

Hội Phật Giáo Việt Nam Tại Edmonton

PHẬT QUANG TEMPLE

3104 - 48 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T6L 5Z3

Phone : (780) 461-7931 - Web : www.phatquangedmonton.com

Email : info@phatquangedmonton.com



Lotus Bud
Xuân Kỷ Hợi 2019

TU THIỀN - MEDITATION (CHAN, ZEN)



Meditation is to control our mind, direct it inwards, clear out false perceptions and deluded thoughts, *abandon all notions, to ultimately bring us to a non-dualistic state of mind*, help us see our *intrinsic nature*, our *true mind*, and lead us to awakening and enlightenment. Directly pointing at the mind and realizing our True Nature is the goal of Zen meditation.

Trực chỉ chân tâm, kiến tánh thành Phật, là tôn chỉ của Thiền Tông.

Tâm vừa dấy niệm hai bên là đã đi trong luân hồi.

Tu thiền để dứt bỏ vọng tưởng, dứt bỏ mọi phân biệt đối đãi. Vô minh vọng tưởng hết, thì Chơn tâm hiển lộ.

Zen Meditation aims at the shortest, but also the steepest, way to awakening.

Thiền Tông là con đường khó nhất, nhưng cũng ngắn nhất, đưa ta trở về với Chơn Tâm.

TU NIỆM PHẬT - PURE LAND PRACTICE

Lời Đức Phật huyền ký: "Đời mạt pháp người tu thì nhiều nhưng khó có ai đắc đạo".

Buddha Sakyamuni predicted: "In the Dharma-ending age, among the multitude of practitioners, very few will attain the Way. The most they can expect is to rely on the Pure Land method to escape birth and death" (Great Heap Sutra)



"Lúc tôi thành Phật, mười phương chúng sanh nghe danh hiệu tôi chí tâm tin ưa, tất cả thiện căn tâm tâm hồi hướng nguyện sanh cõi tôi, dầu chỉ mười niệm, nếu chẳng được sanh thì chẳng lấy Chánh Giác" (ĐỨC PHẬT A DI ĐÀ)

"In the future, when I realize Buddhahood, my land will be the utmost joyful and pure land... Any living being in the ten directions only needs to recite my name with sincerity and I will guide him to my land to realize Buddhahood..." (Amitabha Buddha)

Single-mindedly reciting Amitabha Buddha's name and seeking rebirth in the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha allows for "horizontal" escape, as compared to the much harder way of "vertical" escape (of Meditation)

Niệm A-Di-Đà Phật, nguyện vãng sanh Tịnh Độ là con đường ngắn nhất có thể đưa đến thoát khỏi luân hồi.

The Land of Ultimate Bliss is also our True Mind... (Master Hua)

Tức tâm là độ lý không ngoa,

Tịnh khác Thiền đâu, vẫn một nhà! (H.T. Thích Thiền Tâm)

Foreword

LOTUS BUD, PHAT QUANG Temple, 2019

LOTUS BUD (BÚP SEN) Phật Quang is the youth edition of HOA SEN (Lotus) Phật Quang annual magazine. Throughout the years, HOA SEN magazine, with its contents aimed mainly at Vietnamese adult readers, has not been able to reach a broader audience.

Mr. Quang Tri, our president, advanced the idea that maybe we should have a youth version.

Mr. Giac Minh added that a bilingual youth version might be worth considering. English texts would help introduce the wonderful teachings of Buddhism to English readers. Vietnamese texts also offer an opportunity for Vietnamese of 2nd and 3rd generations to learn their maternal language.

There have also been some questions about how big the demand will be.

As

“The unfathomable and wonderful Dharma,*

In hundreds of thousands of millions of eons is difficult to encounter”*

we do believe that trying to reach out to a larger audience, with a both basic and not so basic content, together with an appealing presentation, would be worth the effort ...

Our sincere thanks to all of you who have, in different ways, created the *favorable conditions* for LOTUS BUD to spring up.

Phật Quang editorial group would like to welcome all questions. We will do our best to reply to readers' emails.

PHAT QUANG Temple

*Dharma: Buddha's teaching

Eon: an indefinitely long period of time

*LOTUS BUD is for FREE distribution

Copying is freely encouraged to help spread the Dharma

Table of Content

| | | | |
|--|----|--|----|
| Foreword | 3 | Đức Phật là Ai ? | 8 |
| Tết, the Vietnamese New Year | 5 | Đức Phật là Một Bậc Thầy | 8 |
| Einstein's Quote: | 7 | Luật Nhân Quả | 10 |
| Who is Buddha ? | 8 | Định Luật Nhân Duyên | 11 |
| Buddha is a Teacher | 8 | Định Luật Vô Thường | 11 |
| The Law of Cause and Effect | 9 | Chúng ta làm chủ vận mệnh của chính mình | 12 |
| The Law of Causes and Conditions | 11 | Nhân Ái | 12 |
| The Law of Impermanence | 11 | Đầu Thai và Bánh Xe Luân Hồi | 13 |
| We are the architects of our own destiny | 12 | Duyên Khởi Vô Tận (Trùng Trùng Duyên Khởi) | 14 |
| Compassion | 12 | Tánh Không | 14 |
| Reincarnation and the Wheel of Rebirth | 13 | Chơn Tâm (Phật Tánh) | 14 |
| Lord Buddha | 13 | Cứu Đàn Kiến, Tăng Tuổi Thọ | 17 |
| Dependent Origination | 14 | Việc Làm Tốt | 18 |
| Emptiness | 14 | Kinh Báo Đáp Công Ôn Cha Mẹ | 19 |
| The True Mind (True Nature, Buddha Nature) | 14 | Lòng hiếu thảo | 20 |
| Different Roads to Enlightenment | 15 | Cái Hại Của Sự Nóng Tính | 23 |
| Meditation (Chan, Zen) | 15 | Cha Mẹ là Phật | 29 |
| Pure Land practice | 16 | Con trai duy nhất của tỷ phú Malaysia đi khất thực | 30 |
| Elude death, live longer by saving the lives of an ant colony | 18 | | |
| Good Deeds | 18 | | |
| Filial Piety Sutra | 19 | | |
| Filial piety | 21 | | |
| The Painful Consequences of Being Hot-Tempered | 23 | | |
| The Story Regarding a Blade of Kusa Grass [<i>Dummedha-Jataka</i>] | 24 | | |
| The Story of an Iguana [<i>Godha-Jataka</i>] | 25 | | |
| The Goat Who Saved the Priest [Ignorance] | 26 | | |
| Watering the Garden [Foolishness] | 28 | | |
| Parents are living Buddhas | 30 | | |
| The only son of a billionaire in Malaysia goes on daily alms round | 30 | | |
| King Banyan Deer | 31 | | |
| The God in the Banyan Tree [A Bad Promise] | 36 | | |
| The Tree That Acted Like a Hunter | 37 | | |
| The Fortunate Fish [Desire] | 39 | | |
| The Baby Quail Who Could Not Fly Away | 40 | | |
| Wise Birds and Foolish Birds [Good Advice] | 42 | | |
| The Birth of a Banyan Tree [Respect for Elders] | 43 | | |
| Baby Peacock | 44 | | |
| Recommended Readings | 45 | | |
| References | 46 | | |



Tết, the Vietnamese New Year

Tết, or Vietnamese New Year, is the most important celebration of the year. Tết celebrates the arrival of spring based on the Vietnamese lunar calendar.

Tết is an occasion for pilgrims and family reunions.

Altars to the ancestors are adorned with flowers, fruits and food offerings.



The first day of Tết is reserved for the nuclear family.

Children receive money gift in a **red envelope**. This tradition is called *mừng tuổi* or *lì xì*. Children wear their new clothes and give their elders the traditional Tết greetings before receiving the money.

People believe that the first visitor a family receives in the year determines their fortune for the entire year. The act of being the first person to enter a house on Tết is called *xông đất*, *xông nhà* or *đạp đất*. A person of morality, and highly successful in life, will bring luck to the host family and will be much welcome first into the house.



Sweeping during Tết is taboo or *xui* (unlucky), since it symbolizes sweeping the luck away. It is also taboo for anyone who has experienced a recent loss or death in the family to visit people during Tết.

On subsequent days, people visit relatives and friends.



Local Buddhist temples or churches are popular spots for pilgrimages.

Mua Lan or Lion Dancing is popular. The *Lan* is an animal between a lion and a dragon, and is the symbol of strength in the Vietnamese culture that is used to scare away evil spirits.

Decorations:

Traditionally, each house displays *cây nêu*, a bamboo pole 5 to 6 m long. The top end is usually decorated with many objects. Every house in the central and southern parts of Vietnam has **Yellow Apricot blossoms** (*hoa mai*), and those in the northern part of Vietnam have **peach blossoms** (*hoa đào*).



Greetings:

The traditional greetings are "*Chúc Mừng Năm Mới*" (Happy New Year) and "*Cung Chúc Tân Xuân*", (gracious wishes of the new spring). People wish each other prosperity and luck.

Common wishes for Tết include:

- *Sống lâu trăm tuổi* (May you live 100 years):
- *An khang thịnh vượng* (Peace, health, and prosperity)
- *Vạn sự như ý* (May all your wishes come true)
- *Sức khỏe dồi dào* (Plenty of health)
- *Tiền vô như nước* (May money flow in like water)
- *Cung hi phát tài* (Happiness and prosperity)



Traditional Foods

- ***Bánh chưng*** and ***bánh tét***: made from sticky rice with meat or bean fillings and wrapped in banana leaves. *Bánh chưng* is square-shaped to represent the Earth, while *bánh tét* is cylindrical to represent the Sky. *Bánh chưng* is more popular in the North, *bánh tét* is more popular in the South.

The creation of bánh chưng was credited to Lang Liêu, a prince of the Hùng dynasty (1712 - 1632 BC). To choose a successor, the king decided to carry out a competition: each prince had to come up with a delicacy on the occasion of Tết. While everyone tried to find the rare and delicious foods from the jungle or from the sea, the eighteenth prince, Lang Liêu, also the poorest one, had the idea of creating, from the everyday simple ingredients such as sticky rice and pork, a square cake to represent the Earth, and a cylindrical one to represent the Sky. The Hùng king found that bánh chưng and bánh tét not only are delicious but also symbolize the respect one pays to one's ancestors. He declared Lang Liêu to be the successor to the throne, and bánh chưng, bánh tét to be traditional foods at Tết. Lang Liêu founded the Seventh Hùng dynasty (c. 1631 - 1432 BC).



- ***Hạt dưa***: roasted watermelon seeds
- ***Dưa hành***: pickled onion and pickled cabbage
- ***Củ kiệu***: pickled small leeks
- ***Mứt***: dried candied fruits
- ***Kẹo dừa***: coconut candy
- ***Kẹo mè xừng***: peanut brittle with sesame seeds or peanuts
- ***Thịt Kho Nước Dừa***: pork belly and medium boiled eggs stewed in coconut juice.
- ***Xôi Gấc***: red sticky rice



Games and entertainment



People enjoy traditional games during Tết: **bầu cua cá cộ, cờ tướng**,...

Fireworks and firecrackers are part of the Tết celebration in Vietnam.

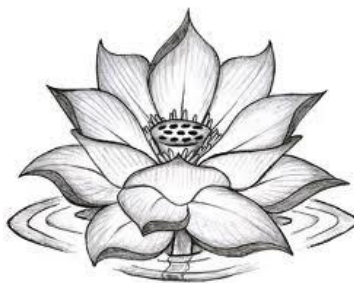
(From Wikipedia)

Einstein's Quote:

"Buddhism has the characteristics of what would be expected in a cosmic religion for the future: it transcends a personal God, avoid dogmas and theology; it covers both the natural and spiritual, and it is based on a religious sense aspiring from the experience of all things, natural and spiritual, meaningful unity. Buddhism answers this description. If there is any religion that would cope with modern scientific needs, it would be Buddhism. Buddhism required no revision to keep it up to date with recent scientific findings, because it embraces science as well as goes beyond science."

"Tôn giáo của tương lai sẽ là một tôn giáo toàn cầu, vượt lên trên mọi thần linh, giáo điều và thần học. Tôn giáo ấy phải bao quát cả phương diện tự nhiên lẫn siêu nhiên, đặt trên căn bản của ý thức đạo lý, phát xuất từ kinh nghiệm tổng thể gồm mọi lĩnh vực trên trong cái nhất thể đầy đủ ý nghĩa. Phật giáo sẽ đáp ứng được các điều kiện đó".

"Nếu có một tôn giáo nào đáp ứng những nhu cầu của khoa học hiện đại, thì đó là Phật giáo. Phật giáo không đòi hỏi phải xét lại mình để cập nhật với những khám phá gần đây của khoa học. Phật giáo không cần từ bỏ quan điểm của mình để đi theo khoa học, vì nó bao gồm khoa học cũng như vượt qua khoa học."



