



[Karmic Ties]

TIMA's Precious Bonds: Growing and Flourishing

By Lin Chih-Yi and Huang Chiu-Hui

Dr. Chien Sou-Hsin, the organizer of this year's conference, wanted to begin the sharing session with Dr. Leh Siu Chuan and Dr. Tsai Tsung-Shien, who best exemplified the TIMA spirit, to present their stories to Master Cheng Yen. Through creative innovation, the working team used AI-generated voices combined with video footage from Da Ai TV to allow current TIMA members worldwide to reflect on and listen to the medical journeys of Dr. Leh and Dr. Tsai. The sharing session then continued with presentations from attendees at the venue.

Dr. Leh Siu Chuan (1934-2012), First Seed of TIMA Philippines

"In 1995, Sister Linda Chua from the Philippines came to The Chinese General Hospital to invite me to organize regular free clinics. As a devout Catholic, I had many reservations about collaborating with an organization of different religious beliefs. However, understanding the medical needs in remote areas of the Philippines and my mission as a doctor, I accepted this task. In April 1995, we held our first outreach free clinic. When we arrived in the Baguio mountain region at the northern end of Luzon Island, there

was already a long line of people waiting for medical attention. Seeing the anxious and helpless expressions on the faces of men, women, elderly, and children in the queue made me feel the responsibility of our medical team, and I was grateful we came.

The Philippines consists of over seven thousand islands of various sizes. With wealth inequality and transportation difficulties, many people in remote areas have never visited a hospital in their entire lives. Our arrival brought not only



medical care and medicine but also hope to their lives.” “Besides medical consultations, medication dispensing, and dental treatments, we also brought the operating room to the free clinic sites. We would create makeshift operating tables by joining several tables together, use bamboo poles to create partitions, and replace surgical lights with hanging lamps. This free clinic model became the prototype for future Tzu Chi international medical missions.

In September 2000, Master Cheng Yen granted me certification. Our master-disciple agreement was that

whenever impoverished patients needed help, I would lead the medical team across mountains and seas to relieve their suffering. This is both a doctor's mission and a Tzu Chi commissioner's responsibility. I only started volunteering with Tzu Chi at age 61, and despite my ailments, each free clinic made me forget my own pain. Everyone was considerate of my age and physical condition, asking me to slow down, but whenever I saw people suffering in poverty and illness, regardless of my physical state, as long as I could walk, even if stumbling, I would go wherever I was needed.”



Dr. Tsai Tsung-Shien (1958-2012), TIMA Taiwan

“Navigating trains and climbing stairs with a cane didn’t deter me. This ability to adapt with ease came only after joining Tzu Chi as a volunteer, because each step I took was firm and grounded.

At age one, I contracted polio which caused my right leg to atrophy, making walking difficult. My parents and siblings, fearing I would develop an inferiority complex, were overly accommodating. My teachers gave me special attention, and being a good student, everyone yielded to me, which fostered my arrogant personality.

After graduating from dental school, I opened my own clinic. The income was good, but I was never satisfied and started playing the stock market. While treating patients, my mind would wander, following the stock prices on TV. Despite having a smooth career and life, I remained unhappy and complained about life. During the great earthquake

of September 1999, I watched on TV as the earth was torn apart and homes were destroyed. I also saw volunteers in their blue and white uniforms, serving hot meals to disaster victims with strong hands, or offering warm shoulders for them to cry on. For the first time, I felt ashamed of my discontent.

After the 921 Earthquake, I joined TIMA Northern Taiwan. To make up for my wasted years, treating patients at my clinic became secondary. Whenever possible, I would either provide free medical services in Taiwan’s remote areas or travel with TIMA to Sri Lanka, the Philippines, or Indonesia to treat the teeth of those in need.

In 2004, upon hearing that Yuli Tzu Chi Hospital needed dentists, I began the Eastern Taiwan Mobile Medical Care project. Every Friday morning, I would take a train from Taipei to Yuli Tzu Chi Hospital, 250 kilometers away. After finishing



afternoon clinic duties, I would stay in the emergency room as a medical volunteer at night. Early Saturday, I would take another train to Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital to continue seeing patients. On Sundays, wherever help was needed, I would follow the volunteers with my cane to provide free medical care.

