



Engaged Buddhist for Social Welfare

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Abstract

With the development of economy, the focus on materialism hasn't made people happier. Instead people become more discontented and unhappy. In Australia I have met lots of quite rich people, but I cannot tell if they are happier. As a Buddhist monk, I have taken the Bodhisattvas' vow: to be on the path to liberate all sentient beings from sufferings. Out of this motivation, I have engaged myself in Australian social welfare wishing to help people as a monk police, a volunteer in hospitals and a manager on my Dharma farm. As a monk police, I teach the police to meditate and Buddhist wisdom so as to reduce their anxiety caused by their dangerous job. In the hospital, I help the patients to overcome their mental fear and reduce their physical pain. On the Dharma farm, I take care of the sick or abandoned animals with loving kindness.

Keywords: Bodhisattvas' vow, A monk police, Loving kindness.

Introduction

My name is Venerable Ban Rou Shi from Australia. I was born in China. I came to Australia in 1994. Buddhism was not widely practised in Australia then. Australia is a country where multiculturalism has been practised as a national policy and deeply rooted in most Australians' mind.

Since the day I came to Australia, I have kept my precepts and the tradition as a monk, at the same time, I learned English and made many new friends in Australia. Being a monk, I view all sentient beings as the same. We are all equal and deserve all the rights to be happy.

Yet, out of my observation, same as in any other country; with the development of economy, the focus on materialism hasn't made people happier. Instead people become more discontented and unhappy. The cause of all these is greed. In Australia I have met lots of quite rich people, but I cannot tell if they are happier.

People often become very unhappy with the goals of getting "fame and fortune" but in Buddhism we learned "no self". In the Australian society, people who committed crimes are the ones who need lots of compassion. These days especially amongst young people, there are many problems: they drink heavily and take drugs, consequently these behaviours result in violence and crimes.

I have the opportunity working with a few other religious leaders and politicians to help with the problems in the country. As a Buddhist monk, I have taken the Bodhisattvas' vow: to be on the path to liberate all sentient beings from sufferings. Out of this motivation, I have engaged myself in Australian social welfare wishing to help people.

To better serve community as a Buddhist monk who lives in Australia: -

Firstly, I work closely with Australian police force: NSW Police

Secondly, I work as a volunteer in many hospitals

Thirdly, on my Dharma farm, I have rescued many weak, sick and abandon animals that need a lot of care and love

A Monk Police

I think probably I am the only “monk policeman” in the world. It is a long story.

It was in year 2000 when Sydney hosted the Olympic Game. I was working as a volunteer that I had the opportunity to meet a Priest who asked me to work as “a police officer councillor”.

In the beginning, I had other plans in my mind, so I didn’t give it much consideration. Surprisingly after a few years, “the job” was still available.

On May 26, 2006, I officially became Chaplain of the Parramatta police force.

I have so much respect and compassion for the policemen. They often face lots of very dangerous and challenging situations. They are often become very anxious. I first taught them how to meditate and then later, bit by bit taught them the wisdom of Buddhism.

There was a funny story I would like to share with you. I met a policeman who often came to my class to meditate. He told me that he felt much better and the insomnia he suffered disappeared. But instead of sitting straight to meditate on the cushion, he requested that a posture of lying down and that would benefit him much more. I listened and allowed him to do so.

It takes me some time and deeply thought to find the best way to help these heroes who are helping others in Buddhist perspective. And it really worked out which based on the support I have from everyone. I appreciate the trust people give me so that in this way I can benefit others regardless their races, cultural and religious background.

People who work in the police force are very courageous, they are dealing with terrorism, crimes and human disasters fearlessly. At the same time, as Buddha taught, the real strength is from within, that is the peace of mind. Training the mind to find the peace is really the key for me to help all my students including these police offices who become so close to me.

After 12 years working with the NSW police force, I am very happy that I can help as a Buddhist monk **and** as well as a “Monk Police”.

Chaplin in the hospitals

Apart from going to the police stations, whenever I am needed I would go to hospitals. The most one I visit as a chaplain is the Sydney Concord Hospital.

As you can imagine the physical and mental pains people could suffer in the hospitals. I especially feel so much for those who are quite old and live alone. When they are suffering from disease, they often become so depressed and sad, don't even mention when they are facing the death in such a state of mind.

The fear in the patient's mind is huge. It is also very challenging to find the way to help people like them. I know life is impermanent and we will die one day for sure, however most people seem, in their mind, holding a view that life should remain the way they like it to be and they could live forever. Based on this type of thought, when there are changes in life including sickness and death, they come as shocks, therefore they feel vulnerable and depressed. I believe that the wisdom of Buddhism can really help them.

As a Monk who has taken the Bodhisattvas' vow, I have generated lot of compassion for the patients in the hospital, in any way that I can help with lot of patience and loving kindness, I have been trying my best.

The rescued animals on the Buddhist Farm.

I founded "Prajna Monastery Dharma Farm", two hours drive from Sydney in NSW, where I have rescued a lot of animals.

In Australia there are many horse racing tracks where they use animals for gambling. Horses that were being raised as racing horses when they are old or sick and cannot be used as a tool to make money for their owners then they face the destiny to be killed by shooting them at their heads. I feel this is very brutal and feel it is extremely sad. So, I have been collecting old or sick animals from the racing tracks and from other farms with the helping from a few local Australian volunteers.

Most of these animals now have become much healthier and look happy too. They have been well fed and have lots of space to run over the farm. Once they become healthy again, if other people want to "adopt" them, I often give them for free with condition that they continue to look after them with kindness.

Looking ahead, I am very determined to carry on the Bodhisattva's way of life to benefit humanity.

To be able to engage myself in the social welfare in Australia is my karmic connection with the beautiful people of the country.

It is also my honour to be given so many opportunities to serve humanity. It is not an easy journey with my wish to spread Buddha's teaching, not only to the Chinese community but also to benefit all human being with the secular approach.

There are challenges in a fast-paced world that is based on the materialism, but what is a more meaningful life that is worthy of living than a life purely benefit to humanity for their ultimate happiness?