

## **Humanistic Buddhism-represented in the International Disaster Assistance of the Tzu Chi Organization\***

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### **Abstract**

The Tzu Chi Organization was the first Buddhist organization in Taiwan to practice international disaster relief work. The international disaster assistance developed from the concept of “beginning with a pure thought and engaging in the altruistic end” (利他為上) toward the development of extraordinary wisdom of the Great Vehicle (Mahāyāna) the belief that all beings are equal according to the dharma of cause and effect. The present communication discusses how the group developed into an efficient and unique Buddhist disaster relief association under the leadership of Master Cheng Yen.

Although the Tzu Chi foundation is influenced by the thought of “Humanistic Buddhism” from Master Yin Shun, the major Buddhism theory and practice of Master Cheng Yen is focuses on the concept of “Tathagatagarbha” (如來藏) rather than on Master Yin Shun’s concept of “Dependent Origination and Emptiness” (緣起性空) for the Buddhist path of liberation. The practice of relief at the highest level of the human bodhisattva

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path, “compassion without focus” (無緣大慈) has been a driver of Tzu Chi’s international disaster relief efforts throughout regions in Asia, Africa, America, Europe, and Oceania.

Tzu Chi volunteers enter every corner of communities and implement their spiritual goal in the practical world to develop a path to Buddhahood with Mahayana characteristics. The approach has helped Tzu Chi become a charity organization acting on Taiwan and globally, reflecting Tzu Chi’s ideal of the universal value (普世價值) and contemporary significance of “work for Buddhism, for all sentient beings”(為佛教、為眾生).

This article analyzes the process of Tzu Chi’s participation in world disaster relief work and practicing the path of Bodhisattva in the world, and explores the evolution and innovation of relief supplies by the organization in response to local conditions and needs. The disaster relief operations are a process of practice toward a thorough understanding of the ultimate reality of all dharma.

**Keywords:** Tzu Chi, international disaster relief, relief distribution, Humanistic Buddhism, the Unique Teachings of Mahāyāna

# 別具人間佛教特色的慈濟國際賑災行動

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## 摘要

慈濟是台灣第一個開展國際賑災行動的佛教團體，奠基於佛法「利他為上」的理念，慈濟國際賑災行動展現大乘殊勝、含容與不共的智慧，因此能跨越「眾生緣慈，法緣慈」的侷限，而成就「無緣大慈」的菩薩道境界。本文探討慈濟如何在證嚴法師的領導下，發展成為一個高效與獨具大乘特色的佛教救災組織。

證嚴法師的弘法方向偏重於「如來藏」思想，與印順導師在佛法解脫道的「緣起性空」理念不同，然其所領導的慈濟僧團受到印順導師「人間佛教」思想的啟迪，在修行上真正走入人群、落實人間，延續至今，慈濟賑災的步履已遍歷亞洲，非洲，美洲，歐洲，大洋洲等世界五大洲，從傳承中開展出具有大乘特色的成佛之道，推動慈濟成為影響台灣：甚至是影響國際的慈善團體，並呈顯出慈濟法脈「為佛教、為眾生」的普世價值與時代意義。

本文剖析慈濟參與世界救災工作跟實踐人間菩薩道的過程，並探討了慈濟國際賑災行動中救援物資的演變與創新。慈濟國際賑災行動是一個實踐「了知一切諸法實相」的修行過程。

**關鍵詞：**慈濟、國際賑災、物資發放、人間佛教、大乘不共法

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## Part I International disaster relief with Unique Teachings of Mahāyāna

### 1. Origin

The international disaster relief operations of the Tzu Chi organization began in 1991. The first overseas branch of the Tzu Chi California organization in the United States began to support the reconstruction of the floods following the raging tropical cyclone in Bangladesh. At that time, the branch mobilized a large number of volunteers to raise funds on the basis of “one person, one dollar” in the street and in Chinese supermarkets. Later, it held a charity sale in Texas. In addition, leading by Master Cheng Yan, the Tzu Chi foundation in Taiwan responded to “one person, one loaf of bread” to donate ten NT dollars (USD 25 cent at the time) from each giver. The campaign raised more than 157,000 US dollars in just over a month’s collection time. Stephen Huang, CEO of Tzu Chi’s California branch, represented Tzu Chito donate the money to the Los Angeles Chapter of the International Red Cross.<sup>1</sup> This was the first step of Tzu Chi’s international disaster relief in cooperation with the American Red Cross.

Adhering to the Buddha’s teaching of everything is impermanent and there is no self, Tzu Chi has promoted international disaster relief operations to more than 100 countries and regions. The absence of signs of “me, people, living beings, and longevity” (我相，人相，眾生相，壽者相) is the essence use of prajna wisdom. Only actions are not attached to the appearance of “self, people, living beings, and longevity”, will it be able to subdue the mind, abide in bodhicitta, and become Bodhisattvas.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For details, see “Tzu Chi’s Footprints in Bangladesh”, Facebook of Tzu Chi Center, <https://www.facebook.com/TzuChiCenter/videos/tzu-chis-footprints-in-bangladesh/988276655198931/>, March 5, 2025.

<sup>2</sup> Self, people, living beings, and longevity are all different names of sentient beings; there are sixteen different names in the Prajna Sutra, all of which are named based

Emphasizing tireless work for the ultimate good of all beings, the relief efforts of Tzu Chi have continued following the “great mercy of nonattachment”. The word “nonattachment” refers to “the three different levels of compassionate thoughts”: compassion focused on sentient beings, on dharma or compassion without focus. At the first level, there are still difference between oneself, people and sentient beings. Therefore, a sentient being can make sacrifices for his/her own children, but may not be able to do so for other people’s children. The second vehicle, compassion focused on dharma, is the compassion of the practitioner who has realized the emptiness of self and all living beings, but is still unable to see the emptiness of all phenomena. Consequently, he/she is always in the dharma, such as cultivating the meditation method of peace and happiness. In compassion without focus, there is no attachment to distinguish between sentient beings and no attachment to distinguish between dharmas, leading to true kindness and compassion. In the Mahāyāna practice, regardless of the four embracing virtues (四攝), the six paramitas (六度), and the three universal truths (三法印), all kinds of wisdom pervade prajna (般若).<sup>3</sup> Through the prajna wisdom, bodhisattva fully realizes their emptiness of self-nature. This is the true bodhicitta of the bodhisattva, which can really save all sentient beings.

