

An Overview of Social Well-being in Humanistic Buddhism

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ABSTRACT

Most of the main ideas in Buddhism, such as compassion, loving-kindness, giving, not killing, not stealing and so on, are associated with social well-being. Sakyamuni Buddha not only taught us through sutras but also presented himself as a positive example. Nowadays, 2500 years later, Venerable Master Hsing Yun, the developer of modern Humanistic Buddhism, and founder of Hsi Lai University, follows the Buddha's way and had devoted all his life to the activities of social well-being.

This paper is divided into three parts. First, I will quote some Mahayana sutras which illustrate social well-being. Second, I will explore the Humanistic Buddhist perspective on current social issues. Third, I will enumerate the activities developed for social well-being by Fo Guang Shan. I will conclude with a note of respect for all the bodhisattvas who are the truthful followers of the Buddha and enthusiastically promote the spirit of Buddhism worldwide.

Introduction

Sakyamuni Buddha spent 45 or 49 years teachings after he attained full enlightenment under the Bodhi tree at Bodhigaya in India 2,500 years ago. At that very moment of enlightenment, he realized “dependent origination” - that all sentient beings and non-living things in this world are interdependent.

The Law of Dependent Origination is one of the most important teachings of the Buddha, and it is also very profound. The basis for dependent origination is that all things are built on a set of relationships, in which the arising and cessation of factors depend on other factors which condition them. This principle can be given in a short statement of four lines:

When this is, that is
This arising, that arises
When this is not, that is not
When ceasing, that ceases. (Samyuttanikaya. X, T02 0067a)

The Buddha, having practiced the bodhisattva way by serving all sentient beings and benefiting society for three great kalpas¹, achieved Buddhahood before Maitreya Bodhisattva, who used to be the elder Dharma brother of Sakyamuni Buddha and focused on his own practice instead of serving others.²

Even though Sakyamuni Buddha made a great effort to benefit all sentient beings, over the years Buddhism decayed in India because the monastics stressed the practice of self-liberation but ignored social well-being. In *Religion of India*, Louis Dumont describes the Indian context as having two kinds of people: “those that live in the world and those that have renounced it.” Those who in the forest he styles “renouncers” or “virtuosos”³ and those that lived in the world were ordinary people. The former kind was termed “disciples of salvation” and the latter kind “religious.” The religions were characterized by the provisions they made to meet the needs of the people living in society. Religions provided prayers, rituals, sacrifices, deities and

sacraments that addressed both the immediate and ultimate needs of these people. By setting forth moral guidelines, the religions adjusted the sacred to the secular, thereby sanctioning life in the world. By holding funeral rituals, they provided for the welfare of the dead and the afterlife. The religions supplied the kind of hierarchical cosmology needed by people living in a group-dominated society.

The “disciplines of salvation,” however, had none of these group-oriented characteristics. “Disciplines of salvation” were neither philosophers nor religions, but took the path leading to liberation or nirvana. Supra-mundane rather than mundane ends represented the focus of the disciplines of salvation. No provisions were made for marriage, funerals, or even for social interaction, since the disciples were those who had renounced secular life and society. It was from such a disciple of salvation that early Buddhism began.

Max Weber described early Buddhism as an asocial system of “radical salvation striving” that set out a path for those ascetics who had fled the world, but had little to offer to people who remained in the world.⁴ Thus, gradually, Buddhism decayed and virtually disappeared in India.

The Madhyamagama says that one who sees dependent origination sees the Buddha.⁵ Therefore, Buddhism for social well-being is the key for the maintenance, existence and development of Buddhism and the way of achieving Buddhahood. In Humanistic Buddhism for Social Well-being, Dr. Ananda W.P. Guruge, the Dean of Academic Affairs at Hsi Lai University, has cited many writings from the Agama Sutras to illustrate the ideas of social well-being in Humanistic Buddhism. I will also quote some Mahayana Sutras to show the concepts, the principles and way of social well-being taught by the Buddha.

The textual proof of the concept of social well-being

The idea of Mahayana Buddhism, based on the emptiness of prajna advocated by Nagarjuna in the 1st to 2nd century, develops its great and wonderful function through the manifestation of social well-being. Here I will cite some Mahayana Sutras to illustrate this concept.

