 Heading for a Bright Future after a Difficult Journey

A Brief Report on the Renovation of Dharma Realm Guan Yin Sagely Monastery

仁德文 BY REN DE

樊果惠 英譯 ENGLISH TRANSLATED BY IRENE FAN

Renovation Process Fraught with Challenges

Malaysia is an Islamic country. Even though there is freedom of religion, renovating a Buddhist Monastery is a very sensitive issue. The application for a permit and the blueprint were submitted back in 1993, but the government rejected it numerous times, so six years passed and the permit was still not forthcoming. In 1999, the Dharma Master discovered that because the architect was convinced that the government would never approve the permit for a Buddhist development, so the application was not even submitted. After the Dharma Master took back the blueprint and asked a layperson to resubmit it, surprisingly it was approved within two to three weeks. The fourfold assembly was truly amazed and delighted by this miracle, the result of their utmost sincerity.

Kun Yam Thong [the original name] is located in the busiest district at the golden triangle in Kuala Lumpur. The busiest traffic route in the city passes right in front of the monastery, which is surrounded by the consulates of various countries, all kinds of five-star high rise buildings, the Kuala Lumpur Culture Center (the tallest building in Asia before Taipei 101 was built), the World Trade Center and about twenty other luxurious apartments. DBA, over 100 years old, while truly a historical landmark in this prosperous commercial area, was in a very dilapidated state and filled with grease and dust after many years of incense and candle offerings. The government approved the application for renovation (since the monastery would then fit in better with the cityscape) but required that the monastery keep the same overall appearance and size. The permit was obtained only after many challenges.

走過艱辛迎向光輝
—略記法界觀音聖寺重建經過

重建不易經考驗

馬來西亞政府是回教國家，雖說宗教自由，但佛寺重修是很敏感的。申請重建方案從93年開始設計圖樣，政府曾駁回數次，六年多來未取得建築許可。99年，決定將設計師的圖樣取回，交居士投遞後，沒想到二三週內便順利取得執照，可說是四眾弟子無不為此「真誠所至，金石為開」的奇蹟歎欣無比。

「觀音堂」位於吉隆坡最繁華的金三角，廟前是市內最繁忙的交通要道，附近有各國大使館，各類五星級的摩天大樓，雙峰塔（臺北101之前，亞洲最高建築）、世界貿易中心與20棟豪華公寓競相矗立，豔光四射。百年餘的登彼岸在此繁華中，雖為史蹟，實在老舊，經年累月焚燒燈油香燭，垢膩可見。政府在有利市容觀瞻之考量下，但以造型依舊，尺寸不變為條件，可說是在驚險考驗中獲准的。

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Working Together without Discrimination

Dharma Realm Guan Yin Sagely Monastery (DRGYSM) has followed the northern style of temple architecture. It resembles the Forbidden City in China, with a Great Heroes Hall, a Patriarch Hall, a Long Life Hall, a Rebirth Hall, a Four Great Heavenly Kings Hall, a corridor, two pavilions upstairs, and restrooms. The total area is 10,000 square feet.

Dharma Masters Jang and Tai have worked together on the design, supervising every major or minor task. Dharma Master Jang had previous experience from building the Buddha Hall at Long Beach Monastery in the U.S. Dharma Master Xiang oversaw the ironwork and welding.

Because the monastery is located in a busy area, the government prohibits construction trucks from entering between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. To avoid any delay, the monastery decided to provide room and board to the construction workers on the condition that they refrain from eating meat and smoking on site. The Dharma Masters treated these workers very well, providing them with healthy and delicious vegetarian meals and fruits, showing concern for their living conditions, and comforting them when they miss home. These workers were deeply touched by their kindness. The experienced foreman even took the initiative to suggest adding a beam for safety when he saw the need. It was difficult to build a roof of so many layers. Nevertheless, the workers still tried their best to achieve the best result. They certainly worked hard and did not slack off in the least.

Adorned beyond Compare

The Great Jeweled Hall is 70 feet wide and 100 feet long. The gray Buddha altar is 42 feet long and supports three statues of Shakyamuni Buddha, Medicine Master Buddha and Amitabha Buddha. Each bronze statue is over 10 feet tall and weighs one ton. The images of the three Buddhas and the Guanyin Bodhisattva of a thousand hands and eyes are extremely adorned. They are beyond compare. Now, these images are reputed to be the largest in Malaysia. Also, the Medicine Master Buddha in Long Life Hall and the Earth Store Bodhisattva in the Rebirth Hall were all made in Putian, Fujian Province in China. All the statues and the eighteen Arhat statues are gilded by hand with gold leaf. They resemble the light released from a thousand suns. This adds to the splendor of the monastery. For the sake of this project, DM Jang traveled to China more than ten times.

