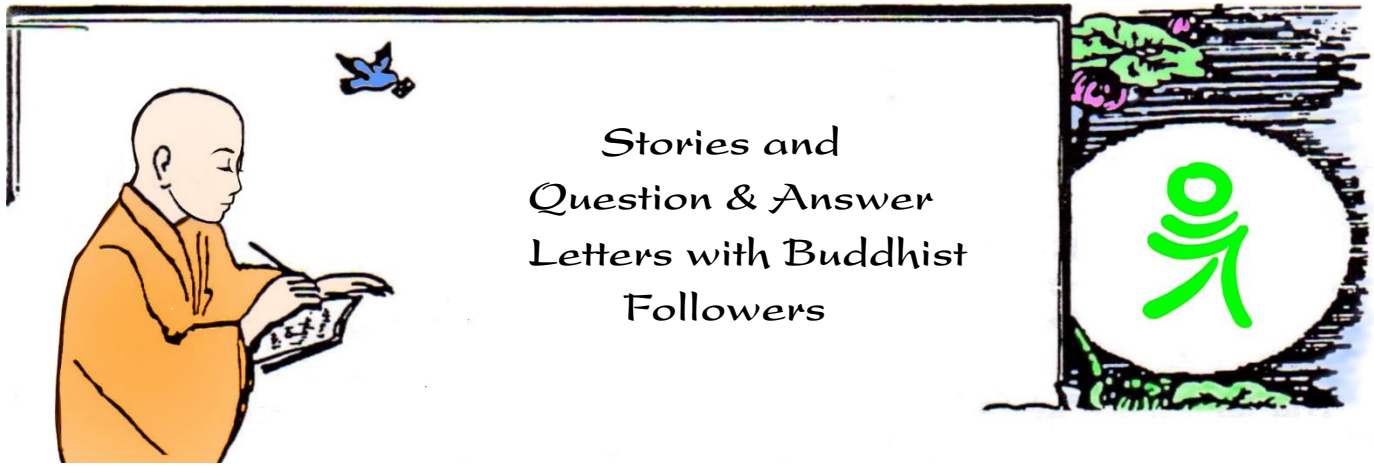




How to recognize the karma of past lives?

This is a true story about the Cause (*from past lives*) and the Effect (*in the current life*). Below are a few words that Upasika Hue-Tri would like to share with fellow Buddhists who want to learn about their past lives.

There were long nights of sound sleep when I suddenly felt a sharp pain in my legs. In an instant and without control, I fell off the bed and landed on the ground. Looking down, I saw that one or occasionally, both feet were twisted to one side. My two calves felt as stiff as a log; and with the twisting muscles, the result was an unbearable pain. Every time my feet twisted, I would collapse down to the ground, helplessly.

These incidents happened around the second or third part of the night; when everyone else was still deep asleep. On the hard floor, I was the only one squirming in pain. Mustering without strength, I tried to call for help, but no word came out...

I desperately searched around in the dark to find anything. If it was a bottle of the Green Eagle medicated oil, I would use it to massage the legs. If I found a bag of ice, I would place it on to numb the pain. If I found a hair blow-dryer, I also used it to relieve the cramp. Whatever I could find, I would make use of it...

Only those who have experienced leg cramps can understand its painful, agonizing feeling. For me, the more twisted my legs were, the more pain I suffer. I could never imagine that my own legs could physically look this absurd.

Those painful moments were indescribable. It felt as if someone was cleaving my flesh, crushing my bones into crumbs, then numerous sharp finger nails piercing into my muscles and tearing it to pieces.

As my body was breaking down, I tearfully cried out in pain. I thought that holding on to the bed would help me get up, but I already lost all my strength and collapsed once again...Hence, I could only weep.

The apathetic pain only stopped when the muscles gradually returned to the normal orientation. Only then would I be able to stand up and walk normally. I used to quietly pray for the torment to disappear, but my prayers were never answered. Every time I moved too

quickly, or sat in a wrong position for too long, that killer pain would return; never once spared me.

There were times when I was driving on the Interstate at 75-80 miles per hour; I would suddenly feel my legs numbing. My natural reactions were to quickly slow down, turned on the emergency lights, and tried to move to the shoulder area. Ironically, the defunct right foot failed to control neither the break nor the gas pedal. I clenched my teeth to bear the pain and clumsily used the left foot to operate the vehicle. With much difficulty, I slowly moved the car to the shoulder safely!