During various disaster relief operations, Tzu Chi assesses local causes and conditions, analyzing what can be seen, heard and perceived to gain insight into the karmic situation to adapt and guide the best actions. Following the first successful international disaster relief operation in 1991, Tzu Chi

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on a certain characteristic of sentient beings. The bodhisattva sees dependent origination and interdependence, there is no self-nature to be obtained, and the self is understood as the same emptiness and tranquility as all other sentient beings without distinction. Therefore, the bodhisattva does not see the real beings who are saved, see CBETA, T 8, no. 235, p.750b.

<sup>3</sup> Yin Shun 印順導師, *Bōrě jīng jiǎng jì* 般若經講記 (*Lectures on the Maha-Prajna-Sutra*), 2th edition, Taipei: Cheng Wen Publications, April 2003, pp.32-38.

cooperated with “Médecins du Monde” (MdM) headquartered in Paris, France, to assist at war disasters. On January 15, 1993, the chairman of MdM came to Taiwan to visit Master Cheng Yan. The two parties signed a contract to work together, launching a three-year health assistance program and hospital expansion for Ethiopia. Since then, Tzu Chi’s early global disaster relief operations with MdM have included the Ethiopian civil war in 1993, the Luanda coup in 1994, the first Chechen war in 1995, and the humanitarian assistance in Azerbaijan after their six-year war with Armenia in 1996, the battles of Bairan and the rescue of street children on the Ivory Coast, the civil war in Afghanistan in 1998 and the war in Kosovo in 1999.<sup>4</sup>

Of the three levels of compassion which shape the development of Bodhisattva ground, the idea breaks through the limitations of the first two, compassion focused on sentient beings and compassion focused on the Dharma (眾生緣慈，法緣慈), to cross the barriers of national boundaries, religion, politics, race, skin color, etc., to reach the state of compassion without attachment to specific beings or Dharma. The practice of relief at the highest level of the human bodhisattva path, “compassion without focus” (無緣大慈) has been a driver of Tzu Chi’s international disaster relief efforts throughout regions in Asia, Africa, America, Europe, and Oceania.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. Inconceivable cause and effect

Karma is inconceivable. Diligent Bodhisattvas always strive to obtain extraordinary good karma to achieve prajna wisdom. Grounded in the great compassion of persevering in one mind, Master Cheng Yen applied the

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<sup>4</sup> A Taiwanese Buddhist nun and the founder of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation. For details, see Mark O’Neill, *Tzu Chi -Serving with Compassion*, Singapore: John Wiley & Sons (Asia) Pte. Ltd, May 2010, pp.67-68.

<sup>5</sup> Julia C. Huang 黃倩玉, “Buddhism and Its Trust Networks between Taiwan, Malaysia, and the United States”, *The Eastern Buddhist* 44, no 2, Kyoto: Eastern Buddhist Society, January 2013, pp.59-76.

wisdom from the Sutra of Infinite Meanings: “Our thought, still and clear, our vows, vast as the endless void (靜寂清澄，志玄虛漠), upholding them, unwaveringly for countless eons of time” (守之不動，億百千劫), infinite Dharma doors readily appear in front of them (無量法門，悉現在前), they attain great wisdom and completely understand all Dharma (得大智慧，通達諸法),<sup>6</sup> and developed the real meaning of true emptiness and wondrous existence” (真空妙有) to the essence of born from one to Immeasurable (從一而生無量) described in the *Lotus Sutra* to persist the guide of Tzu Chi relief work.<sup>7</sup>

Master Cheng Yen transformed the Buddhist concept into concrete actions of Tzu Chi’s relief work, for example the continued operations in Haiti. Tzu Chi’s relief operation in Haiti, started after the Hurricane Georges and Mitch in 1998 and has continued over 20 years, after four severe storms in 2008, the 2010 earthquakes, the 2014 flood in Cap-Hatien and the 7.2 magnitude earthquake in 2021. Tzu Chi volunteers provided relief materials, free clinics, school and college constructions, and the Tzu Chi Cash For Relief program (Konbit Lakay (Sweet Home) Blue Hills). As said by Father Valon Pierre, the leader of Church Saint Martin de Porres: “Today is the last day of ‘Konbit Lakay’ Cash For Relief program, but we already saw the changes of Blue Hills. People have big smiles on their faces. People are happy because this is the miracle that has never happened here in Blue Hills.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For more details, see Dharmagatayas 曇摩伽陀耶舍 trans., *Wúliàng yì jīng* 無量義經 (*Anatanirdeśa Sūtra*), CBETA, T 9, no. 276, p.384b.

<sup>7</sup> The true emptiness and wondrous existence is the origin and spatial background of Buddhist ideology in southern Chinese Buddhism, compared to the ideological characteristic of truth and constant idealism (真常唯心) in northern Chinese Buddhism.

<sup>8</sup> Allen Courtland Freese, *Living Bodhisattvas—Historical and Textual Sources of Practitioner Identity in the Tzu Chi School of Buddhism*, Master’s thesis, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i at Manoa, 2019.

During the difficult initial period when Tzu Chi were becoming established in Taiwan in the major areas of Charity, Medicine, Education, and Humanistic culture, there are financial and manpower constraints, and all aspects were hard-fought. The establishment process was full of difficulties, and each Freese, Allen Courtland. 2019. *Living Bodhisattvas—Historical and Textual Sources of Practitioner Identity in the Tzu Chi School of Buddhism*. Master's thesis, University of Hawai'i at Manoa. had different difficulties to overcome. Despite the extremely burdened situation and the frequent voices of criticism, Master Cheng Yan insisted on promoting international disaster relief, insisting in her belief that the Taiwanese people are full of love. As long as they are inspired, everyone can give their best and do their best. There is great strength when a lot of people were in uniformed, so the impossible can be made possible, and Tzu Chi's four major causes have been created in a difficult situation. In a difficult situation, one must adjust the mind; fear of hardship leads to nothing. Often bitterness has to be tasted before you know sweetness can be savoured.

Tzu Chi continues to provide emergency supplies such as drinking water, food, and warming supplies in the disaster areas and expanded free consultations, housing assistance, and aid work such as water source development. Tzu Chi launched independent International disaster relief operations with the Unique Teachings of Mahāyāna. By negating the existence of self as real existence, Tzu Chi workers act from their true aim to arouse bodhicitta. Since bodhicitta is great compassion and great compassion means to save all sentient beings equally with unconditional kindness, the Tzu Chi workers want to save all sentient beings equally without distinction, they need to see the emptiness of inherent existence. With this right view of prajna, the real nature of no self can be obtained. The volunteers of Tzu Chi showed great dedication and bodhisattva aspirations, to fulfill the bodhisattva path of helping others in urgent trouble and taking actions to meet their needs.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Yu-Shuang Yao 姚玉霜, *Taiwan's Tzu Chi as Engaged Buddhism : Origins*,



As said in *Samyuktāgama Sutta* 《雜阿含經》: “If this exists, that exists, with arising of this that arises; if this ceases, that also ceases, with the cessation of this that ceases. In the Dependent Origination (Pratītyasamutpāda) of sentient beings, there is a continuation of empty essence with dependent relationship, the false self, which arise in dependence upon the others.”<sup>10</sup> According to the pseudonym of false self, sentient beings are established to continue their karma and the cycle of birth and death. If they reach the emptiness of their own nature and get rid of their false attachments, they can be liberated and enter Nirvana.

