

HELPING HAND FOR LIFE

LIFE is unpredictable. Everyone is aware of that but, truthfully, how many of us would want to admit the possibility of hardships, sorrows or disappointments knocking on our doorsteps unexpectedly?

You could be happily enjoying your life with your close ones when illness comes a calling or you could be having sleepless nights wondering about your forked love life between two romantic prospects.

Philosophically speaking, life is made up of an endless series of decisions – of course, your immediate thoughts, desires and surrounding influence will, to a certain extent, sway your judgments; but, overall, life is just the manner you act and react to a given set of constantly evolving situations.

Ask yourself: Do you think you make the “best” decisions that go in your favour – always?

The answer is probably that most of us don’t.

We make decisions, both trivial and life changing, based on what we observe and hear from our social circles and, more often than not, this information may not be sufficient to help us make the most of the situation.

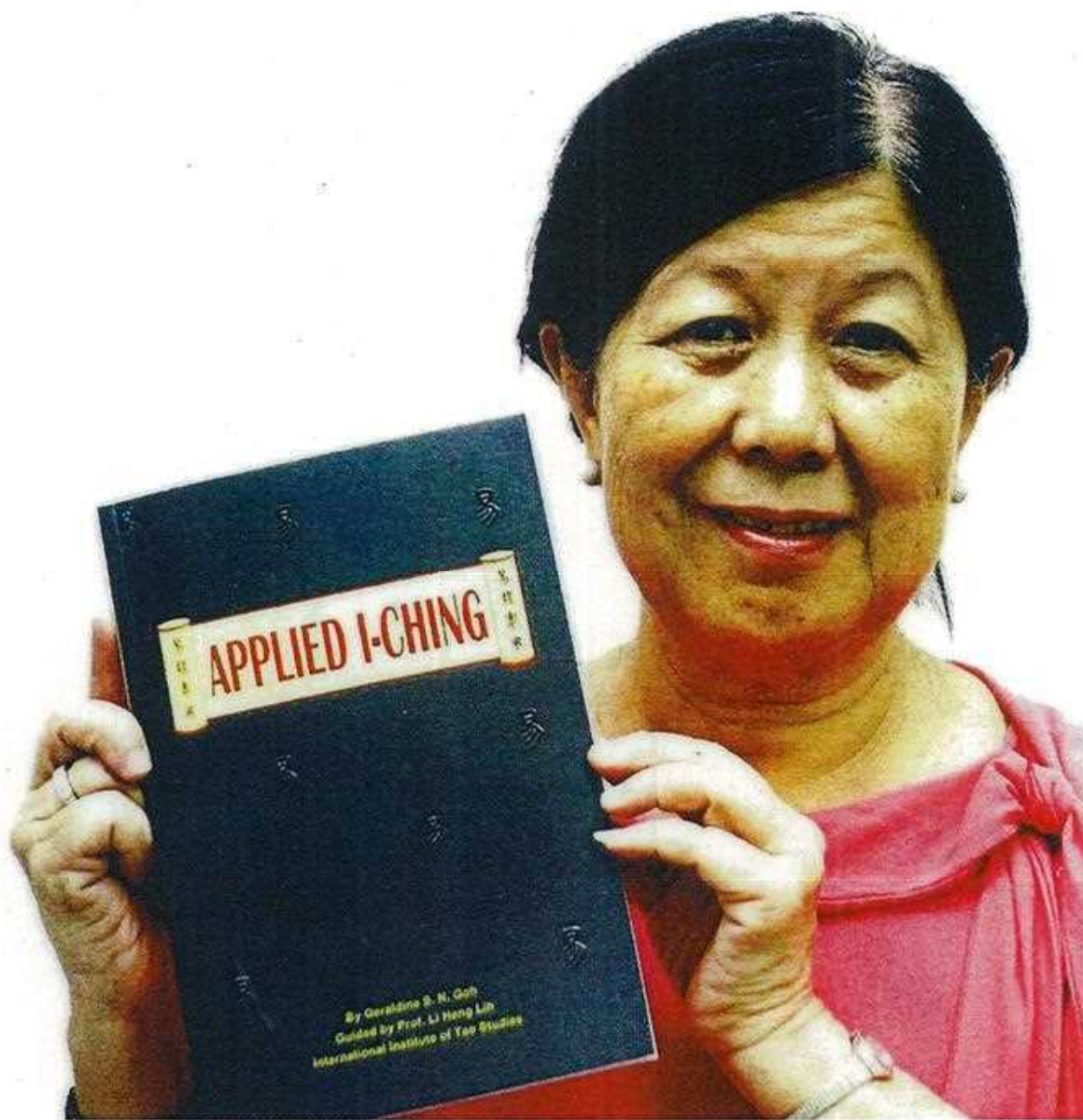
A brief history of I-Ching and its interpretation

Thanks to the ingenuity of the ancient Chinese civilisation, the art of divination (along with precious knowledge in medicine, mathematics and other serious academic pursuits) through the complex I-Ching was developed – a skill refined through the ages that metamorphosed from interpreting the convulsion of cow intestines and cracked turtle shells to the intrinsic patterns of yarrow stalks, coins and rice when thrown.