Fortunately, only one foot was numbed; the other foot was still usable. If both feet failed, even if for a few minutes, a fatal accident would have occurred.

Another major problem was the grave urgency to urinate immediately after the cramp.

However, rushing to bathroom, then the next cramp would be unavoidable.

After each cramp, my legs felt like they were falling apart; as if I had walked 100 miles without rest. The entire body was completely exhausted and had no strength left to move. That brutal pain wore me out to the point that I almost fainted and lost my voice. I had no strength to stand up (*unless someone hoisted me and held the body there, so it would not collapse*).

Throughout the last 20 years, I toughened up to bear this cramp. Lately the cramp advanced up the chest, suffocating me. The price for inhaling was a sharp pain in the chest, as if someone stabbed me right in the heart with a needle. My throat tightened so I could not make a sound! My old mate was still sound asleep in the next room and had no idea what was happening to his wife...

During those times, I could only hold on the chest with one hand and pounded on something with the other to call for help. I continued to pound on any object to make loud noises... But eventually because the pain was too intense, too harsh, I could not control myself any longer... I did not notice when tears started falling down my cheeks. My head was spinning. My breath was muffled. Death was just around the corner. At that time, I could only think of the beloved mother Guan-Yin Bodhisattva:

"Mother! Please save me!"

Then I collapsed, both arms held on to the chest, and trying to ignore the pain. Five words 'Guan-Shi-Yin Bodhi-sattva' were appeared in my head, came and gone. Suddenly I felt two small hands reaching from behind hoisted my up...

I was fortunate to say that I had some positive karma left and was saved by the Buddhas, and thus I am able to sit here and write this story. If it were an old and frail person, the chest cramp could have easily sent him to the eternal sleep.

I had had this cramp condition since young, but it was not so serious then. It would occur once every ten days or fortnight, but the youthful body was able to withstand the pain. Years have been accumulated on the body and the strength has been fading. As a result, this cramp

affliction had become more unpredictable, like an untamed beast, ready to strike. I could never sleep through the night most of the time. If the cramp occurred two, three times in one night, then I was pretty much kept awake until dawn.

Therefore, before going to bed every night, I always prayed and wished for a sound sleep until dawn without getting cramped. Around the bed, I always kept medicated oil, hair blow-dryer, ice bag... so that I could grab whatever available within my reach when it attacked.

The family rarely let me drive far, only to nearby stores. Even when I was a passenger, we would have to make frequent stops for me to get out, walk back and forth, and massage the legs to ease the cramp.

I tried all kinds of medicines and treatments that people suggested, including massage and acupuncture.

As my hair turned gray over the years, my body increasingly weakened and slimmed. The cramp affliction had not diminished at all. It still would not spare me. Perhaps it would like to torture me to death.

I can say that over the past 20 years, I had cried me a river.

It's hard to believe that in a modern, technologically advanced country like the US, today's medical science has not discovered a medicine that can completely cure the cramp condition. The current drugs available can only reduce the frequency or severity.

Perhaps the Bodhisattvas had compassion for me and secretly guided my family to the Dharma Flower Temple in Tucson, Arizona. There, we took refuge in Venerable great Master Thich Hai-Quang during the 2009 Ullambana festival season.

Since then, my family frequently attended the Temple's services to practice the Dharma. We attended every religious retreat that was organized. But every time I was sitting a little longer to listen to the Dharma or to recite mantras or Buddha name, the cramping occurred. If not, then I would fall asleep (*because of many years of lacking good night sleeps*). You can say that I have been craving for sleep more than delicacy in this world.

The many times that I sat listening to Master Bao-Dang's (*Velvet*) sermons, I would fall asleep unknowingly. I felt so guilty and embarrassed just talking about it. After learning about my stubborn and incurable illness, Master. Bias offered me the following advice:

"From my experience of many years in the cultivated path, I've seen many incurable illnesses. I clearly see that you are carrying the 'karma' of illness. A 'physical' illness can be treated with medicine or other means of medical science (*such as surgery*). If it cannot be completely cured, at least it would be mostly treated. However, you have not been able to treat your illness effectively. Therefore, it is definitely this kind of karma; and only the Buddha Dharma can cure any karmic condition.

