ABSTRACT

This academic exercise comprising six chapters is a comparative study of the concept of filial piety in two great Eastern traditions, namely Confucianism and Buddhism.

Chapter one deals with the background of the two schools of thought which form an essential part of the life of the Singapore Chinese. It also explains the importance of filial piety in both Confucianism and Buddhism.

Chapter two discusses the characteristics of filial piety and its various forms of expression in Confucianism and explains how it functions in the Confucian society. It demonstrates that filial piety is the corner-stone of the Confucian moral order upon which familiar, social and political relationships are built. If everyone practises filial piety, then harmony in the family, stability in the state and peace in the world would naturally follow.

Chapter three concerns itself with the characteristics, various forms of expression and functions of filial piety in Buddhism. If people are able to practise filial piety as taught by Buddhism, they would be able to reach the highest state of Buddhism, that is, Nirvana, the state of enlightenment.

Chapter four compares the differences and similarities between the concept of filial piety of Confucianism and that of Buddhism. It concludes that the concept of filial piety
in Confucianism is more moralistic and filial piety in Buddhism is more religious in nature.

Chapter five evaluates the concept in Confucianism and Buddhism. Both versions of filial piety have certain merits. While it is difficult to state conclusively which is the better of the two, this chapter points out that the two can be complementary to each other. Nevertheless both Confucianism and Buddhism do not deny the existence of spirits. Their mutual agreement on this point can serve as a bridge between the two schools of thought.

Chapter six concludes this academic exercise. It also states that if we could combine the doctrine of filial piety as the philosophy of Buddhism, and above all, my Buddhist teacher, Mr. Tan Kang Bose for teaching from both school of thoughts - Confucianism and Buddhism, then we will achieve the most perfect state of filial piety on earth.