Who is Buddha ?

Buddha means “*The Awakened one*”. He is not an Almighty God. Buddha was a real person, not a myth or a legend.

More than 2500 years ago, prince Siddhartha was born to king Suddhodana in ancient Northern India (today Nepal). At the age of 29, after witnessing human sufferings through an old person, a sick person and a lifeless corpse, he decided to leave the luxurious palace life and devote his life to search for a path out of the cycle of birth and death. He spent eleven years trying different practices with no success. Then, after 49 days of meditation under the bodhi tree, he attained *complete enlightenment* and became Shakyamuni Buddha.

Shakyamuni Buddha has solved the mystery of human life, of the incessant cycle of birth and death, and of how to break that cycle.

Đức Phật là Ai ?

Phật là chỉ cho Đấng đã giác ngộ. Đức Phật không phải là một Thượng Đế toàn năng. Đức Phật là một người bằng xương bằng thịt cũng như chúng ta, chứ không phải chỉ là một huyền thoại.

Hơn 2500 năm về trước, thái tử Sĩ Đạt Ta ra đời ở miền Đông nước Ấn Độ (Nepal bây giờ). Vua cha là vua Tịnh Phạn. Năm 29 tuổi, nhân một chuyến đi ra ngoài cửa thành, Thái Tử thấy một người già, một người bệnh, và một xác chết. Thái Tử nhận thấy cuộc đời là đầy đau khổ và quyết định rời bỏ nếp sống xa hoa ở cung điện, vào rừng để tìm đường thoát ly sanh tử. Sau khi trải qua mười một năm tu hành qua nhiều pháp môn mà không kết quả, cuối cùng, sau bốn mươi chín ngày thiền định dưới gốc cây Bồ Đề, Thái Tử đã đạt đến sự giác ngộ viên mãn và trở thành Đức Phật Thích Ca Mâu Ni. Ngài đã thông đạt bí ẩn của vũ trụ, của cuộc sống, của vòng sanh tử, và tìm ra phương pháp thoát ly sanh tử.



(Picture from <https://thuantanh.vn>)

Buddha is a Teacher

He teaches us the Way to *end sufferings and escape the cycle of birth and death*. With his finger, he points out the Moon to us. By following his teachings, we can find peace and serenity and end sufferings. Practising diligently leads us to *enlightenment* and to the “*Buddha’s Nature*” inherent in all of us.

Đức Phật là Một Bậc Thầy

Ngài dạy cho chúng ta Con Đường **thoát khổ và thoát ly vòng sanh tử**. Với ngón tay của ngài, Ngài chỉ cho chúng ta thấy Mặt Trăng. Ngài dạy cho chúng cách để diệt trừ đau khổ và tìm thấy an lạc. Con Đường của Ngài sẽ đưa chúng ta đến **giác ngộ** và trở về với **Chơn Tâm Phật Tánh** có sẵn nơi mỗi chúng ta.

FUNDAMENTAL TEACHINGS IN BUDDHISM

What goes around comes around ...

The Law of Cause and Effect

Nothing happens or comes into being without a cause. There is no cause without an effect.

No grass or plant comes into being without a seed, root, or bud.

Wholesome (good) deeds and actions will bring in good effects in the present and future, and vice versa. We cannot plant the seed of a sour orange and hope to get sweet fruits.

The Law of Cause and Effect is a fundamental teaching in Buddhism. It is one of the most important, yet the most difficult notion to master, and also the most easily misunderstood.

The Law of Cause and Effect is NOT created by any Divine power, just as the law of gravity is not created by Newton. Buddha is just the one who found The Law of Cause and Effect, just as Newton was the one who discovered The Law of Gravity.

Causes and effects are impartial and inevitable. The law applies to everything and everyone.

There is no place for luck, misfortune or unfairness. We all enjoy equality when harvesting our own karmic fruits.

There are principal, secondary, favorable and adverse causes (also known as *favorable and adverse conditions*). An orange seed is the main cause. Our thought to plant a tree, soil, fertilizer, water, sunlight,... are secondary and favorable causes. The lack of care, water, sunlight,... are adverse causes.

The law of cause and effect functions in the dimension of time. Just a few days are needed for mung bean sprouts to germinate, but it takes decades for certain seeds to grow into trees. We can reap the fruits of our actions in this lifetime or in a future lifetime, depending on whether favourable or adverse conditions are present.

The wholesome and unwholesome deeds will not cancel each other, as in $+3-3 = 0$.

Stealing from someone and giving back to others does not lead to a zero sum karma effect. The two deeds of robbing a sentient being of its life and saving the life of another one will not negate each other. We will reap the bad karma from the killing and the merit from saving life.

We have a glass of salty water. Water represents good deeds and merits. Salt represents bad karma fruits. By adding more water, the salt will not disappear, but the water will get less salty.

Our future is in our own hands

Luật Nhân Quả

Không có gì sinh ra, mà không có nguyên nhân. Không có cái gì ta làm mà không tạo nên hậu quả. Gieo gió thì gặt bão. Trồng cây nào thì ăn cây nấy.

Không một cây cỏ nào mà không mọc lên từ một nhân, hạt, chồi, hay mầm. Không một sinh vật nào tự nhiên sinh ra ở đời.

Những hành vi thiện lành của chúng ta sẽ đem đến quả tốt lành trong hiện tại hoặc tương lai xa hoặc gần. Những hành vi xấu ác sẽ đem đến những quả xấu ác.

Chúng ta không thể gieo hạt của một trái cam chua rồi mong có được trái ngọt.

Luật Nhân Quả là một định luật cơ bản trong giáo lý Phật Giáo. Đó là một trong những định luật quan trọng nhất, song cũng là một định luật rất khó thấu hiểu cho được tường tận, và rất dễ bị hiểu sai.

— **Luật Nhân Quả không phải là do một Đấng Thần Linh nào đặt ra.** Đức Phật chỉ là người đã phát hiện ra Luật Nhân Quả, cũng như Newton chỉ là người phát hiện ra Định Luật Hấp Dẫn của Trái Đất.

— **Luật Nhân Quả rất công bằng và vô tư, không một ai có thể tránh khỏi.** Luật áp dụng cho mọi người, mọi vật. Không có chuyện hên xui, hay "ông Trời thiếu công bằng" trong đời. Luật Nhân Quả rất công bằng, ai gieo nhân nào thì gặt quả ấy.

— **Có nhân chính, nhân phụ, trợ nhân và nghịch nhân (trợ duyên và nghịch duyên).** Hạt cam là nhân chính. Nhưng nếu không có ai khởi sinh ra cái ý trồng cây cam, nếu không có đất tốt, nước đầy đủ và khí hậu thích hợp, cùng những trợ duyên khác, thì cây sẽ không được trồng, sẽ không lớn và cho trái tốt. Nếu gặp nghịch duyên như bị sâu bọ ăn, bị hạn hán, thì cây sẽ không mọc.

— **Luật nhân quả tác động theo chiều thời gian: quá khứ, hiện tại và tương lai.** Chỉ cần vài ngày cho dưa giá nảy mầm, nhưng có nhiều loại cây phải cần cả chục năm mới cho trái. Chúng ta có thể gặt hái quả của những hành động của mình ngay trong hiện tại, trong tương lai, hay trong nhiều kiếp về sau. Đôi khi cái quả mà mình đang thọ nhận hôm nay là do một nhân đã gieo trong quá khứ, hay trong nhiều đời trước.

— **Những hành vi thiện lành và những hành vi xấu ác không thể bù trừ cho nhau như bài toán $+3-3=0$.** Chúng ta không thể cướp tiền của một người, đi làm việc thiện, rồi xin tòa án tha tội. Điều này không có nghĩa là chúng ta không sửa đổi được cuộc sống của mình. Ta có một ly nước muối mặn. Nước tượng trưng cho nhân quả thiện lành, muối tượng trưng cho nhân quả xấu ác. Thêm nước vào thì nước bớt mặn nhưng muối không giảm hay biến mất.

Cuộc sống của chúng ta hoàn toàn được định đoạt bởi chúng ta

The Law of Causes and Conditions

“All dharmas arise due to causes and conditions; all dharmas cease due to causes and conditions.”*

Everything arise because of a combination of causes and conditions, and cease to exist when those causes and conditions are no longer present.

A plant needs a seed, water, sunlight and soil to come into being and grow. No water, no sunlight, no soil, and the plant cannot strive.

As all things arise due to causes and conditions, they have no real “individual essence”. Before things are formed, there was nothing. Once things cease to exist, there is nothing. **They are unreal, fake and illusory.**

* Dhamas: everything in life, all phenomena of the universe

Định Luật Nhân Duyên

Không có vật nào sanh ra mà không nhờ nhiều nhân và duyên hòa hợp.

Khi nhân duyên hết, vật sẽ tan hoại.

Cây cần có hạt, đất, nước và ánh sáng mặt trời. Thiếu đất, nước, ánh sáng thì cây sẽ chết.

Mọi vật đều do duyên hợp, nên không có “tự tánh”. Trước khi sanh ra, không có gì cả. Sau khi hoại, không còn gì cả. **Mọi vật đều là không thật, đều là hư dối, giả tạm.**

The Law of Impermanence

Anything that forms due to combination of causes and conditions is impermanent, false and illusory.

Nothing would remain unchanged. Nothing would stay forever.

If we realize how ephemeral things are and how short our life is, we would change our perspective towards life.

That Buddhist viewpoint is not to be interpreted as discouragingly pessimistic. On the contrary, we would admit life as it is, we would not lament when facing a mishap, illness, separation, failure or even death. ***As nothing is permanent, we will not take it to be real, and cling to them. Clinging is the reason of suffering and being subject to cycle of birth and death.***

Định Luật Vô Thường

Cái gì mà do nhân duyên hoà hợp thì đều giả tạm và vô thường. Không có gì có thể tồn tại mãi mãi. Hiểu được mọi vật đều vô thường giả tạm, biết được cuộc sống là ngắn ngủi, chúng ta sẽ nhìn đời dưới một góc độ khác.

Cái nhìn của Đạo Phật không phải là bi quan, yếm thế. Chúng ta sẽ chấp nhận cuộc sống dễ dàng hơn, sẽ không than vãn khi phải đối đầu với nghịch cảnh, đau yếu bệnh tật, phân ly hay chết chóc. *Vì tất cả là vô thường, chúng ta không coi đó là thật và không bám víu. Bám víu chính là lý do của sự đau khổ và của luân hồi sanh tử.*

We are the architects of our own destiny

Not knowing about the **Law of Cause and Effect**, we may believe that our misfortunes are contrived by a Creator, by some “God’s will”. We become dependent on a God who can control our fates. We pray to God for protection and good fortunes. We ask God for forgiveness.

To Buddha, that belief is not based on the Truth. We are free to control our own life. We are solely responsible for our actions or future. Whether our path in life is smooth or full of misfortunes depends on the wholesome or unwholesome deeds we have done.

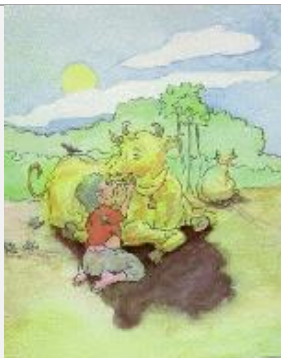
Our coming to this world, our interactions with our family and others, and what happens to us are from our *karmic fruits*.

That Buddhist viewpoint is not to be interpreted as fatalistic. *With the Law of Cause and Effect and the Law of Causality and Conditionality, we know we are the ones, and the only ones who can change our life for better or for worse.*

Chúng ta làm chủ vận mệnh của chính mình

Nếu không hiểu Luật Nhân Quả, chúng ta có thể nghĩ rằng những điều không may đến với chúng ta là do ý muốn của một Đấng Thượng Đế nào đó. Chúng ta lệ thuộc vào một Đấng Thượng Đế có toàn quyền quyết định vận mạng của chúng ta. Chúng ta cầu xin Thượng Đế tha tội, che chở và ban phước cho chúng ta.

Đối với Phật giáo, quan niệm như vậy không đúng với sự thật. *Với Luật Nhân Quả và Luật Nhân Duyên, chúng ta hiểu được chúng ta là chủ vận mệnh của mình, và có thể sửa đổi được vận mệnh.*



Compassion

The Buddha came into this world to teach all living beings the truth. He liked to use old stories and parables to illustrate his teachings. The Buddha always taught us that:

-You must love one another and love all the creatures on this earth.

Nhân Ái

Đức Phật xuống thế gian là để giảng dạy chân lý cho mọi loài. Ngài ưa thích dùng chuyện xưa tích cũ để giáo hóa người đời. Đức Phật luôn luôn nhắc nhở chúng ta:

“Các con nên thương yêu tất cả mọi người và hết thảy loài vật.”

