

20240302_ Interview Translation 001

Interviewer: Venerable Jue Fang

Interviewee: Venerable Tzu Chuang

0:06 Venerable Jue Fang

This is Venerable Jue Fang interviewing Venerable Tzu Chuang on the 2nd day of March 2024. This recording is taking place at Taipei Vihara, Fo Guang Shan. The interview is being recorded for the State Library of New South Wales Oral History Collection and Nan Tien Temple's 30th Anniversary Oral History Project.

Venerable Tzu Chuang, auspicious greetings. Thank you very much for agreeing to our interview today. Could you please give us a brief self-introduction?

1:09 Venerable Tzu Chuang

Sure. My name is Li Xintao. I was born in Yilan City, Taiwan, in 1931. Now I am 94 years old.

1:33 Venerable Tzu Chuang

My family originally engaged in commerce, operating a department store. But later, my father became a follower of Buddhism. He went to a temple in Taipei County to receive the Bodhisattva Precepts.

2:10 Venerable Tzu Chuang

He aspired to learn the Dharma but didn't have a spiritual teacher; thus, he invited Venerable Master Hsing Yun from Taipei to guide him.

2:20 Venerable Tzu Chuang

At that time, I was not a follower. But my father wished us all to share his faith in practising Buddhism, so he encouraged me to visit the temple to worship. There was a chance: after delivering a Dharma talk in Yilan, Venerable Master Hsing Yun led on a pilgrimage to Lion's Head Mountain. My father then asked me to accompany my mother, while he himself did not join.

2:53 Venerable Tzu Chuang

While accompanying my mother and through this opportunity, I felt great compassion emanating from Venerable Master Hsing Yun, and later, I obediently began to participate in activities at the temple. Venerable Master Hsing Yun initiated various Buddhist activities at Lei Yin Temple in Yilan, thus converting many of us, the youth.

3:24 Venerable Tzu Chuang

So later, we felt blessed serving in the temple as laypersons. Venerable Master Hsing Yun then invited me to Taipei to establish and manage the Buddhist Cultural Service Office, involving the distribution and sale of many Buddhist books and Dharma objects.

3:53 Venerable Tzu Chuang

Because of this pivotal cause and condition, later, when Venerable Master Hsing Yun founded Shou Shan Temple in Kaohsiung, he was poised to establish the Eastern Buddhist College; he invited me to manage educational affairs, leveraging my background in educational administration.

4:25 Venerable Tzu Chuang

After a year of involvement, I felt that it was somewhat odd for me to continue without being ordained as a nun, especially as those around me had done so. Meanwhile, I saw Venerable Master Hsing Yun's dedication to founding schools and Buddhist colleges without sufficient funds, even going so far as to conduct Dharma services throughout the night.

4:58 Venerable Tzu Chuang

I felt that he was working too hard on these Dharma services, which we had already learned in Yilan, so I resolved to take the work. It was in 1964, in 1965, during the conferral of precepts, that I participated and was ordained.

5:26 Venerable Tzu Chuang

Since then, my involvement with the Buddhist colleges founded by Venerable Master Hsing Yun has continued. My contributions have included educational administration, occasional Dharma talks offering, and support in educational endeavours.

5:46 Venerable Tzu Chuang

Venerable Master Hsing Yun also sent me to study at universities in Japan. After that, I was sent to the United States with his aspiration to spread Buddhism worldwide.

6:09 Venerable Tzu Chuang

So, in 1977 or 1976, during the bicentennial of the United States, a group of us was organised to travel there. Later, the devotees in the U.S. asked Venerable Master Hsing Yun to propagate the Dharma, so I was sent to found Hsi Lai Temple in Los Angeles.

6:44 Venerable Tzu Chuang

After Hsi Lai Temple was founded, it was praised as the "Forbidden City of America". Devotees came in quick succession, and many were converted. In the U.S., we established many branch temples, dozens of them in New York and other places.

7:13 Venerable Tzu Chuang

Later, Venerable Master Hsing Yun felt that we needed to expand to other countries and continents like Europe and Australia, so it was just right that someone recommended that Australia had land available for building temples, so the Venerable Master sent me there to negotiate with the government.

7:46 Venerable Tzu Chuang

In Australia, I initiated the preparations for the temple's construction. Meanwhile, I was also the Director of Fo Guang Shan Pure Land Cultural and Educational Foundation, particularly in managing the construction of global branch temples.

8:11 Venerable Tzu Chuang

So there, at that time, following Venerable Master's instructions, we worked quickly on the building plans and preparations. It was the Master's aspiration that the temple in Australia should be built by Australians. So we helped to get it built. Then, Venerable Master sent me to various places in Europe to continue the propagation of Buddhism.

8:44 Venerable Tzu Chuang

In various regions, including the UK, France, Spain, Portugal, and even Africa, we have branch temples. In each place, I led the initial groundwork, ensuring the readiness for our Dharma brothers to establish these temples and commence the spread of the Dharma.

9:16 Venerable Tzu Chuang

Now, in every place, we can say, a lot around the world, dozens of places have our branch temples. East America¹, South America, including in Brazil, and in several places.

9:41 Venerable Tzu Chuang

So, it is Venerable Master Hsing Yun's great vow, "May the Buddha's light shine universally on the three thousand realms; Let the Dharma stream flow across all five continents", reaching all corners of the world. His hope is to make Buddhism, and our Humanistic Buddhism, accessible to the entire world so that all people can lead happy and prosperous lives.

¹ A slip of the tongue; it should be South America.