The concept of social well-being – altruism and compassion

1. *The Saddharmapundarika-sutra (Lotus Sutra)* says,

“There is no peace in the triple world,
Just like in the burning house,
Which is full of various suffering
And which is extremely terrifying.
There are always the sufferings
Of birth, old-age, illness and death.
Such fires as these burn endlessly.
The Tathagata, who has already left
The burning house of the triple world,
Lives in tranquility
And dwells at ease in the forest.
Now this triple world is my property,
And the sentient beings in it are my children.
There are now many dangers here,

And I am the only one who can protect them.”⁶

The Buddha, spoken of as a “mother” to sentient beings, is anxious to relieve the sorrow and suffering of her children. Such compassion and altruism is the basic idea of Buddhist social well-being.

2. The *Vimalakirtinircksa-sutra* shows the layman Vimalakirtinircksa’s compassion which is the basis of Buddhist social well-being. Vimalakirtinircksa, being sick and lying in bed surrounded by many visitors, said,

“I am sick because all sentient beings are sick.
I will recover when all sentient beings recover.”⁷

3. In the chapter of the Ten Vows of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva of the *Avatamsaka-sutra*, the Ninth Vow is to be in accordance with all sentient beings.
4. The *Maha-parinirvana-sutra* and the *Lankavatara-sutra*, emphasize that all sentient beings have Buddha Nature and can also become Buddhas. This is a view of respecting human rights and equality. It also expands to all non-sentient beings such as the mountains, rivers, trees and grass which correspond to ecology and protecting the environment.⁸
5. The *Sukhavativyuha-sutra* explains that the Buddha came into being in this *Saha* world for emancipating all sentient beings. It says,

“The Tathagata came to this world with endless compassion for rescuing all sentient beings in the triple worlds and bringing them the true Dharma joy.”⁹

The principle of social well-being – in accordance with all sentient beings

1. In the *Bhaisajyaguru-Vaidurya-Prabhasa-Tathagata-Sutra*, the Medicine Buddha made twelve vows before he became a Buddha to take care of both the mental and physical illnesses of all sentient beings. The second and third vows are as the followings,

“The second vow. ‘I vow that, after my reincarnation and having attained Perfect Enlightenment, my body should be like a crystal in spotless purity both within and without, with splendid radiant light, in the majesty of its virtue, sitting serenely adorned with the aureole, brighter than the sun and the moon, I shall reveal my great power to all the beings in obscurity, in order that they may act freely according to their bent.’

“The third vow. ‘I vow that, after my reincarnation and having attained Perfect Enlightenment, I should grant by means of boundless wisdom, to all beings the inexhaustible things that they may need and that they may be free from any want.’¹⁰

2. In the *Srimala-simha-nada-sutra*, Srimala made ten great vows after the Buddha’s teaching. The sixth vow and the eighth vow fully show us the

principles of social well-being. These two vows are the following:

“The Lord Buddha, from now on till my enlightenment, I will not collect any treasure for my own. And all my belongings will go to the poor and needy”

“The Lord Buddha, from now on till my enlightenment, I will not escape from all sentient beings in lack of taking care. Besides, I will settle them down and eradicate their sufferings.”¹¹

The method of social well-being – giving

1. The sixth and seventh vows of the Medicine Buddha in the *Bhaisajyaguru-Vaidurya-Prabhasa-Tathagata-sutra* that show us how to conduct social well-being are the following:
 - “The sixth vow. ‘I vow that, after my reincarnation and having attained Perfect Enlightenment, those beings who are physically inferior, with imperfect senses, such as, the ugly, stupid, blind, lunatic, or sick in many respects, shall all of them, when they hear of my name, regain their normal appearance and become intelligent. All their senses shall be perfectly restored, and they shall not suffer from disease.’
 - “The seventh vow. ‘I vow that, after my reincarnation and having attained Perfect Enlightenment, those who are tormented by diseases, who have nobody to whom they can seek for help, without relatives, without a home; these poor and miserable beings shall all of them be free from diseases and troubles, and shall enjoy perfect health of body and mind, once my name reaches their ears. They shall have families, friends and properties a-plenty, and shall all be brought to the supreme Enlightenment of Buddha.’¹²
2. In *the Avatamsaka-sutra*, Sudhana-sresthi-daraka, having visited 53 teachers, made a vow that is the principle for not only material relief but also spiritual instruction leading to social well-being. It says,

