



Pre-BA assignment feedback form

(to be completed by marker)

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<i>Module title: Ancient Chinese Morality and Ethics</i>	
<i>For completion by marker:</i>	
<i>Comments:</i>	
<i>Marker's signature:</i>	<i>Date:</i>
<i>Provisional mark:</i>	
<i>NB.</i> <i>All marks are provisional until confirmed by the final examination board.</i>	

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SICH3001 Reflective Workbook

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Time really flies! The first module of the Pre-Ba course came to an end. Through this assignment, I would like to appreciate Venerable Chengde and teachers who have educated and guided me in my learning journey. Although I have learnt many lessons from the lecture, I would like to share one of the teachings which impresses me a lot. According to *The Discourse on the Ten Wholesome Ways of Action*, there is a phrase of 'Who so embellished the ten meritorious deeds with compassion will have pity on all sentient beings and will never get tired of them.'¹ In a nutshell, a person who possesses mercy should pity others' plights, and not leave them behind.

In the new era of globalisation, most people always bury their heads in their own work to earn a better living and satisfy their own desires in the competitive world. Owing to this circumstance, they have an excuse that there is no time for them to help others. As time passes, this aura will become a kind of social climate since those people become more selfish and impersonal. Nevertheless, our traditional Chinese cultures and teachings have been diffusing rapidly in our world nowadays. Therefore, some people will be wondering why they need to help others instead of merely care for themselves?

For this reason, Venerable Master Chin Kung constantly teaches us that we should practice enlightenment-mind including to be compassionate at every moment, not only to benefit oneself in getting a pass to be born in the Pure Land,

¹ Translated into Chinese from Sanskrit by Sikshananda-Nanjio, Translated into English from Chinese Version by Upasaka Wong Mou-Lam, *The Buddhahhasita Dasabhadra Karmamarga Sutra* (Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 1984) p. 17.

but also to assist others in overcoming their problems. According to *An Inspiration to Give Rise to the Bodhi Mind*, there is a paragraph of ‘There are ten causes and conditions that help one to initiate the bodhi mind.’² In my opinion, even though there are varieties of causes and conditions which could rouse a person’s benevolent spirit, there are some kinds of motivations which have been touching me intensely during the course.

First and foremost, being mindful of my parents’, teachers’ as well as benefactors’ deep kindness is the vital factor for me to pick up a virtue of sympathy. Throughout my living and learning journey, elders including my parents, teachers and backers are the people who always stand by me, lend me a hand, and give me tremendous support aside from thinking of their own benefits. They are the people who usually consider my well-being all the time. As I know, without those people’s endurance encouragements, it will be a gruelling road for me to undergo and I will not be able to succeed accordingly.

For instance, parents have been bringing me up and caring for me a lot since I came into this world. Apart from their ten lunar months of carrying, labour pains and three years of nursing, they swallow the entire bitter and give me sweetness. It is not a simple and easy task to raise a child in a good condition. During the upbringing process, they even contribute their time, vigour, and money to undertake the financial and material support of a family and maintain a good environment for me. When I face trials and tribulations, they are there to help me out with those predicaments. By and large, as the Chinese old saying goes, ‘Parental

² Fo Guang Shan International Translation Centre, *An Inspiration to Give Rise to the Bodhi Mind* (U.S.A: Fo Guang Shan International Translation Centre, 2017) p. 21.

love is considered as heavy as a mountain and as deep as the sea.’

On top of that, teachers are the tutors in my learning path who seem like a candle to enlighten me in my studies. As I have only a slight acquaintance with my learning, teachers always impart me the principles of being a human and general knowledge as to improve my ability as well as widen my horizons in every field. In fact, they are my role models whereby I could follow their footsteps in the future. Hence, Venerable Master Chin Kung often edifies us that parents give us life, but without teachers’ educating, we will not comprehend the morals and manners and it will make no distinction between humans and animals.

Moreover, benefactors are those people who contribute to an educational environment for me to study. To set up a good learning environment, they try to fulfil the requirements in my daily life such as appetizing diets, comfortable accommodation, well-equipped facilities, and the like. Sometimes, they even sponsor us with their limited income. In fact, the main purpose of their contribution is hoping that we could learn our ancients’ teachings in a peace of mind in order to materialise Venerable Master Chin Kung’s aspiration by promoting the crucial of education for everyone to the extent that minimising the occurring rate of disasters in our Mother Earth.

Thus, as I have acquired the elders’ favours and they are patient with me all time, I should lend others a hand without any hesitation as my repayment to society. Some people, especially those who are younger than I, really need some help when they are dealing with their problems. Since I had undergone some troubles, why not provide them tricks of the trade which were given from my

elders? Not only to assist them when they are in an excruciating situation, but also to be tolerant with their shortcomings as those elders have been treating me in the same way as well.

In addition, repaying is also a responsibility or mission for every citizen who lives in our Mother Earth to follow our successive ancestors' spirits on contributing to the Earth without any racism. Since they always think of the offspring's benefits, they have passed down the invaluable wisdom and experiences so that we will avoid repeating their previous mistakes and take a leaf out of their books to attain a good future lifestyle. Consequently, as a citizen of our Earth, there is no reason for me to pass the buck in assisting others at any moment. In fact, I should assist others, especially the needy, come rain or shine, for the sake of pulling them through their crises.