She then cheerfully asked me:

"Hue-Tri, would you let me attempt to treat your illness?"

I gladly replied:

“Dear Master Velvet, as I previously recounted to you and the Venerable great Master, after 18 years of searching, I believe that the Buddhas had guided me to the Dharma Flower Temple to meet both of you. Since the day of meeting my two wise teachers, my cultivated path has advanced significantly. I wholeheartedly cultivate in order to gain rebirth in the Pure Land and to achieve complete liberation from the reincarnation cycle right in this life. You and Venerable Master have taught me so much. The results were obvious and tangible. I am sad to say that Venerable Master is no longer with us. He had now rejoined with the Buddhas. However, you as the direct successor of Venerable great Master are the official abbot and also my Acarya (teacher). Your single word of wisdom is worth a thousand bars of gold! How can I not listen?”

Master Velvet smiled and said:

- *“I have a precious ‘magic whip’ that has been stowed away for a while, rarely used”.*
She showed my daughter (Nancy) where to fetch it and told everyone:
- *‘I’ll use this magic whip to cure Hue-Tri’s karmic illness. Previously, mantras were chanted for 108 days into the whip. Now I’ll add additional power into the whip so that the treatment can be even more effective’.*

After the recent full moon celebration of fall 2011, Master organized a 24-hour retreat as usual. Tens of thousands of guardian angels and good spirits from various places (*who have previously taken refuge in the Triple Gems with Great Master Hai-Quang*) gathered to uphold the retreat precepts. Master Velvet recited mantras into the whip and used it to treat my illness.

She explained like this:

- *“I chose the retreat day to treat the illness because that was when many heavenly beings, guardian angels, Dharma protectors gathered to practice with us. Their combined power was very strong. I relied on that power so I could resolve your illness effectively”.*

What a miracle!

After three treatments within 24 hours in front of the three Pure Land Saints and witnessed by all the retreat attendees, my cramp was gone. Since that day until now (*from 12/11/2011 to 03/12/2011*) I have not felt the cramp. Namo Amitabha Buddha! I’m sincerely grateful to the Triple Gems!

The first morning after the treatment, I nervously stretched my arms, legs and rolled back and forth in bed... Oh wow! How strange! Nothing happened! So excited, I stretched some more and longer... Still nothing happened. How joyful! Since then, I gave my limbs a good stretch every morning. Such a luxury!

Do you know how great it is to be able to stretch your shoulders and limbs after a long night sleep? Almost all my life I had not had an undisturbed sleep, let alone a sound sleep. I have a feeling that all the exhaustion is falling off the body with every stretch of the shoulders, arms, and legs... Over 20 years, I had not dared to do these simple stretches like everyone else.

But... the ‘but’ again! When one misfortune left, another misfortune arrived. After the karmic illness of cramp was resolved, I started to feel a dull pain in my left hip.

At first I thought I caught a cold and negative energy entered the hipbones. However, coining and cupping didn't get rid of it. Massage didn't help either. Taking medicine also didn't resolve the pain.

The family doctor could not pinpoint what the illness was. The pain started to gather and build into a lump on the side of the hip, making any activity (*standing, walking, sitting, lying*) rather painful. At night, I couldn't sleep. I needed help to get off the bed. I tried various medicines, including antibiotics at the 825 mg dose. The more medicines I took, the more painful it was, to the point that I had difficulty breathing. The lump was swelling up noticeably. I felt a sharp pain every time I coughed or sneezed. It was also painful to move the arms.

I was anxiously waiting until the weekend to go to the temple and see Master Velvet.

A few days felt like an eternity. The lump continued to torture my body without mercy. It was the leg cramp, the chest cramp, now it's an 'ill-condition' on the hip! The long days eventually gave way to me, and my family drove straight to the Temple. The drive was almost 2 hours and the sharp pain continued non-stop along the way.

Master Velvet already learned about the problem and started treating me immediately. She recited mantras into a glass of water for a long time, concentrating the power in her palms. She then sprinkled the mantra water over and gently rubbed the lump area. It was a miracle! I felt at first a warm hand, and then it turned unusually cool and relieving, massaging me. The lump gradually subsided. The sharp pain seemed to have almost disappeared. I raised my arm high without feeling the pain. I also did not feel it when standing up, sitting down, or bending over. The Buddha Dharma is unbelievable!