Based on the practice of “getting the best price from three bids” in Dharma Realm Buddhist Association, Dharma Master Jang sought to obtain the best quality at the lowest cost, and thus it was difficult to proceed quickly. DM Jang remarked, “This is not like any ordinary housing, which can be changed at anytime or rebuilt when it deteriorates! The monastery is the place for transmitting the Dharma and cultivating
Accomplished through Joint Effort and Joint Virtue

The Dharma protecting laity sincerely supported this project. One person made a donation to build the front gate and four arches. Another person paid for all the labor. Many disciples came to the monastery daily and contributed their effort in the kitchen, the Buddha Hall, and at the front gate. Some people brought their servants to help out. Some rushed in to help after work, using their weekends or vacation time. The fourfold assembly pooled their efforts and their virtue. The renovation project was completed by the monastery itself. There was only a construction announcement, but no fundraising activities nor a “Thousand People Banquet” (Malaysia has a custom of holding fundraising banquets where participants are required to donate a certain amount). Just as the Dharma Master said, Dharma Realm Guan Yin Sagely Monastery was built based on group efforts and a myriad of conditions.

Developing Good Roots by Promoting Vegetarian Meals

To encourage vegetarianism and reduce killing karma, the dining hall with a capacity of 500 is open to the public Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. Its low-priced, healthy and delicious vegetarian meals have become popular and profitable in the financial district. After the renovation of Dharma Realm Guan Yin Sagely Monastery was completed, it introduced more customers to Buddhism. To give working people more opportunities to benefit from the Dharma, the Great Compassion Repentance and Avatamsaka Sutra Recitation are scheduled after lunch. After work, many people come to the temple and pray, and gradually also become volunteers.

The project was completed after about five years, from 2000 to 2005. Kun Yam Thong has a new visage which is modern and elegant. May the Dharma Realm Guan Yin Sagely Monastery turn the Dharma Wheel and cross over living beings on a vast scale!
A Talk by Dharma Master Heng Jang

First, I would like to welcome all the good advisors from Dharma Realm Buddhist Association to this auspicious Dharma assembly at DRGYSM. “The Dharma does not arise by itself, but only through conditions.” DRBYSM was formerly known as Kun Yam Thong. The Venerable Master Hua came to Malaysia in 1978 and turned the Great Dharma Wheel and planted the vajra seed. After that, the Venerable Master returned many times to create Dharma connections with living beings here. [Editor's Note: The Venerable Master propagated the Dharma for forty-two days in Malaysia, during which more than 6,000 people took refuge with the Triple Jewel, breaking the record in the history in Malaysia.]

The disciples at the Kun Yam Thong truly respected the Venerable Master’s great vow to rescue living beings. They wished to offer the Venerable Master a place so he could continue to speak Dharma in Malaysia. This is why I have the chance to study Buddhadharma with you all. The construction of DRGYSM started in 2000; it was completed through group effort and many supporting factors. We hope that with the guidance of the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and the Venerable Master, we can plan more Dharma assemblies in the future to continue the wisdom life of the Buddha. We welcome all of you to participate in the 125th year Opening Light Ceremony. Please always come and study the Buddhadharma at the Dharma Realm Guan Yin Sagely Monastery.”

A Talk by Dharma Master Heng Tai

Today we have this adorned DRGYSM truly because of the Venerable Master’s virtue as well as the sincerity of the laity. We shall always remember the kindness of the Venerable Master’s teaching. The Venerable Master has established the foundation of the Proper Dharma in the West. That is our true place of refuge. We always need to remember that origin. We don’t just render our support here, but also support the headquarters so that the Proper Dharma can flourish everywhere.

Originally, this is the monastery of Guanyin Bodhisattva. The small statue in front of the big Guanyin statue was originally worshiped here. Later on, we wanted to make a bigger one, a little bigger than the original size. When the Dharma Master went to the factory to sign for the statue, he discovered that it was bigger than what we had requested. This new statue is much bigger and far more adorned. Because of this, we should believe the great spiritual power of Guanyin Bodhisattva which surpasses our expectations!