Other than that, the second consideration which could wake my compassion is to be mindful of the suffering of life and death. Based on the history of Buddhism, this factor is also one of the reasons for Buddha giving up the chance to become a crown, but he chose to be a multicultural educator. When Buddha was a prince at his young stage, once he left his palace to observe the outside world, he was shocked when he came across an old man, a diseased man, a decaying corpse, and an ascetic. These four situations led him to discover the righteousness of the world and as a result, he was successful in enlightening the true nature of reality.

As we know, all sentient beings have been trapped in the cycle of birth and death and have not been liberated for endless kalpas. As we are born in The Sahā world, we are unable to evade eight sufferings throughout our lives, such as

suffering of birth, old age, sickness, death, being apart from loved ones, being together with despised ones, unsatisfied wanting and the flourishing of the Five Skandhas. Those agonies will happen on any occasion in our daily lives. As I have been going through some of the afflictions, I have a sensation that it is not easy to endure those situations.

For instance, once I had completed my first vaccination of the Covid-19, I was under the weather and could not get sleep at night. In the meantime, my whole body was in pain, and I felt that my body temperature was gradually increasing. Unfortunately, there was no one who could ease my discomfort on the spot owing to some reasons. I tried to do something like chanting the name of Buddha as to draw attention away from my pain, but to no avail. After this experience, I had a marginal sentiment that sickness will totally make a person feel indisposed as well as annoying and some negative thoughts would easily intrude my mind.

In the same way, as the old saying goes, 'Life is full of ups and downs.' Indubitably, most people including me would not be able to shirk those troubles throughout our lives. To me, sometimes I was thoroughly down in the dump, feeling worn out and would tend to give up my goals as I could not search for a way to get rid of it. However, I was fortunate to have my parents, teachers, and friends by my side in order to help me get through with those issues. Since I could not avoid myself from running into those problems and I have a deep feeling about these unpleasant situations, so whenever I encounter someone who has been suffering the same situation as me, I would surely empathize with others' plights and offer them enormous support.

Subsequently, having respect for our own spiritual being is also one of the key points for me to cultivate compassion. In this course, Venerable Chengde often advises us that we must search for a way to leave the samsara as this kind of life is unceasing. In fact, we have been born in heaven and on Earth around ten thousand times, ascending and falling in an instant. Once we are in heaven; after a while, we are back on Earth. In next to no time, we may have a fall to hell, become an animal or a hungry ghost. When we are bearing those miseries, we regret our bad behaviours and evil deeds. However, when we are enjoying amusements which could lead us involved in bad deeds, we entirely forget the pains of the outcomes. Therefore, this is the main reason why humans could not be able to get out of the samsara.

Nevertheless, since I have been listening to Venerable Master Chin Kung and Venerable Chengde's teachings, I have a slight awareness and attempt to behave well in my life. According to *Liao-Fan's Four Lessons*, there is a lesson which has influenced me a lot. I wonder why we have the same essence of mind as Buddha as well as all the ancient saints and sages, but we do not obtain the same achievement as them? Buddha attained supreme, perfect enlightenment for immeasurable kalpas, whereas we still remain ignorant and confused as ordinary people?³ Consequently, since I am youthful and have the ability to break away those scourges, I must grab the opportunity to do more good deeds in my remaining time. Not only to be confident to be reborn in Pure land, but also to prove to everyone

³ Original work by Mr. Liao-Fan Yuan of the Ming Dynasty, Interpreted by Mr. Zhi-Hai Huang, Re-edited by Police Officer Wang, Sponsored and recorded by The Education Foundation of Liao-Fan's Four Lessons, *The Second Lesson: Ways to Reform*
<<http://faculty.stust.edu.tw/~tang/Mahayana/4lessons/lesson2.htm>> [accessed 13 October 2021]

that a good heart conquers ill fortune. In the meantime, there are some lessons I could apply in my daily life such as practicing Dāna which means generosity or charity.

There are generally three kinds of Dāna in Buddha's teachings such as giving material help, sharing the Dharma, and providing protection from fear which could definitely benefit everyone including myself. For instance, based on Venerable Master Chin Kung's edification, if we give material help for others, we would gain wealth and higher status in society; if we share the Dharma to others, we would have an intelligence and wisdom mindset; if we provide others protection from fear, we would get health and longevity life in return. In short, reap what you have sown. Hence, I should always offer my assistance so that I can accumulate good deeds for my future.

In conclusion, there are three main aspects for me to obtain compassion. At first, being mindful of my parents', teachers' as well as benefactors' deep kindness, so that I am duty bound to reciprocate our society by helping others no matter how tough the situation is. Moreover, being mindful of the suffering of life and death, I could put myself in others' shoes which would help me to go the extra mile in assisting them. Eventually, having respect for my own spiritual being will lead me to be well-behaved in order to attain good prospects.

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2. Fo Guang Shan International Translation Centre, An Inspiration to Give Rise to the Bodhi Mind (U.S.A: Fo Guang Shan International Translation Centre, 2017) p. 21.

Website (English)

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