As a dentist, I face a world only

three fingers wide every day. Fortunately, through TIMA's dental services, I saw how vast the world truly is. I could use my expertise to relieve patients' tooth pain and my smile to ease their fears.

I am grateful for my leg. Because of polio, I had the opportunity to become a doctor and experience the most fulfilling life possible.”



Rekindling the Original Aspiration of Medical Practice and Recharging for a New Journey

Dr. Li Kuan-I, Director of Emergency Medicine at Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital, participated in a free clinic in Cambodia in 2018 and formed good connections with local volunteers. When Dr. Chien invited him to serve as the student leader for this year's conference, he accepted without hesitation, saying, "I hope to recharge myself and rediscover my original aspiration as a medical practitioner."

Reflecting on the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, when the emergency department served as the first line of defense, Dr. Li shares, "Besides clinical duties, I also held administrative responsibilities. I had to maintain stability not just for myself but

for the entire team. The medical team on the frontline faced immense pressure, and despite our best efforts, some colleagues left for personal career reasons, which was disheartening. As soon as the pandemic restrictions were lifted, Dr. Chien immediately called a management meeting to hear everyone's thoughts. At that moment, I felt somewhat overwhelmed emotionally. However, Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital is truly like a family. Many people encouraged me, and the young attending physicians in our department said, 'You're our department head, that's why we're staying!' That's when I realized I needed to stay strong to lead the emergency team forward!"

Dr. Chien gave the student leader an unusual assignment - to lead the singing of the conference theme song "Moonlight in the City," which had to be pre-recorded!



Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital Emergency Department Director Li Kuan-I served as the head student coordinator at the annual conference.



Vietnamese nursing instructor Ly Thi Phuong Anh (left) shared her experiences, with Sister Phung Tuyet Phan on the right.

Dr. Li admits that while his expertise lies in rock music, “Moonlight in the City” requires emotional interpretation as a ballad. He practiced intensively, so much that his children asked, “Dad, why are you singing this song all day?”

After two and a half days of immersion in the conference, Dr. Li reflects, “This TIMA annual conference has awakened something in me, recharging me with energy and renewed confidence to continue being a physician who helps more people.”

Returning to the Spiritual Home: Learning About Charity and Medicine

Li Thi Phuong Anh, a nursing instructor from Vietnam, visited Taiwan for the first time this year and attended her first TIMA annual conference. She was delighted to see her technical college teacher from 39 years ago also present at the event. The brief few days of courses deeply moved her. She expressed gratitude to Master Cheng Yen for creating the Tzu Chi world, which allowed her to learn valuable knowledge about charity, medicine, and environmental protection. What touched her most was seeing senior TIMA doctors who, despite their age, maintained their unwavering spirit to save lives, while a new generation of partners



American TIMA ophthalmologist Lin Men-Cheh.

joined to continue the mission of helping others.

Li Thi Phuong Anh noted that she was amazed and impressed to see doctors, who are generally viewed as having a noble profession, showing such humility during Tzu Chi free clinics, even bowing 90 degrees to their patients.

Witnessing Suffering at US- Mexico Border Strengthens Resolve to Restore Sight

Dr. Lin Men-Cheh, an ophthalmologist from the United States, shares that she used to participate in free clinics as a happy volunteer. However, since 2014, when the Tzu Chi Mobile Eye Clinic was established, she began working as staff for both the mobile unit and clinic centers. She shared her experience from last year’s free clinic in Tijuana, Mexico, saying, “Over a decade ago, Brother Joe Wang asked if



I wanted to go, but I was honestly afraid because the area was quite dangerous, with drug trafficking and numerous shootings. I finally gathered the courage to participate last year and discovered that the area was extremely underdeveloped and truly needed help. Many residents had lost their sight due to shootings or attacks. Once the Tzu Chi Mexico Eye Surgery Center is established, I hope ophthalmologists from around the world can come help perform surgeries and help restore people's vision."