However, Master Velvet warned me:

"This is the karmic illness, and indeed it's an intensively 'wicked karma' not a meritorious one. You must be careful, must wholeheartedly pray, recite mantra, repent as much as possible. Most importantly, you must dedicate the merits of cultivation toward enmity and avenging spirits related to this karma, even though you don't really know what happened in the past. Regardless, you have created the karma, now you must find ways to eliminate it".

*Because sins originate from the mind;
Repentance must also come from the mind
Once the wicked mind is eliminated,
The sins caused will also be eliminated.
No sins, no sinful mind, both are nonexistent
That is the definition of true repentance.*

You must always remember that and try to repent sincerely and wholeheartedly. Repentance cannot be merely ceremonial, but you must show it in your actions. In addition to the daily prayers, you must also repent and recite the Karma Elimination Mantra more (108 times). You will also need to purify your thought, bodily and verbal actions.

Moreover, Talk a little less, while recite the name of Buddha more. You must reduce your recreational activities, reduce your social networking, and close your door for tranquil cultivation. In addition, you must develop the mind of Loving-kindness, Compassion, Joy, and Detachment; correct your own bad characters and habits; you should make offerings to the Triple Gems, do charity works, publish sutras, cast Buddha statues, and other good deeds... Only then, your repentance would bring desirable results."

That night, I had a peaceful sleep. Waking up at midnight, the pain on the hip was gone. I felt and noticed the lump was also gone. I was so happy that I called Master Velvet the next morning to let her know of the miracle of her treatments. She shared the joy but also reminded me about her previous advice ...

She was more than right. The joy only lasted for two short days. The pain returned to the chest, specifically the solar plexus. It came when breathing heavily, coughing, sneezing... Even speaking loudly, inhaling, reaching up to retrieve something, carrying an object... all caused a sharp, unbearable pain. Every time I coughed or sneezed, I had to embrace the chest and press on it with my palms to subdue the pain. Otherwise, the vibration from the cough or sneeze would spread across the chest, causing a violent pain. Not to mention that my entire body felt like it had just received a thorough flogging.

I am growing old, but due to regular exercises and strict care of the body, I almost rarely had chronic pains like people in the same age group. Therefore, pain all over the body, pain in the finger joints, and pain in the toe joints... hardly occurred. But now, facing my karmic illness, I thought a lot about Master Velvet's advice. I completely devoted to the daily cultivation, sincerely repented my past karmas, and strived to give up negative habits. I dedicated all merits from the cultivation, mantra chanting, and Buddha name recitation to anyone who was victimized in the wicked karmas that I created. I prayed sincerely for forgiveness. I also wished this would be my last life on earth and I'd be reborn in the Pure Land after death.

One night, it was pretty late when I went to bed after the nightly prayer. However, I couldn't sleep and kept turning and tossing. My body was aching and the chest pain was throbbing every time I changed position. I tried hard to recite mantras continuously until I fell into sleep.

All of a sudden a terrifying scene appeared. In front of me were rows of naked people with arms and legs chained up. Also, lying everywhere on the ground were women and children. They didn't have a piece of clothing to cover the body either. They writhed in agony and their bodies were covered in blood. Some were dying. Horrified at the scene, I turned my back to flee; but they all suddenly rose up and surrounded me. They unanimously demanded revenge.

I was terrified and without delay begged them for forgiveness. But they all said:

"We cannot let you go to Buddha land that easily. You must first pay this bloody debt. Three hundred years ago, you were a prison warden of a tribe in Africa. You tortured us without mercy. Because of the resentment we have not been liberated. We have been wandering without clothes and in hunger and cold for all these years. You must pay this bloody debt. We won't let you live in peace!"

I suddenly understood the cause of the wicked karma that I created in the past. First they let me feel the pain and ache when I tortured them. Slowly they made me suffer the physical pain, then the mental pain, and finally die in agony...

No one could expect that a person who is weak, appears kind and loving, almost never dares to confront and upset others... were an inhumane, wicked prison warden 300 years ago, who tortured others ruthlessly and without mercy!