“Any person in need comes to request help from me, I will open the storehouse of treasure for their free collection. By the way, I will teach them not committing evil deeds, Not harming all sentient beings, not cultivating incorrect view, And practicing detachment.”¹³
3. The *Atasahasrika-prajnaparanita-sutra* elaborates on how to express altruism by providing anything required by all sentient beings, such as food, drinks, a vehicle, house, furniture, security guard, perfume or musical instrument.¹⁴
4. The three chapters of the *Suvainaprabhasa-sutra* – “Curing diseases”, “the Son of the Elder Jih-shiew” and “Sacrificing the body” – are taught by the Buddha as examples of social well-being. In the Chapter “Curing disease”, the Elder Jih-shiew taught a therapy to his son in order to heal a plague in his country. In the chapter “Son of the Elder Jih-shiew”, compassion is seen in an analogy of floating water that survives all the fishes in need of water. The Chapter “Sacrificing the body” describes the story of the Buddha who sacrificed himself to a hungry tigress and her

baby in one of his previous lives. The social well-being mentioned above not only benefits human beings but also takes care of all animals.¹⁵

5. The *Brahamajala-sutra* focuses on altruism rather than self-benefit, and how to spread compassion even to non-sentient beings.
 - The 2nd Major precept says, “A bodhisattva should nurture Buddha Nature with compassion, gratitude and respect for helping all sentient beings to be blissful and happy.”
 - The precept of self-praising and slandering others says, “A bodhisattva should take on the insult for all the sentient beings, accept all the negative things and bestow good things on others.”
 - The 20th Minor precept says, “When a Buddhist practices creature life relief, he should think that all the males are my fathers and all the females are my mothers, I was given birth by them. Therefore, all the sentient beings in the six realms are my parents. If I kill and eat them, it means I kill my parents as well as myself...When we see any person kill the creatures, we should rescue and save them. Meanwhile, we should teach and explain the bodhisattva precepts to them.”
 - The 21st Minor precept says, “A Buddhist should not fight back and take revenge on those who kill their parents, kinsfolk, or an emperor. For killing and revenge are not correspondent to filial piety.”¹⁶

The Humanistic Buddhist Perspective on Current Social Issues

Early Chinese Buddhist temples conducted a lot of activities for social well-being such as praying for rain, supplying foods, study classes, funeral services and so forth. Humanistic Buddhism, founded by Ven. Master Hsing Yun, is concerned with all the issues encountered by all sentient beings, especially human beings. In accordance with *Fo Guang Study (compiled by Fo Guang Shan Committee of Religious Affair comprising all the ideas, way, goal and so forth of Humanistic Buddhism)*, the Humanistic Buddhist perspective on current social issues are as follows:

1. The viewpoint of different spiritual practices

Buddhism can be divided into five vehicles – Buddhism of the human vehicle has the idea of Confucianism. The five constant virtues – benevolence, righteousness, propriety, knowledge and faith - are similar to the five precepts – no killing, no stealing, no sexual misconduct, no lying and no alcohol. The idea of repaying another’s kindness in Buddhism corresponds to the funeral rites for parents and the worship of ancestors in Confucianism. The Ten Commandments of Christianity is very similar with the ten wholesome deeds in Buddhism. Christians and Muslims believe in a creator being and their goal are to be re-born as a celestial being. The goal, to be born in the celestial realm, for other spiritual traditions is similar to the heavenly realm in Buddhism. (*Fo Guang Study*, p.315)

2. The way of political participation

Government is the management agency for most human affairs. Humans are social animals and cannot exist alone; collective affairs must be taken into account,

thus making a government important. Political participation is the right of every citizen (except for felons who have been deprived of this right). Even Buddhist monastics in Taiwan must pay taxes and do their military service in order to fulfill their obligations as citizens. Renunciation does not imply leaving one's country, and Buddhism advocates not only personal liberation but the liberation of others as well. While different, Buddhism and government both have something of value to offer, and one can complement and complete the other. Government needs to be supplemented with the educating influence of Buddhism, while Buddhism can be spread with the protection and support of government.¹⁷ Buddhism is concerned with society, all its people and politics without interference in politics.

