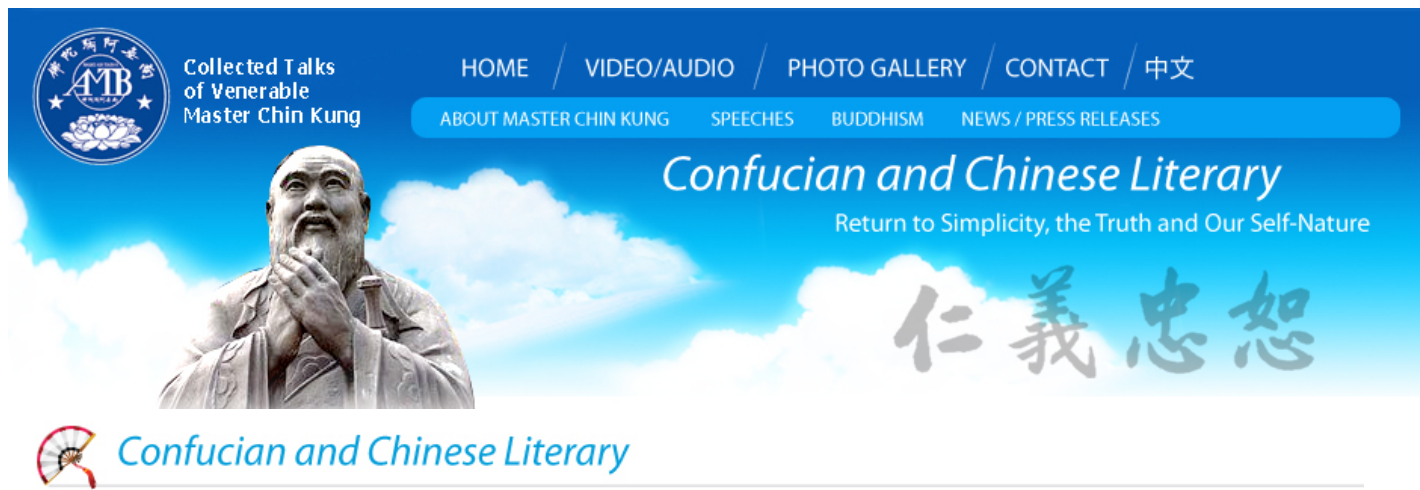




Traditional Chinese Culture's Contribution to the World:

The Ancestral Remembrance Ceremony and Its Significance

2016 UK Ancestral Remembrance Ceremony and Thrice Buddhist Yearning Service for World Peace Speech By Venerable Master Chin Kung

**Respected Venerable Masters, Leaders,
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

My warmest greetings to everyone!

Today is June 24th, 2016 and thanks to the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, in collaboration with the Hwa Dzan Pure Land Buddhist Society, we are here to hold an Ancestral Remembrance and Thrice Buddhist Yearning Ceremony. This is not only the first time this type of ceremony is being performed in the UK, but also probably the first time in all of Europe! We have Chinese from all over the world, as well as friends from all over the world, all who have gathered here today to participate in and perform this spectacular ceremony. This is truly a rare and remarkable occasion. It is an event extremely worthy of celebration!

Today's ancestral ceremony not only commemorates the ancient ancestors, saints and sages, and ten thousand family names of China, it also commemorates those ancestors of every country and every race throughout the whole world. Because the whole world is one family, the human race is an entity of common destiny. So for each and every country and race in the world, we wish to equally pay our respects and give our consecrated offerings, in order to thank and recall fondly upon our collective ancestors' benevolence to us, as their children and generations of offspring.

Introduction: The Story Behind This Year's Ancestral Remembrance Ceremony

In talking about this year's ancestral ceremony and Buddhist ceremony, I can't help but think back to May of last year. At that time, I had heard that now in the UK, children from kindergarten all the way through high school are studying Chinese. I really admire the incredible foresight of the government and people of the UK. So at the end of May, after attending UNESCO's interfaith peace forum in Paris, I decided to pay a visit to the UK in early June. My wish was to tell everyone that the real treasure of Chinese language lies in the Chinese Characters and Classical Chinese. The wisdom, ideas, methods and experience of China's ancient saints and sages, regarding moral cultivation, managing a family, governing a nation, and bringing about world peace and prosperity, are all preserved in the Complete Library of the Four Branches of Literature (Si Ku Quan Shu). We just need to master the Chinese characters and Classical Chinese to access this treasure-trove of invaluable and timeless wisdom for today's world.

