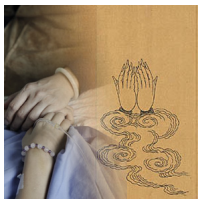


Bringing Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva to Life

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
Tuesday, 04 January 2011 11:30



[[Master's Teachings](#)]

In Buddhism, there is a Bodhisattva who embodies the spirit of compassion. This Bodhisattva, named Avalokitesvara, is so full of love that she cannot bear for people to suffer. When she sees or hears people in distress or difficulty, she goes to them very quickly to offer aid and relief. Exercising wisdom and compassion, she not only helps them out of their material difficulties, but guides them with the Dharma so they may gain the insight to liberate themselves from their suffering and attain true happiness.

Actually, all of us can be Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva. Deep in our hearts, we have the same great compassion. Why have we not been able to tap into this compassion? It is because it has been buried away beneath our afflictions and delusions. Once we clean away this layer of afflictions and delusions, we will discover our true heart, full of love, compassion, and understanding. Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva is not just a figure in Buddhism we hear about—in fact, we are Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva and Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva is us.

There is a lot of suffering in the world. Seeing the suffering of others, we can do as Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva does and go to people to help them out of their plight.

The story of Mr. Chang is a very good example. Mr. Chang is an elderly man who used to own a lumber company. At the prime of his life, he became addicted to gambling and incurred so much debt that he had to sell his business. His life went downhill from there. Faced with his misfortunes, he lost all sense of hope and motivation and gave up on himself. He became very self-isolated and eventually was so poor that he subsisted on food scraps from scavenging. He lived like this for many years.

One day, Tzu Chi volunteers came to learn of Mr. Chang's situation. They decided to visit him and after seeing what terrible conditions he lived in, they began to visit him regularly to offer aid and care. Mr. Chang, however, had developed a deep mistrust of people and was far from welcoming. Tzu Chi volunteers had to be very gentle and loving with him, patiently building rapport with him over a period of four years. Gradually, touched by their sincere care, he began to open his heart to the volunteers. Seeing as he was still able-bodied, they encouraged him to get out more and interact with people, and invited him to help out at the local Tzu Chi office. He began to do this. When he was there, he would help mop the floor and wash vegetables in the kitchen. He was very motivated and whenever he was finished with one task, he would quickly find another. Later, with the help of Tzu Chi volunteers, he found a job. After many years of interactions with Tzu Chi volunteers, he decided to enter training to become a certified Tzu Chi volunteer. Now, he is a certified member of Tzu Chi's [Tzu Cheng Faith Corps](#) and goes with other volunteers to help people in need. So transformed is his life now, that looking at him one would never guess the life he once led.

His story illuminates the heart of Tzu Chi's spirit and practice. In Tzu Chi, we learn to feel for

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others' suffering. Through our efforts to understand our own suffering and afflictions, we gain the insight and understanding to help others. With this, we can better relate to others and help them out of their difficulties.

As Mr. Chang's case shows us, these difficulties are often not only physical and material. It therefore takes more than one-time aid. That is why we visit our care recipients regularly, giving them encouragement, support and love in their time of difficulty. We seek to be their spiritual friend, and by sharing our experiences and insights into life with them they can gradually open their hearts and break free from their afflictions. Then they can begin to see life differently and consider doing something that is more meaningful or beneficial to others. If we can continue to offer care and support, being their friend and guide, people can be transformed, just like Mr. Chang.

Doing this, we bring to life the spirit of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva.

From Dharma Master Cheng Yen's Talks
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