

A Generous Poor Old Lady

Written by Tan Kim Hion
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After the 76-year old grandma inserted the only 100 Kyat she had into the bamboo bank for good deeds, she danced with joy. This shows that even the very poor can give generously.

During Buddha's time, there was a story about a poor old lady who made an offering to Buddha.

Maha Kasyapa (also known as Kasyapa) always begged for alms from the poor so that the poor could have a chance to receive merit. One day, he met a poor old lady who was very sincere in offering alms but did not have anything to offer. Kasyapa told her, "It is alright to offer a small piece of cloth from the clothing you are wearing. It is still considered as a Dana." The poor old lady immediately tore a small piece of cloth from her old clothing and offered it respectfully to Kasyapa.

When Lord Buddha heard about it, he told his disciples to be appreciative of the thoughtfulness of the poor old lady. Since then, the monk's robe always has a 'patch of cloth' which serves as a reminder of the generous poor old lady.

In Myanmar, there was an identical story.

After Cyclone Nargis hit Myanmar in May 2008, Tzu Chi volunteers went to more than 30 villages in Kyautan and Kunyangon Districts to hand over paddy seeds and fertilizers to the farmers. They told the victims about the story of the bamboo bank and encouraged the villagers to cultivate merits.

By watching the movie, the villagers began to understand how Master Cheng Yen and the 30 housewives had used the bamboo bank to collect money for charity. They knew they could do the same, so they started to make their own bamboo banks.

One day, when Tzu Chi volunteers were distributing relief goods at Ma Yann Bay Village, they also told the story of bamboo bank. Seventy-six year old Daw Duo Chi quickly took out money to donate, as did many other villagers. She said, "My house was destroyed by the cyclone, and I will now be staying with either my children or relatives. I have only 100 Kyat (approximately USD0.30)." She donated what little money she had as she wanted to help others in need. She was indeed very happy after donating; and she sang and danced on the spot, influencing all present to do the same.

In June 2008, Typhoon Fengshen hit the Philippines, affecting 410,000 people and had a death toll of more than 1,000. Tzu Chi provided them with rice and daily necessities and also shared the story of bamboo bank.

When Tzu Chi volunteers conducted the relief distribution at a Catholic College in Aklan, they noticed that the school was damaged by the Typhoon. The priest was very sad and worried. He was very pale and was unshaven. When Tzu Chi volunteers met the priest again after the relief,

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he was clean-shaven. He said he was encouraged by the story of the bamboo bank, and knew that if everybody worked together, there would be no insurmountable difficulties. He encouraged his followers to emulate the Tzu Chi Way.

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