What can be done to clear this sin? How can someone treat another person like that? Even animals cannot match the cruelty. How shameful, how shameful!

Alas, who can confidently say there are no **Cause**, no **Effect**, no **Rebirths**, no **Incarnation**, and no **Karmas**?

Planting a bad seed would lead to a tree with flowers and fruit that would terrify onlookers. The wicked karma that I am receiving today is the fruit of what I planted in the last. Honestly, I myself planted the cause, so it is me who reaps the consequence. I cannot rely on others to carry the outcomes for me. I was crying my heart out and knelt down to apologize:

- *I'm prostrating to Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Dharma Protectors, and heavenly spirits and beg them to witness my repentance.*
- *Dear all spirits who are present here and those who already forgave my sins. I completely accept the responsibility for all my sins that you have addressed. 300 years ago, I was ignorant. I abused my power, used other people's suffering for entertainment, toyed with your deaths to show my foolish power, and fed my ego with your downfalls.*

Alas, I deserve to be quartered for all those sins. No hell can accommodate all those sins! I dare not to oppose and won't beg for forgiveness. But in this life, I've been lucky to meet two wise masters and learn the Buddha Dharma. They wholeheartedly passed on the Buddha's teaching to me, helped me develop wisdom, understand the infinite value of the dharma body, and understand the equality.

Between human beings, and between the Buddha and mortals. The Buddha is the omnipresent being, but Buddha was also a human with flesh and blood. Therefore, a human has the potential to become a Buddha.

I have vowed to cultivate toward liberation and sincerely seek liberation. On the path to Pure Land, I have vowed to help and guide anyone who shares my path, anyone who wants to go but is still reluctant, and anyone who genuinely wants to go.

- *I've wronged you (i.e., the ghosts) and I sincerely admitted my sins. However, if you can forgive me and hold off on the revenge, then I promise in front of the Triple Gems that I will always and until my last breath pray for you to eliminate all your karmas. You can be reborn in a better realm of your wish.*

And I'll also respectfully dedicate all merits of my cultivation to you so your wholesome karmas will even be better in future lives.

- *Moreover, I'll also, on your behalf, publish Buddha sutras, continue His legacy, do charities, and liberate living creatures to further enhance your belongings. I also wish that you'll have the good affinity to be reborn in the land of Buddhism, have the opportunity to seek liberation, eliminate the path of reincarnation, and the day of achieving Buddhahood is not far-fetched and impossible.*

- *These honest words come from the bottom of my heart. I sincerely beg you to accept my proposal and vows, so I can carry them out soon...*

- *When I finished, the crowd of people (spirits) that tightly encircled me slowly broke up and disappeared. With my face covered in tears and my pillow soaked in my sweat, I woke up.*

- I recounted the dream to Master Velvet,

She said:

"What you've promised must be done right away, without delay. Now that you know the exact cause of your karmic illness, it's not too difficult to cure."

- She showed me step by step how to cultivate so that my repentance quickly yields results, and especially how to dedicate my cultivation to bring about desirable outcome, benefiting both the living as well as the deceased. She also showed me visualization techniques during chanting to treat the illness myself. She also used her spiritual power to assist me in the treatment.

- She also said:

"Effective treatment relies mainly on us because only we know exactly where the painful spot is and can visualize treatment vividly. The teacher is only a guide during the beginning stage and shows us how to practice correctly. The teacher is not there for you to unload your illnesses and expect miracles. Cultivation with this kind of mentality would not bring much progress even if one cultivates for a lifetime. The path to the Pure Land would also be blocked because of one's distraction, sloth, laziness, and reliance on others!"

The sutra **"Twelve Buddhas Repentance Ceremony"** has been published multiple times and widely circulated domestically as well as overseas. Because of the high demand, I asked Master's permission to reprint it. In my observations as a human, no one can avoid creating karmas. Karmas, whether large or small, light or heavy, wicked or wholesome, are still karmas.

- **Once we take in karmas**, we cannot blame the distant gods or the nearby heavens. We can only blame ourselves that we do not know how to repent. We had the gut to create karmas in past lives, but now that the debt collectors come, we hunker down and find ways to escape. Can we ever be able to escape?