### 3. Disaster relief operations with unique Mahāyāna characteristics

The mission of the Tzu Chi Foundation originated as charity work and extended into medicine, education, and humanistic culture. The charity concept remains a crucial part of all activities. To achieve the concept of charity, Tzu Chi is deeply involved in international disaster assistance. Through these activities, Tzu Chi volunteers work directly with people in need, providing aid, food, health care, settlement or education, etc. Tzu Chi collaborates with local communities to empower the vulnerable and help them find strength to help others, forming a cycle of compassion. In this way, Tzu Chi has become a global humanistic foundation for charity, stepwise developing its missions internationally.

Through the more than 50 years since the establishment of the Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation in 1966, Master Cheng Yan 證嚴 (1937-) has followed the advice of her teacher Master Yin Shun 印順 (1906-2005), to apply the Human Buddhism concept of “for Buddhism and for all living beings” (為佛教、為眾生), turning the profound wisdom of Dharma

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*Organization, Appeal and Social Impact*, Leiden: Global Oriental, May 2012, pp.70-79.

<sup>10</sup> Gunabhadra 求那跋陀羅 trans., *Zá ā hán jīng* 雜阿含經 (*Samyukta Āgama*), CBETA, T 2, no 99, p.67a.

theory into concrete action forces, and letting the organization's members go into the world to help the poor and provide disaster relief.<sup>11</sup> The *Ekottaragama Sutra* records that “all the Buddhas are achieved in the world of sentient beings, but not obtained from heaven” (諸佛世尊皆出人間，非由天而得).<sup>12</sup> Buddhist teachings differ from deist teachings. Buddhas are not gods, nor are they sons or messengers of gods. Buddhas are saints who achieve enlightenment and liberation in human form. Buddhism does not concern “the relationship between God and man”, but the understanding of human beings, embodying the truth, and achieving eternal happiness, freedom, and purity. Buddha is a human being, and the ultimate Buddhahood is not in the gods, nor in the heavens, but only in the human world.<sup>13</sup> The Buddha said, “I am also a member of people.” Therefore, all Buddhas and World-Honored Ones are born out of the human world, not from heaven.

Master Cheng Yen's thought and practice are grounded in the *Anatanirdeśa sutra* (*Infinite Meaning Sutra* 《無量義經》) and the *Sadharma pundarīka Sūtra* (*Lotus Sutra* 《法華經》). Doing so emphasized the third of the three doctrines of Mahāyāna Buddhism “Tathagatagarbha, cittamātratā only” (真常唯心), the true and eternal mind with thought only, over the other two, “Śūnyavāda, nāmarūpa only” (性空唯名) and “Vijñaptimātratā, consciousness only” (虛妄唯識).<sup>14</sup> This line of thinking differs from the thought of Master Yin-shun which relies on “Dependent Origination and

<sup>11</sup> Xuan Pan 潘煊, *Fifty Years on the Bodhisattva Path*, Taipei: Tzu Chi Publishing Co., September 2019, pp.34-34.

<sup>12</sup> For details, see Saṃghadeva 僧伽提婆 trans., *Zēng yī ā hán jīng* 增一阿含經 (*Ekottarika Āgama*), CBETA, T 2, no 125, p.694a.

<sup>13</sup> Yin Shun 印順導師, *Fú zài rénjiān* 佛在人間 (*Buddha in the World*), 2th edition, Taipei: Cheng Wen Publications, July 2019, pp.12-15.

<sup>14</sup> Yin Shun 印順導師, *Yìndù fójiào sīxiǎng shǐ* 印度佛教思想史 (*History of Indian Buddhist Thought*), 2th edition, Taipei: Cheng Wen Publications, April 1993, pp.119-320.

Emptiness” (緣起性空) in the Buddhist path of liberation. The concept of “Dependent Origination and Emptiness” that based on the idea of *sūnyatā* (空性) and *nirātman* (無我) to achieve liberation is different from the *cittaprakṛti-viśuddhi* (心性本淨) thought of Tathagatagarbha (如來藏). However, the Tzu Chi Charity Foundation led by Master Cheng Yen was inspired by Master Yin Shun’s thoughts on “Humanistic Buddhism” (人間佛教) which is implemented in the practice of the Bodhisattva Way by people in the human world. Thus, a Mahayana-characteristic Bodhisattva Way of “Increased Faith” (信增上) was developed. The universal value and contemporary significance of Tzu Chi’s mission to “work for Buddhism and all living beings” (為佛教、為眾生) is reflected in the charity work with an impact on Taiwan and the wider world.

Since providing assistance during the Bangladesh floods in 1991, Tzu Chi’s international disaster relief operations have not only provided immediate emergency relief, but also considered the settlement of body, mind, and spirit of victims. Rescue operations follow the five principles of direct, focused, respectful, pragmatic, and immediate. The model of peace of mind, body, health, learning, living, and preservation in the mountains and forests, has opened an international disaster relief road with two Unique Teachings of Mahāyāna: first, it is the Bodhicitta that is not found in ordinary human beings, gods, śrāvakas, and pratyekabuddhas vehicle; and secondly, that all merits and virtues are unified in the minds of Bodhisattvas, and all become the special Dharma of Mahāyāna.

The overseas rescue operations of Tzu Chi continue today. But how does Tzu Chi choose the best rescue method to maximize the positive impact? How to decide where to focus relief efforts and choose the materials to be distributed? How is the best approach decided on and how is the decision taken on distribution of supplies? How is a project designed to allow for adjustment and change at the right time and right place? The network of karma is long and complicated and the future may ripe with different karma. The exhaustive karma is not necessarily the last, therefore, it is not easy to exhaust

all sentient beings' karma. Only the Buddha's easy can actually know all sentient beings in the three worlds of karma and retribution. As recorded in the *Lotus Sutra*: only the Buddha are able to accomplish the first inexplicable Dharma, and can investigate the reality of Buddhist principles (唯佛與佛乃能究盡諸法實相).<sup>15</sup>

In the practical work, Tzu Chi follows the wisdom of dharma's right thought (如理思惟) and under the guidance of Master Cheng Yen, to help the poor and disaster relief.<sup>16</sup> An overview of the approach to relief is shown in the Figure 1. How does the relief work center on the structure and support processes is shown in Figure 2.