3. *The engagement with economics*

In early Buddhism, monastics practiced alms begging in order to maintain their lives. When Buddhism came to China, Chan Master Pei-chang established the Agriculture Chan System, but later on, the financial support of the Buddhist temples came from producing industrial products rather than farming. In terms of social well-being, Buddhist temples provide vegetarian food, Dharma function services, hospices, cemeteries for ash urns, pilgrimages, traveling services, charitable relief to and cultural and educational programs. All the programs conducted by FGS Buddhist temples are for the purpose of being beneficial to all the devotees and society.

Therefore, Humanistic Buddhism redefines the value of wealth. As long as it is "clean" wealth and in accordance with correct occupation and livelihood, then the more the better. As long as it is beneficial to nature, people, society and the economy, and as long as the occupation – such as farming, manufacturing, business, or banking – adds to the joy and prosperity of life, Buddhists should participate. Having money is not shameful, but poverty can lead to evil.¹⁸

4. *The cultural, educational and charitable programs*

Buddhism divides giving into two kinds – material giving and Dharma giving. Cultural and educational programs ascribe to Dharma giving, being limitless, boundless and endless, which can develop the wisdom and purify the mind of all sentient beings. However, charitable relief belongs to material giving which can only aid one's present life but cannot get rid of ignorance forever. *The Diamond Sutra* says, "If a good man or a good woman receives and upholds as few as four verses and if he teaches them to others, then his goodness will be greater than giving away as many great chiliocosms of precious jewels as all of those grains of sand."¹⁹

Charitable relief can be done by any kind of organization, however, only Buddhist groups can promote Buddhadharma and purify the mind and society for all sentient beings. For this reason, Buddhism must spread the teachings through cultural, educational and charitable enterprises as well as through practice and realization. (*Fo Guang Study*, p.320)

5. *The viewpoint of immigration*

Nowadays, high technologies and a speedy communication media, bring humans more opportunity to move among places and migrate between countries. To find and create a pure living circumstance is an important task for all humans. However, the mind produces one's world. If one is required to immigrate, he/she should localize and merge with the multitude. But the final and ultimate goal is to be reborn to the Western Pure Land. (*Fo Guang Study*, p.322)

6. *The perspective on bribery, political corruption and gambling*

Bribery, political corruption and gambling are illegal. On the one hand, they are obstacles in the development of society. On the other hand, they are negative habits which increase our greediness and addiction. Therefore, Buddhists are not allowed to participate in any of them. (*Fo Guang Study*, p.322)

7. *The viewpoint of test tube babies (in vitro fertilization), surrogate mothers and cloning*

These three activities challenge social ethics and family morality. Based on dependent origination, life cannot be cloned nor can consciousness or Buddha Nature. (*Fo Guang Study*, p.322)

8. *The viewpoint on family violence*

Violence harms life and is despised by most people. Disharmony in a family causes social problems. Killing parents, spouses fighting each other and treating children cruelly are not allowed by society.

Family, the basic structure of human society, is a harborage for all members. Therefore, all the members should cooperate, respect and embrace each other with compassion, tolerance and consideration for the harmony and warmth of the family. (*Fo Guang Study*, p.323)

9. *The viewpoint on homosexuality*

Homosexuality is still under consideration as to its meaning. Affection is a kind of attachment that is the source of suffering, no matter whether between the two genders or homosexuality. (*Fo Guang Study*, p.324)

10. *The viewpoint on divorce and an abnormal relations between genders*

Humanistic Buddhism puts stress on a normal, legal and harmonious marriage. However, marriage is also conditioned. When the conditions separate from the cause, divorce is allowed with careful concern for the children. If the conflict arises from misunderstanding, both persons should try their best resolve difference and make up the marriage.

Everything is conditioned and impermanent, the most important understanding is how to maintain a loyal and truthful heart with all the changes in life and affection. (*Fo Guang Study*, p.323)

11. *The problem of aging*

Nowadays, because of the developments in medicine and medical techniques, human life has been prolonged, and we have created "an old-age" society. Those seniors have contributed their whole life to society and should take care of their mental and physical health and explore their future life. Some ways of doing this are by teaching others with their wisdom, helping the younger generations with their experience, exploring their lives through practice and searching for a future with their spiritual practice. (*Fo Guang Study*, p.324)

12. *Abortion and the unmarried mother*

Abortion is killing. If the mother knows of an abnormal baby during her pregnancy or the mother's pregnancy is caused by rape, abortion depends on the decision of the mother as to who should bear the cause and effect. However, if a

pregnant mother is too young to look after the baby and is not yet married, the newborn baby will likely cause a serious social problem. An “Unmarried Mother’s Home” should provide them with financial aid and assistance. (*Fo Guang Study*, pp.324-5)