Reincarnation and the Wheel of Rebirth

We are constantly going through cycles of rebirth within the six **Realms*** of Existence. In which realm we are going to be reborn depends on our past deeds and actions.

It is the Law of Causes and Effects, the Karma Law that controls our rebirth and our life. No God controls our destiny.

The wise action to take is to avoid doing unwholesome deeds and accumulate wholesome ones. Better, we should strive to escape the Wheel of Rebirth by following the Way Buddha has pointed to us.

***Realm:** all living beings are born into one of the six realms in a recurring cycle over countless ages -- unless they can break free from desire and attain enlightenment. Being reborn into which realm depends on our past actions. The lowest three states are called the three evil paths: Hell, Hungry Ghosts and Animals. The three higher realms are Asura (demigods, semi-blessed beings; they are powerful, fierce and quarrelsome), Humans and Deva (The realm of heavenly beings filled with pleasure; the deva hold godlike powers and live for countless ages)

Đầu Thai và Bánh Xé Luân Hồi.

Con người mãi trôi lăn trong sáu cõi Trời, Người, Ngạ Quỷ, và Súc Sanh. Sanh vào cõi nào là do những nhân đã gây nên trước đây.

Luật Nhân Quả, chứ không phải một Đấng Thần Linh nào, quyết định số phận của chúng ta.

Phải nên tránh tạo ác nghiệp, và cố gắng tạo thiện nghiệp. Tốt nhất là đi theo con đường Đức Phật đã chỉ để thoát khỏi Sanh Tử.



Lord Buddha

Lord Buddha said:

– Everyone can become a Buddha.

He also said:

– To become a Buddha, all you need to do is to stop being unkind and to do good deeds.

People who take heed of Buddha's words and follow his teachings are the happiest, most joyful people. So, each one of us can become a Buddha some day, if we only try our best to be good and kind.

The following concepts are more difficult to grasp, we just introduce them briefly.

Dependent Origination

As all existence arises from a combination of causes and conditions, it ensues that the existence of everything in the universe is interdependent. ***Nothing comes into being and exists by itself, independently of others.***

Duyên Khởi Vô Tân (Trùng Trùng Duyên Khởi)

Mọi sự vật đều do các duyên hợp lại mà sinh khởi, gọi là duyên khởi; ***vạn sự vạn vật trong pháp giới cùng làm duyên cho nhau mà sinh khởi***, lớp lớp vô tận, gọi là duyên khởi vô tận.

Emptiness

All dharmas (all objects and phenomena) come into being from a combination of causes and effects and are interdependent. Any existence arising from causes and conditions, and due to dependent origination, has ***no individual inherent self-nature*** and is illusory.

The true nature of all dharmas is emptiness. As all things arise due to causes and conditions, they have no real “individual essence”. Before things are formed, there was nothing. Once things cease to exist, there is nothing. They are unreal, fake and illusory.

Tánh Không

Vì muôn pháp có được là do nhân duyên kết hợp và pháp này duyên với pháp kia, nên không có pháp nào tự nó có thực thể. Pháp không có tự tánh. ***Tánh của muôn pháp là tánh không.***

The True Mind (True Nature, Buddha Nature)

Our “true mind”, “true nature”, does not discriminate and is not subject to birth and death. With our true mind, all dualistic concepts like I/you, subject/object, and true/false are eliminated.

The “true mind”, “true nature”, “Buddha nature” is inherent in each of us. We all have it. We “are” it. But, as unenlightened beings, we do not recognize our *true mind*.

Instead, we live with our “false mind”. The false mind discriminates between our “self” and others, between good and bad, pure and impure..., and that is cause of us being stuck in the Wheel of Birth and death.

Chơn Tâm (Phật Tánh)

Chơn Tâm (Phật tánh) không phân biệt đúng sai, và không bị chi phối bởi luật Sinh tử.

Different Roads to Enlightenment

All Buddha teachings aimed to help us attain enlightenment, realize our true nature, our true mind, and ultimately liberate us from the Wheel of Birth and Death. There are gradual ways to enlightenment, and there are direct ways to achieve sudden enlightenment.

Meditation (Chan, Zen)

Zen Meditation aims at the shortest, but also the steepest, way to awakening.

Meditation is to control our mind, direct it inwards, clear out false perceptions and deluded thoughts. Abandoning all thoughts and concepts bring us to a non dualistic state of mind, help us see our *intrinsic nature*, our *true mind*, and lead us to awakening and enlightenment.



On Vulture Peak Mountain, surrounded by his disciples, Shakyamuni held up a flower without saying a word. Only his student Kashyapa understood and smiled. Kashyapa grasped the essence of the Buddha's teaching on the spot and experienced a breakthrough to enlightened vision. That was the first transmission outside the orthodox teaching, not dependent on words, and relying instead on directly pointing to the true mind. Kashyapa became the first Zen patriarch.



The ultimate Goal of Zen is to directly attain enlightenment

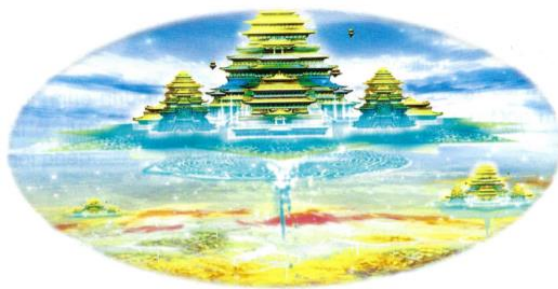
*** **Zen Koans** are paradoxical anecdotes or riddles, used in Zen Buddhism to provoke enlightenment. With the power to cut off delusive thinking, Zen koans help students "directly point to the mind". Any thought, any concept of duality, and we have walked away from the True Mind.

Examples:

- A disciple asked a Zen Master: "After letting go everything, nothing is left...what should I do next?"
- "Drop it", the Master said. "But I have nothing in my hands", the disciple replied. The Master said: "Can't drop it off, then pick it up!" At this, the disciple awakened. (The meaning: drop off all thoughts to attain enlightenment)
- Manjusri was once standing at the gate. Shakyamuni called to him: "Manju. Manju, why don't you come inside? — Manjusri replied "I don't see anything outside the gate". (You should, without rationalizing with thoughts, grasp the message: no duality inside-outside, me and the world...)

Pure Land practice

Pure Land practice advocates recitation of Amitabha Buddha's name. Seeking rebirth in the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha allows for “horizontal” escape, as compared to the much harder way of “vertical” escape. (Suppose we have a worm, born inside a stalk of bamboo. To escape, it can take the “hard way” and crawl all the way up to the top of the stalk. Alternatively, it can look for, or poke a hole near its current location and escape “horizontally” into the big, wide world) (Horizontal Escape, Niệm Phật Thập Yếu, Dharma Master Thích Thiện Tâm).



Amitabha Buddha vowed to lead all those who recite his name with faith, to rebirth in his Buddhaland, known as the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss. **“In the future when I realize Buddhahood, my land will be the utmost joyful and pure land... Any living being in the ten directions only needs to recite my name with sincerity and I will guide him to my land to realize Buddhahood...”**

Single-mindedly reciting the Buddha's name helps create merit and virtue. Reciting the Buddha's name plants the seed of Buddhahood and cultivate our Future Dharma field.

“The land of Ultimate Bliss is just our original True Mind. When we uncover our original True Mind, we will be born in the land of Ultimate Bliss.” (Amitabha, A Compassionate Father- Venerable Master Hua)

Seeking rebirth in the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha allows for “horizontal” escape.

“Lúc tôi thành Phật, mười phương chúng sanh nghe danh hiệu tôi chí tâm tin ưa, tất cả thiện căn tâm tâm hồi hướng nguyện sanh cõi tôi, dầu chỉ mười niệm, nếu chẳng được sanh thì chẳng lấy Chánh Giác” (Đức Phật A Di Đà)

“In the future, when I realize Buddhahood, my land will be the utmost joyful and pure land... Any living being in the ten directions only needs to recite my name with sincerity and I will guide him to my land to realize Buddhahood...” (Amitabha)

Niệm A-Di-Đà Phật, nguyện vãng sanh Tịnh Độ là con đường ngắn nhất có thể đưa đến thoát khỏi luân hồi.



Cứu Đàn Kiến, Tăng Tuổi Thọ

Thuở xưa có một chú Sa di xuất gia theo một vị cao Tăng. Một bữa nọ, vị cao Tăng đoán biết chú Sa di này trong vòng bảy hôm nữa sẽ mệnh chung, nên lòng rất băn khoăn thương xót. Vì chú ấy từng hết lòng hầu hạ, cung kính vâng lời, nên thầy tính kế làm sao cho được vẹn toàn, liền bảo chú: “*Này con, đã khá lâu mà con chưa về thăm cha mẹ cho trọn tình hiếu tử, con hãy về thăm cha mẹ rồi sau tám hôm con sẽ trở lại chùa.*”



Vì thầy nghĩ rằng chú ấy sẽ không sống quá bảy hôm nữa, nên cho phép về nhà, tám hôm sau trở lại. Nào ngờ đúng hẹn, tám hôm sau chú trở lại chùa. Vị cao Tăng vô cùng ngạc nhiên thấy chú vẫn còn sống, nên hỏi: “*Này con, xưa nay ta đoán việc như thần, chưa bao giờ lầm lẫn, ta tưởng con sẽ chết trong vòng bảy ngày, không hiểu vì sao đến hôm nay, sau tám ngày, mà con vẫn còn sống, trở về mạnh khỏe, và thần sắc tươi sáng, tướng tai ách trên mắt con lại biến mất?*”

Sa di nhớ lại việc mình đã làm, thành thực đáp: “*Vâng thưa thầy, lúc đi về nhà, đệ tử trông thấy một đàn kiến đang bị nước lũ cuốn trôi, động lòng trước cảnh thương tâm ấy nên đệ tử dùng một cành cây cứu chúng thoát nạn.*”

“*Con này, làm điều nhân chắc chắn được sống lâu, như cổ đức từng nói: “Cứu một mạng người còn hơn xây dựng một ngôi tháp chín tầng”. Con đã giải cứu vô số sinh mạng, tương lai chắc chắn sẽ sống lâu, phúc đức của con sau này không nhỏ, ấy là nhờ ơn cứu mạng sinh linh. Thế nên, công tác hoằng pháp lợi sanh của đạo Phật chính là phát huy tinh thần từ bi cứu thế, lợi lạc chúng sinh, và luôn luôn cố vũ đức tính bất sát và công việc phóng sinh.*”

(*Truyện Tranh Phật Giáo: CỨU VẬT PHÓNG SANH - Liên Trì Đại Sư. NXB Hồng Đức, 2014*)

KILLING LEADS TO TWO UNWHOLESOME KARMIC EFFECTS: SHORT LIFESPAN AND POOR HEALTH

SPARING LIFE (SETTING FREE ANIMALS) PRODUCES TWO WHOLESOME KARMIC EFFECTS: LONGEVITY AND GOOD HEALTH

SÁT SANH TẠO HAI ÁC NGHIỆP: CHẾT YẾU VÀ NHIỀU BỆNH TẬT

PHÓNG SANH TẠO HAI THIỆN NGHIỆP: TRƯỜNG THỌ VÀ ÍT BỆNH TẬT

Elude death, live longer by saving the lives of an ant colony

A Dharma Master knew his young disciple's life would end in 7 days. Without saying anything, the Master recommended the young monk to go visit his parents and come back after. After 8 days, the Master was surprised to see his disciple still alive and coming back. He told his disciple the truth, and said he was not expecting the young monk to be still alive. When asked whether anything had happened, the young monk pondered for a while, and said: *"On my way back to my village, I saw an ant colony being swept away into a body of water...I felt pity for them, and saved them from drowning with a small branch"*.



By saving lives, the young monk has produced wholesome karmic effects, has changed his karma and prolonged his life.

Good Deeds

What are good deeds?

Here are some good deeds that children should do.

—At home, they should respect their elders, honor and obey their parents, love and support their brothers and sisters;

—At school, they should be courteous to their teachers and helpful to their classmates. They should pay attention to their teachers, and take good heed of the advice and guidance they receive at school;

—In their neighborhood, they should be considerate and friendly to all their neighbors. When they meet people in need, whoever they may be, children should try to help and comfort them. These are simple good deeds that every one of us can do.

Việc Làm Tốt

Thế nào gọi là việc làm tốt?

Với nhi đồng, việc làm tốt là:

— Ở nhà, nên kính trọng các bậc tôn trưởng, hiếu thuận với cha mẹ, mến yêu, nhường nhịn anh chị em.