Due to the complexity of the meanings involved and the cryptic ancient Chinese text in which the I-Ching was written, many Western missionary scholars have, in the past, made many numerous attempts at translating the I-Ching into Latin and English without much success.

James Legge, who was also a Christian missionary, stood out with his inclusive theology, witnessing all the great creations of the Chinese civilisation as the hand of God at work.

While most missionaries believed they were taking God to the Chinese in the late 19th century (1882, to be exact), Legge believed he was observing a full-



Dr Goh holding up a copy of her new book on the I-Ching.

er experience of God, and that the Chinese had always borne witness to and believed in God within their society and scriptures.

Legge was later succeeded by Richard Wilhelm, a pastor to the German colonies in China, when it was already quite acceptable to believe that, just as the Israelites were given a special revelation of the name and true nature of God in the books of the Old Testament, the Chinese had at the same time been given a similar message, but that it was lost under the later layers of Buddhism and Taoism.

Present day I-Ching

There are several methods used to interpret the I-Ching but all scholastic attempts at sharing the intriguing values of the I-Ching in the English language in the past had focused solely on the Confucian approach, never the Tao and numeric styles.

Fast forward to the 21st century, Dr Geraldine Goh Sim Ngan, founder of the Institute of Tao Studies, Malaysia, endeavours to share her understanding of the I-Ching via her effort to translate the ancient text into a practical read.

Called Applied I-Ching, the book presents readers with a modern day understanding of the kua (there are 64 kua or hexagrams in the I-Ching), and you may relate a kua to your personal and company name, phone numbers, residential address and even car plate numbers.

Meant for I-Ching dummies, the DIY book seeks to address the few ways we may “consult” the Universe for answers – via

coins, yarrow stalks and oracle cards – to help in the never-ending journey of decision-making.

“We can’t run away from problems. It’s how you manage them that counts,” Dr Goh said, adding that foreseeing future variables in the various ventures we undertake helps make the results even better.

Essentials of I-Ching consultation

“The single most important element in seeking answers from the oracle is to have a sincere, clear mind. If you’re not sincere, the results you get may not be sincere too,” cautioned the 61-year-old, adding that it shouldn’t be played with or ridiculed.

“Your questions should also be specific and the scope must not be too broad,” Dr Goh said.

She is a diligent Tao practitioner, who had sought tutelage under the most renowned overseas Tao scholars over the last few decades.

“Also, don’t ask questions that end up with a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer. You get nothing, except a blur fog. The oracle doesn’t give definite answers, instead, it paints a scenario,” she said.

“Try something like: I am thinking of furthering my career in New York next year. I want to consult the oracle to know what is going to happen,” Dr Goh explained.

One may use just one card, or stretch it up to a maximum of 13 cards. If you’re not too familiar with I-Ching, you may ask a friend or close confidante to do it on your behalf – but sincerity is imperative.

“In short, there are two parts.

First, to be in the right frame of mind to get an accurate response from the Universe.

“Second, one needs the necessary knowledge to interpret the message conveyed by the hexagram(s). For those who are not so confident, having an experienced I-Ching practitioner help is vital,” she concluded.

Fear of the unknown shouldn’t stop anyone from advancing and the I-Ching should not be regarded as a superstition but more as a means to improve the consequences of decisions.

■ Applied I-Ching can be found at all MPH and Popular bookstores nationwide.

Dr Goh is also giving her yearly Chinese New Year Talk (conducted in English) on Charging Up the Vigour of the Ox Year 2009 on Dec 28 at 2.30pm. Admission is RM20.

She’s also giving a free talk on Practical Oracle of Heng Lih I-Ching Cards to provide an opportunity to consult the I-Ching and gain a clearer picture of what’s ahead of you. The talk will be held on Feb 27, 2009, at 7.30pm.

Lastly, there is a training course on the Introduction to Oracle of Heng Lih I-Ching Cards that guides you on simple and effective ways to consult the oracle. It is scheduled for Feb 15, 2009, from 9.30am till 1pm. Course fee is RM65 per participant.

All talks and courses are held at the Institute of Tao Studies, located at 31-1, Jalan Desa, Taman Desa, Off Jalan Klang Lama, 58100 Kuala Lumpur (next to the Desa Hospital). Tel: 03-7983 0388.

APPLIED I-CHING

— Practical Application

☆ I-Ching the foremost ancient Chinese classic and the first Chinese oracle book, is for the first time presented in a comprehensible and practical way.

☆ A self-help I-Ching application book for beginners, step by step, easily understood and interesting.

☆ 64 Hexagrams in pictures with interpreted phrases, easy to read, understand and use.

☆ First book in English presenting the I-Ching classical text of the Han dynasty for interpretation of the Numeric and Tao I-Ching.

The International Institute of Tao Studies is an international organisation promoting, preserving and passing on the study of Taoism (Laozi, Chuangtzu and the five skills of Sun Dongyuan, Yi (medicine), Mei (arts), the calendar and feng shui). These rare skills are derived from ancient books that were the exclusive property of the emperors and were passed down through the ages. The study of Tao is to help people with philosophy and skills to live harmoniously with nature and to improve the materiality as well as spirituality.

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