It is precisely last year when I visited the UK that I got to know Professor Medwin Hughes, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. In regards to how to better promote the study of Sinology, we had a long talk for three hours, and each of our ideas seemed identical. Last August, Vice-Chancellor Hughes along with two of his colleagues came to visit me in Hong Kong. They attended our Lunar Mid-Year Festival Ancestral Remembrance Ceremony and Thrice Buddhist Yearning Service and were extremely delighted. So they asked us if we could do the ceremony in Wales. We agreed. And then we thought: Since we are already going to the UK, why not do even more ceremonies there? Also we could make the ceremonies even bigger, and invite all of the Chinese living in Europe

and our friends from overseas to attend. This is exactly how the idea for this year's Ancestral Ceremony started.

The United Kingdom has an excellent cultural tradition. In modern times, it has produced several outstanding scholars of Sinology and philosophy, for example: Bertrand Russel, Dr. Arnold Toynbee and Joseph Needham. These academics thoroughly understood and highly regarded traditional Chinese culture. In fact, Arnold Toynbee once said, in order to resolve the social problems of the 21st century, we must rely on the teachings of Confucius, Mencius, and Mahayana Buddhism. This is an extremely high affirmation and assertion that the Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist education of Chinese culture could help society to maintain peace and stability and achieve great prosperity.

Ancestral Remembrance Ceremony's Significance

Ancestral remembrance is an extremely important part of Eastern culture. The goal is to express our remembrance and gratitude to our ancestors. It seems that Western culture also has something similar. In Hong Kong, every year we organize three large-scale ancestral remembrance ceremonies during Qing Ming festival, the Lunar Mid-Year festival, and the Winter Solstice festival respectively. The goal is to promote filial piety, cherish the memory of our ancestors and to continue the incredible tradition and cultural heritage left behind by the ancient saints and sages. The Analects has a famous saying: "People will become virtuous by respecting life, treating death properly and following their forefather's teachings."

If we conscientiously uphold the funeral rites of our parents, and remember our ancestors, it will restore society and its common practices back to their original goodness. This confirms the positive effect conducting ancestral remembrance has on society, creating stability and harmony. I wish this year's ancestral remembrance ceremony can enhance the mutual respect, recognition and relationship between Eastern and Western cultures, and make a contribution towards the peace and harmony for all mankind.

The ancients of China teach us, "If we don't listen to the teachings of our elders, it is to our own detriment." The meaning of this is that the generations before us have rich life experience and wisdom; by listening to their teachings no harm will come to us. If we don't listen, the disadvantage will be on us. So who are our elders? The ancient ancestors are our elders, Confucius and Mencius are our elders, and before them, Emperor Fuxi, Emperor Shen Nong, and so on.

According to legend, from the time of Emperor Fuxi to Emperor Shen Nong was five hundred years; from the time of Emperor Shen Nong to the Yellow Emperor was another five hundred years. At that time, there were not yet written accounts of events. But as soon as the Yellow Emperor began to create characters we could record, we had family names and clan names that can be traced back. If we count to this day, since the time of the Yellow Emperor, it has been 4500 years; this is credible.

Now was there any existence of Chinese civilization prior to 5,500 years of history? Of course there was! If there was nothing, then where did we come from? So we have to diligently trace back to the past, we can trace back to the beginning of mankind. Now that is extremely early! If we trace back to the legendary Yellow Emperor, we will find that all family names were in fact one family. And so because of intermarriage we know that these different clan names or surnames are actually all of close relation. So in truth we are all one big family.

The heart of the Chinese people is truly magnanimous. Chinese people tend to think in terms of 'the whole world'. We can see this in the classics. Our ancestors all held the well being of the whole world in their hearts. It wasn't just that they wanted to benefit the Chinese people; they wanted to benefit everyone on earth. The Chinese people love family, the concept of the family clan is very important. Loving one's clan means loving one's clansman. "Zong" (宗) or clan refers to having the same surname. So when we meet people of the same surname we feel kinship and familiarity. In addition we also know people from the same hometown or village as us. So knowing others of the same clan, who share the same surnames, and others who come from the same town or place as us, this becomes a basic uniting force.

The formation of this ideology comes from the teachings of our ancestors, which have from a young age imperceptibly influenced us. Now we take this one step further, and emphasize the fact that we are all people of the earth. Growing up on this earth, we are all one family. So, we must always think in terms of the well being of the whole world and all its living things. This is being truly magnanimous.