13. The viewpoint on the prostitutes

The belief in “Looking down upon the poor more than the prostitute” should be broken through. Furthermore, youths must respect life and plan for their future. In addition, men should treat all the younger women as daughters without harming them and; treat all the older women as mothers or sisters respectfully. Then the problem of prostitute can be solved. (*Fo Guang Study*, p.324)

14. On the psychiatric patient

Psychiatric patients have the right to be respected and have a free life. Unless a patient has violent tendencies, he/she need not be separated for safety’s sake. A psychiatric patient should have a normal life, under the sunlight, as an ordinary and healthy person. He/she should also be the focus of concern and receive more protection and care instead of discrimination and abandonment. (*Fo Guang Study*, pp.324-5)

15. On euthanasia and suicide

When one is in a catatonic state and he/she becomes a burden to his/her family, can he/she die of Euthanasia? Who has the right to make this decision? Only his/her most loved ones can make such a decision based on love and compassion in order to stop the suffering and solve the problem for all the family. (*Fo Guang Study*, p.325) Suicide is also killing. However, the karmic weight of committing suicide is stronger than killing others. One should try self-reflection and relaxation in order to relieve all their stress.

16. On Human Rights

Humans have developed from an oppressive past – worshipping the mystical power of nature and monarchical authority (being obedient to the emperor absolutely) – into a period of civil rights. Emphasizing the dignity of human life such as the right of existence, democracy, equality, freedom, ownership and culture should be protected.

Buddhism promotes the right to life and advocates that all sentient beings have right not to be harmed. Hence, the concern with protecting and serving all sentient beings is a manifestation of the protection of the right to live. (*Fo Guang Study*, p.325)

17. On women’s rights

- a. Women should have the same rights of equality with men in accordance with the fact that all humans are born with Buddha Nature.
- b. Women should have the right of involvement in the public affairs of government and society.
- c. Women should have the right of development of the female characteristics such as kindness, compassion, diligence and carefulness.
- d. Women should have the right of dignity and to reject any vocation that harms a female’s dignity, such as being a prostitute. (*Fo Guang Study*, p.325)

18. On capital punishment (death sentence)

Some people suggest that we abolish capital punishment. It is not necessary because one will be killed if he/she has killed another. That corresponds to the idea of cause and effect in Buddhism. Even though the executor of capital punishment follows national law, he is not associated with the criminal and this execution is neutral for him. (*Fo Guang Study*, p.326)

19. On pest control using a pesticide

In Buddhism, no-killing focuses mainly on human life, but this does not mean that animals can be killed. But, the karma of killing an animal is not as strong as killing a human. For preventing a plague, two treatments are possible – avoiding or removing. In case these don't work, killing should be permitted which is different from the basic killing precept. (*Fo Guang Study*, p.328)

20. On wearing leather and surf

Carrying a leather bag, wearing leather clothes, leather shoes or beating a leather drum are not serious acts of contributing to killing because of the person wearing or beating does not have the intention or desire of killing. (*Fo Guang Study*, p.328)

21. On use of alcohol and drug

The precept of no smoking cannot be found among the Buddhist precepts, but if some Buddhists smoke so that it harms others' health they should not do it in public areas prohibited to smoking. *The Eight Precept Liturgy* explains that alcohol is the cause of evil deeds because drinking alcohol makes one distracted so they may kill, steal, commit sexual misconduct, lie or have a car accident. If drinking alcohol is a way to improve social communication, one should observe the following principles – don't get drunk, don't encourage drinking, no engagement in a drunken brawl and don't cause trouble. (*Fo Guang Study*, p.329)

What is a drug? Those chemicals that influence the nervous system that can destroy one's health, fame, affinity, prospects and life, must be prohibited.

22. On educational reform

The primary consideration of education is the educational goal rather than the argument of teaching skills. The educational ideal of the Buddha is to teach humans both understanding and practice in order to have a wholesome personality and deal with things reasonably. Therefore, skillful means is important for teaching all the various capacity.

The suggestion is that life is more important than knowledge, morality is more important than material gain, altruism is more important than self-benefit and self-awareness is more important than acceptance. (*Fo Guang Study*, p.326)

23. On social movements

Buddhism advocates peace and tolerance, however, if Buddhism is persecuted, Buddhists should aggressively be involved in a social movement and street demonstrations.