Figure 1: An overview of the explanatory diagram of Tzu Chi's international disaster relief operations.

<sup>15</sup> See Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什 trans., “Guānshīyīn púsà pǔ mén pīn 觀世音菩薩普門品 (Avalokiteśvara-vikurvāṇa-nirdeśaḥ)”, From *Sadharmā Puṇḍārīka Sūtra* (*Lotus Sutra*) 法華經, vol. 7, no.25, CBETA, T 9, no. 264, p.3c.

<sup>16</sup> Whether the Dharma is like the phase, the nature, the body, the strength, the action, the cause, the condition, the effect, the retribution, or the ultimate, you may use the nine different viewpoints in the Ten Rus in the Lotus Sutra, that are phase, nature, body, strength, action, cause, condition, effect, and reward to understand the contents of Tzu Chi's international rescue operations.

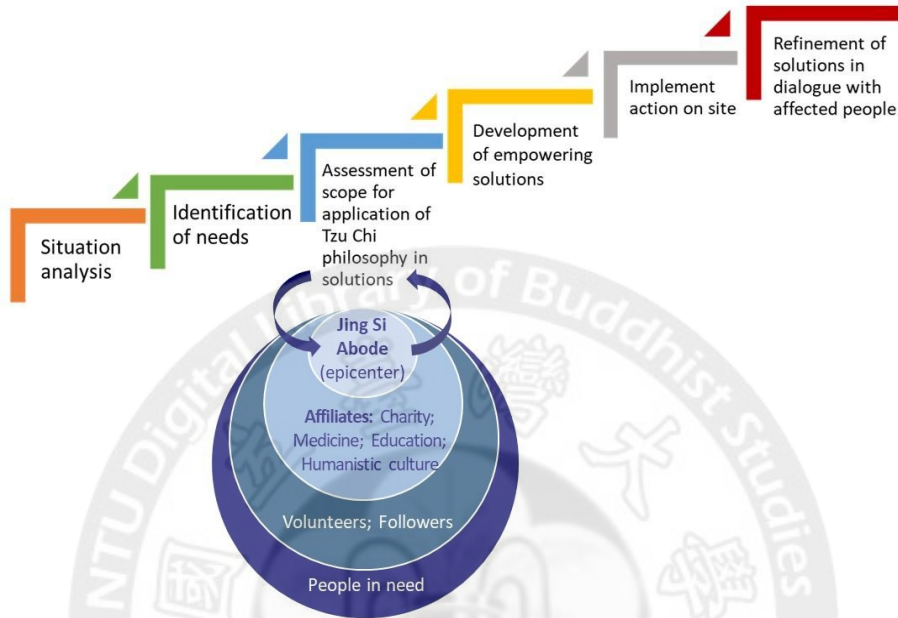


Figure 2: The schematic diagram of the conceptual framework showing the structure and support processes of Tzu Chi's international disaster relief operations.

According to the *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra*, the right thought is the essentials and criteria of rational choosing.<sup>17</sup> To achieve it, one must pay attention to the “sign, nature, body, strength, action, cause, fruit, retribution, origin and end” (相、性、體、力、作、因、緣、果、報、本末究竟).<sup>18</sup> The ten aspects of predestination, which can exhaust the reality of all dharmas. The observation of “such a sign, such a nature, such a body, such a force, and such a deed” is precisely a contemplation of the self and universal appearance of all dharmas. “sign” is appearance, “nature” is essence, “body” is the whole of

<sup>17</sup> For more details, see Xuanzang 玄奘 trans., *Yújiā shī de lùn* 瑜伽師地論 (*Yogācārabhūmi-Śāstra*), CBETA, T 30, no. 1579, p.685c.

<sup>18</sup> Compiled by Zhiyi 智顗, *Miàofǎ liánhuá jīng xuán yì* 妙法蓮華經玄義 (*The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*), CBETA, T 33, no. 1716, p.693b.

appearance (a conjunction), this conjunction has its potential, it is “power”, once the strength is manifested, it is “action”. It manifests itself from the latent, and so plants the “cause and condition” that will produce “results and retributions” in the future. Knowing its own characteristics (svalakṣaṇa), so that the correct universal characterized phenomena (sāmāyalakṣaṇa) can be summarized. The practice of seeing and knowing the truth (如實知見) will be an intimate experience, rather than an abstract concept.

In the relief operations, Tzu Chi seeks to gain insights into the complex factors and conditions driving the specific needs in each situation with altruism without self, with the body of great love and gratitude, with the power of charity for charity, with the action of eliminating suffering and happiness, with the cause of charity and kindness, with the condition of service cooperation, with the effect of four great ambitions, with the report of Solemn Pure Land, and finally being able to understand the true reality, a process of practicing the reality of various dharma. After understanding the conditions in the disaster areas, the organization can carry out timely and opportunistic activities to provide the most appropriate and helpful response method. This is the way of liberation, and so is the way of Bodhisattva; in that the Bodhisattva practitioner’s concern extends to all living beings. Therefore, when the cause is complete, what can be explored is not only the impermanence, non-self and annihilation of oneself, but the ultimate reality of all dharmas for all living beings.

In the next section we will discuss the dynamics and adaptations of international disaster relief materials and how this reflects Tzu Chi’s dharma lineage and the characteristics of the organization.

## **Part II Development and adaptation of materials distributed by Tzu Chi to the diversity of international disaster relief**

### **1. Introduction**

From its beginnings in Taiwan, Tzu Chi has developed into an all-round

human bodhisattva group with international action capabilities. In order to solve and meet the diverse demands of various regions, Tzu Chi continues to innovate and improve the methods and materials of disaster relief operations in the global disaster relief operations. This ranges from consolation money to pre-charged cash cards and vouchers, from living bags and blankets to multi-purpose folding beds (the Fuhui Bed/福慧床), from rice to fragrant rice (香積飯), including rice seeds and tool kits.<sup>19</sup>

The materials distributed by Tzu Chi's international disaster relief operations are constantly evolving, but behind the relief packages is the simple way of the Buddha's teachings that "corresponding to the wisdom to intentions, great compassion is the head, and no gain is convenience" (一切智智相應作意，大悲為上首，無所得為方便)。<sup>20</sup> When Mahāyāna practitioners practice the six paramitas and the four embracing virtues of the bodhisattva, they adapt the attitude of "corresponding to the bodhicitta" (菩提心相應), "with great compassion as the supreme guide" (大悲為上首), and "with nothing to gain as an expedient" (無所得為方便 empty wisdom). Due to the different natures of all living beings, those who learn to practice bodhisattva practices also have differences in increasing faith and aspiration, increasing compassion, and increasing wisdom, but in the process of practicing bodhisattva behavior, these three are essential and indispensable. If there is compassion without bodhicitta and empty wisdom, this is only worldly philanthropy. With emptiness and wisdom but no compassion, it is not possible to become a Bodhisattva. In the bodhisattva practice, it is extremely important to have no ego and no desire, and to have a clear understanding of dependent arising and not being attached to signs. Without "no gain is the

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<sup>19</sup> Chih-Hong Wang 王志宏 and Wen-Chun Tsai 蔡文村(ed.), *Cí jì jīn àn zhèn zāi* 慈濟急難賑災 (*Tzu Chi Disaster Relief*), Taipei: Yin Cheng Foundation, June 2021, pp.16-31.