- The Great Grand Master Thich Thien-Tam, who dedicated his whole life to cultivation, spent a great amount of effort searching for Buddhas with powerful vows who can be our defense attorney, who can plead for our sins, intentionally or not, created in past and present

lives. Moreover, fearing that cultivators have a weak mind, and thus cannot chant sutras and recite Buddha name with focus and vigor, he wanted to find Buddhas' mantras that can help cleanse body-mind while expediting the effectiveness of our cultivation and clearing up some obstacles along the path to Pure Land. Consequently, he researched the Tripitaka (*the whole Buddhist canon*) and prepared this **"Twelve Buddhas Repentance Ceremony"**.

- In my humble opinion, each and every Buddhist must have the **"Twelve Buddhas Repentance Ceremony"** sutra and conduct the repentance daily to quickly lessen karmas. A sin, even small like a needle or a strand of hair, is still a sin. Over time, many needles, many strands together add up to an iron bar or a bundle of hair...

Alas! When we regret, it's already too late! For those who still living, having all the time left on earth is probably not long enough to repent all the sins. It is even worse for deceased people because their karmas are still there, waiting for them in the next life...!

Such thoughts encouraged me to seek Master Velvet's permission to publish the **"Twelve Buddhas Repentance Ceremony"** for free distribution, and write down my **horrific, heavy karma** here to share with fellow Buddhists. Three main points that I want to share are:

1. The karma force is real, even if that karma was created 300 years ago.
2. I genuinely feel shameful about how I treated other people. Owing to the Buddha Dharma that the ignorant person of 300 years ago now truly knows to how value to the Dharma body and how to elevate the Dharma body.
3. Finally I sincerely regretted and repented my action that were inhumane, uncompassionate, arrogant and brutal. How shameful!

I hope the story is a lesson for me as well as for other fellow Buddhists. We can learn from it, contemplate on it, together search and reflect upon our sins (*created in present life*) that we have forgotten, solemnly place them in front in order to earnestly repent them daily.

The luggage to the Pure Land must be valuable luggage, we should not pack it with the stinky and worthless karma.

Finally I'd like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to Master, the head resident of the Dharma Flower Temple, who helped resolved my tragedies.

On Sunday 18/12/2011, when my family attended the temple as usual for the weekly practice, Master provided additional guidance:

"After learning about the past stories, you should, in addition to prayers, repentance, and charities, also buy clothes, shoes, sandals, sutras, rosary beads and send to the spirits (*by burning these accessories*); and within 49 days. you should also offer foods and perform salvation prayers to free these souls. In the last 300 years, they had no clothes and suffered from hunger and cold; it's truly pitiful! You cannot blame them for punishing you like that.

You have created wicked karma in past lives; but now you know the Path. You also possess the miraculous Dharma, you should use the Dharma to ease their mental wounds. They will happily forgive you. As a result, your karmic illness will also disappear. I will

help you with the salvation prayers, and wholeheartedly help them all to be reborn in heavens.

Do you remember the story of Venerable Master Hải Quang?

One million people of the tribe Navahe in Mongolia were killed by Genghis Khan, the Mongolian king. They came to temple for revenge. I also helped Master to pray for them all to be reborn in heavens.

Now I'll also help you like that have to wait until you are old and lying on the deathbed. Only then will it be impossible to resolve animosity. When we are young and healthy, we should cultivate and repent frequently, do any wholesome deeds possible... to dedicate merits to avenging souls and sins that we created in past lives; then when we are old and frail, we'd avoid or be less likely to suffer karmic illnesses or to be banished to the three evil realms (*e.g., hell, hungry ghost, animal*)".

Immediately after, I prepared clothes, foods, fruit, sutra books, and prayed for them in 49 days per Master Velvet's instructions. Due to her guidance, I understand more and advance nicely on the cultivated path.

Opportunity lies in tragedy. From the treatment of my karmic illness, Master Velvet had taught me so much about cultivation, how to recognize '**karmic causes**' from past lives, and how to resolve '**karmic consequences**' when they are due.

Again, I sincerely prostrate to Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, heaving beings, Dharma Protectors, and other venerable spirits of the Dharma Flower Temple – Esoteric-Pure Land School, who guided me to meet Master Velvet, a wonderful and rare Master!

Gratefully and Respectfully,
Upasika Hue-Tri

Namo Amitabha Buddha
Be the great witness!

