award of the Niwano Foundation has made a great contribution to peace in the world and I would like to express my great esteem and admiration for your efforts and devotion in creating a better world. The purification of the human spirit and harmony in the world are the important legacies of the Buddha and have become the mission of all his disciples. This is particularly true during a time of man-made chaos, which makes his disciples even more determined to create a pure land among humans.

From the beginning of human history, we have lived through the rise and fall of innumerable civilizations and countless cruel and unnecessary wars. Out of greed, we humans have over the millennia destroyed many creatures and eco-systems. All this destruction is accelerating the era of decay. This makes me worry often that it is too late to save our planet.

In the Lotus Scriptures, the Buddha taught us that Buddha's appear during an era of chaos. During this era, there will be five kinds of chaos – chaos among creatures, chaos in the mind, chaos in perception, chaos in life and finally chaos in the world. During this period, greed grips the heart of man and the results are devastating. In the world in which we live now, both human and natural disasters are the result of this human greed. How can we maintain a simple and broad-minded heart, bear no hatred against other people or nature and live in harmony with our basic nature? By doing this, we will be able to realize the pure land on this earth. Cheng Yen and all Tzu Chi volunteers aim to put into practice the teaching of the Greater Vehicle of Buddhism, which is the legacy of the Buddha. We deeply believe that it is the confusion of mankind which has given us the opportunity to be Bodhisattvas and that it is the era of chaos which has given us the opportunity to establish a pure land on the earth in which we live. To transform society, we must first make ourselves clean and rid the earth of impurities and build this pure land in the human world around us. We do not need to wait until we pass away nor expect to achieve a Buddha-like heaven in a future life that may be far from us in times that we cannot measure.

## The Greater Vehicle Buddhism Has Been the Legacy of Buddha

According to the Scripture of Long Discourse, before Buddha was liberated from existence, he taught his disciples, saying that “all the scriptures and teaching I have taught after I accomplished the ultimate enlightenment will be your preserved doctrines and become the ultimate truths that you may depend on.” Even though Buddha reached the ultimate state of cessation of becoming, his teaching and philosophy will become the eternal laws for Buddhists to uphold and follow. The

teaching of Buddha has been passed through more than two thousand years and these Scriptures passed to China, Japan and many other countries, generating many different denominations and various interpretations and practices. However, no matter what are the differences of these denominations and of their interpretations, all of them aim to teach people the way out of the afflictions of life and bring them to enlightenment. As the Divine Lotus scripture had said, "that only through enlightening and supporting life we will be able to accomplish the ultimate Buddha-like enlightenment." We must enlighten all mortal beings without discrimination and enrich people via our wisdom, through fulfilling altruistic deeds to purify ourselves and then we will be able to accomplish the eternal awakening and enlightenment.

The Divine Immeasurable Meanings Scriptures specified that, at the time Buddha foresaw his imminent liberation from existence, he asked disciples to raise any questions that had been in their minds. Thus, the Great Divine Bodhisattva asked Buddha to indicate how to reach the ultimate wisdom of Buddha. Buddha replied that the Great Divine Bodhisattva raised an important and profound question. Buddha said, "For you to expect to accomplish the Buddha-like awakening, you have to enlighten people, embrace them, support all mortal beings, comfort their afflictions and then give them bliss. This accomplishment of great mercy will be the preliminary stage of ultimate enlightenment. " Buddha's legacy to future disciples was to make them dedicate themselves to eradicate the afflictions of the mortal world and employ the great love to enlighten people and purify their spirits by our own awakening wisdom. We hope eventually that we can obliterate all the original ignorance of mortal beings and bring them into the state of ultimate Buddha like enlightenment.

### **In The Era of Decay, We Shall Not Search for Awakening Alone**

Buddha said that, after he was liberated from existence, Buddhism would undergo three stages – progress, symbolism and finally decay. Buddha indicated that, up to the era of decay, the secular world would be full of catastrophes, with savage wars, immense fires, and terrible flooding. Buddha's ingenious wisdom passed through time and foresaw the vicissitude of mortal afflictions and indicated the way out of these disasters and how we shall reach the state of enlightenment. He expected us to fulfill the paramount Greater Vehicle of Buddhism. If we look at recent society, constant wars, ruin of the land, human beings victim to many temptations, this decay really worries us. Being followers of Buddha, we cannot search for enlightenment solely for ourselves, but must exert Buddha's great love and wisdom in the secular world and enlighten every mortal human being until they realize the eternal wisdoms.