<sup>20</sup> Xuanzang 玄奘 trans., *Dà bō rě bō luó mī duō jīng* 大般若波羅蜜多經 (*Mahā-Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*), CBETA, T 7, no. 220, p.62c.

convenience”, great deeds of the Bodhisattva cannot be expanded universally. Only by understanding the emptiness of all nature can we not tire of the world and not love the world; advancing toward Nirvana instead of being attached to Nirvana.

Under the enlightenment and guidance of Master Cheng Yen, Tzu Chi adheres to the Dharma “giving with nothing to ask for” (付出無所求) and develop with “empathy” (同理心) a kind of sympathy for the suffering of life (感同身受). Empathy is manifested in the relationship between oneself and others, and the normal morality of human beings is not difficult to obtain from the consciousness of transmuting other’s hearts with one’s own heart. From what you want to do, you can infer what others will do. Since I hate suffering and seek pleasure, and others are just like me, how can I not sympathize with others’ joy and relieve others’ pain? The compassion of Buddhism “removing suffering with joy” is the source of compassion and all virtues. That is the practice of this spirit. In Buddhism, the “dharma of self-learning” of “saving others’ feelings by oneself”. Those who “remove suffering with joy” take advantage of the good dharma, and if it deepens, it is the cultivation of bodhicitta. In this way, the disaster relief of Tzu Chi aims to follow the origin and selfless wisdom of Buddhism.

## 2. From rice to grain

The distribution of rice and grain seeds was originally the content of Tzu Chi’s domestic charity and disaster relief on mainland China. It continues through the international disaster relief operations. How did the development and change from rice to grain seeds proceed?

The reasons for the distribution of grain seeds can be attributed to the following key points. First, it is to transcend the simple form of material relief that the world’s good law “treats the symptoms but not the root cause”, and to continue the purity and endurance of Tzu Chi’s spirit. The distribution of grain seeds means Tzu Chi pay attention to long-term reconstruction work in the disaster area. This is according to the “Lin yuan envy fish” (臨淵羨魚) saying:



it is better to teach people how to fish than to fish for the people.<sup>21</sup> The Buddha's compassion focuses on complete relief, such as the healing of human beings in the world. To cure the symptoms is to treat only the pain. Although this can stop temporary pain, it cannot eliminate the source, and cure the root of the disease. The world's relief of human suffering can also be a convenient temporary remedy (give a man a fish), or provide fundamental relief (teach a man to fish) according to the cause of his suffering. The alms giving advocated by Buddhism is a convenient way to address the symptoms, while the cure for the root is addressed by providing the victim agency to solve the problem. Therefore, although the Buddha presents all sentient beings a way to salvation, if a person is not willing to follow the teachings truthfully, they will not be able to save themselves. A true practitioner of the Dharma can obtain the ultimate liberation from suffering by practicing the Dharma.

Secondly, the distribution of grain seeds showed the Mahāyāna characteristics of Tzu Chi's advocacy in the practice of Buddhism. The underlying wisdom is the practice of Buddha's concept of "all beings are equal in nature and are mutually dependent on each other" (眾生法性平等，相依相成), which gives the victims the opportunity to become self-reliant.<sup>22</sup> From the conception of equality of dharma, Mahāyāna believes that all sentient beings are equal to Buddhas, and all sentient beings have the possibility to become a Buddhas. In this state of mind of equality, the suffering of sentient beings is equal to our own suffering. Of course, there will be a moral consciousness of "one body with great compassion" (同體大悲). Compassion is not superhuman or extravagant, but a natural revelation of the truth of the

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<sup>21</sup> For more details about the saying of "Lin yuan envy fish", see Ban, Gu 班固, "Dǒngzhòngshū chuán 董仲舒傳 (Tung Chung-shu Biography)", In *Hànshū 漢書 (The Official History of China's Western Han Dynasty)* no. 15, Boston: Chinese Text Project, p.82.

<sup>22</sup> Gunabhadra 求那跋陀羅 trans., *Zá ā hán jīng 雜阿含經 (Saṃyukta Āgama)*, CBETA, T 2, no 99, p.273b.

human mind. In Mahāyāna, the act of compassion and benefiting sentient beings is not only due to the kindness of common consciousness triggered by the interdependent coexistence of Dependent Origination, but also often directly feels the suffering and happiness of sentient beings.

The first grain distribution for international disaster relief operation began with the Cambodian flood relief work in 1994. Upon receiving news of the disaster, the foundation immediately sent personnel to investigate the situation, and urgently donated electric motors, diesel fuel and oil to help save the withered seedlings in the field. In the following three years, Tzu Chi continued to carry out four additional disaster relief distributions in Cambodia. Along with other distribution materials, the grains may enable a future with larger harvests for the farmers to be able to shift from being recipients to donors.<sup>23</sup>

### 3. From grain to Ching Si instant rice

In *Chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra: Universal Gate of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara*, it is recorded: “At this time, the Bodhisattva of Infinite Mind rose from the seat, leant on her right shoulder, put her palms together to the Buddha, and said: “Blessed One! what is the reason for the name of Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva?” (觀世音菩薩，以何因緣名觀世音).<sup>24</sup> The

<sup>23</sup> Tuan-Cheng Wang 王端正, “Ràng yù huǒ fēnghuáng chóngshēng 讓浴火鳳凰重生”, In *Yù huǒ chóngshēng de fēnghuáng: Cí jì jiùyuán jiǎnpǔzhài jìshí* 浴火重生的鳳凰－慈濟救援柬埔寨紀實 (*The Phoenix Reborn: A Documentary of Tzu Chi's Rescue in Cambodia*), edited by Shih De-Hsun et al., Taipei: Ching-Si Cultural Enterprise Co., Ltd., October 1996, pp.8-10.