Why Do We Need to Study Traditional Chinese Culture?

What is traditional Chinese culture? Simply speaking it comes down to twelve words: Filial Piety, Fraternity, Loyalty, Trust, Propriety, Righteousness, Integrity, Shamefulness, Benevolence, Love, Harmony and Peace. Unfold this and we have four branches of study (four subjects).

First, the Five Moral Relationships teach that: "There is a natural love between parents and children; loyalty and fairness between leaders and subordinates; distinct responsibilities between a husband and wife; order amongst seniors and juniors; and trust among friends." Next we have the Five Constants: Benevolence, Righteousness, Propriety, Wisdom and Trust; The Four Anchors: Propriety, Righteousness, Integrity, Shamefulness; and The Eight Virtues: Filial Piety, Fraternity, Loyalty, Trust, Benevolence, Love, Harmony, and Peace. These constitute the four subjects.

If we unfold this one step further, we have The Three Teachings and Nine Schools: in particular, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, as the Three Teachings. For Confucianism, the representative classic texts are the Four Books. For Buddhism, it is the Flower Adornment Sutra, and the Infinite Life Sutra, which is the abridged version of the Flower Adornment Sutra. For Daoism, the representative text is the Dao De Jing (Book of Dao).

So why do we need to study traditional Chinese culture? In the Analects, the opening sentence says it all: "Studying and frequently practicing, is there any joy greater than this?" "Studying" includes, learning extensively, asking questions and examining, thinking carefully, and being able to clearly discern. "Practice," is to conscientiously carry out what we have studied. After we have studied, we have to constantly, implement what we have learned in our daily lives. In that way we will experience extreme happiness, and will attain an indescribable inner bliss, which comes from self-cultivation. We will constantly reap the rewards of this happiness. Confucius asks us: "Is there any joy greater than this?" This is exactly what my teacher, Professor Fang Dong Mei told me about the study and practice of Buddhism being "life's greatest enjoyment".

A person who seeks fame and fortune his whole life, won't necessarily obtain them. They must be a part of one's fate in order to be able to obtain them. If these privileges are not in our fate, no matter how hard we try we won't obtain them. But if we seek "life's greatest enjoyment" in this case, we can definitely obtain it. Because this is something our self-nature has originally with-in it, so everyone can obtain it. Everyone can become a sage, a saint, or Buddha and obtain life's greatest enjoyment. The way to achieve this is in eradicating material desires, knowing the true nature of things, being sincere, and being selfless. This put into practice is cultivating ourselves, managing our families, governing our nations, and creating peace on earth for all. Studying Buddhist principles is no different from studying Confucian principles because their principles are interconnected. Why do we want to study Buddhism? If you look at every sutra, the last line always says, "Everyone is way." Studying Buddhism's purpose is to obtain great happiness. "They pay their respects and go on their way," so where do they go? They go to put the teachings into practice; that is how they obtain great happiness, it's the inner joy achieved from cultivation.

The Guiding Principles of Traditional Chinese Culture - The Twelve Virtues

Traditional Chinese culture starts from moral relationships, which refers to our interpersonal relationships. There are five categories beginning with the natural love between parents and children. The "natural love between parents and children" is natural love, unconditional love, true love, it is the bond between parents and children.

"There are distinct responsibilities between a husband and wife." "Distinct" refers to different roles. Different physiologies have different roles. The husband bears the responsibility outside the household. He provides for the family's living income. The wife controls inside the household; her most important responsibility is to support her husband and raise the children, educating the children to be saints, sages, and men and women of noble character, this is the wife's role.

"There is loyalty and fairness between leaders and subordinates" is about honoring each other. Leaders and those who are being led need to morally support each other. "There is order between seniors and juniors"; "There is trust among friends." These five relationships are called the "Five Moral Relationships" and they encompass all interpersonal relationships. Everyone born on this earth, in one-way or another will experience relationships such as parents and children, husbands and wives, leaders and subordinates, juniors or seniors, and as friends.

These five relationships cannot be transcended; there is no individual who can be excluded from them. These five relationships represent the natural order. This order is a part of nature and not man-made, nor is it determined by anybody. It is the natural and self-regulated order taken by the universe. Aligning oneself with this order is called practicing the Way or "Dao".

As the saying goes, no man is an island. We are destined to live with each other, and so we need to possess virtue. "Virtue" refers to how we should act and follow the natural order of things as we engage in the Five Moral Relationships.