Disorder in society comes from human greediness, selfishness and attachment. Only by teaching people the idea of cause and effect, compassion and protection of

living beings can social order be recovered. Environmental protection depends on the cultivation of mental purity. (*Fo Guang Study*, p.326)

24. On ecology and the environment

Ecology and the environment are a concern deeply engrained in the concept of Humanistic Buddhism. One not only should we be compassionate to humans, but also protect the environment and the earth. All living beings have Buddha Nature.

Amitabha Buddha is an executor of environmental protection. In the Land of Ultimate Bliss there are seven rows of railings, seven rows of decorative nets and seven rows of trees. They are all made of four kinds of jewels. There is no noise, no poisons, no water contamination, no air pollution and no nuclear waste. However, to create a Pure Land we should start with the purification of the mind.

25. On ethnic conflict

Buddhism promotes equality among all sentient beings and between the Buddha and sentient beings. In a Buddhist Sangha, all monastics use the same family name 'Shih' for breaking through only apartheid.²⁰ Buddhadharmā teaches that one should treat their good friend and any enemy equally. Furthermore, we should love our enemies. Peace can be achieved if humans and all ethnic groups respect each other.

26. On organ donation

It is meaningful if human organ donation can be regarded as resource recycling and life extension. It is said that the body after death cannot be touched or moved in case it will be born in the three negative realms and be tortured by pain and hatred. In fact, if he made vow and pledged the Bodhicitta to bestow love to this world before he dies, the power of vow prevails over the suffering from an organ operation. Even if there is pain, it is great opportunity to practice the Bodhisattva way.

27. On killing and relieving creature life

No killing is the first and most basic precept for both monastics and lay Buddhists. It is not appropriate for a Buddhist to create happiness by giving others suffering. Hunting animals is not allowed in Buddhism. The three cumulative commandments²¹ include (1) the formal precepts; (2) whatever works for positive benefit; and (3) whatever works for the welfare or liberation of living, sentient beings. The third one ascribes to the Mahayana precepts, therefore, the Buddha killed a thief in order to save the lives of 500 merchants in his previous life. This killing committed by the Buddha was beneficial for the multitude rather than coming from hatred.

However, if one intentionally relieves a creature of its life or conducts an improper action, it is immoral. Buddhism puts stress on humans and life relief is basically to relieve human's life by giving others trust, joy, hope, convenience, relief and stop their suffering. In addition, non-sentient beings, such as a flower, a chair, a pen, also have life, therefore, one should use them well. (*Fo Guang Study*, pp.327-8)

28. The viewpoint on terrorism and the war

Buddhism is a spiritual practice of peace. To fight back with violence cannot solve any problem. Buddhists can promote peace with compassion, embrace co-existence and let go of "Self". What one should really fight is one's own eighty-four thousand afflictions. When one overcomes all the afflictions, he/she is called a qualified winner.

29. The viewpoint on SARS

A man kills and eats civet cats and gets SARS. The sick person, without isolating himself from the multitude for the safety of all the people in the world, spreads SARS everywhere. All the Buddhists should cultivate compassion, enhance the bodhicitta and apply the 141 pure conducts of *the Avatamsaka Sutra* in everyday life. If all the people can act as the Buddha, SARS and other such diseases, will stop and not reoccur.

Activities in Humanistic Buddhism for creating social well-being

Venerable Master Hsing Yun, a dedicated follower of the Buddha, says, "Human beings are social animals. In the home, at school and in society one must have contact with others. Interpersonal relations are an important facet of life today. Our relations with others are based on causes and conditions. Buddhism is a religion that focuses on human beings. The Dharma provides solutions to nearly every human problem."²² Not only does he have great ideas about the psychosomatic welfare of living beings, but also puts them into action. The followings are the activities that can not only take care of the four basic problems of humans – birth, old-age, sickness and death - but also provide the participants an opportunity to understand each other and learn from each other for expanding social well-being. Because of those various activities, he provides a lot of employment around the world. Here I will enumerate all the activities for social well-being done by the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Order, a promoter of Humanistic Buddhism.

