

Honorary Fellow A Citation

Dr Lee Lok-sze, Rebecca, MH, DHum (Hon)

Chinese philosopher Xunzi has mentioned in his writing, *An Exhortation to Learning*, that “one needs to climb a high mountain to know how high the sky is, and one needs to approach a deep ravine to know how deep is the earth,” stressing that only from looking down at the earth at the high mountains would allow one to realize the magnificence of the heavenly, while only from watching the sky at the extreme lands would allow one to understand the mysteries of the universe. Dr Rebecca Lee is the world’s first female explorer to reach the “three poles” of the world - the North Pole, South Pole and summit of Mount Everest. Dr Lee has four times reached the summit of Mount Everest, looking far and wide from the top of the world. She has also reached the Polar Regions to observe the sky and land. Visits to the extreme lands has empowered Dr Lee with a broad mind and vision, while her thoughts and emotions attached to her nation and the ecology of the earth has long transcended the limitations of the mundane world.

A native of Sansui district in the province of Guangdong, Dr Rebecca Lee graduated from the Hong Kong Technical College (now The Hong Kong Polytechnic University) in 1964, majoring in commercial design. She established a commercial design and advertising company after she graduated, and has worked as a professional advertising designer, artist, photographer and writer. In 1985, Dr Lee was invited to join China’s National Antarctic Expedition, and helped to promote the building of China’s first Antarctic scientific research station. Stepping foot for the first time on the Antarctic, the land of ice and snow, Dr Lee realized the preciousness of the natural world as well as the damages caused by global warming, and recognized the urgency to promote environmental protection. That is when she decided to give up the advertising business she has endeavoured, and devoted wholeheartedly to the work of polar exploration.

The two extreme points of Earth, namely the ice and snow of the Arctic and the ancient land of the Antarctic, are barren and remote. The two poles seem so far beyond reach, and are of no concern to mankind. But in fact, every part of the natural world is closely related. As the two poles greatly affect the Earth’s atmosphere and marine activities, therefore they carry the function of regulating seasonal change and rainfall, exerting great influence on the daily lives as well as the future of mankind. In order to achieve greater understanding on how the change of glaciers at the two poles affect the Earth’s climate, and record the findings through words and images for the use of environmental education, Dr Lee has travelled to the two poles more than 18 times. With a sincere heart and an extraordinary penmanship, Dr Lee has written many articles on the ecology of the Polar Regions, and has authored numerous books documenting her life in the extreme lands. Aside from words, with Dr Lee’s gifted talent of photography and an incredible sharp sense, she has also captured the scenery of the Polar Regions. Some of Dr Lee’s main works include: *The Poles Declaration*, *Bai se li liang: Nan bei ji de hui xiang* (《白色力量：南北極的回響》), *Bei bing yang xi yu* (《北冰洋細語》), *Ji di jing qing* (《極地驚情》), *Ji di sou ying*

(《極地搜影》), *Mang mang bei ji lu* (《茫茫北極路》), *Nan bei ji zu yin* (《南北極足音》), *Nan ji chang ye* (《南極長夜》), *Nan ji lu qing* (《南極旅情》), *Antarctic Fantasy*, *Sha mo xing zhou* (《沙漠行舟》), *Xue yu hong chen* (《雪域紅塵》), *Go Along with the Esqumau*, *Zhu feng mi yu* (《珠峰密語》), *Nan ji zhui zong* (《南極追縱》), *Bei ji zhui zong* (《北極追縱》), which are all bestsellers of all times, with numerous editions printed.

