

"Liberation from Relational Suffering" **Focusing on Mahayana Practices for Healing, Reconciliation and Peace**

Respectable Fathers and Sisters, Reverend and Venerable, it is my honor to be able to participate this historical dialogue. Today, together with Ven. Guo Jian from Dharm Drum Mountain Los Angeles Center, I will briefly share some of Dharma Drum Mountain's practice for healing, reconciliation and peace.

A few years ago, one of our senior nun and some farming experts started practicing natural farming, in which Fukuoka's five principles are followed: 1. No tillage; 2. No fertilizer; 3. No pesticides or herbicides; 4. No weeding; 5. No pruning. The results showed that the ecological environment of the land became more diverse and healthy. Some very sick pest infected Papaya trees could recover by themselves and eventually grew much healthier and stronger than they were before and the production of fruits increased dramatically after 5 years of natural farming.

What did these tell us? Natural farming skipped all the processes used to deliver harmful elements to the environment and all beings; instead it provided all living beings, including plants, weeds, insects, worms, organisms, a healthy environment. All living beings managed to live in harmony, heal themselves and increase reproduction.

If the living beings in the farm can do it, we, *Homo sapiens*, definitely can do it, too. This is the reason why Dharma Drum Mountain has been promoting the "**Four Kinds of Environmentalisms**" and the "**Six Ethics of the Mind**" initiated by our founder, late Master Sheng Yen. We proclaim to minimize unnecessary judgements, remove manipulation and stop the poisonous "pesticides," in relation to our family members, schoolmates, colleagues, the society, the different ethnic groups, and with our mother nature. What we need to do is to decentralize our own standpoint and bring our mind to the state of unconditional loving kindness. Thus, all living beings can live in harmony and prosper together.

It is only natural that people had made numerous mistakes in the past which created karma (causes and consequences) and suffering that follows us from the past to the present and even into the future. To heal, find peace and liberate oneself from such suffering, we first need to repent and apologize. Sometimes, we don't have the opportunity to say "sorry" or we are not ready to apologize yet; other times, our apology is not accepted. From the buddhist point of view, one cannot get liberation without freeing oneself from the inter-dependent originated karma. The way to free oneself is to plant seeds of compassion and forgiveness even though our wounds and hurt may not be healed right away and peace may not come soon enough.

In the Chinese buddhist community, ritual ceremonies are crucial for our practice in various buddhist traditions. There is a very popular 7-day long Great Compassion Water and Land Dharma Service known by its complicated liturgy and high setting cost. In 2007, under the

guidance of our late master Sheng Yen, Dharma Drum Mountain revolutionarily launched this ceremony with modified liturgies and environmental friendly digital setting to meet the needs of the modern world and keep our environment sustainable. We have received a lot of critics in the beginning but people started to accept these changes later on. In 2011, this ceremony went online and was broadcasted in real-time to all the followers worldwide to chant and pray at the same time. In 2013, our followers were able to submit their prayers to a software application that we developed. The software has been stored in the cloud with information on all different ceremonial services performed by worldwide Dharm Drum Mountain organizations blessing all beings. The application can be accessed by adherents worldwide to conduct metta practice by following the three steps:

Step 1. Key in the names of our loved ones (alive or deceased) and our ancestors, then pray;

Step 2. Key in those we don't know but have/had suffered (alive or deceased), then pray;

Step 3. Key in those we have a bad relationship with, and those we have harmed (alive or deceased), then pray.

Through this process, we educate our followers to not only conduct metta practice but transfer all their precious merits to people they have/had encountered. At the same time, we learn to forgive ourselves and others for the suffering that we have caused to others and vice versa.

Buddhists believe in the great power of simultaneous chanting and praying by the mass, which heals and harmonizes all living beings and our mother nature. In 2014, about 10,000 individuals participated the Great Compassion Land & Water Dharma Service at Dharma Drum Mountain's headquarter in Taiwan. Approximately 40,000 individuals participated online broadcasted service from 36 countries. The whole prayer lists added up to *820,000 inputs*.

Lastly, I would like to share the four steps for handling vexations, difficulties and conflicts based on the Fivefold Spiritual Renaissance Campaign that our founder, Master Sheng Yen initiated based on Buddha's teachings, using very simple language for ordinary people to understand:

1. Face it with repentance.

Things happen via the principle of causes and consequences. We all are part of what's happening around us; therefore all of us need to take the responsibility and repent when things go wrong.

2. Accept it with gratitude.

Things are impermanent; therefore they are subject to change by conditions. We appreciate that we have the ability to make a positive change and are grateful for being a part of it.

3. **Take care of it** with loving kindness.

We are not separated from each other (oneness). The way to better ourselves is to make things better for others. We **transfer all our merits/forgiveness** to other people. Loving other people is to love ourselves.

4. **Let go of it** without any attachment.

Only when we decentralize our ego and detach our selfish grasping can we truly heal ourselves and other people from rooted ignorance of craving, hatred, jealousy, arrogance, and suspicion. This is the **Middle Way**, the true liberation. **Emptiness/no-self** is the true reality.

I hope my short 10-minute talk provided something useful. Many thanks for having us here to learn from you all. May all sentient beings be in peace and harmony. Thank you for your attention.