Dr. Lin says, "This is my first time attending the TIMA (Tzu Chi International Medical Association) Annual Convention in Taiwan. Seeing many of my 'idols' (TIMA seniors) and hearing their shared experiences has been truly moving. I'm grateful for Superintendent Jian's leadership and planning at Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital. I enjoyed every session, especially 'Under the Same Sky,' where each story was deeply touching, combining medicine with charity. Seeing Tzu Chi members worldwide overcome difficulties and take root in various places, it's like the Sutra of Infinite Meanings says: 'After relieving suffering, teach the Dharma.' I'm truly grateful to Master Cheng Yen - without the Dharma, we wouldn't have the wisdom and courage to persist."

Dr. Lin states that upon returning to the United States, she will implement the

TIMA spirit learned at the convention, never forgetting the power of fifty cents, and invites everyone to adopt a vegetarian diet for better health, including eye health, while protecting the environment and saving the Earth.

Understanding Hardship: A Muslim's Expression of Great Love

Dr. Hamis Rashid from TIMA Philippines shares that his father passed away from heart disease during his high school years, leaving his family in financial hardship. This personal experience has given him deep empathy for families struggling with poverty and illness. He initially trained as a nurse and worked in rural areas. After encountering a cancer patient who couldn't receive treatment due to the absence of doctors in the area, he became determined to become a physician.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, he was invited by Tzu Chi members to participate in free clinics. Through their interactions, he discovered that Tzu Chi's philosophy closely aligned with his own beliefs. "Love is the way to change the world. Now that I've joined Tzu Chi, I feel we all share the same heart and are family, working together to help more people through love. Being Muslim hasn't posed any difficulty in working with Tzu



Dr. Hamis Rashid from TIMA Philippines.

Chi. Master Cheng Yen, your help to these suffering beings is like a beam of light. Your teaching by example and everything you've done deeply moves me. I hope you will remain in this world for a long time, leading us to do more and help more people."

A Jordanian Doctor's Responsibility and Mission

Dr. Amjad M. A. Othman from Jordan first encountered Tzu Chi in 2019. The Jordan TIMA conducts free clinics at refugee camps every two months, where he witnessed many toothless refugees. With support from the Jordan branch, dentists helped provide dentures for these refugees. Activities were temporarily suspended due to the pandemic until 2022, when they resumed holding free clinics, providing an average of ten to fifteen dental treatments or denture



Jordanian TIMA physician Dr. Amjad M. A. Othman (left), with Brother Chen Chiou-Hwa on the right.

services monthly.

Dr. Amjad now serves as the contact person for Jordan TIMA and has been making monthly donations since last year, unifying his profession with volunteering. This year, Dr. Amjad brought his wife and four young dentists to Taiwan to attend the TIMA Annual Convention, receiving care from Tzu Chi members throughout their journey until safely arriving in Hualien. He emotionally shared, "During the opening ceremony on September 15th, when I held hands with CEO Lin Chin-Lon, I felt my responsibility and mission in Jordan! During the specialized group discussions, hearing sharing from dentists worldwide was incredibly impactful, and I learned so much. I hope to bring TIMA's humanistic culture back home and invite Jordanian doctors to join TIMA, expanding our impact in Jordan."



Healing Both Body and Soul: Aspiring to be a Dharma Messenger

Lo Kaileen, a dentist from Malaysia, attended a tea gathering organized by Tzu Chi Collegiate Association during her second year of university in 2012. While watching a video about Tzu Chi's origins at the event, she recalls, "What touched me most deeply was my karmic connection with Master Cheng Yen. Seeing Master's image through the screen for the first time, my tears fell uncontrollably." She subsequently joined the Collegiate Association, and after graduation, returned to her hometown in Penang for Tzu Chi commissioner training, eventually receiving certification in 2019.

Dr. Lo carefully follows Master Cheng Yen's teachings, constantly striving for improvement. She participates in

charity visits, environmental protection, and promotes vegetarianism. She also engages in TIMA's health screenings, free clinics, and health education. Beyond serving local community members, she extends care to Rohingya refugees and the indigenous people of Gawu.