"The natural loving relationship between parents and children," is the starting point of the Way (Dao). This love is a natural virtue. It is an innate love. It does not need to be learned. All moral cultivation stems from this innate love. This concept is extremely important.

Our interpersonal relations, the interactions between partners, leaders and subordinates, siblings, and friends all relate to virtue. If we were able to follow "the natural love between parents and children" in our interactions, daily living, work, and dealing with all people, matters and things, our lives would be extremely blissful. If we violate this natural order, we inevitably encounter difficulties and consequent suffering.

So since ancient times what do the time-honored teachings of China teach us? They teach us to understand the "Dao" or proper "Way" and after that to follow the "Dao" and carry out its virtues.

The content of these virtues is represented by The Five Constants. "Constant" means it does not change. In later times, these Five Constants expanded into Eight Virtues. Thus we often say, "The Constant Morals and Eight Virtues". The Eight Virtues are filial piety, fraternity, loyalty, trust, propriety, righteousness, integrity and shamefulness. There is another version, which put together filial piety, fraternity, loyalty, trust, benevolence, love, harmony, and peace as the Eight Virtues. When we combine these two versions, we get twelve concepts: filial piety, fraternity, loyalty, trust, propriety, righteousness, integrity, shamefulness, benevolence, love, harmony, and peace. These twelve concepts are virtues.

As human beings, we should exemplify these virtues. Ever since thousands of years ago, these virtues were used by our ancient ancestors to guide us.

Virtuous behavior traverses each and every direction. It reaches the boundaries of the entire universe and transcends space and time. Throughout the world, no matter where we are, when we speak of these virtues, we are always able to touch people's hearts. Why? Because we are speaking to their hearts, this is what each and every one of our self-nature possesses originally. If we have someone help give rise to these virtues within of us, we are able to awaken to them. This is exactly what China's ancient culture discussed as "the moral constants and virtues," it is the foundation of being a good person.

In our thought, speech, and actions, in dealing with matters, people and things, we cannot violate these twelve concepts. We must make ourselves correspond to them; in doing so our natural capacity for good emerges. Cultivating virtue is letting go of bad habits and wandering thoughts that do not correspond to moral behavior. In doing so, our natural capacity for good comes forward. We can see that the fundamental guiding principles and teachings of China's ancient ancestors do not leave these twelve concepts. If we are able to truly carry out these twelve concepts, we will live as if we were in heaven. If we are able to see through to the true nature of life's impermanence, and let go of all trivial details and attachments, the life we will live is that of the Buddha. What could be happier and freer than that?

Filial Piety

Filial piety is the root of Chinese culture, just like of a big tree, it is the root. The people of ancient China say, "Of all the good deeds, filial piety is foremost." Confucius says, "Filial piety is the root of all virtues." Filial piety is the foundation of moral virtue, and the principle virtue of ourself-nature. Filial piety embodies the endless capability and goodness of our self-nature. So the awakening of a person's moral virtue begins with filial piety. Fulfilling one's filial duty is our self-nature's perfect manifestation of its innate capacity for good. If a person is not filial, no matter how many good deeds he performs, they are all false. Just like cut flowers in a vase, they are all very beautiful, but they have no roots. After a few days they wither and die. Therefore filial piety is the most important; without it we have no roots.

The character for filial piety 「孝」 is an associative compound ideogram. On the top is the character for old "lao" 「老」, on the bottom is the character for child, "zi" 「子」. Thus emerges a new character formed by these two

characters. It signifies that the former generation and the later generation are one entity; with the former generation, and the generation before that, going back forever, and the next generation, and the generation after that, going on forever. Recognizing this, we can finally understand why we have to pay respects to our ancestors, carefully perform the funeral rites of our parents, and remember them long after they are gone. Because our ancestors and our posterity are one whole entity, they cannot be considered separately. By extension, filial piety is what Buddhists would describe as a notion, "traversing through the past, present and future, and transcending time and space in each and every direction." We, ourselves, are one living entity with the universe and all living things in it. This is just like what Zhuangzi said: "The heaven and earth co-exist with me; all things and I are one."

"If we look upon all living beings as if they are our fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters, every time we meet someone the same age as our mother and father, we will then show them the same respect and filial piety that we do to our own parents. Likewise, when we meet children the same age as our own children, we must look upon them as our own children. So when can we finally realize that we are actually one entity? When we have seen thoroughly into our original nature, achieved perfect enlightenment, and when everything becomes clear; it is only then that we may realize that loving others is loving oneself."