### **Work for All Mortal Beings and For Buddhism**

In 1963 Chen Yen chose to follow Dharma Master Yin Shun but it was done in a rush, so he gave me just six words as the mission for my whole life--"for all life and for Buddhism." Those six words were like a clap of thunder that passed through me and deeply stirred my conscience. From 1966, when I established the Tzu-Chi Austere Charitable Foundation, to the present, these six words have become my guiding principles. In the era of Decay, the secular world is full of disasters, greed and chaos, but the afflictions of the mortal world is the best opportunity for us to practice great love and reach enlightenment. Tzu-Chi volunteers go to every corner of the world where catastrophes occur, to soothe the afflictions of the victims and give them happiness without asking anything in

return. This is the fulfillment of the Greater Vehicle of Buddhism. By embracing those afflicted, we can realize the reality of suffering. By treating the suffering, we will be able to understand that the cause is derived from ignorance. And thus we hope to actualize the eternal teaching and wisdom of Buddha and to fulfill the path of enlightenment in order to reach our own natural peace.

The Divine Immeasurable Meanings Scriptures point out that we must “keep the state of mind which is extreme calm and purity, maintain a selfless will, concentrate on our mission and sustain this for ever.” This scripture inspired me and gave me enormous courage. Use this pure mind and spread it to all people and we will acquire the ultimate wisdom to enrich all mortal beings. This is the path that Buddhists and Tzu-Chi volunteers have to follow.

### Ultimate Emptiness and Selfless Giving

We all know that we have to learn from Buddha and then enlighten all life. But Chen Yen expects Tzu Chi volunteers not to be someone who always asks Buddha for support but is a person who can always selflessly support others. Buddha preached that Buddhists must enlighten all life. But, until all life has been enlightened, we must be aware of the principle of emptiness and realize that there is no life being enlightened by us.

Tzu-Chi volunteers not only practice selfless giving but also must express gratitude when giving. This is the fulfillment of emptiness and the practice of spiritual freedom. People normally think of themselves and, as long as we do this, we are no longer experiencing joyful giving. As the Divine Immeasurable Meanings Scriptures point out, “we have to observe that all rules are emptiness themselves. They stem from themselves and originally were calm. There is no difference between big and small, between being and extinction, between stillness and motion, between progress and withdrawal, like emptiness itself. There is no dualistic thinking. However, all mortal people are obsessed by illusions and therefore create the difference between this and that, gain and loss and eventually conceive evil thoughts and perform many immoral deeds.” If we realize the essential emptiness and learn that there is no distinction among all beings, then we can give without worry and grief. But how can we understand the rule of emptiness? The best way is to start from gratitude and especially express gratitude through giving. By doing this, we will be able to practice non-discriminatory love, reach spiritual freedom and acquire ultimate bliss.

The utmost form of devotion by Tzu-Chi volunteers is by those who devote their wisdom and energy during their life and then after death donate their body for medical research and experiments to teach both students and doctors. The statement that tells students that they “can make one thousand mistakes on my body but do not make a single mistake on a patient’s body” shows the Tzu Chi volunteers’ ultimate awareness of emptiness. This selfless giving shows their divine personality and leaves a remarkable legacy for the future followers. The giving of these silent mentors presents a perfect finale to their lives. When I think of these Tzu-Chi disciples, who devote their lives to suffering people during their lifetime and after death donate their bodies to teach medical students, I always feel touched and full of gratitude. They give all their mortal belongings to others and in return accomplish eternal enlightenment.

### The Practice of Equal Love

The catastrophes of the present all stem from human greed and illusionary obsessions. I often believe that natural disasters are a result of human misconduct. The greenhouse effect is indeed a result of spiritual causes. The scales of recent hurricanes and earthquakes are much severe than ever and have resulted in the sacrifice of millions of people. No matter whether it is a Tsunami in south Asia, the Katrina hurricane in the United States or the wars in the Middle East, all are derived from the expansion of human desire, the endless destruction of nature and selfishness that is never modified.