With her words and photography, Dr Lee has awakened mankind to show more concern to the ecology of the Polar Regions, and to reflect on how to grasp a balance between the availability of natural resources and the desire of humans. In the prologue of her book *Bai se li liang: Nan bei ji de hui xiang* (《白色力量：南北極的回響》), which was published in 1991, Dr Lee has solemnly warned the world that “the two Polar Regions are just like a reticent giant, usually hiding at the far edges of the world. However her every move will trigger the sensitive nerve of global change. Therefore ignoring her existence will be a historical mistake”. Dr Lee’s judgement was accurate. In 1999, icebreakers in the Arctic Ocean would be stopped by glaciers when they reach the latitude of 74° north, but by 2010 icebreakers could easily reach the 88° north, indicating the Arctic ice is melting rapidly. In the meantime the global temperature is rising; the seasons are out of sync, acid rain is falling constantly, while floods and droughts are occurring unpredictably. Aside from words, photographs taken by Dr Lee are also vibrant and stunning. A touching picture published on *Bei ji zhui zong* (《北極追縱》) showed polar bear, which lost its home due to the melting of Arctic ice, was looking for food on a piece of broken ice, agonizing over the fact that the ice are slowly disappearing. The books has led to serious debate among the readers, questioning on how to preserve the natural habitat of the Polar Regions, as well as on how to deal with the dilemma created by global warming. Environmental issues became more widely discussed because of Dr Lee’s fabulous penmanship and splendid pictures.

While the glaciers at the Polar Regions continue to melt away, Dr Lee’s determination to preserve the environment is stronger than ever. In 1997, Dr Lee founded the Polar Museum Foundation, and has served as its director since then. The foundation’s goal is to compile the results of scientific research conducted by different countries, and pushed forward the work of environmental protection around the world. Dr Lee actively advocated the exploration and study of the Polar Regions, and promoted the knowledge of environmental science. She has hosted hundreds of lectures in Hong Kong, Macau and the mainland, and has spoken to more than half a million students about the magnificence of the polar scenery, and the damages pollution has done to the environment. Dr Lee has also held numerous photo exhibitions of the Polar Regions, and produced television documentaries to share her experience and feelings with the public. She is adored by students and numerous followers, and is honoured by the nickname “Hong Kong’s queen of snow”.

Glaciers may keep their cool, but the queen of snow is warm and gentle. She has visited different parts of the world to promote the work of environmental protection, once saying that “speaking in person to several hundreds of students at one time is the quickest and most direct way to achieve results. I have personally been to those places, and the students will believe

me because I am more appealing to them". Dr Lee has dedicated her life to the exploration of the Polar Regions and environmental protection, while her professionalism, devotion and personal experience has led the youth to their journey of environmental protection. Dr Lee is also devoted to raise local awareness on environmental protection, serving as an adviser for the Hong Kong Government's Leisure and Cultural Services Department as well as the mainland's Polar Research Committee of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Dr Lee was awarded the title of Doctor of Humanities, *honoris causa* respectively by Lingnan University in 2000 and The Hong Kong Institute of Education in 2012. She was also conferred the honorary title of University Fellowship by The Hong Kong Polytechnic University in 2009, in recognition of her contribution to polar research and environmental education.

The Chinese University of Hong Kong has always been concerned with work of environmental research and education. It established the Institute of Environment, Energy and Sustainability in 2011, and is currently constructing the Museum of Climate Change. Dr Lee has promised to work with the University, and provide her thousands of valuable pictures and samples to the museum for exhibition and educational purposes. When the construction of the museum is complete, the University's students as well as the general public will be educated and enlightened by the importance of environmental protection. Dr Lee has also given numerous lectures at the University, and is deeply respected by the University's faculty members and students.

Dr Lee has dedicated her life to promote the work of environmental protection, travelling to the Polar Regions to gather information. She mentored the youth to cherish the planet, and practice on what she preaches. During the past 40 years, numerous people began to treasure the planet because of Dr Lee's books, exhibitions and lectures. Dr Lee has contributed outstandingly to the cause of environmental education, made extraordinary achievements and is greatly influential. She is one of our country's greatest explorers, and is deeply honoured by the youth.

Mr Chairman, Dr Lee is a Chinese explorer who has four times reached the summit of Mount Everest Region, and has entered the Polar Regions eighteen times without fear. To recognise her perseverance and unshaken devotion to environmental protection, it is my privilege to present to you Dr Lee Lok-sze, Rebecca for the award of an Honorary Fellowship of the University.