<sup>24</sup> There are many Chinese people who believe in Guanyin Bodhisattva, especially women. Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, with great compassion and great compassion, rescues sentient beings from suffering and achieves happiness, and expresses his infinite and vast compassion. In “The Lotus Sutra - Universal Door Pin”, it is described that the Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva can be transformed according to the

advent of instant rice by Tzu Chi, presents a current version of why Avalokiteshvara is called Avalokiteshvara.

Expanding sympathy reaching a bodhisattva's level of compassion is difficult to achieve, but when the relationship between human and self is thoroughly experienced, no matter who is suffering, it is easy to arouse compassion. This is to learn from the compassion of Guanyin Bodhisattva. To carry the spirit of great compassion of the Bodhisattva, it is necessary to look up to the Bodhisattva and encourage each other to make progress. This will bring immeasurable benefits to ourselves and others. In this way, the Ching Si rice was investigated. It is an instant rice developed by the Ching Si Abode Cooperative Factory for disaster relief. It can be eaten by brewing with water without further cooking and can be quickly supplied at the relief sites.

The idea of instant rice development began at the time of a Tzu Chi mainland winter order. A grandmother hurried all night and fainted due to exhaustion during the delivery. After receiving the white rice, she was unable to enjoy it immediately. Looking to all living beings, the compassion of "hear the sound and save the suffering" (聞聲救苦) arises. Master Cheng Yen took it to heart and drove the transformation of white rice into instant rice for rapid meal supplies.<sup>25</sup>

Without professional training in food processing, under the simple and

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needs, and what form should be saved, the Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva will appear in the form to teach the Dharma. When the Bodhisattva fulfilled in the causal ground, he cultivates the Dharma door of the ear root, and he can hear the sounds of all sentient beings in the world. Only if sentient beings are in trouble and devoutly recite the holy name of Guanyin, the Bodhisattva will immediately seek out the voice to save suffering. For this reason, it is called "Avalokitesvara" Bodhisattva.

<sup>25</sup> Yu-Hua Yeh 葉又華, "Zìlìgēngshēng yǔ tiāndì gòng shēngxī 自力更生與天地共生息 (Self-reliance and coexist with the whole world)", *Tzu Chi Monthly* 593, Taipei: Tzu Chi Culture and Communication Foundation, 2016, pp.69-79.

difficult environmental conditions at the time, the nuns of Tzu Chi set out to develop the process of instant rice. After repeated tests, they finally produced a dried pre-cooked rice that can be brewed immediately on site. However, when the procedure was shifted for mass production by using drying machines, they encountered difficulties recovering the water after the drying process. The resident masters of the Tzu Chi Abode showed great persistence with repeated tests and improvements, and finally succeeded.

In 2017, Ching Si Instant Rice obtained both the ISO 22000 Food Safety Management System and the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point System (HACCP) international certification. In this way, it can be quickly cleared through customs inspections in various countries around the world, which will reduce delays to international rescue operations.<sup>26</sup>

#### 4. Form life bag and blanket to Fuhui multipurpose folding bed

To help suffering sentient beings, the Bodhisattva develops their destiny with bodhicitta (菩薩所緣，緣苦眾生). In a world with abundant suffering, driven by the great compassion for the suffering of sentient beings, the Bodhisattva initiates the great compassion for living beings to get away from suffering and enjoy happiness through reality. The altruistic bodhisattva behavior opens up pure prajna wisdom, which is characteristic of the practice of the Mahāyāna community.<sup>27</sup>

During the 2010 flood in Pakistan, the Tzu Chi disaster investigation team sent back images of the weak and thin body of the baby girl Shana lying on the damp and cold ground in the local area. The images made Master Cheng Yan extremely uncomfortable and she tasked the Tzu Chi volunteer Marshall

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<sup>26</sup> Tzu Hao Yeh 葉子豪 and Siou-Hua Huang 黃秀花, *Cibēi kējì MIT 慈悲科技—台灣製造 (Compassion Technology MIT)*, Taipei: Tzu Chi Humanities Foundation, November 2017, pp.246-269.

<sup>27</sup> By Nāgārjuna 龍樹, Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什 trans., *Shí zhù pí pó shā lùn 十住毘婆沙論 (Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣā-śāstra)*, CBETA, T 26, no.1521, pp.100c-101c.

Siao to develop the concept of a simple disaster relief bed. In three years, after several requests of instructions from Master Cheng Yan, Marshall Siao created the “Multifunctional Fuhui Bed” which weighs only 12 kilograms and does not need to be assembled. The Fuhui bed is fully functional and provides physical and mental comfort for the victims. It is a bed when opened and a chair when folded. Behind the Fuhui Bed is Tzu Chi’s bodhisattva’s practice of compassion in practical actions, and the bodhicitta that utilizes social responsibility design concepts.<sup>28</sup> A true practitioner of Mahāyāna Buddhism will attach great importance to the study of extensive compassion. Because the Mahāyāna’s arousing the bodhicitta, and widening all sentient beings, is the initiation of the compassion of “the object of bodhi and the suffering of all sentient beings”. Without compassion, Bodhicitta is unachievable, and Buddhahood unobtainable. Bodhisattva actions without compassion, such as giving, keeping precepts, reciting Buddha, chanting sutras, etc., will lead the results of reaching heaven. If there is compassion, all practice will lead to becoming a Buddha in the future. Therefore, all the pure merits of becoming a Buddha must be led by great compassion.

Since the development of the Fuhui bed, it has been applied in the reliefs of Haiyan typhoon of Philippines in 2013, the strong earthquake of Nepal in 2015, the flood of Penang, Malaysia in 2017, the breach of a dam in Laos in 2018 and the Ebola disease in the Lion Rock Kingdom of West Africa, the free clinic for floods and droughts in Cambodia in 2019, and further in relief works such as the gas explosion in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, the Great Earthquake in South Taiwan, and the Nibert typhoon.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Tzu Hao Yeh 葉子豪, “Chuàngyì láizì tóng lǐ xīn-duō gōngnéng fú huì chuáng 創意來自同理心—多功能福慧床 (Creativity comes from empathy-multifunctional Fuhui Bed)”, *Tzu Chi Monthly* 608, Taipei: Tzu Chi Culture and Communication Foundation, July 2017, pp.50-59.