Facing these terrible disasters, we have to examine ourselves more seriously. The obsession of loving greed, stereotyping and obstinacy are the root of ignorance and the cause of turmoil in the world. To lead this distorted world out of chaos, we have to first awaken people's minds. So I advocate the principles of great love and selflessness. If everyone were selfless, then conflict will be diminished. If we love all, all creatures will prosper. All earthly beings are different, but each tiny creature and drop of water contains a spirit. If we compare all earthly beings to water, an ocean is different to a lake and a dewdrop is different to a river, but they are all the same as water. Chen Yen is always afraid of harming the land when she walks. Buddhists must use equal love to embrace all mortal beings and these should include every sentient or non-sentient being. The Divine Immeasurable Meanings Scriptures pointed out that "all Buddhas are alike. They have enormous strength that can bring one voice to respond to all callings and can use one person to comfort all beings. This single unit of energy can transform itself into any kind of figure. And this transformed figure in itself will continue to be transformed into many other figures. The number is equivalent to the infinite sands in the Eternal River. All these innumerable grains of sand will continuously turn into immense forms to enlighten billions of mortal beings. "For the beginning of the human race, the population may not exceed billions but the number of creatures that Buddha included among his thousands of billions of beings contains all sentient and non-sentient earthling beings. All mountains, trees and lands are all considered beings. Therefore, Buddha taught us that we must exercise our non-discriminatory love to enlighten and care for all mortal beings.

In Tzu-Chi there are more than 100,000 environmental volunteers who devote themselves to recycling, to preserve the earth, cherish material beings and realize the endless value of life. They expand their love to cover all people and every earthly creature and, by doing so, raise the value of their own lives.

The Tzu-Chi Charity Mission-Make Everyone Practice their Love and Wisdom

Chen-Yen believes that the non-discriminatory principles that Buddha taught us will in due course enlighten all sentient beings. If we expect to do this, we have to employ infinite ways to educate them, for sentient beings are very divergent. The Tzu Chi foundation applies the Four Divine Spirits - love, compassion, sympathy and giving to establish our four missions-charity, medicine, education and culture, these missions have eight major tasks, which are all opportunities to practice Buddha-like wisdom and paths toward awakening.

The realization of the pure land is here in the earthly world. People may say that the Tzu-Chi Foundation is a reformation of Buddhism but I believe that we are dedicated to restore traditional Buddhism. Tzu-Chi volunteers follow the teaching of the Greater Vehicle Buddhism, fulfill the Divine Scriptures and are dedicated to enlightening the mortal world.

You can see Tzu Chi volunteers in every community in Taiwan. Their blue and white uniforms are to be found in poorest villages in rural China. Thousands of Zulu Tzu Chi volunteers in South Africa devote their love to tribal people. Some volunteers in South America have even entered into the Indian tribes in Paraguay to build schools for aboriginal children. The doctors of Tzu-Chi Medical Association hold free clinics in the vast and empty Australia continent. Indonesian volunteers joined together to clean the garbage of the Angke River in Jakarta. Turkish Muslim Tzu-Chi volunteers showed their love during disasters. All these volunteers follow the principle of non-discrimination to love every race, nationality and religious group equally. Besides, we also believe that everyone is entitled to love. We not only aim to inspire the rich to support the poor, and also expect those who are helped to support others. That means that there is no difference between poor and rich in the giving of love.

These fulfill the Divine Immeasurable Meanings Scripture's teaching which says: "you all convey the abundant energy of the Greater Vehicle Buddhism and you have to enlighten all earthly beings into ultimate wisdom. Deliver the good seeds, cultivate the minds of people and inspire their eternal freedom, like the light of the sun and moon that shall shine on all creatures, and fulfill the ultimate mission of the Greater Vehicle Buddhism." We must look back on the original teaching of Buddha and use the philosophy of Greater Vehicle Buddhism to develop earthly Buddhism. By practicing our pure nature and our own mercy and wisdom, facilitating modern technologies, entering every professional arena, we can deliver the wisdom and practice of Buddhism to everyone who works in different occupations. Inspire all of them to understand and realize the ultimate Buddha nature and enlightenment.