Admiring Tzu Chi's Dynamism and Praising Vegetarian Cuisine

Dr. Ruzbih Bahtiar, a general surgeon from Indonesia, joined TIMA in March last year, with his wife following shortly after. He shares, "What moves me most is Tzu Chi team's unique operational capabilities and well-established system. Everyone dedicates themselves wholeheartedly, and despite fatigue, they can always display joy and smiles to comfort patients and their families until the end of activities. I am very happy and honored to be part of the team."



Lo Kaileen, a dentist from Malaysia.



Dr. Bahtiar Ruzbih, a general surgeon from Indonesia, and his wife.

This is the first time he and his wife have come to Taiwan to attend the TIMA Annual Convention. Dr. Ruzbih smiles and says, “Tzu Chi’s vegetarian delicacies are delicious!” During the courses, besides learning about technology’s aid to medical care, he witnessed many TIMA partners acting as bodhisattvas in relieving people’s suffering. “Such sharing of love is priceless.”

A Miraculous Rebirth: Gratitude and Seizing Opportunities to Do Good

Dr. Ardent Lee, who serves in the Department of Oral Medicine at Taichung Veterans General Hospital, joined Tzu Chi Collegiate Association in 1992 and the Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA) in 1996. In 2023, he was admitted to the hospice ward of Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital due to terminal cancer. After

a series of life-saving interventions, he miraculously recovered and has now returned to Hualien to attend the TIMA annual conference, deeply moved by life’s unfathomable nature.

“I remember having a video call with Master Cheng Yen on February 5, 2023. I’m grateful for Master’s compassionate guidance, encouraging me to maintain both spiritual cultivation and peace of mind, reminding me that life and death are natural laws. Afterward, many Tzu Chi family members prayed for me, which greatly encouraged me. When my life was hanging by a thread, I’m thankful for the care shown by Vice President Lin Pi-Yu, CEO Lin Chin-Lon, and many senior executives.”

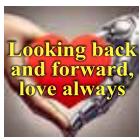
On March 22, 2023, Dr. Lee was rushed to Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital’s emergency room with a high fever of 40 degrees Celsius. Superintendent Chien Sou-Hsin immediately came to



Dr. Ardent Lee has recovered. Grateful to Master and all Dharma friends.



Nepalese plastic surgeon Dr. Jaswan Shakya invited his wife to attend the TIMA Annual Conference in Taiwan.



the emergency room and held his hand, calming his heart. Dr. Li also expressed gratitude to Deputy Superintendent Chuang Shu-Ting, Nursing Director Li Yu-Ru, and the nursing team. He recalled everyone who cared for and helped him, including the treatment team, 7A and 7B wards, the hospice ward, social work department, humanity department, the central region TIMA led by Dr. Chi Pang-Chieh, northern region TIMA, and countless Tzu Chi volunteers. “This powerful force of love enabled me to rise

from rock bottom. Everyone calls it a miracle; I believe it’s a miracle of love.”

At the beginning of this year, as Dr. Ardent Lee gradually recovered and returned to work, he expressed gratitude for his second chance at life and seized opportunities to do good. “Because of Tzu Chi, because of Great Love, we are gathered here. This is our dharma connection with Master that transcends time and space. We will carry this love back to our respective communities to continue spreading and implementing it.”



Building Connections Through Earthquake Relief: Promoting Free Clinics in Nepal

Dr. Jaswan Shakya, a plastic surgeon from Kathmandu, Nepal, first connected with Tzu Chi during Nepal's devastating earthquake in 2015. In 2016, he attended his first TIMA (Tzu Chi International Medical Association) annual conference, where he met many medical professionals and volunteers from different countries and regions. Through this experience, he gained a deeper understanding of Tzu Chi's humanitarian culture and its global relief efforts.