— Ở trường, nên tôn trọng Thầy giáo, thương mến đồng học và nghe theo sự dạy dỗ, hướng dẫn của Thầy Cô và nhà trường.

— Đối với hàng xóm (xóm giềng) nên vui hòa, thân thiện.

Bất cứ ai, nếu rủi gặp phải điều không may, chúng ta nên thương xót, giúp đỡ.

Đó là những việc làm tốt mà ai cũng có thể làm được.

Filial Piety Sutra

Kinh Báo Đáp Công Ôn Cha Mẹ

...The Tathagata spoke to the Assembly: “All of you should know this. I will explain to you this matter.”

“If there were a person who carried his father on his left shoulder and his mother on his right shoulder, until his bones were crushed to powder by their weight,



And if that person were to circumambulate Mount Sumeru for a hundred thousand kalpas until the blood that flowed out covered his ankles, that person still would not have repaid the kindness of his parents.”



Đức Phật bảo Đại chúng:

*“Này các tỳ-kheo!
Ví có người ơn sâu dốc trả
Công mẹ cha tất cả hai vai
Giáp vòng hòn núi Tu di,
Đến nổi da thịt nát tan, máu huyết khô khan,
Trải trăm ngàn kiếp, ơn kia chưa đền.”*

*“If there were a person who, during a famine,
slice the flesh off his own body
to feed his parents and did this repeatedly as he passed through hundreds
of thousand of kalpas,
that person still would not have repaid the kindness of his parents.”*



*“Ví có người gặp thời mất mùa đói kém,
Cắt xẻo da thịt mình,
Dâng hết thân này nuôi song thân,
Trải trăm ngàn kiếp, ơn kia chưa đền”*

*(The Buddha Speaks The Sutra About The Deep Kindness of Parents and The Difficulty in Repaying it
(FILIAL PIETY SUTRA)) (Shaolin Cultural Centre of Canada, 2009)*

- *“Three things cannot be long hidden: the sun, the moon, and the truth.” – **Buddha***
- *“There are only two mistakes one can make along the road to truth; not going all the way, and not starting.” – **Buddha***
- *“Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared.” – **Buddha***

Lòng hiếu thảo

Có một người đàn ông trung niên mặc bộ đồ giản dị, đi vào một nhà hàng sang trọng bậc nhất của thành phố. Vừa bước vào cổng, anh bị người bảo vệ chặn lại. Người bảo vệ nhìn vị khách từ đầu xuống chân, thấy bộ đồ cũ kỹ, liền nói: - Thức ăn và thức uống ở đây đắt gấp 5 lần so với các nhà hàng khác... Ở đây toàn là khách quý tộc... Tôi nói điều này để anh suy nghĩ rồi quyết định trước khi vào.

Vị khách nhìn anh bảo vệ một lúc, mỉm cười rồi đi thẳng vào trong. Ở đây đa số khách đều sang trọng và mặc những bộ đồ đắt tiền. Khi thấy anh ta đi vào bao nhiêu cặp mắt đều đổ dồn anh. Có người thì thầm nhỏ to với nhau rồi cười chún chím, có người nhìn anh với cặp mắt soi mói chế giễu.

Mặc cho những cặp mắt không mấy thiện cảm của mọi người xung quanh, vị khách tiến thẳng lại một cái bàn trống và ngồi xuống. Anh ngồi khá lâu nhưng nhân viên phục vụ ở đây không ai thêm đồ ý đến anh ta. Anh vẫn kiên nhẫn đợi... Thấy cô phục vụ đi ngang qua, anh liền gọi:

— Cô cho tôi hỏi, hiện nhà hàng có món gì đặc biệt?

Cô phục vụ nhìn vị khách một lúc rồi trả lời:

— Ở đây món gì cũng có, món rẻ nhất ở đây bằng 2 ngày làm việc của một người lao động như ông, còn món đặc biệt thì chắc phải bằng cả tháng lương của ông đấy ạ.

Vị khách vẫn vui vẻ trả lời:

— Vậy cô cho tôi mấy món đặc biệt mà cô đã nói!

Thấy cô phục vụ nhìn mình bằng ánh mắt nghi ngờ, vị khách liền móc trong túi ra một cọc tiền khá lớn rồi nói:

— Cô hãy tính tiền luôn những món tôi vừa gọi... À cô cho tôi mỗi thứ 2 phần ăn nhé.

Lại một lần nữa các cặp mắt của mọi người đổ dồn về anh. Người thì nghĩ “*Chắc anh ta mới bán được lúa nên chơi nổi đấy mà*”, người thì nghĩ “*Chắc nhà ông ta mới bị giải tỏa, ông ta có được một số tiền kha khá nên vào đây cho biết đấy mà*.”

Thức ăn đã dọn ra đầy đủ, nhưng vị khách này không ăn mà chỉ gấp bỏ vào cái chén đổi diện không người ngồi. Mọi người vừa vô cùng ngạc nhiên vừa tò mò... Ông chủ nhà hàng từ ngoài đi vào, nhìn thấy vị khách này và nhận ra anh ta là một chủ tịch tập đoàn lớn mà ông đã từng gặp. Ông đi thẳng đến chỗ anh ta ngồi, mừng rỡ la to:

— Wow ngọn gió nào đưa một vị thương gia lừng lẫy đến nhà hàng tôi thế này... Hân hạnh thật là hân hạnh cho tôi quá.

Cả khách lẫn nhân viên phục vụ đều ngạc nhiên và ngỡ ngàng khi nghe ông chủ nhà hàng nói thế, nên càng chú ý hơn đến câu chuyện giữa hai người.

Sau phần chào hỏi và bắt tay nhau, ông chủ nhà hàng kéo ghế ngồi rồi hỏi vị khách:

— Anh có hẹn với ai à?

Vị khách trả lời:

— Không. Tôi đến đây một mình

Chủ nhà hàng ngạc nhiên liền hỏi:

—Ồ vậy tại sao trên bàn lại có 2 cái chén và chén kia lại đồ ăn đầy thế kia.

Vị khách trầm ngâm một lúc, lau vội giọt nước mắt, và từ tốn trả lời:

— Chén đối diện là của Mẹ tôi đấy... Lúc tôi còn nhỏ Mẹ tôi dẫn tôi đến đây ăn xin... Mỗi lần đến đây Mẹ tôi nhìn thấy mọi người ăn uống mà cứ nuốt nước miếng ... Thấy thế tôi tự hứa với lòng, lớn lên tôi sẽ cố gắng phấn đấu kiếm thật nhiều tiền để đưa Mẹ tôi đến đây ăn những món mà Mẹ tôi thích...

Bây giờ khi tôi có thể đưa Mẹ đi khắp thế giới và ăn những món ngon thì Mẹ không còn nữa... Nói xong vị khách thở dài một tiếng náo ruột. Đôi mắt vị khách trở nên đỏ hoe.

Anh ta về đây để sống lại những kỷ niệm xưa. Lòng anh ta đang thôn thức nhớ đến Mẹ. Mọi người nghe xong câu chuyện đều ngậm ngùi, khâm phục và xấu hổ. Ngậm ngùi vì vị khách này là một người con hiếu thảo, khâm phục vì dù giàu có nhưng anh ta không quên cội nguồn, và không hề che đậy sự xuất thân bần hàn của mình. Xấu hổ vì lúc nãy họ đã giễu cợt và chê cười vị khách này. Họ đã học được một bài học thấm thía từ sự cao đẹp của vị khách.

From: <https://thuantanh.vn/long-hieu-thao>

“Give, even if you only have a little.” – Buddha

“No one saves us but ourselves. No one can and no one may. We ourselves must walk the path.” – Buddha

“Give, even if you only have a little.” – Buddha

“Nothing ever exists entirely alone; everything is in relation to everything else.” – Buddha

Filial piety

A middle-aged man, very casually dressed, went to the most bustling and luxurious restaurant in the city. He was not allowed in. The doorman glanced quickly at the man’s worn outfit, and said: - “The menu in this restaurant is five times more expensive than at other places... All guests are from the upper class ... You should think twice before stepping in”.

The man listened, smiled, and entered the door. The well-dressed patrons who were present observed him. They looked at him amusingly. They stared at him with contempt. They were even laughing at him covertly.

Not affected by the unfriendly look of others, the man headed straight to a table. He was ignored by the staff. He sat there for a while ... A waitress passed by. He asked:

- Does the house have any special dishes?

She looked at him for a few seconds and replied:

"Yes, we do. The price of the cheapest dish would be the equivalent to a two-day pay of a general labour worker, and a special dish must cost the equivalent of a month's salary."

The guest happily said:

— Then I'll have some of those special dishes!

Shock and disbelief appeared on the waitress's face.

He pulled out a thick pack of dollar bills:

— Send me the bill ... Also, for each dish, I'd like to order two portions.

People looked at him. Someone thought: "He must have just sold his crops"... "Or maybe he just sold his house."

Food were put on the table, but he did not eat. He just "serve" the "guest" sitting opposite to him. But there was no one sitting there. He kept putting food into that plate. People were intrigued ...

The owner of the restaurant came back through the front door, saw him and instantly recognized him. He was the president of a large company. They did meet before. The owner went straight to his table:

- Wow! What brings you here today? It's a pleasure and an honour for us to have you!

Everyone was caught by surprise and looked at the man with interest. After shaking hands, the owner took a seat, sat down next to him and asked:

— Are you waiting for someone?

— No, I am not.

— I see two plates on the table, and one is full of food.

A moment of silence. He wiped tears on his face and slowly said:

— The plate is for my mother ... When I was young, she took me here to beg for food and money... she looked at people enjoying their food ... I did promise to myself... later in life, I would work hard, so I could take her here ... Unfortunately, now that I can afford to take my mother to any place in the world, to any famous restaurant, she is gone ...

The man sighed. He was almost in tears....

People in the restaurant listened ... looked at him ... in admiration.

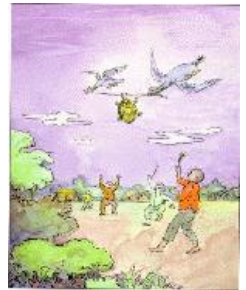
His filial piety rendered people thoughtful. They admired him. Though wealthy, he did not forget his origin and did not hide his poor background. They felt ashamed for having mocked him and looked at him with contempt.

The Painful Consequences of Being Hot-Tempered

There was once an irascible tortoise who lived for many years at the bottom of a lake. Once, during a drought, the lake dried up and the tortoise decided to look for a better place to live. He asked a pair of wild ducks to help him. The ducks each took up one end of a branch in their beaks. They told the tortoise to hold fast to it with his teeth whilst they flew up into the sky and carried him to another place. Before they set off, the kind ducks warned the grumpy old tortoise:

– Once we fly high off the ground, whatever happens, don't open your mouth to say a word!

As they took off, a group of children, at seeing the tortoise in the air, burst out laughing, and clapped their hands. The tortoise was so furious that he opened his mouth to scold the children. As soon as his teeth lost grip of the branch, he dived to the ground like a stone, banged his head on a rock and died on the spot.



We should avoid being hot tempered. It can lead to disastrous consequences

Cái Hai Của Sự Nóng Tính

Có một con rùa nóng tính sống lâu năm trong một cái ao.

Gặp lúc trời hạn, nước ao khô cạn, rùa muốn đổi chỗ ở liền nhờ một cặp vịt trời giúp đỡ. Vịt dùng một cành cây, bảo rùa cắn vào giữa, rồi mỗi con vịt gấp một đầu để mang rùa sang nơi khác. Trước khi bay, đôi vịt tốt bụng đã dặn dò kỹ với rùa rằng:

“Trong khi chúng tôi đang bay trên cao, anh tuyệt đối không được nói năng điều gì hết!”

Thế nhưng, khi có một bọn con nít dưới đất nhìn thấy cảnh lạ lòng ấy vỗ tay reo cười, gã rùa không dần được con giận nên mở miệng mắng lũ trẻ. Song khi rùa vừa mở miệng thì lập tức bị rớt xuống, va đầu vào đá và chết ngay.

Tính tình nóng nảy là một tật xấu hết sức tai hại mà chúng ta cần phải chữa bỏ

(Phỏng theo <https://thuvienhoasen.org>)

The Story Regarding a Blade of Kusa Grass [Dummedha-Jataka]

The Buddha delivered this story about Anathapindika's true friend when he was in the Jetavaranama of Anathapindika in Savatthi. The millionaire Anathapindika had a friend and he helped him as he stated earlier in the Kalakanni-Jataka.

At one time, there was a king called Brahmadata in Benares. At that time, the Enlightenment Being lived in the pleasure garden of the king and was a friend of the deity who possessed that park and who lived in the most prominent Sala tree in the park. The Enlightenment Being lived in a clump of Kusa grass.