#### Tzu Chi Medical Mission--Doctor as Medical Master

There is no pain that compares to the affliction of disease. But, if we perceive diseases as a reflection of life and understand that life and death are inevitable, then we will turn a hospital into an important place to contemplate the cycle of life and death. The Tzu-Chi medical mission perceives a hospital as a practicing temple. I expect every doctor to become a great medical master. The doctor will not only cure the patient's disease but also comfort their spiritual afflictions. As the divine Immeasurable Meanings Scriptures points out, "the doctor diagnoses the different diseases of patients and prescribes medicine to cure them and eventually brings them to health and happiness." The doctors also have the mission to comfort their minds. As Buddha said, once the pain has been taken away, we must give patients bliss and awaken wisdom in them. A doctor must perceive his patient as a teacher and be willing to practice Buddhista-like mercy and compassion, and be humble. By following this practice, doctors, nurses and volunteers will eventually turn a hospital from a place like hell into a heaven-like land of peace, where all beings can meditate on the true meaning of life and realize that nothing is everlasting. Through this transformation, we can create a pure land here on earth.

#### Tzu Chi Educational Mission-Being a Teacher to those short of Knowledge

Modern society is full of greed and temptation, which results in inequality of wealth. However, the poverty does not only apply in the material sense -- poverty of knowledge is even more serious in our world. Tzu Chi educational missions are dedicated to support children and build schools in the poor areas of countries, which include Thailand, Mexico, Iran, South Africa, Indonesia and China.

We expect that, through education, we will be able to eliminate inadequate knowledge and diminish the gap of intelligence between rich and poor. We also teach children to embrace the principle of altruism that supporting others will improve their own worth. The education mission also follows the teaching of Buddha who expects us to “be a kind tutor to all beings, provide resources to all people for them to prosper, become a pro-active teacher for the needy, cultivate their wisdom, stabilize their life and finally make them live in bliss and happiness.”(The Immeasurable Meanings Scriptures)

### Tzu Chi Humanity Mission—Cultivate personality and Make Society Prosper

Chen Yen believes that we must apply Buddha's wisdom, expressed 2,600 years ago, in our modern time and space and spread it to every human being. In order to fulfill this principle, we have to start from ourselves. A great Master, Hong Yi in the early 20th century, said: “Culture will not be delivered by culture itself but passed through by people.” I also emphasize that the Tzu-Chi humanity mission -- or 'cultural mission' -- must be driven by a perfect temperament, which will cause all of society to prosper. A believer in humanity and practitioner of bodhisattva must follow the Immeasurable Meanings Scriptures which say: “vow to be a great master for all beings, who brings light to the blind, sound and smell to deaf, cure to the handicapped and enables the mad to become healthy.” Chen Yen expects the Da Ai TV station and other Tzu Chi media to become a source of pure water to clean up the chaotic society, formulate a new civilization for the earthly world and bring people into a state of spiritual freedom. And this enlightenment stems from an individual's awakening. One awakened seed can generate infinite goodness and enlighten many other seeds. As the Divine Immeasurable Meanings Scriptures preaches, “one seed can create ten and then transfer to hundred thousand and eventually create an infinite number of goodness.” There is no difference between mortal beings, Buddha and the ultimate enlightened mind. As Buddhists, we have to practice ourselves and become an awakening seed and enlighten all mortal beings. That is the only way to spread the Greater Vehicle Buddhism in this earthly world.

### The Realization of Pure Earth in the Human World

We all face the situation that the world abounds with many conflicts and hatreds, and people become victims of temptation. We Buddhists must be courageous and ceaseless enter the afflicted world, both physical and spiritual, to comfort mortal beings and awake them from their ignorance. Disregard their nationality, race and religious belief; make them all enlightened by nature Buddha's wisdom, calmness and ultimate awakening. If we preserve this mind and work ceaselessly, we will eventually attain the pure earth here in the human world.