Traditional Chinese education actually originates from filial piety. For instance, if we look at a baby, it can't speak, nobody teaches it, yet it unconditionally loves its parents, it trusts its parents. Its parents also unconditionally love their child. The ancient saints and sages saw this natural love between parents and their children as the most precious virtue in the entire world. They thought, how could we make sure that this natural love can be preserved forever; that is when they thought of education. This became the practice of filial piety. It is the foundation of all moral virtues. Chinese education simply teaches Filial Piety. As long as a person's love and compassion for his parents remains eternally constant, he will love his brothers, love his spouse, love his relatives, love his neighbors, love his friends, he will be loyal and love his country, and even be able to sacrifice his own needs for the needs of all living things. All is the result of the education of Filial Piety.

Fraternity

Respect is the stem of Chinese culture, like the trunk of a tree, all the other branches grow from it. If we take filial piety and carry it out in the serving of our elder siblings, we may call this Fraternity or "Ti" 「悌」. Fraternity means being respectful to and honoring those who are older than us. Brothers and sisters living in harmony are a representation of Fraternity. When we extend this idea, it means respecting our elders, respecting our teachers, and revering their teachings. So as students how we respectfully serve our teachers, this is also "Fraternity." This is the art of tradition handed down by the master to his student. Filial Piety is the root, honor and respect for one's teachers is the trunk. Traditional Chinese culture is found upon Filial Piety and respect for teachers and elders.

In life, when we receive karmic rewards and feel blessed and happy, what is the root cause of this? The root cause is filial piety and in respecting the teachings passed down to us by our teachers. Filial piety and respect for one's teachers are virtues of equal importance that complement each other, like a car with two wheels, a bird with a pair of wings; one side does not work without the other. Filial piety represents the Way, Fraternity represents the Virtue and together they are the Virtuous Way. Respecting and honoring our parents is Filial Piety, while serving and abiding by our teachers is Fraternity. So the Way of a saint or sage, is simply the carrying out of Filial Piety and respect and honor for our teachers. If all people were to be filial to their parents and loved ones, and respectful to their teachers and seniors, society would be stable, people would live in harmony with each other, we might even say that all kinds of conflicts would be resolved, and that world harmony could be upheld.

Loyalty

The character for "Loyalty" "zhong" 「忠」 is a combined associative character. On top of the character for "heart" "xin" 「心」, is the character for "center" "zhong" 「中」. The mind is neither biased nor deviated, this is the meaning of "Zhong" or Loyalty. In everything we do, we do our utmost. In regard to our country, in regard to our families, we are always loyal and devoted. We must not be biased or have deviated thoughts. As soon as we become biased, we hurt others and ourselves. When our hearts are not biased we are able to behave benevolently and without personal interest. Everywhere we go we give thought to others.

In Confucianism it is known as the Doctrine of Mean, in Buddhism it is known as the Middle Way. Both of these represent the meanings of "Zhong" or Loyalty. Loyalty means giving one's whole heart, being sincere and forthright. Half-heartedness is not Loyalty; it would carry bias and evil-mindedness. In Mahayana Buddhism it is known as

Sincerity. Loyalty is sincerity; two notions contain the same meaning. The Qing Dynasty politician Mr. Zeng Guofan once explained the word "sincerity" as in "Without giving rise to even a single thought is sincerity." This is also the meaning of Loyalty, being truly sincere.

When we have even a little bit of bias or deviated thinking, we have become deluded. This delusion is a result of our deluded mind. So in our daily lives, we must maintain a clear, impartial, and pure mind. In this way, our character will be righteous and honorable; this is displaying our utmost Loyalty.

If we study Buddhism, we can summarize the Buddha's teachings as having a sincere mind, a pure mind, an impartial mind, an awakened mind, a compassionate mind; this is all Loyalty. In regard to dealing with people, matters, and things, using a loyal and devoted mind, is following the Middle Way. Following the Middle Way means, being purified of defiling illusion, impartial, and having proper awareness; this is the way of the saints and sages and the Buddha.

Trust

Trust is about keeping one's word, to speak and keep one's promise. This is one of the most basic principles of being a good person. Those who speak and keep their word perform tasks responsibly. They do what they say and never deceive others. This kind of person will receive society's help and support. Confucius says, "Without credibility one cannot establish himself." Our ancient ancestors regarded the virtue of Trust as the basis of all moral behavior. The success of all things comes from the virtue Trust. If there is no Trust, it is impossible to accomplish anything.