The king of Benares lived in a palace that only had one pillar supporting it. One day, this pillar was shaken by the wind. The king decided to further support it. He summoned his carpenter and asked him to cut down any good tree with a core from the pleasure garden.

The chief carpenter went to the pleasure garden, looked for an appropriate tree to cut down, and not seeing one, decided finally with his assistant to cut down the prominent Sala tree in the garden. He went back to the palace and reported about the problem, and about the prominent tree to the king.

The king said, "Even if it is the prominent tree, you cut it and repair the palace", Then the carpenter went with his assistant to cut down the tree. They made an appropriate reverence [puja], asking the deity who possessed the tree to move away from the tree. Hearing this request, the deity thought, "I do not have any other tree this large in the pleasure garden in which to stay". He began to cry, and his children also began to cry while they all embraced one another.

All the other deities who were visiting there also started to cry. The deity who resided in the clump of Kusa grass also came upon hearing all this crying. He asked the reason for this crying.

On hearing the reason, he said, "Please do not be afraid. I know a way to save the tree". The next day, when the carpenters came to cut the tree, he made himself into a chameleon. He went through the roots of the tree, came up the tree on the far side so that people could not see him, and went to a top branch of the tree.

On seeing the chameleon on the top branches of the tree, the carpenter and his assistant thought, "This tree is hollow inside". They gave up the idea of cutting down the tree because it had no core inside.

Then the tree deity summoned the other deities and said, "Even though I was the highest deity in the pleasure garden, I did not know how to save my tree and palace. The deity who lived in a clump of Kusa grass understood how to protect it with his wisdom. Therefore, we must always associate with wise people, and not with the unwise". In this way, he preached to his fellow deities, and he became friendlier with the deity who possessed the clump of Kusa grass. Later, he passed away.

The pleasure garden deity was the venerable Ananda at that time. And I was born as the deity of the clump of Kusa grass. And in this way, the Buddha finalized the Kusanali story.

The moral: "Associate with the wise no matter what their station, not the unwise".

(BUDDHIST TALES FOR YOUNG AND OLD, Vol 1-4, The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2010)

The Story of an Iguana [Godha-Jataka]

When the Buddha was living in the Bamboo Grove, he disclosed this Jataka story because of a certain disobedient monk. The present story for the reason behind this story was explained in detail in the *Mahilamukha-Jataka* [No. 26]. At one time, King Brahmadatta was ruling in Benares. At that time, the Enlightenment being was born as an iguana with a following of a thousand iguanas. They lived in a big termite hill.

The Enlightenment Being had a son who was friendly with a chameleon. On seeing this, many iguanas complained about it to the Bodhisatta. The Bodhisatta summoned his son, and warned him not to be friendly with the chameleon. Because of such a friendship, there would be a great disaster for the community of iguanas. Even though he was so warned, the young iguana did not listen to him. He continued to play with the chameleon, and they continued to embrace each other. In the course of time, the iguana became large and fat. Bearing such a heavy body, when the iguana embraced the chameleon, the big-bodied iguana sometimes hurt the chameleon, who had a small body. The small chameleon perceived the play of the iguana to be as if a big rock were falling over his body. And he became angry.

The king of the iguanas, in doubt about his son's continued relationship with the chameleon, though that one day calamity might befall upon the community of iguanas. He therefore made a secret tunnel so as to be able to flee away.

In the meantime, there came to be a certain unexpected rain. Swarms of flying termites came out from the termite hill. On a certain iguana hunter's seeing this, he thought, "Now is a good time to hunt, because iguanas come out to eat flying termites".

So thinking, he entered the forest. While he was wandering in the forest, the chameleon saw him and enquired as to why he was wandering in the forest. The hunter said, "I am searching for iguanas". As the chameleon was angry with his friend, the iguana, he said, "Do not be bothered by searching for iguanas. I can show you a place where there are plenty. What you need is some hay and fire".

Hearing this, the hunter brought some hay and fire. When he did this, the chameleon said, showing him the termite hill hole, "Put hay inside it and set it on fire. When the smoke goes in, the iguanas will come out. When they come out, hit them with your club or chase after them with your dogs. You can easily kill as many as you want". The hunter did this.

The Enlightenment Being thought, "This type of a calamity came upon my relatives because of this evil chameleon". The Enlightenment Being fled away through the secret tunnel.

"The chameleon at that time was Devadatta. The disobedient little iguana was this monk today who is disobedient. And I who have now obtained supreme Buddhahood was at that time the king of the iguanas". Saying so, the Buddha ended this Jataka story of an iguana.

The moral: "Choose your friends wisely".

(BUDDHIST TALES FOR YOUNG AND OLD, Vol 1-4, The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2010)

The Goat Who Saved the Priest [Ignorance]

Once upon a time, there was a very famous priest in a very old religion. He decided it was the right day to perform the ritual sacrificing of a goat. In his ignorance, he thought this was an offering demanded by his god.

He obtained an appropriate goat for the sacrifice. He ordered his servants to take the goat to the holy river and wash him and decorate him with flower garlands. Then they were to wash themselves, as part of the purification practice.

Down at the riverbank, the goat suddenly understood that today he would definitely be killed. He also became aware of his past births and deaths and rebirths. He realized that the results of his past unwholesome deeds were about to finally be completed. So he laughed an uproarious goat-laugh, like the clanging of cymbals.



In the midst of his laughter, he realized another truth - that the priest, by sacrificing him, would suffer the same terrible results, due to his ignorance. So he began to cry as loudly as he had just been laughing!

The servants, who were bathing in the holy river, heard first the laughing and then the crying. They were amazed. So they asked the goat, “Why did you loudly laugh and then just as loudly cry? What is the reason for this?” He replied, “I will tell you the reason. But it must be in the presence of your master, the priest.”

Since they were very curious, they immediately took the sacrificial goat to the priest. They explained all that had happened. The priest too, became very curious. He respectfully asked the goat, “Sir, why did you laugh so loudly, and then just as loudly cry?”

The goat, remembering his past lives, said, “A long time ago, I too was a priest who, like you, was well educated in the sacred religious rites. I thought that to sacrifice a goat was a necessary offering to my god, which would benefit others, as well as myself in future rebirths. However the true result of my action was that in my next 499 lives I myself have been beheaded!

“While being prepared for the sacrifice, I realized that today I will definitely lose my head for the 500th time. Then I will finally be free of all the results of my unwholesome deed of so long ago. The joy of this made me laugh uncontrollably.

“Then I suddenly realized that you, the priest, were about to repeat the same unwholesome action, and would be doomed to the same result of having your head chopped off in your next 500 lives! So, out of compassion and sympathy, my laughter turned to tears.”

The priest was afraid this goat might be right, so he said “Well, sir goat, I will not kill you.” The goat replied, “Reverend priest, even if you do not kill me, I know that today I will lose my head and finally be released from the results of my past unwholesome action.”

The priest said, “Don’t be afraid, my fine goat. I will provide the very best protection and personally guarantee that no harm will come to you.” But the goat said, “Oh priest, your protection is very weak, compared to the power of my unwholesome deed to cause it necessary results.”

So the priest cancelled the sacrifice, and began to have doubts about killing innocent animals. He released the goat and, along with his servants, followed him in order to protect him from any danger.

The goat wandered into a rocky place. He saw some tender leaves on a branch and stretched out his neck to reach them. All of a sudden a thunderstorm appeared out of nowhere. A lightning bolt struck an overhanging rock, and cut off a sharp slab, which fell and chopped off the goat’s head! He died instantly, and the thunderstorm disappeared.

Hearing of this very strange event, hundreds of local people came to the place. No one could understand how it had happened.

There was also a fairy who lived in a nearby tree. He had seen all that had occurred. He appeared, gently fluttering in the air overhead. He began to teach the curious people, saying, “Look at what happened to this poor goat. This was the result of killing animals! All beings are born, and suffer through sickness, old age and death. But all wish to live, and not to die. Not seeing that all have this in common, some kill other living beings. This causes suffering also to those who kill, both now and in countless future rebirths.

“Being ignorant that all deeds must cause results to the doer, some continue to kill and heap up more suffering on themselves in the future. Each time they kill, a part of themselves must also die in this present life. And the suffering continues even by rebirth in hell worlds!”

Those who heard the fairy speak felt that they were very lucky indeed. They gave up their ignorant killing, and were far better off, both in this life and in pleasant rebirths.

The moral: Even religion can be a source of ignorance

(BUDDHIST TALES FOR YOUNG AND OLD, Vol 1-4, The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2010)

“Believe nothing, no matter where you read it, or who said it, no matter if I have said it, unless it agrees with your own reason and your own common sense.” – Buddha

Watering the Garden [Foolishness]

It was just before New Years in Benares, in northern India. Everyone in the city was getting ready for the three day celebration, including the gardener of the king's pleasure garden.



There was a large troop of monkeys living in this pleasure garden. So they wouldn't have to think too much, they always followed the advice of their leader, the monkey king.

The royal gardener wanted to celebrate the New Years holiday, just like everybody else. So he decided to hand over his duties to the monkeys.

He went to the monkey king and said, "Oh king of monkeys, my honourable friend, would you do a little favour for me? New Year is coming. I wish to celebrate. So I must be away for three full days. Here in this lovely garden, there are plenty of fruits and berries and nuts to eat. You and your subjects may be my guests, and eat as much as you wish. In return, please water the young trees and plants while I'm gone."

The monkey king replied, "Don't worry about a thing, my friend! We will do a terrific job! Have a good time!"

The gardener showed the monkeys where the watering buckets were kept. Feeling confident, he left to celebrate the holiday. The monkeys called after him, "Happy New Year!"

The next day, the monkeys filled up the buckets, and began watering the young trees and plants. Then the king of the monkeys address them: "My subjects, it is not good to waste water. Therefore, pull up each young tree or plant before watering. Inspect it to see how long the roots are. Then give more water to the ones with long roots, and less water to the ones with short roots. That way we will not waste water, and the gardener will be pleased!"

Without giving it any further thought, the obedient subjects followed their king's orders.

Meanwhile, a wise man was walking by outside the entrance to the garden. He saw the monkeys uprooting all the lovely young trees and plants, measuring their roots, and carefully pouring water into the holes in the ground. He asked, "Oh foolish monkeys, what do you think you're doing to the king's beautiful garden?"

They answered, "We are watering the trees and plants, without wasting water! We were commanded to do so by our lord king."

The man said, "If this is the wisdom of the wisest among you - the king - what are the rest of you like? Intending to do a worthwhile deed, your foolishness turns it into a disaster!"

The moral: Only fools can make good deeds into bad ones.

(BUDDHIST TALES FOR YOUNG AND OLD, Vol 1-4, The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2010)

Cha Mẹ là Phật

Dương Phủ lập chí xuất gia sống đời tỉnh thức. Nghe nói đạo hạnh của Đại sư Vô Tế ở Tứ Xuyên hết sức cao thâm, liền từ biệt song thân đến Tứ Xuyên tìm thầy cầu đạo. Vừa mới vào địa phận tỉnh Tứ Xuyên, tiên sinh may mắn gặp một vị hòa thượng đã gần 70 tuổi. Tiên sinh cung kính đánh lễ lão hòa thượng. Lão hòa thượng từ từ hỏi:

– Con từ đâu đến đây, đến Tứ Xuyên có việc gì không?

Dương tiên sinh cung kính chấp tay đáp:

– A-di-đà Phật! Kính bạch thầy, con ở tỉnh An Huy, muốn đến Tứ Xuyên tham học với Đại sư Vô Tế.

– Con muốn gặp Đại sư Vô Tế, như thế không bằng thầy Phật.

– A-di-đà Phật! Kính bạch thầy, đương nhiên con rất muốn gặp Phật, nhưng quả thật con không biết Phật ở đâu, thỉnh lão hòa thượng từ bi chỉ bảo?

– Vậy con hãy lập tức trở về nhà, nếu gặp người nào trên thân khoác cái chăn bông, chân mang dép ngược, người ấy chính là Phật.

Dương Phủ nghe lão hòa thượng nói thế, lập tức cáo biệt lão hòa thượng, lên đường về quê. Trèo núi vượt đèo hơn cả tháng trời mới về đến nhà. Lúc đến nhà, mặt trời đã xuống núi từ lâu, các ngọn đèn trong xóm cũng dần dần thừa thớt, ông gõ cửa gọi mẹ:

– Mẹ ơi! Con vừa về, mẹ ra mở cửa cho con.

Người mẹ nghe tiếng đứa con trai của mình gọi thì mừng vui khôn tả xiết. Vì thế, vừa nghe tiếng con thì bà vui mừng luýnh quýnh, lật đặt ngồi dậy bước vội xuống giường, không kịp mặc áo, kéo đại cái chăn bông khoác lên người, luýnh quýnh mang dép ngược, vội vàng vàng chạy ra mở cửa đón con...