1. Educational Activities

Book Clubs, City Buddhist College, Srimala College (for laywomen), Vimalakirt College (for laymen), Disciple University, Online Buddhist College, Schools (kindergartens, elementary schools, middle schools and universities), Libraries, Scholarship Fund, Sunday Children's School, Culture Schools, Language Class, Camps, Scouts, Sutra Study Classes, Buddhist Examination Program., Seven Precepts Declaration, The system of Buddhist lay lecturer.

2. Cultural Activities

Universal Light Magazine, Merit Times Newspaper, FGS Radio Station, Humanistic TV Station, Books, Fo Guang Publisher, Hsi Lai University Publisher, Translation Center, Buddhist Art Gallery, Book and Painting Auction, Buddhist Lectures, Seminars, Singing Contests, Concerts, Drawing from Nature Competitions, Telling Stories Competitions, Speech Competitions, Adult Witness Ceremony, Skill Training Classes, Bookstores, Tea Houses, Examination Service. Annual International Conference and Interfaith Dialogue.

3. Charitable Activities

Volunteering, Establishment of the Retired Home and Orphanage, Visiting the Retired Home and Orphanage, Blood Donations, Catastrophe Relief, Relief to those in need, Financial Aid for the poor, Free Medical Services, Visiting the sick, Protecting animal life services, Hospice care, Street Sweeping; Recycling, Volunteering for Motherly Care, Teaching criminals in jails, Providing criminals a temporary residence after release, Supplying financial aid and spiritual assistance to new immigrants.

4. *Spiritual Practice*

Buddha's Name's Recitation Assembly, Group Chanting Ceremony, Seven-day Retreat, Five Precepts and Bodhisattva Precept Ceremony, Eight Precepts Retreat, Repentance Ceremony, Pilgrimage and Prostration, Chan and Pure Land Practice.

5. *Social Gatherings*

Sports Games, Family Sports Meetings, Family Gatherings, Tug of War Contests, The Great Sports Meeting, Temple Tours, Food Fairs, Mountain Climbing, Travel, Birthday Blessing Parties, Near Death Chanting Ceremonies, Outdoor Games and Exercise, Walking Meditation, Establishment of BLIA (a Buddhist association for laity).

Conclusion

Venerable Master Hsing Yun skillfully conducts a variety of activities for social well-being for he says that all those beneficial, pure, wholesome and altruistic activities are what Humanistic Buddhism should do. Nowadays, more and more Buddhist groups are involved in activities for social well-being around the world. In Western countries, socially engaged Buddhism advocated by Thich Nhat Hanh, the Dalai Lama, Tzu Chi Foundation and so on have developed very fast. We are glad to see that the spirit of Buddhism is explored and nurtured day by day worldwide.

Notes

¹ A kalpa, age; also translit. Ka: "a fabulous period of time, a day of Brahma or 1,000 Yugas, a period of four hundred and thirty-two million years of mortals, measuring the duration of the world.

² Carya-nidana taisho Tripitaka V.3 T190 p.668

³ Max Weber, *The Religion of India*, trans. H. Gerth and D. Martindale 204ff

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.206, 214

⁵ Madhyamagama I. pp.190-191, Samyuttanikaya III.p.120

⁶ Trans. By Kubo Tsugunari and Yuyama Akira *The Lotus Sutra* p.76

⁷ T.1715 Fa-far-chin-yi-chi V.33, p.0636

⁸ Taisho Tripitaka V.12 p.450

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.346

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, V.14 p. T450 p.401

¹¹ *Ibid.*, V.12 p.T353 p.217

¹² *Ibid.*, V.14 p. T450 p.401

¹³ Dao Tuan Liang Shu, trans. Guan Shih-Chen, *Chinese Buddhism and the Business of Social Well-being*. p.18

¹⁴ Taisho Tripitaka V.8 T.227 p.0583

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, V.16 T.663 pp.351-6

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, V.2 T.1484 p.1009

¹⁷ Venerable Master Hsing Yun *Humanistic Buddhism: A Blueprint for Life* p.106

¹⁸ Ibid., p.43

¹⁹ Master Hsing Yun *Describing the indescribing* p.12

²⁰ Sakyamuni established this system for avoiding the discrimination among four castes, all monastic use 'shih'(transliteration of Sa in Chinese) as their family name

²¹ Three meanings of the precepts.

²² Venerable Hsing Yun *Humanistic Buddhism: A Blueprint for Life* pp.26,27

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