Dr. Shakya shared, "This is why I've returned to the annual conference - I want to understand Tzu Chi more deeply. This time, my wife has joined me to learn about Tzu Chi as well. I have made a vow to initiate free medical clinics in Nepal, and I hope to collaborate with Tzu Chi's medical teams to provide free medical services both in Nepal and in various countries. My wish is to see more volunteers and medical professionals from Nepal join the ranks of TIMA."

Senior TIMA Members Carry Forward Faith and Action: Spreading Love Globally

Dr. Kenneth Liao from TIMA USA is a familiar face at the annual conference and

often assists with translation. He believes that joining TIMA and participating in free clinics has transformed his entire life. From Honduras to El Salvador, Sri Lanka, and Jordan, he has created countless touching stories through his medical service. Believing in TIMA's ability to spread love's energy across the world, he made another vow before Master Cheng Yen to continue participating in TIMA indefinitely.

Dr. Josefino Qua was moved to hear the voice of his godfather, Dr. Leh Siu Chuan, during the closing ceremony. "Seeing the video of Dr. Leh this morning reminded me of our early efforts in free clinics. I never imagined it would influence medical outreach worldwide. It's truly touching. If Dr. Leh were here, he would be moved and grateful to everyone."

Dr. Chi Pang-Chieh from Central Taiwan TIMA shared: "Over 28 years, I've grown with TIMA. Though I've aged, our wisdom has grown daily, and I hope our compassion continues to increase. Seeing so many international participants return brings great joy. Tzu Chi's love knows no bounds and has blossomed everywhere."

Dr. Yeh Tian-Hao from Kaohsiung TIMA reflected: "This year's curriculum was excellent, helping us rediscover our initial aspirations. Each annual conference feels like taking inventory of oneself. Having the opportunity to treat those in need helps we discover our own pure nature."



Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital Supt. Chao You-Chen expressed gratitude to Master for enriching his life's path with dharma family members and role models, proudly stating, "I am a member of Tzu Chi." Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital Superintendent Lin Shinn-Zong reiterated his concern for African children and respect for all TIMA partners. Superintendent Chien Sou-Hsin concluded by thanking all volunteer teams.

Tzu Chi Foundation Vice CEO Lin Pi-Yu discussed TIMA's origins in the Philippines and expressed joy at seeing Dr. Ardent Lee's recovery. When visiting him at Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital after learning he might have less than a week to live, she was instead comforted by

him. "Many say 'Tzu Chi people aren't ordinary people; they're bodhisattvas.'" Dr. Lee is indeed a bodhisattva, following Master's teachings with faith and facing life's challenges peacefully." She praised his dedication to Master's principles of faith, vows, and action, saying, "And miraculously, he appears before us today!"

After everyone shared their closing remarks, Master Cheng Yen was invited to give a dharma talk.

The Healing Heart of Medicine Kings and Bodhisattvas: A Legacy for Generations

Time flows ceaselessly, and human life is impermanent and brief. As sutras





state, “A sickbed is like a personal hell,” making doctors patients’ greatest hope. Master often expresses her respect, gratitude, and love for these “Medicine King Bodhisattvas.” The gathering of such excellent and compassionate doctors in TIMA is invaluable. Master thanked all TIMA team members - doctors, nurses, pharmacists, support staff - saying, “Everyone shares the same mindset, dedicating precious time to medical outreach. This is so precious and touching!”

“I often say this: cherish the Earth, cherish all beings, be grateful to heaven and earth, and be grateful for human relationships. When we maintain gratitude toward humanity and all beings daily, directing this gratitude inward, we find

peace and joy every day.”

With TIMA members gathering from different countries in Hualien to benefit humanity, Master noted: “Though bodhisattvas speak different languages requiring translation, our hearts’ language is universal. Whether translations are perfect or not, they convey good intentions, unified by our common aspiration: love.” Master creatively pointed out: “Recently, everyone talks about AI. I don’t really understand AI, sometimes it becomes ‘IA.’ In Taiwanese, AI sounds like ‘will love’ - mutual love.” “A = will, I = love,” she explained, hoping the compassionate heart of the Medicine King Bodhisattva will continue its legacy of love through generations.