Dương Phủ nhìn thấy mẹ khoác chăn bông, chân mang dép ngược chạy ra, tức thời nhớ lời hòa thượng và nhận hiểu được ngay ý nghĩa: cha mẹ chính là Phật sống trong nhà.

Từ đó về sau, ông hết lòng hiếu thuận, phụng dưỡng song thân. Về phương diện vật chất, ông luôn cố gắng cung dưỡng đầy đủ; còn về phương diện tinh thần, ông luôn tự mình làm nhiều việc tốt để cha mẹ vui lòng.

Dương Phủ hưởng thọ đến 80 tuổi, lúc sắp lâm chung vẫn an nhiên tự tại, đọc bốn câu kệ trong kinh Kim Cang rồi an tường ra đi.

(trích Đức Dục Cổ Giám)

From: https://www.rongmotamhon.net/xem-sach_CHA-ME-LA-PHAT_ckmmlmss_show.html

Parents are living Buddhas

Duong Phu had always dreamed of leaving the material life and getting ordained as a monk. Having heard about the great Dharma Master Vo Te in Tu Xuyen province, he decided to bid farewell to his parents and leave for Tu Xuyen. There, he met an old monk.

The monk asked him: “What are you doing here?”

– Amitabha! I come here looking for Dharma Master Vo Te.

– You are here looking for the great Dharma Master. How about meeting Buddha in person?

– Could that be possible? Please tell me.”

– Go back home now. If you meet someone wrapped in a cotton blanket and wearing slippers the wrong way, that person is Buddha in person.”

Duong Phu immediately headed back to his village. He arrived home late at night, knocked on the door: – Mother! I am back!

His mother was so happy to hear Duong Phu’s voice she jumped out of bed, did not bother to get dressed warmly, hastily put on her slippers the wrong way, wrapped herself with the cotton blanket, and rushed to the door.

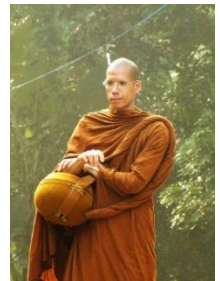
Duong Phu saw his Mother wrapped in a cotton blanket and wearing slippers the wrong way and realized what the old monk said: our parents are living Buddhas.

From that day, he stayed home with his parents, caring for them with filial respect, devotion and love.

Duong Phu lived till the age of 80. On his last day, he recited the four verses in the Diamond sutra and passed away serenely.

The only son of a billionaire in Malaysia goes on daily alms round

Dharma Master Ajahn Siripanno, the only son of billionaire T. Ananda Krishnan, the 2nd richest man in Malaysia, chose to live a simple life of a monk, dedicated to spiritual practicing and sharing the Dharma.



Con trai duy nhất của tỷ phú Malaysia đi khất thực



Nhà sư Ajahn Siripanno là một trong những nhà tu hành uyên bác nổi tiếng trong Phật giáo Theravada (Phật giáo Nguyên Thủy) tại Thái Lan. Đặc biệt, Ajahn Siripanno cũng chính là con trai duy nhất của vị tỷ phú T. Ananda Krishnan giàu có thứ 2 tại Malaysia.

Năm 1989, Ajahn Siripanno (18 tuổi) đã tham dự một khóa tu hành ngắn hạn nhằm bày tỏ sự biết ơn và lòng kính trọng đối với người mẹ và gia đình của mình khi trở về quê mẹ ở Thái Lan.

Khoảng thời gian ngắn ngủi đó đã hoàn toàn làm Ajahn thay đổi suy nghĩ về Đạo Phật và cuộc sống của các vị tu sĩ. Chương trình dự trù chỉ sống đời tu sĩ trong hai tuần lễ nào ngờ đã trở nên vĩnh viễn.

Nhà sư Ajahn Siripanno chia sẻ, ông chưa từng hối hận hay nuối tiếc về sự lựa chọn trong cuộc đời mình.



Câu chuyện xuất gia của nhà sư Ajahn Siripanno là ví dụ điển hình cho việc tiền tài và vật chất không phải là cái đích đến cuối cùng trong cuộc sống. Nhà sư Ajahn Siripanno đã bỏ lại tất cả khối tài sản khổng lồ của người cha tỷ phú để tìm kiếm sự bình an trong cõi tu hành.

Hãy học cách buông bỏ để tìm kiếm những giá trị đích thực trong cuộc sống và sự yên bình trong tâm hồn của mỗi người.

Theo Tâm Nguyễn

King Banyan Deer

[Nigrodhamiga-Jātaka (Nigrodha-Jātaka)]

This story was delivered by the Buddha while he was living in Jetavana monastery on account of the venerable Kumāra Kassapa's mother.

In the city of Rājagaha there was a very wealthy millionaire who possessed a great deal of all sorts of the possessions and provisions that laymen ordinarily might acquire. He had a daughter who had the spiritual good fortune to be able to attain Arahant-ship [emancipation, sainthood] in her very same lifetime. When she came of age, and her understanding of life was that of a mature woman, she asked her father for permission to become a nun.

Both her father and mother refused her the permission saying that the family had much wealth, and if she became a nun there would be no heirs to whom to leave it. She made this request over and over again, and each time she was given the same response.

Her parents were unable to get her to stop such requests, and without her permission they arranged for her to be married to an eligible young man from a nearby village.

After her marriage the girl, whose only interest was in gaining merit, spent her time practicing generosity, virtuousness and meditation. She had little interest in her wifely duties. In due course, though, she became pregnant without being aware of it. But, as she constantly requested of her husband, as well, permission to become a nun, he eventually decided to let her do so.

She went to the nearby temple, which happened to belong to Devadatta, and there she was ordained. She was very happy there.

As time passed, the other nuns noticed that she seemed to be pregnant. They asked her, “Are you pregnant?” She said that she was not aware of that, and that she was virtuous. But a rumor that she was indeed pregnant was spread about, and eventually it reached Devadatta. Devadatta summoned her and saw for himself that she was pregnant.

Without any mercy, Devadatta expelled her from the order, saying that she would bring disgrace to his following. She became very upset, and she went to see the Buddha.

The Buddha understood, with his divine knowledge, what had happened to her. But, for the sake of avoiding blame being placed on anyone, he appointed a committee composed of reliable lay people, including the virtuous lady Visākhā and the millionaire Anāthapiṇḍika, and the like. The Buddha requested that they examine her, and report back as to whether she was pregnant before her ordination, or became pregnant after it.

They examined her, screening her from being seen by all the people in the hall, and declared that she was blameless. Later, when the child was born the king of Kosala, Pasenadi, brought him up. The child’s name was Kumāra Kassapa. Eventually he, too, became ordained and attained Arahant-ship.

The Buddha said, “Not only in this life, even in a previous life as well, I have come to this woman’s rescue in a similar situation.” And everyone present asked the Buddha to disclose the past story. The Buddha disclosed the story in this way:

[Chapter 1. Compassion]

Once upon a time, an unusual and beautiful deer was born in the forests near Benares, in northern India. Although he was as big as a young colt, it was easy for his mother to give birth to him. When he opened his eyes, they were as bright as sparkling jewels. His mouth was as red as the reddest forest berries. His hoofs were as black as polished coal. His little horns glistened like silver. And his color was golden, like a perfect summer’s dawn.

As he grew up, a herd of 500 deer gathered around him, and he became known as King Banyan Deer [Nigrodha]. Meanwhile, not far away, another beautiful buck deer was born, just as splendidly golden in color. In time, a separate herd of 500 deer came to follow him, and he was known as Branch Deer [Sākha].

The King of Benares at that time was very fond of eating venison. So he regularly hunted and killed deer. Each time he hunted, he went to a different village and ordered the people to serve him. They had to stop what they were doing, whether plowing or harvesting or whatever, and work in the king’s hunting party.

The people’s lives were upset by these interruptions. They grew fewer crops, and other businesses also had less income. So they came together and decided to build a large deer park for the king, at Benares. There he could hunt by himself, with no need to command the services of the villagers. So the people built a deer park. They made ponds where the deer could drink, and added trees and grasses for them to eat from.

When it was ready, they opened the gate and went out into the nearby forests. They surrounded the entire herds of Banyan and Branch deer. Then, with sticks and weapons and noisemakers, they drove them all into the deer park trap, and locked the gate behind them.

After the deer had settled down, the people went to the king and said, “Our crops and income have suffered because of your hunting requirements. Now we have made you a pleasant safe deer park where you can hunt by yourself, as you like. With no need of our aid, you can enjoy both the hunting and the eating of deer.”

The king went to the new deer park. There he was pleased to see the vast herds. While watching them, his eye was caught by the two magnificent golden deer, with large fully-grown antlers. Because he admired their unusual beauty, the king granted immunity to these two alone. He ordered that they should be completely safe. No one could harm or kill them.

Once a day the king would come and kill a deer for his dinner table. Sometimes, when he was too busy, the royal cook would do this. The body would then be brought to the chopping block to be butchered for the oven.

Whenever the deer saw the bow and arrows, they went into a panic, trembling for their lives. They ran around wildly, some being injured and some wounded, many suffering great pain.

One day, King Banyan Deer’s herd gathered around him. He called Branch Deer, and the two herds joined for a meeting.

King Banyan Deer addressed them. “Although in the end, there is no escape from death, this needless suffering due to injuries and wounds can be prevented. Since the king only wishes the meat of one deer per day, let one be chosen by us each day to submit himself to the chopping block. One day from my herd, and the next day from Branch Deer’s herd, the victim’s lot will fall to one deer at a time.”

Branch Deer agreed.

From then on, the one whose turn it was, meekly surrendered himself and laid his neck on the block. The cook came each day, simply killed the waiting victim, and prepared the king’s venison.

One day, the turn fell by chance to a pregnant doe in Branch Deer’s herd. Caring for the others as well as herself and the unborn one, she went to Branch Deer and said, “My lord, I am pregnant. Grant that I may live until I have delivered my fawn. Then we will fill two turns rather than just one. This will save a turn, and thereby a single life for one long day.”

Branch Deer replied, “No, no, I cannot change the rules in midstream and put your turn upon another. The pregnancy is yours; the babe is your responsibility. Now leave me.”

Having failed with Branch Deer, the poor mother doe went to King Banyan Deer and explained her plight. He replied gently, “Go in peace. I will change the rules in midstream and put your turn upon another.”

And the deer king went to the executioner's block, and laid down his own golden neck upon it.

A silence fell in the deer park. And some who tell this story even say that silence also fell in other worlds not seen from here.

Soon the royal cook came to kill the willing victim on the block. But when he saw it was one of the two golden deer the king had ordered spared, he was afraid to kill him.

So he went and told the King of Benares. The king was surprised, so he went to the park. He said to the golden deer, still lying on the block, "Oh king of deer, did I not promise to spare your life? What is the reason you come here like the others?"

King Banyan Deer replied, "Oh king of men, this time a pregnant doe was unlucky enough to be the one to die. She pleaded for me to spare her, for the sake of others as well as her unborn baby and herself. I could not help but feel myself in her place, and feel her suffering. I could not help but weep, to think the little one would never see the dawn, would never taste the dew. And yet, I could not force the pain of death on another, relieved to think it was not his turn today. So, mighty king, I offer my life for the sake of the doe and her unborn fawn. Be assured there is no other reason."



The King of Benares was overwhelmed. Powerful as he was, a tear rolled down his cheek. Then he said, "Oh great lord, the golden king of deer, even among human beings, I have not seen any such as you! Such great compassion, to share in the suffering of others! Such great generosity, to give your life for others! Such great kindness and tender love for all your fellow deer! Arise. I decree that you will never be killed by me or anyone else in my kingdom. And so too, the doe and her babe."

Without yet raising his head, the golden one said, "Are only we to be saved? What of the other deer in the park, our friends and kin?"

The king said, "My lord, I cannot refuse you. I grant safety and freedom to all the deer in the park."

"And what of the deer outside the park, will they be killed?" asked Banyan.

"No my lord, I spare all the deer in my whole kingdom." Still the golden deer did not raise up his head. He pleaded, "So the deer will be safe. But what will the other four-footed animals do?" "My lord, from now on they too are safe in my land." "And what of the birds? They too want to live." "Yes, my lord, the birds too will be safe from death at the hands of men." "And what of the fish, who live in the water?" "Even the fish will be free to live, my lord."

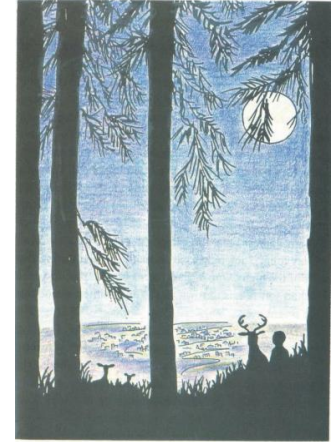
So saying, the King of Benares granted immunity from hunting and killing to all the animals in his land. Having pleaded for the lives of all creatures, the Great Being arose.