The sutras say, "Trust is the mother of all good merits; it nurtures all the goodness of our true nature." Trust is the entrance to the Way. The merits achieved in worldly matters and spiritual matters alike all arise from our ability to believe. If we do not have any faith or Trust in the Way, we cannot cultivate or achieve any merits. So the greatness of our success is entirely based on the deepness of our faith or Trust.

Today in the world many places witness landslides or the phenomena of sinkholes. Why is this happening? It is because we have lost Trust as a result of doubt. The corresponding symptom of this in our bodies is the breaking down of our immune systems and having no resistance; all pathogens are able to infect us. When people have doubts in regard to any situation, they lose their resistance. When our faith is firm we maintain our resistance. No matter what element or bacteria tries to infringe upon us, we remain unaffected. We will not be harmed. So faith is extremely important.

We must have faith in our ancestors, in the ancient saints and sages, and in the Buddha. We must establish our faith; believe that human nature is originally good, that all living beings are originally a Buddha. Our Trust can be built on this foundation. Those who truly believe can achieve what Professor Fang Dong Mei explained as, "life's greatest enjoyment". They can live happily and free.

Propriety

Propriety is the standard in which we regulate our behavior. Our each and every movement, word, smile all must be in accordance with Propriety. Buddhism teaches about, "maintaining a solemn and dignified manner." Maintaining a solemn and dignified manner simply stated means being courteous, observing etiquette. Confucius says, "Those who do not know propriety have nothing to stand upon." In society in the past, if one did not understand propriety, he or she would have no standing in society. So since ancient times, China has been called the land of propriety and righteousness, a place where everyone knows and upholds Propriety.

Everyone likes to be around individuals who uphold propriety and observe precepts. If we are able to make everyone we meet like us and not dislike us, it means that we have conducted ourselves successfully. So propriety is a virtue we must cultivate.

Propriety is about codes of conduct. It is society's order, established standards and customs. People are social animals. If there are no established standards and rules society becomes a mess. So families have household rules, countries have national laws. The text "the Guidelines for Being a Good Person (Di Zi Gui)" is one hundred and thirteen rules every family can collectively follow. In addition, every family also has its own special rules, all of which can be compiled into a family genealogy, allowing the whole clan to collectively follow it.

Today's laws are also included as Propriety. So, the scope of Propriety is extremely vast. If all people could abide by the rules, abide by the law, uphold Propriety, and show mutual respect for each other, everyone could live in harmony

together, resolve conflicts, reach a stable society and achieve peace on earth.

Righteousness

Righteousness is adhering to proper principles; doing the right thing and abiding by the rules of nature. In other words, whether in regard to others or ourselves, our thoughts, words and actions are fair, reasonable, and compliant with the law and do not violate the moral principles, this is Righteousness. This is what we call nature's conscience.

Righteousness is fulfilling one's duty. Serving all living things and not seeking karmic reward or being concerned about rights, this is called duty. Today we call this doing volunteer work. Doing volunteer work simply means not wanting a reward. It means voluntarily serving society, serving the country, serving all living things; this is one kind of Righteousness and justice.

If members of a group were able to understand this logic and were able to uphold the principle of placing importance on collective duty and less on personal benefit; simultaneously if people could take the love and kinship felt for their parents and children and extend it to the relationships above and below themselves, we would all be able to care for each other, be more tolerant to each other, cherish one another, protect one another and work together to mutually exist and mutually prosper.

When all the people of a group respect the group, love the group, do not slander the group or harm the group, we can consider this a Righteousness and moral group. This kind of group is a good example of Righteousness for the rest of the world to follow. When our hearts are Righteous, our moral and benevolent, caring and grateful behavior can influence society and help save all living things; to help all living things return to goodness. This is precisely how a modern sage fulfills his duty.

Integrity

Integrity means being honest and clean not corrupt, not seeking improper rewards, and not taking even the slightest advantage of anyone. In China, since the Han dynasty, over two thousand years ago, when an emperor wanted to select the best officials there were two qualifications that each candidate had to possess. One was Filial Piety, and the other was Integrity.

Being frugal is a virtue. In everyday life, by fulfilling one's responsibilities, not being wasteful with even the slightest bit of food or drop of water, and by leading a simple, frugal life and not indulging in luxuries, we are practicing the virtue of Integrity. We must often reflect on the reality that there are still many people in the world on the verge of starvation, without food, clothing or shelter. So if we are able to drink even one glass of water, eat one bowl of rice, we must be grateful for this privilege. At the same time, we must open our hearts, to be constantly mindful of those suffering, and do our utmost to help them.