<sup>29</sup> Rey-Sheng Her 何日生 (ed.), *Cí jì nián jiàn 2018 慈濟年鑑 2018 (Tzu-Chi Almanac 2018)*, Taipei: Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation, May

## 5. From condolence money to cash card / present value card

In August 2005, Hurricane Katrina made landfall in the Gulf of Mexico, ravaging the five southeastern states of the United States and causing tens of billions of dollars of damage. To make the relief acceptable with maximum benefit for the modern society, Tzu Chi Chapter of the United States immediately mobilized volunteers in more than 30 countries around the world to raise funds and issue a “Walmart gift card” to help the victims. As Bodhisattvas can penetrate the nature of emptiness, and come out from the emptiness, they see the immeasurable dharmas thoroughly like illusions. Therefore, they can adapt to the various occasion and use various methods to save sentient beings. Evaluating the results, Master Cheng Yan considered the safety of cash distribution during international disaster relief, and initiated the design of the Tzu Chi exclusive “present value card” (cash card) based on the concept of the Katrina cash card, in cooperation with local banks.<sup>30</sup>

Each Tzu Chi-exclusive present value card has an independent serial number, which can be combined with ID card information through the participation of socially responsible e-passport companies, for systematic verification to ensure the accuracy of the distribution process. This streamlines and increases the efficiency of Tzu Chi’s International disaster relief operations. While taking into account the Tzu Chi character of “compassion and wisdom” and “advancing with the times”, the love and blessings from all walks of life are contained in each modern small value card. Master Cheng Yen hopes that expired cards will maintain their gift present value and can be used as a souvenir in the future.<sup>31</sup>

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2019, pp.254-338.

<sup>30</sup> Sabrina Chien, “Blue and red bring light to darkness”, *Tzu Chi USA Journal* 40, San Dimas: Tzu Chi USA, 2014, pp.49-54.

<sup>31</sup> Jonathan H. X. Lee, “Tzu Chi Compassion Society’s Peace 145 Work in America”, *The Journal of International Association of Buddhist Universities* 6, no 1, Phra

The concept of “modern value card” was extended to the devastating floods in Queensland, Australia in 2011. Tzu Chi carried out 13 relief operations during the disaster. Each household were issued a value card of 500 Australian dollars. Tzu Chi was included on the Australian government’s list of emergency relief organizations. In 2013, Typhoon Haiyan raged in the Philippines, extending the coast to within one kilometer inland. All houses were razed to rubble and bricks. In addition to launching the innovative approach of “relief for work”, Tzu Chi volunteers cooperated with a printing business, working overnight to print 140,000 value cards for distribution in Tacloban.<sup>32</sup> In 2016, Ecuador experienced severe flooding. Tzu Chi led a nine-day “work-for-work” relief effort. After the victims completed their home reconstruction activities, volunteers wanted to copy the distribution methods of the Haiyan typhoon. Several temporary emergencies complicated the process, but finally, a photocopy of the “Tzu Chi Blessing Gold with Securities” was distributed to the victims.<sup>33</sup> In 2017, the Tzu Chi Malaysia

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Nakhon Si Ayutthaya: International Association of Buddhist Universities, June 2013, pp.145-64 ; Ho-Don Yan, Chi-Yin Wu and Ruey-Fa Lin, “Social entrepreneurship and charismatic leadership: Master Cheng Yen and Tzu Chi Foundation”, *International Journal of Innovation and Regional Development* 8, no.2, Geneva: Inderscience Enterprises Ltd., June 2018, pp.136-158.

<sup>32</sup> Yi-Long Cai and Hai-Ling Lin, “Sunshine after rain - Queensland floods”, *Tzu Chi Quarterly*, Spring, Auckland: New Zealand Tzu Chi Foundation, 2011, pp.51-55 ; Tzu Chi’s documenting volunteers (ed.), *Jìng guān: Fēilùbīn hǎiyàn fēngzāi cí jì yuánzhù* 鏡觀:菲律賓海燕風災慈濟援助 (*Yolanda in Focus: Tzu Chi Disaster Relief for Typhoon Haiyan*), Taipei: Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation, May 2014.

<sup>33</sup> Rei Ling Lai 賴睿玲 (ed.), *Wèi wǒmen de chéngshì dǎpīn- Cí jì yuánzhù è guā duō yǐ gōng dài zhèn jì, hí* 為我們的城市打拚—慈濟援助厄瓜多以工代賑紀實 (*Fight for our City-Documentary on Tzu Chi’s Relief for Work in Ecuador*), Taipei: Rhythms Monthly, June 2019, pp.40-87.

Branch issued economic activities to flood victims in Pahang in the form of value cards. Since then, Tzu Chi's model of issuing value cards developed continually.<sup>34</sup> In 2018, heavy rains in Mozambique caused a rubbish mountain to collapse. Local volunteers immediately formed a disaster investigation team, issued hot food and shopping coupons urgently, and organized buses to transport victims to stores.<sup>35</sup> In 2018, there was a severe flood in southern Taiwan. Volunteers issued Tzu Chi charity cards for the first time in Taiwan.<sup>36</sup>

Compared with the materials and cash issued by Tzu Chi International Disaster Relief in the past, the value card is safer and easier than cash issuance, and is more convenient and economical than the distribution of materials. It also reduces the waste of carbon footprint of long-distance transportation of materials, so that disaster victims can receive help according to local demand and purchase necessary food and materials, saving manpower and transport resources. Thus, the Tzu Chi international disaster relief operations increasingly meet the needs of "altruism" and become a model of the bodhisattva on earth. A list of relief activities involving cash cards is provided in Table 1.

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<sup>34</sup> Hsiao-Ting Wu 吳曉婷 (ed.), "Tzu Chi events around the world", *Tzu Chi Bimonthly*, Taipei: Tzu Chi Culture and Communication Foundation, January 2018, pp.63-64.

<sup>35</sup> Chih-Hong Wang 王志宏 and Wen-Chun Tsai 蔡文村 (ed.), *Gǔ dì xīn jī- dōngfēi yīdài fēngzāi hòu* 古地新機—東非伊代風災後 (*New Opportunities in the Old Land - After Typhoon Idai in East Africa*), Taipei: Rhythms Monthly Press, June 2019, pp.16-133.

<sup>36</sup> Hui-Ping Wang 王慧萍 (ed.), "Leading article", *Tzu Chi Monthly* 623, Taipei: Tzu Chi Culture and Communication Foundation, October 2018, p.1.