[Chapter 2. Teaching]

Out of compassion and gratitude, King Banyan Deer – the Enlightenment Being, taught the King of Benares. He advised him to climb the five steps of training [pañca-sīla-s, the first five sikkhā-pada-s], in order to purify his mind.

He described them by saying, “It will benefit you, if you give up the five unwholesome actions [akusala-kamma-s]. These are:

– destroying life, for this is not compassion; – taking what is not given, for this is not generosity; – doing wrong in sexual ways, for this is not loving-kindness; – speaking falsely, for this is not Truth; – losing your mind from alcohol, for this leads to falling down the first four steps.”



He further advised him to do wholesome actions [kusala-kamma-s] that would bring happiness in this life and beyond.

Then King Banyan Deer, and both herds, returned to the forest. In the fullness of time, the pregnant doe, who had stayed with Banyan’s herd, gave birth to a fawn. He was as beautiful as a lotus blossom given as an offering to the gods. When the fawn had grown into a young buck deer, he began playing with Branch Deer’s herd.

Seeing this, his mother said to him, “Better to die after a short life with the great compassionate one, than to live a long life with an ordinary one.”

Afterwards, her son lived happily in the herd of King Banyan Deer.

The only ones left unhappy, were the farmers and villagers of the kingdom. For, given total immunity by the king, the deer began to fearlessly eat the people’s crops. They even grazed in the vegetable gardens inside the villages and the city of Benares itself!

So the people complained to the king, and asked permission to kill at least some of the deer as a warning.

But the king said, “I myself promised complete immunity to King Banyan Deer. I would give up the kingship before I would break my word to him. No one may harm a deer!”

When King Banyan Deer heard of this, he said to all the deer, “You should not eat the crops that belong to others.”

And he sent a message to the people. Instead of making fences, he asked them to tie up bunches of leaves as boundaries around their fields. This began the Indian custom of marking fields with tied up leaves, which have protected them from deer to this very day.

Both King Banyan Deer and the King of Benares lived out their lives in peace, died, and were reborn as they deserved.

When the Buddha finished relating this story, he preached the Four Noble Truths [cattāri ariya-saccāni], that life is by nature full of sorrow, the cause of sorrow is craving, it can only be stopped by stopping craving, this can only be done by practicing disciplined and moral conduct culminating in the life of concentration and meditation of a Buddhist monk. The Buddha then connected the past story with the present:

“At that time in the past, Branch Deer was Devadatta, the pregnant doe was this nun, and the fawn was the young monk Kumāra Kassapa. King Banyan Deer was I who have in this life become the Buddha.”

The moral: “Wherever it is found, compassion is a sign of greatness.”

(BUDDHIST TALES FOR YOUNG AND OLD, Vol 1, The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2010)

The God in the Banyan Tree [A Bad Promise]

[Āyācitabhadda-Jātaka (Pāṇavadha-Jātaka)]

When the Buddha was living in Jetavana temple, he told this story about a sacrificial vow that was being made to gods at that time.

Before people went on a journey to sell their goods, they would sacrifice living creatures to gods. They thought their venture would be successful because of their sacrifice. And they would make a vow that if their venture turned out well, when they would come back, they would perform even more sacrifices.

About this, some monks asked the Buddha, “Bhante, is there any advantage on account of such sacrifices?” The Buddha then said, “The answer to this has been clouded over by many re-becomings.”

And the Buddha told this story of the past: In the past, and even in some places today, people have had superstitions. One such is that a large or unusual tree is inhabited by a tree god, or some kind of spirit. People think that they can make a promise to this tree god, so he will help them in some way. When they think the god has helped them, then they must keep their promise.

Once upon a time, in the city of Kāsi in northern India, a man came upon a large banyan tree. He immediately thought there must be a god living there. So he made a promise to this tree god that he would perform an animal sacrifice in return for a wish being granted. It just so happened that his wish was fulfilled, but whether by a god or a demon or by some other means – no one knows.

The man was sure the tree god had answered his prayer, so he wanted to keep his promise. Since it was a big wish, it called for a big sacrifice. He brought many goats, mules, chickens and sheep. He collected firewood and prepared to burn the helpless animals as a sacrifice.



The spirit living in the banyan tree appeared and said, “Oh friend, you made a promise. You are now bound by that promise. You think you must keep the promise in order to be released from the bondage to it. But if you commit such terrible unwholesome acts, even though promised, the unpleasant results will put you in much greater bondage. For you will be forced to suffer those results in this life, and even by rebirths in hell worlds! The way to release yourself into future deliverance is to give up unwholesome actions, no matter what!

“And furthermore, since you think I’m a true god, what makes you think I eat meat? Haven’t you heard that we gods eat better things, like ‘ambrosia’ or stardust or sunbeams? I have no need of meat or any other food offerings.” Then he disappeared.

The foolish man understood the mistake he had made. Instead of doing unwholesome deeds that would force unhappy results on him in the future, he began to do only wholesome deeds that would benefit himself and others. The Buddha then ended this Jātaka story by saying: “The god living in the banyan tree was I who am today the Buddha.”

The moral: “Keeping a bad promise is worse than making it.”

(BUDDHIST TALES FOR YOUNG AND OLD, Vol 1, The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2010)

The Tree That Acted Like a Hunter

[Impatience] [Kuruṅga-Jātaka]

This story was told by the Buddha while he was living in the Bamboo Grove temple with regard to Devadatta.

At one time, the monks assembled in the preaching hall in the evening were discussing with reproach Devadatta’s attempts to kill the Buddha. They said, “Devadatta is trying to kill the Buddha by hiring bowmen to shoot him, hurling a rock at him and letting loose the elephant Dhanapālaka¹⁶ in his path. In every way, he is trying to kill the Buddha.”

When the Buddha entered the hall, he asked the monks, “Oh monks, what were you talking about before I came here?”

The monks replied, “Venerable sir, we were discussing Devadatta’s criminal acts trying to kill you, but always failing to do so.”

The Buddha said, “Oh monks, it is not only today that Devadatta goes about trying to kill me. He did so also in the past, but just so was unable to kill me.”

And the Buddha then told this story of the past: Once upon a time, there was an antelope who lived in the deep forest. He ate the fruits that fell from the trees. There was one Sepaṇṇi-tree that had become his favorite.

In the same area there was a hunter who captured and killed antelopes and deer. He put down fruit as bait under a tree. Then he waited, hiding in the branches above. He held a rope noose hanging down to the ground around the fruits. When an animal ate the fruit, the hunter tightened the noose and caught him.

Early one morning the antelope came to his favorite tree in search of fruits to eat. He did not see that the hunter was hiding in it, with his noose trap ready. Even though he was hungry, the antelope was very careful. He was on the lookout for any possible danger. He saw the delicious looking ripe fruits at the foot of his favorite tree. He wondered why no animal had yet eaten any, and so he was afraid something was wrong.

The hiding hunter saw the antelope approaching from a distance. Seeing him stop and take great care, he was afraid he would not be able to trap him. He was so anxious that he began throwing fruits in the direction of the antelope, trying to lure him into coming closer.

But this was a pretty smart antelope. He knew that fruits only fall straight down when they fall from trees. Since these fruits were flying towards him, he knew there was danger. So he examined the tree itself very carefully, and saw the hunter in the branches. However, he pretended not to see him.

He spoke in the direction of the tree. “Oh my dear fruit tree, you used to give me your fruits by letting them fall straight down to the ground. Now, throwing them towards me, you do not act at all like a tree! Since you have changed your habits, I too will change mine. I will get my fruits from a different tree from now on, one that still acts like a tree!”

The hunter realized his mistake and saw that the antelope had outsmarted him. This angered him and he yelled out, “You may escape me this time, you clever antelope, but I’ll get you next time for sure!”

The antelope realized that, by getting so angry, the hunter had given himself away a second time. So he spoke in the direction of the tree again. “Not only don’t you act like a tree, but you act like a hunter! You foolish humans, who live by killing animals. You do not understand that killing the innocent brings harm also to you, both in this life and by rebirth in a hell world. It is clear that we antelopes are far wiser than you. We eat fruits, we remain innocent of killing others, and we avoid the harmful results.”

So saying, the careful antelope leaped into the thick forest and was gone.

When the Buddha ended this Jātaka story and had told the monks present about Devadatta’s trying to kill but failing to do it in the past, he said: “The hunter in those days was Devadatta, and the antelope was I myself who have become the Buddha.”

The moral: “The wise remain innocent.”

(BUDDHIST TALES FOR YOUNG AND OLD, Vol 1, The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2010)

The Fortunate Fish [Desire]

[Maccha-Jātaka]

The Buddha delivered this story when he was living in Jetavana monastery with regard to a certain monk who was lovesick for his former wife.

The Buddha saw that this monk was confused about his monkhood, and asked this monk, “Is it true that you still desire your former wife?” The monk answered, “Yes, Bhante.” The Buddha then said, “Oh monk, on account of this woman in a previous birth as well, you fell into trouble. But I saved you.” And the Buddha then told this story of the past:

Once upon a time, King Brahmadatta had a very wise adviser who understood the speech of animals. He understood what they said, and he could speak to them in their languages. One day the adviser was wandering along the riverbank with his followers. They came upon some fishermen who had cast a big net into the river.

While peering into the water, they noticed a big handsome fish who was following his pretty wife. Her shining scales reflected the morning sunlight in all the colors of the rainbow. Her feather-like fins fluttered like the delicate wings of a fairy, as they sent her gliding through the water. It was clear that her husband was so entranced by the way she looked and the way she moved, that he was not paying attention to anything else!

As they came near the net, the wife fish smelled it. Then she saw it and alertly avoided it at the very last moment. But her husband was so blinded by his desire for her, that he could not turn away fast enough. Instead, he swam right into the net and was trapped!

The fishermen pulled in their net and threw the big fish onto the shore. They built a fire, and carved a spit to roast him on. Lying on the ground, the fish was flopping around and groaning in agony.

Since the wise adviser understood fish talk, he translated for the others. He said, “This poor fish is madly repeating over and over again:

‘My wife! My wife! I must be with my wife! I care for her much more than for my life!

‘My wife! My wife! I must be with my wife! I care for her much more than for my life!’”

The adviser thought, “Truly this fish has gone crazy. He is in this terrible state because he became a slave to his own desire. And it is clear that he has learned nothing from the results of his actions. If he dies keeping such agony, and the desire that caused it, in his mind, he will surely continue to suffer by being reborn in some hell world. Therefore, I must save him!”

So this kind man went over to the fishermen and said, “Oh my friends, loyal subjects of our king, you have never given me and my followers a fish for our curry. Won’t you give us one today?”

They replied, “Oh royal minister, please accept from us any fish you wish!”

“This big one on the riverbank looks delicious,” said the adviser.

“Please take him, sir,” they said.

Then he sat down on the bank. He took the fish, who was still groaning, into his hands. He spoke to him in the language only fish can understand, saying, “You foolish fish! If I had not seen you today, you would have gotten yourself killed. Your blind desire was leading you to continued suffering. From now on, do not let yourself be trapped by your own desires!”

Then the fish realized how fortunate he was to have found such a friend. He thanked him for his wise advice. The minister released the lucky fish back into the river, and went on his way.

The Buddha then connected the births: “The female fish was the wife of this lovesick monk. The lovesick monk was the male fish. And the very wise adviser who saved the fish’s life was I who have become the Buddha.”

The moral: “Fools are trapped by their own desires.”

(BUDDHIST TALES FOR YOUNG AND OLD, Vol 1, The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2010)

The Baby Quail Who Could Not Fly Away

[The Power of Truth, Wholesomeness and Compassion] [Vatṭaka-Jātaka]

Once, when the Buddha was going to Magadha with a group of monks, there was a fire in the forest on the way. This story was told with regard to this fire.

At the time, the monks who were not yet saintly became afraid of the fire. But when the fire came near the Buddha, it miraculously disappeared, as if water had been put on it. Then all the monks, together, began to praise the Buddha.

Hearing their appreciation, the Buddha said, “Oh monks, this is not due to my present merit. In a previous life, also, fire in this spot was extinguished by me due to the power of Truth [sacca-kiriya]. Because of this, fire will always go out in this spot.”

Then, the monks requested the Buddha to disclose the previous story.

This is how it was: Once upon a time, the Enlightenment Being was born as a tiny quail. Although he had little feet and wings, he could not yet walk or fly. His parents worked hard bringing food to the nest, feeding him from their beaks.