In regard to material things, we must practice conserving. We should not waste or discard things at will. We have to often think about the difficulty of obtaining such material resources; they do not come easy, and should not be taken for granted. We must not covet extravagance. Our abundant goods should be given to others, to aid those who are suffering. When our body and mind are pure and at peace, our physical strength is naturally ample. Thus plain and simple food is sufficient to maintain our health and well being.

When we live a life that is austere and without luxury, our hearts are less likely to harbor greed, anger, ignorance and arrogance. We become immune to corruptions, live selflessly, and are able to resist the negative stimuli around us. Buddhism emphasizes practice rather than words. Thus, we must be able to actually put into practice what the Dharma teaches and be an example for others to follow. We must not become even a little bit affected by fame and fortune or the five desires brought about by our six sensations. If we work diligently and persistently, focusing on our practice and cultivation without seeking rewards, naturally we will be rewarded.

By encouraging ourselves to act in this way all our lives, others will take notice of our integrity. They will be deeply moved and turn around and wish to study with us. This kind of transformative influence can have significant impact and rectify the present corruption in society.

Shamefulness

Shamefulness is the awareness of shame, having remorse, feeling ashamed when not being able to live up to one's duty. In Chinese moral education, having a sense of shame is about maintaining a clear conscious in thoughts, words

and actions.

The character "can" 「慚」 means reflecting on whether our words can live up to our conscience. The character "kui" 「愧」 is about facing public opinion and the criticism of the outside world so as to have a sense of apprehension about committing crimes. By not going against our conscience on the inside, we will not be vulnerable to public criticism on the outside. This is the virtue of Shamefulness.

Knowing Shamefulness helps us to set standards for our behavior. So with our rise of thoughts, words and actions, we must think as to whether or not we have violated such standards. We must reflect upon whether or not our actions will let down our parents, ancestors, or our own conscience. Will these actions cause others to criticize and denounce us? This is having a sense of shame, using our internal and external strength to reflect upon ourselves.

"The awareness of shame is akin to courage." Why are people able to boldly dedicate themselves to progress and be strongly determined to succeed? This strength is nothing more than knowing shame. This is a person's motivation to forge ahead diligently. Buddhism teaches, "to boldly and powerfully forge ahead", Confucianism teaches to, "make constant progress day after day". Who can do this? Those who have a sense of shame are able to do this. If we can know Shamefulness, we can definitely make a determined effort and be diligent in improving ourselves.

The sutras tell us: "All things possess the Buddha nature." "All Tathagatas are one Dharma body." If there is still a sentiment being that has not become a Buddha, it is because he has not yet fully realised the virtue of his self-nature. Knowing this should remind us of a sense of shame. In this way, we can understand why all buddha's and bodhisattvas respond to the needs of all living things seeking enlightenment. As a result, those who have just begun on the path to enlightenment feel incredibly grateful and a sense of shame naturally arises.

Only those who truly understand the principle of shamefulness can abide by the teachings of the Buddha and diligently cultivate. They are grateful for the help of the buddha's, bodhisattvas, teachers and virtuous friends. This is known as "repaying the Four Kindnesses above and relieving the sufferings of those in the Three Realms below." Thus, shamefulness is an extremely important virtue in our cultivation, and can help us achieve moral virtue and benevolence.

Benevolence and Love

The character "Ren" 「仁」 is also an associative compound character. One who is benevolent understands others. When he thinks of himself he immediately thinks of others. Himself and others are not separate entities. He uses a sincere, genuine and compassionate mind to put others before himself. "Do not do unto others what you do not wish others to do unto you." The things we are not willing to do, we cannot demand others to do. Loving others is loving oneself. Compassion, benevolence and universal love are all the meaning of "Ren" 「仁」 Benevolence. A Benevolent person cherishes others. Loving others, is the expansion of our natural love; expanding it to know that "each and every person needs our love".

We feel sympathy for people in today's world. They do not know to love themselves, and similarly do not know to love others. Failure to maintain one's innate goodness means not loving oneself. The Buddha said, "All living beings are originally Buddhas." They have just regressed to the state of deluded beings creating negative karma, this is not loving oneself. We must love ourselves in order to love others. Loving others starts from loving our parents, our spouse and children, our family and relatives. It then gradually expands to loving all people.

