

Grand Premiere of Animated Film Ven. Jian Zhen in Malaysia

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The Grand Premiere of the animated film, "Ven. Jian Zhen", was held on May 15, 2011, at Mid Valley's GSC, Malaysia. The film traced the path taken by Venerable Jian Zhen, who, with great determination, crossed the sea to Japan to spread Buddhism.

The Da Ai TV production team spent almost 5 years researching historical evidence, and making on-site trips, for their production of the animated film on "Ven. Jian Zhen". This production was made as a tribute to the Venerable Jian Zhen, a Buddhist monk in the Tang Dynasty. The film will be shown simultaneously in cinemas in Kuala Lumpur, Petaling Jaya, Melaka, Penang and Johor Bahru, commencing May 19, 2011.

The Venerable was dedicated in spreading Buddhism to Japan. He had made five attempts to cross the sea to Japan, but was unsuccessful. Despite having to face many difficulties, the death of his disciple, the obstacles imposed by officials, and most of all, the loss of his vision, he persevered. Finally, on his sixth attempt and at the age of 66, he succeeded in his mission. Besides promoting Buddhism, he had also made a tremendous contribution to Japan by introducing Chinese medicine, Chinese architecture, calligraphy and painting, all of which have a profound influence in the development of Japanese arts and culture.



A total of 300 guests attended this grand premiere held in a GSC cinema at Mid Valley. The many distinguished guests who graced the occasion included Mr Tang Jian-Ming, CEO of Da Ai TV, Mr Xiao Yi-Jun, Production Manager of Da Ai TV, Mr Luo You-Zhong, Head of Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Malaysia, President of the Kuala Lumpur-Selangor Branch of the Malaysian Buddhist Association, Dharma Master Ming Ji and other Dharma Masters, Dr Ong See Yew, President of the Malaysian Buddhist Youths Association, Mr Song Yao Rui, President of the Malaysian Fo Guang Society, Sister Theresa Lina Chew of the Roman Catholic Metropolitan Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, Mr Lai Zhao Hong, World Vision Malaysia's representative, and representatives from various charitable organizations, and social, economic, cultural and educational organizations. Also present were representatives from the media.

The film transported the audience 1,200 years back in time to experience the amazing determination of the Venerable in spreading the Dharma. Through the movie, the power of sheer determination as a driving force was felt, and the values of humanistic Buddhism were presented with clarity.

A historic event

After the premiere, Tan Sri Dato' Lee Kim Yew said that he had read a brief biography of the Venerable before but it was incomplete. He commented that the biography in animation is well-suited to the taste of the new generation, and he could understand why Master Cheng Yen

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would want to produce such a film. He also pointed out that the screening of the film at this time is appropriate and carries an added meaning since Japan had recently faced the onslaught of an earthquake/tsunami/nuclear disaster.



Mr Luo You Zhong of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office was very emotional after the show. He could not help but think of the sheer determination of the Venerable Monk, who, in his opinion, was crucial in the successful development of Buddhism in Japan.

Zhang Ji An, AIFM DJ and movie critic, commented that despite living in an era when transportation was such a huge problem, the Venerable was so determined that he devoted his whole life in his endeavor. In contrast, modern people, who have all the conveniences of transportation and communication, give up so easily. Religion aside, we should therefore learn from the film about the spirit of great sacrifice. The film was a breakthrough in that it was the first attempt to present Buddhism in animation and should be regarded as a milestone in the history of Malaysian Buddhism. He also added that to showcase the film on the eve of Vesak was even more meaningful.

When it is a right thing, just do it

Sister Theresa Lina Chow shared, "This film made me think of the great challenges faced by the Christian nuns, who had travelled over lands and seas from the West to unknown lands, to preach Christianity."

Sister Theresa Lina Chow could empathize with the challenges faced by Venerable Jian Zhen, as Christians had faced similar predicament in spreading the Christian faith. She was impressed by the Venerable's determination in doing the right thing, and Master Cheng Yen's philosophy on "love as management, precepts as system", both of which could guide everyone in his/her life, regardless of religion.

"Every religion preaches charity, and Tzu Chi has done an outstanding job in this respect in that it promotes universal love through charitable actions of its volunteers.



"Charity is highlighted by every religion. Yet, without real actions of serving mankind, mere praying would render religious belief futile to humanity. The Venerable made a sacrifice of himself and disregarded all physical challenges and opposition from a worldly view point, all because he vowed to preach the Dharma," Sister Theresa Lina Chew said thoughtfully.

The importance of "Precepts" for the Buddhist Sangha

The President of the Kuala Lumpur-Selangor Branch of the Malaysian Buddhist Association, Dharma Master Ming Ji, expressed that the film was educational in spreading the Dharma. He

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was of the view that Buddhists should be grateful towards the Four-fold grace of the Buddhist Triple Gems. For Buddhism to survive the test of time to last until today, it took the efforts of the monks, who renounced the worldly life, and common disciples to carry on the Buddhist missions. The life stories of Venerable Xuan Zhuang and Venerable Jian Zhen are meaningful classics and the characters are examples for all to learn from."

Dharma Master Chuan Wen, Abbot of Hor Beng Zen Monastery, said that the film was good for the general public, young and old. She pointed out that the animation of Little Monk Yi Xiu was for the children. It was rare to have an animation that could suit both young and old.

She added that most Buddhists know the story of Venerable Xuan Zhuang, but not Venerable Jian Zhen. She compared the precepts of the Buddhist monks to the robe they wore. The precepts, if not strictly kept by the monks, would cause the fall of the Sangha character. Venerable Jian Zhen knew well about the importance of precepts, and vowed to go East to complete his mission. His determined spirit served as a reminder for all Buddhists, not just to feel the joy of learning the Dharma, but also to always portray themselves as true practitioners of Buddhist values.



"If none of you is willing to go (to Japan), then I will go!" said Venerable Jian Zhen when his disciples hesitated to give him a positive reply.

Dharma Master Chuan Wen said that the above scene in the film was familiar in real life. Hesitation is normally due to unnecessary worries, and the lack of deep understanding of the Dharma. The scene depicted the difference between the Master and his disciples in the level of attainment in Buddhist practice.

Finally, she pointed out that Venerable Jian Zhen was able to take things as they came, and never swayed; and he was able to preach the Dharma wherever he might be. It took great wisdom for a Dharma practitioner to be so.

A mind purifying film

"Ven. Jian Zhen" as a film, carries a message. Mr Tang Jian Ming, CEO of Da Ai TV, hoped that through the combined elements of technical know-how and creativity, the audience, while enjoying the film, would be able to discover its core value, and return to the very basic values of humanity.

Mr Xiao Yi-Jun, the film's Production Manager, said that the single-mindedness in serving Buddhism as exemplified by Ven. Jian Zhen was the highlight of the film.

Echo Chien, CEO of Tzu Chi Foundation Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur-Selangor), was happy that the film, after much re-scheduling, managed to go on the big screen on the eve of Vesak. She

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was grateful for the good turnout at the premiere, which served to indicate the high expectation and kind support from the guests.

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