In that part of the world, there were usually forest fires every year. So it happened that a fire began in that particular year. All the birds who were able, flew away at the first sign of smoke. As the fire spread, and got closer and closer to the nest of the baby quail, his parents remained with him.

Finally the fire got so close, that they too had to fly away to save their lives. All the trees, big and small, were burning and crackling with a loud noise. The little one saw that everything was being

destroyed by the fire that raged out of control. He could do nothing to save himself. At that moment, his mind was overwhelmed by a feeling of helplessness.

Then it occurred to him, “My parents loved me very much. Unselfishly they built a nest for me, and then fed me without greed. When the fire came, they remained with me until the last moment. All the other birds who could, had flown away a long time before.



“So great was the loving-kindness [mettā] of my parents, that they stayed and risked their lives, but still they were helpless to save me. Since they could not carry me, they were forced to fly away alone.

I thank them, wherever they are, for loving me so. I hope with all my heart they will be safe and well and happy.

“Now I am all alone. There is no one I can go to for help. I have wings, but I cannot fly away. I have feet, but I cannot run away.

But I can still think. All I have left to use is my mind – a mind that remains pure. The only beings I have known in my short life were my parents, and my mind has been filled with loving-kindness towards them. I have done nothing unwholesome to anyone. I am filled with newborn innocent truthfulness.”

Then an amazing miracle took place.

This innocent truthfulness grew and grew until it became larger than the little baby bird. The knowledge of truth spread beyond that one lifetime, and many previous births became known.

One such previous birth had led to knowing a Buddha, a fully enlightened knower of Truth [Dhamma] – one who had the power of Truth [Saccam], the purity of wholesomeness, and the purpose of compassion.

Then the Great Being [Bodhisatta] within the tiny baby quail thought, “May this very young innocent truthfulness be united with that ancient purity of wholesomeness and power of Truth. May all birds and other beings, who are still trapped by the fire, be saved. And may this spot be safe from fire for a million years!”

And so it was. The Buddha said: “The tiny baby quail was I who have today become the fully enlightened one.”

The moral: “Truth, wholesomeness and compassion can save the world.”

(BUDDHIST TALES FOR YOUNG AND OLD, Vol 1, The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2010)

Wise Birds and Foolish Birds [Good Advice]

[Sakuṇa-Jātaka]

When the Buddha was living in Jetavana monastery in Sāvatti, he told this story on account of a monk's burned down hermitage.

The people in the nearby village promised to repair the hermitage, but they kept postponing it. Even after three months time, the villagers did not repair it. And because of this, the monk could not advance his mental state through his meditation for the course of the entire rainy season.

After the three months of the rainy season, the monk went back to Sāvatti to see the Buddha. The Buddha heard from him what had happened, and he said, "You ought to be ashamed of yourself. Even birds in the past knew to leave a place where there was fire. Why did you not know that you should leave such a place?"

All the monks present asked the Buddha to relate the story of the past.

The Buddha told the story in this way: Once upon a time, there was a giant tree in the forest. Many, many birds lived in this tree. And the wisest of them was their leader. One day the leader bird saw two branches rubbing against each other. They were making wood powder come falling down. Then he noticed a tiny wisp of smoke rising from the rubbing branches.

He thought, "There is no doubt a fire is starting that may burn down the whole forest."

So the wise old leader called a meeting of all the birds living in the great tree. He told them, "My dear friends, the tree we are living in is beginning to make a fire. This fire may destroy the whole forest. Therefore, it is dangerous to stay here. Let us leave this forest at once!"

The wise birds agreed to follow his advice. So they flew away to another forest in a different land.

But the birds who were not so wise said, "That old leader panics so easily. He imagines crocodiles in a drop of water! Why should we leave our comfortable homes that have always been safe? Let the scared ones go. We will be brave and trust in our tree!"

Lo and behold, in a little while the wise leader's warning came true. The rubbing branches made sparks that fell in the dry leaves under the tree. Those sparks became flames that grew and grew. Soon the giant tree itself caught fire. The foolish birds who still lived there were blinded and choked by the smoke. Many, who could not escape, were trapped and burned to death.

The Buddha then ended this Jātaka story, saying: "The birds who flew away, listening to their wise leader's advice, are today my disciples. And their wise old leader was I who have today become the fully enlightened Buddha."

The moral: "Those who ignore the advice of the wise do so at their own risk."

(BUDDHIST TALES FOR YOUNG AND OLD, Vol 1, The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2010)

The Birth of a Banyan Tree [Respect for Elders]

[Tittira-Jātaka]

When the Buddha was on his way to Jetavana monastery in Sāvatti, a certain group of six elders went ahead and together with their followers, occupied all the rooms. Even the venerable Sāriputta, the Buddha's chief disciple, had no room available for him, and so he spent the night under a tree.

Seeing this, the Buddha questioned about the situation and learned what had happened. He then admonished the followers of the group of six elders and told them that they ought to defer to their elders, and respect them. Such was done even by animals in the past. And the monks asked the Buddha to tell the story of the past.



The Buddha told the past story in this way: Once upon a time, there was a big banyan tree in the forest beneath the mighty Himalayas. Living near this banyan tree were three very good friends. They were a quail, a monkey and an elephant. Each of them was quite smart.

Occasionally the three friends got into a disagreement. When this happened, they did not consider the opinion of any one of them to be more valuable. No matter how much experience each one had, his opinion was treated the same as the others. So it took them a long time to reach an agreement.

Every time this happened, they had to start from the beginning to reach a solution. After a while they realized that it would save time, and help their friendship, if they could shorten their disagreements. They decided that it would certainly help if they considered the most valuable opinion first. Then, if they could agree on that one, they would not have to waste time, and possibly even become less friendly, by arguing about the other two.

Fortunately, they all thought the most valuable opinion was the one based on the most experience. Therefore, they could live together even more peacefully if they gave higher respect to the oldest among them. Only if his opinion were clearly wrong, would they need to consider others.

Unfortunately, the elephant and the monkey and the quail had no idea which one was the oldest. Since this was a time before old age was respected, they had no reason to remember their birthdays or their ages.

Then one day, while they were relaxing in the shade of the big banyan tree, the quail and the monkey asked the elephant, "As far back as you can remember, what was the size of this banyan tree?" The elephant replied, "I remember this tree for a very long time. When I was just a little baby, I used to scratch my belly by rubbing it over the tender shoots on top of this banyan tree."

Then the monkey said, "When I was a curious baby monkey, I used to sit and examine the little seedling banyan tree. Sometimes I used to bend over and nibble its top tender leaves."

The monkey and the elephant asked the quail, "As far back as you can remember, what was the size of this banyan tree?" The quail said, "When I was young, I was looking for food in a nearby forest.

In that forest, there was a big old banyan tree, which was full of ripe berries. I ate some of those berries, and the next day I was standing right here. This was where I let my droppings fall, and the seeds they contained grew up to be this very tree!”

The monkey and the elephant said, “Aha! Sir quail, you must be the oldest. You deserve our respect and honor. From now on we will pay close attention to your words. Based on your wisdom and experience, advise us when we make mistakes. When there are disagreements, we will give the highest place to your opinion. We ask only that you be honest and just.”

The quail replied, “I thank you for your respect, and I promise to always do my best to deserve it.”

The Buddha then identified the births, saying: “The elephant was the venerable Moggallāna. The monkey was the venerable Sāriputta. And the wise little quail was I who have become the fully enlightened Buddha.”

The moral: “Respect for the wisdom of elders leads to harmony.”

(BUDDHIST TALES FOR YOUNG AND OLD, Vol 1, The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2010)

Baby Peacock



Before going out to find food for her family, Mother Peacock carefully instructed Baby Peacock to stay indoors and never wander outside the house. But no sooner had his mother gone that Baby Peacock forgot her good advice, and went out to play with his friends. The carefree young peacocks picked fruit from the bushes, drank water from the brook, romped happily on the green hillsides and had great fun together. But as you might guess, the hunters soon came along and caught all the little runaways one by one. Only then did Baby Peacock realize his mistake. He sobbed his heart out and was truly sorry. But harm was already done. It was too late for regrets!

This story explains the old adage:

***Fish that is unsalted goes rotten and bad,
Children who don't take heed of parents' advice
Are spoiled for ever.
Oh, isn't that sad!***

Recommended Readings

Please refer to the following articles in HOA SEN 2019 (Vietnamese Spring 2019 journal) for further readings:

- Các pháp duyên sanh không thật (All dharma arise from causes and conditions and are unreal - Zen Master Thich Thanh Tu)
- Con đường đến Phật Đạo (The Road to Buddhism- Zen Master Thich Thanh Tu)
- Vào cổng nhà thiền (Entering the Zen gate - Zen Master Thich Thanh Tu)
- Bông hồng trắng (A white rose - a touching poem dedicated to Mother)
- Lá thư gửi mẹ khi xuất gia (A letter to Mom before entering the ascetic life) (Zen Master Dong Son Luong Gioi)
- Thiền tông xưa nay truyền trao chỉ một chân tâm không gì khác (Zen Meditation aims at pointing directly to the True Mind)
- Vọng thân, vọng tâm, vọng cảnh đều từ Như Lai Tạng hiện ra (The false body, false mind and false world all arise from the treasury of the Thus Come One)
- AI ĐANG NIỆM PHẬT, AI ĐANG NGỒI THIỀN (Who is reciting Buddha's name, who is sitting in meditation): contemplating the question helps us get rid of intrusive thoughts and ultimately lead to self realization.
- Muốn Sớm Thoát Khổ, Nên Tu Tịnh Độ (Pure Land practice allows for an early escape from sufferings - Venerable Master Thich Thien Tam)
- Những Huyền Ký Về Tịnh Độ (Predictions concerning Pure Land practice, Venerable Master Thich Thien Tam)
- Những Nghi Vấn Thường Về Tịnh Độ (Common doubts about Pure Land practice, Venerable Master Thich Thien Tam)
- Một vài Tắc Thiền Ngữ (A few Zen koans).



References

(Apart from those already mentioned with the articles)

- Keys to Buddhism (Zen Master Thich Thanh Tu)
- Buddhism in Every Step (Venerable Master Hsing Yun)
- A Concise Dictionary of Buddhism and Zen
- Amitabha, a Compassionate Father (Venerable Master Hua)
- Phat Hoc Pho Thong (Venerable Master Thich Thien Hoa)
- Other Dharma books by Venerable Master Hua, Zen Master Thich Thanh Tu, Venerable Master Thich Thien Hoa, Venerable Master Thich Thien Tam
- Horizontal Escape and Niem Phat Thap Yeu (Venerable Master Thich Thien Tam)
- Websites: Wikipedia, thuantanh.vn, rongmotamhon.net...
- BUDDHIST TALES FOR YOUNG AND OLD, Vol 1-4, The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2010)
- ThuvienHoaSen.org

Our utmost thanks to the authors of all the precious resources and references ... Thanks to you, spreading the Dharma and the Truth have been possible and tremendously easier ...



Of All The Myriad Dharmas...

The Kindness of Parents Is The Greatest!

Parents Are

The Two Buddhas In The Family.



The Verse of Maitreya's Advice On Filiality States:

**There Are Actually Two Buddhas In Each Family
Regretfully, Most People Do Not Realize That;
No Need to Be Adorned by Gold and Colours, No Need to
Be Carved in Chandana;
Just Look at Your Present Father and Mother,
They Are Shakyamuni And Maitreya;
If You Can Make Offerings to Them,
There Is No Need to Do Other Merit And Virtue.**

(From The Buddha Speaks The Sutra About The Deep Kindness of Parents and The Difficulty In Repaying It (FILIAL PIETY SUTRA), Shaolin Cultural Centre of Canada, 2009)

**“Believe nothing, no matter where you read it, or who said it, no matter if I
have said it, unless it agrees with your own reason and your own common
sense.” – Buddha**

“Work out your own salvation. Do not depend on others.” – Buddha

***Out of unawareness,
Bound by greed, hatred and ignorance,
Misdeeds and sins we have committed.
Stuck in the Wheel of Rebirth,
We have been drifting in the sea of suffering
Through countless eons.***

***May all the merits be dedicated to all
May the light of wisdom
Ferry us all to the other shore,
And lead us all to liberation and enlightenment.***



**Better to live a day and know
that everything that comes into
being will not stay forever,
Than to live a hundred years
and not being aware of the law
of impermanence.**

(The Dhammapada)

*“No one saves us but ourselves. No one can, and no one may. We
ourselves must walk the path.” – Buddha*

**The gift of the Dharma* exceeds all
gifts; the sweetness of the Dharma
exceeds all sweetness; the delight
in the Dharma exceeds all delights;
the extinction of thirst and desire
removes all sufferings.**

(The Dhammapada)



**The frames with Buddha's teachings are from thuvienhoasen.org*

Dharma: teachings