Buddhism states that not only do we need to love all human beings, we also need to love all trees, plants, mountains and rivers. We have to use our sincerity, purity, impartiality and enlightenment in our interactions with all things. Just as the heaven and earth is without even the slightest selfishness, discrimination or attachment in sheltering and accommodating all living things, we must show compassion and love for the entire universe.

When people understand this love for others, they will not harm others. Today, most people's thoughts relate to personal benefit at the expense of others. This is because they have lost compassion. "One who is benevolent has no enemies." Benevolent people possess boundless compassion; their hearts know no enemies, no opposition. If everyone were to advocate benevolence and love, society would be harmonious and positive and all conflicts would be resolved.

Harmony and Peace

Chinese people emphasize harmony and peace. This simply stated means, living in harmony with each other and treating each other equally. We often say "Peace, Harmony and Happiness." If we have harmony, we are peaceful and happy. If we want to have peace of mind, we must first be impartial. Only when we are impartial can we have peace of mind. Today our hearts are not impartial, how can we achieve impartiality? In the Chinese word, harmony is a precondition to impartiality. When we engage with others we have to be kind and harmonious. In this way our hearts will naturally become impartial.

The Buddha teaches us to cultivate "the Six Principles of Harmony". This is the foundation of all Buddhist precepts. The first of "the Six Principles of Harmony" is "Sharing the same viewpoints or goals." This means establishing common understanding. This is where Harmony takes root. Everyone shares a common view, a common way of thinking, and strives toward a common goal and direction. This is the basis of Harmony. Second, "Abiding by the same precepts". This means abiding by the laws and rules. In China, the text "The Guidelines for Being a Good Person (Di Zi Gui)" is the epitome of all social conventions. This is the common subject of learning for all families. Third is, "Living and practicing together harmoniously ". If we consider the greater environment, everyone shares the earth. If we consider the smaller environment, we live together in a city, town, or even a cultivation centre. Therefore, everyone must regulate own words and actions, so as to not disrupt others, thereby allowing everyone to have a positive learning and living environment.

The fourth is, "Speaking without controversy." This means not engaging in disputes. The fifth is, "Experiencing the inner peace and happiness from practicing together harmoniously." This means everyone is happy, and finds happiness in cultivating. The Sixth is, "Sharing benefits harmoniously." This means everyone's basic needs are met fairly. If a group can truly achieve the Six Principles of Harmony, everyone will enjoy equality. With such equality, they can attain peace of mind. And with peace, there comes happiness. The attainment of such peace and happiness is what Buddhism refers to as "breaking through delusion, realising enlightenment, ceasing suffering and attaining happiness."

Conclusion: Traditional Chinese Culture Promotes World Peace

In conclusion, the Twelve Virtues are the Chinese people's standard for conducting oneself in the world. This is what our ancestors taught to us. We accept their sagacious education. What is the meaning of "Sage"? If we use Buddhism to explain, it means a person who has realized his innate capacity for goodness. His thoughts, words and actions completely manifest his self-nature... So the fact that China can have long-term peace and stability and can contribute to the development of world culture is entirely due to the blessings and moral virtues of our ancestors.

In ancient China, small children were taught proper values. When these children grew up they became people who understood the principles of moral behavior and the law of cause and effect; they would not break the law or commit crimes. They always thought about the wellbeing of others, of society, of the country, of the nation, and of the world. This is truly developing great merit and great undertakings. This is worthy of our thoughtful consideration and represents the most important and fundamental way of contributing to a better world.

If the sage education of traditional Chinese culture could be popularized throughout the world, all of the problems that we face today would be completely solved. All the disasters on earth would disappear. Why? Because everyone would enjoy good fortune. "Those who enjoy good fortune live on auspicious land, and auspicious lands are where the fortunate live." The teachings of Confucius and Mahayana Buddhism are able to offer us genuine good fortune. This fortune is not from the world around us but is innate to our true nature.

We wish that all the Chinese around the world would perform ancestral remembrance ceremonies in the place where they live. We further wish that the practice of ancestral remembrance could be spread to all ethnic groups all over the world. We want to benefit all people, and the best way is simply to promote moral sage education, especially the education of Filial Piety. This is the number one meritorious deed. We hope that all those insightful individuals of the world will collectively promote ancestral remembrance. If we can do this, all the people of the world will live a truly blessed and beautiful life. It really can be achieved!

Finally, from the bottom of our hearts, we wish everyone the best of health, peace, longevity and wisdom! May the United Kingdom and its people be blessed with peace and prosperity. May the world achieve peace and harmony! May great harmony flourish again! Thank You!

Chin Kung AM