Year	Place	Type of Disasters	Special Relief Activities
2005	United States	Hurricane	Walmart gift card distribution
2008	Myanmar	Cyclone	Emergency materials/grain seeds
2010	Haiti	Earthquake	Emergency materials/free clinic
2011	Australia	Flood	Relief operations/value card distribution
2013	Philippine	Typhoon	Relief of “Cash-for-Work” model
2015	Nepal	Earthquake	Medical relief supplies/ free clinic
2016	Ecuador	Earthquake / Flood	Tzu Chi Blessing Gold with Securities
2017	Malaysia	Flood	Distribution of emergency cash cards
2018	Mozambique	Cyclone	Disaster assessment/cash cards distribution
2019	Taiwan	Typhoon	Distribution of gift cards

Master Cheng Yen often teaches his disciples: “be aware of the time, the space, and true relationship.” The same Buddhist path guides Tzu Chi’s international disaster relief. As described in the Universal Gateway of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva of the *Lotus Sutra*, the Guānshīyī Bodhisattva way adapts to different categories: “Those who should be liberated by a Buddha, Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva would manifest as the Buddha to preach the Dharma... and even those who should be liberated by a human or a non-human vajrapani, Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva would manifest as the a human or a non-human vajrapani to preach the Dharma” (應以佛身得度者，觀世音菩薩即現佛身而為說法...乃至應以人、非人等身得度者，即皆現之而為說法) .<sup>37</sup> These words are a perfect interpretation of the change enabled by Tzu Chi’s disaster relief.

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<sup>37</sup> Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什 trans., “Guānshīyīn púsà pǔ mén pīn 觀世音菩薩普門品 (Avalokiteśvara-vikurvaṇa-nirdeśaḥ)”, From *Sadharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra (Lotus Sutra)*, vol. 7, no.25. CBETA, T 9, no. 264, p.53c.

## Conclusion

Giving rise to Bodhicitta is not done with thoughts, but through solid deeds to save sentient beings, subdue one's own troubles, go deep into the pure reality, and achieve the perfection of self-interest and altruism. Tzu Chi International disaster relief is transnational, ethnic, and religious. Its footprints are spread across more than 100 countries on the five continents. The relief operations are constantly evolving and changing according to the needs of the victims, showing the Bodhisattva path of the prajna wisdom.

Six Mahāyāna practices guide the Bodhisattvas towards perfection (ṣaḍ-pāramitā): generosity (dāna-pāramitā), precepts (śīla-pāramitā), patience (kṣānti-pāramitā), diligence (vīrya-pāramitā), meditation (dhyāna-pāramitā), and wisdom (prajñā-pāramitā).<sup>38</sup> Of these, generosity is often the beginning and entry way to dharma, reflecting the “compassion” path of Bodhisattva practice. However, it is also the most difficult practice. In *The Way to Buddhahood* the Venerable Yin Shun wrote: “One should give alms willingly in ways that are beneficial to others. Giving with compassion and respect will result different circumstances. Varying motives and attitudes have different levels of merit. One should donate in a proper way and avoid impure generosity, such as to give not from social pressure, out of a desire to get rid of disasters, to repay other's kindness, out of family traditions, as a farewell, for god's protection, ascent to heaven, or fame”.<sup>39</sup> Generosity may emerge from many kilesas. To gradually develop the way of Buddhism, it is necessary to practice pure generosity. The right knowledge of the Dharma leads to the right path of liberation and happiness. This is the spirit of Mahāyāna Bodhisattva that was displayed by the Tzu Chi volunteers.

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<sup>38</sup> Kang Senghui 康僧會 trans., *Liù dù jí jīng* 六度集經 (*Ṣaḍ-pāramitā-saṃgraha*), CBETA, T 3, no.152, p.52b.

<sup>39</sup> Yin Shun 印順導師, *Chéng fó zhī dào* 成佛之道 (*The Way to Buddhahood*), 2th edition, Taipei: Cheng Wen Publications, 2014, pp.114-117. Translate in English by H. Yeung Wing, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1998.

When it comes to the practice of bodhisattvas, there are no more than six paramitas. To become a paramita by giving, one must use the prajna, which is unattainable, as an expedient to cultivate. The generosity that does not abide by signs can subdue afflictions, can abide in Bodhicitta, and the blessings obtained are vast and inconceivable! A real giving contains three empty-natured essentials, the “three wheels”, which referring to the three senses. 1. The alms was the stuff that one can give; 2. The recipient is the person who receives the alms; 3. The giver is the one who gives. A person without dharma-nature emptiness and wisdom to see these three points, will keep the three wheels as the real existence. When there is a form of giving, one cannot penetrate the three-wheeled nature and emptiness, and the merit obtained is limited and quantity. No matter how great the merit is, it is always a limited blessing. But if you can give according to Prajna, integrate this giving into the nature of Dharma, and return to all sentient beings to achieve great enlightenment, the merits and virtues are infinite and inconceivable. Like a drop of water is thrown into the sea, the water in the sea is inexhaustible.

As recorded in the “Vajra Prajna Paramita Sutra”, the Blessed One said to venerable Subhuti: “The Bodhisattva should have no abode in the Dharma (菩薩於法，應無所住，行於布施) Subhuti! The Bodhisattva should do so and not live in the image. Why? If the Bodhisattva does not live in the giving, his merit is inconceivable (若菩薩不住相布施，其福德不可思量).”<sup>40</sup> In the way of practice, Dharma and Dharma are interrelated and mutually beneficial with each other. There has never been a karma which was not born from causes and conditions. During these interlocking instances of relationship, Tzu Chi helps suffering people to reach the shore.

Bodhisattvas promote the good of all beings for the sake of saving lives. Therefore, they should stay away all the forms of givers, recipients, timing of giving, places of giving, the reason of giving and the result of giving, etc.,

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<sup>40</sup> Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什 trans., *Jingang bore boluomi jing* 金剛般若波羅蜜經 (*Vajra-cchedikā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra*), CBETA, T 8, no. 235, p.750b.

even their own nature of erroneous grasping, and to give without looking for any signs. Only in this way, will they truly benefit sentient beings. Under the guidance of Master Cheng Yen, Tzu Chi's international disaster operations aim at allowing relief workers to follow the spirit of "giving nothing and asking for nothing", and to achieve the level of no giver, recipient, and charity, which is the Buddhist realm of three-wheel bodily emptiness (三輪體空). As the Venerable master Yin Shun said in *"The Way to Buddhahood"*, "When attached to the three wheels, giving is described as worldly. Giving that is not connected to the three wheels, is called the world-transcending paramita" (三輪處處著，是施名世間；三輪空相應，出世波羅蜜).<sup>41</sup> Following the Three Turnings of the Wheel (of Dharma), Tzu Chi's international disaster relief operations correspond to the no gain and emptiness wisdom of Dharma, which is the key to enlightenment in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

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<sup>41</sup> Yin Shun 印順導師, *Chéng fó zhī dào 成佛之道 (The Way to Buddhahood)*, 2th edition, Taipei: Cheng Wen Publications, 2014.

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### Abbreviation

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