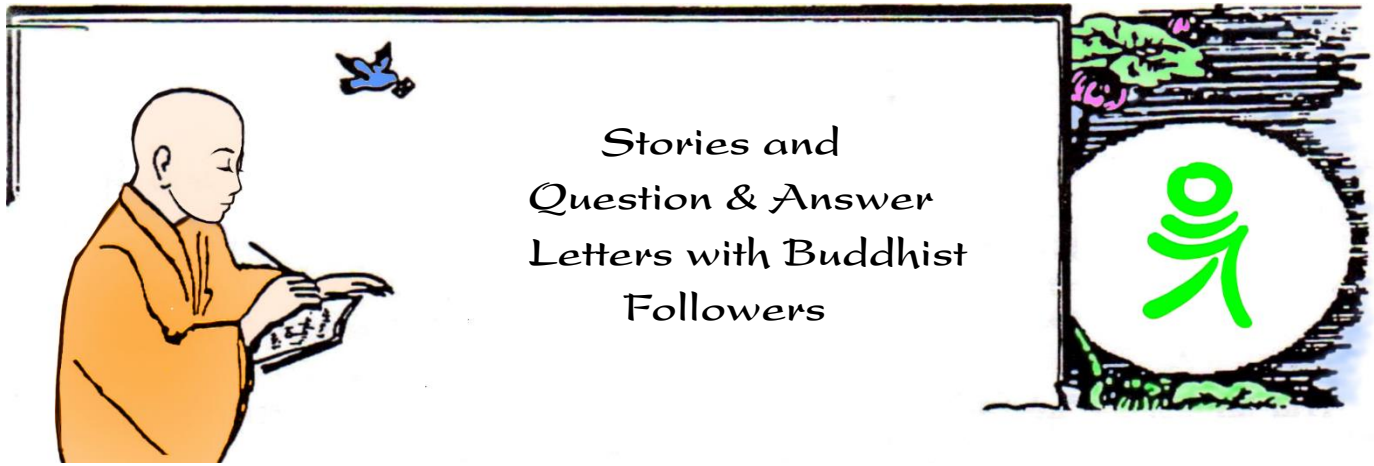
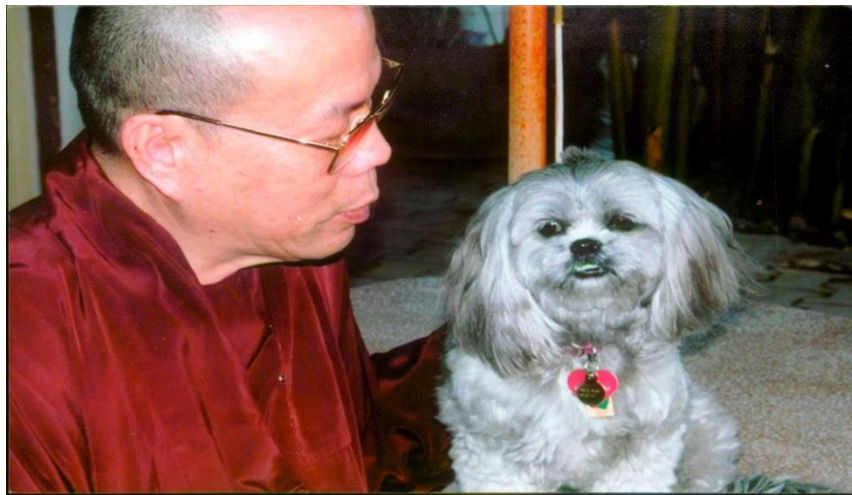




***A story of an
"UNDETERMINED KARMA"
that is unbelievable from a small dog with the Buddhist name
SHEA LA.***



I, Velvet (*Bao Dang*), would like to retell a story of an **"Undetermined Karma"** that is unbelievably from a small dog.

Due to the practice and merits from chanting the Dharani Mantras and reciting Amitabha Buddha's name, this dog was able to transcend to the heavenly realm and onto the Buddha realm.

9 years ago, I helped my daughter, Kim packed for her move from Phoenix to Florida for school. While I was there, a small black and gray dog came to my foot with its tail wagging.

I asked Kim, *"Whose dog is this?"*

Kim replied,

"That's my dog. It's a 2 months old Shih-Tzu, a birthday present to me from a friend. I named her Shea. Unfortunately, I couldn't bring her with me, because the place I'm staying won't allow pets. Mom, please take her with you. My friend paid \$600 for her, you can keep her, sell her or find someone to adopt

her for me."

I wasn't sure if Shea could understand our conversation, but she kept on looking at me and whimpered loudly.

I told Kim,

"I'm not so sure I could bring her home. You know your dad; he doesn't like pets in the house."

Kim persisted,

"Mom, sell her or let someone adopt her then."

She looked at Shea lovingly and said:

"Shea hasn't been on a long car trip, ever, and she might have motion sickness. I'll put her in her crate so she won't mess up your car."

While we were driving on the freeway, Shea barked loudly a few times in her crate. I went to the back of the car and asked her, *"You want to come out?"* She then wagged her tail and barked a few times.

I was shocked and asked again,

"You want to come out?" "If so, bark twice for 'yes.'"

She immediately barked back 2 times, wagged her tail, then sat down, waiting for me to open the crate door. As the door to the crate opened, she jumped onto my lap and laid there, rolled up in a ball. I loved her ever since then. She seemed so smart and well behaved, I was afraid that she would vomit from motion sickness, so I hugged her in one arm. With my freed hand, I'd formed a dharani hand sign pointed to her tummy and chanted a Dharani Mantra. During the 2 hours trip from Phoenix to Tucson, she slept peacefully in my arm.

As we got home, I said to Shea,

"Dad isn't going to like having a dog in the house. If you want to live here with me, you must be well behaved and listen to me," "You can't pee in the house, chew on clothes, shoes or anything except for your toys. If you can do all those things, then I can keep you."

Poor Shea, she sat there and listened to my every word.

I asked, *"Did you understand me?"*

After my speech, she barked twice for *'yes mom.'* *"Can you do that?"*

I asked, and heard her bark 3 times for *'yes I can.'*

Perturbed with love, I made my final decision on keeping her. I taught her many things, like how to speak and answer my questions.

Throughout the years, she kept her promises and never peed in the house, and never chewed on anything other than her toys; even avoided stepping on small papers on the floor. Shea always loved to be groomed and bathed, never fought for food like other dogs. She wouldn't even bite or growl when someone would take her food while she was eating from her mouth: except her toys, which she loved very much.

Every weekend, Shea went to the Temple. She was a great babysitter and played with the kids while the parents were worshipping. She was potty-trained and never once went on the Temple's property.

She had to be walked outside of the Temple's gate if she had to go. Whenever our Venerable Dharma Master visited the Temple, Shea would follow his every step.

One special thing about her was how she refused to eat dog food. She'd rather starve herself a whole week than eating dog food. I had tried everything to make her eat, yet she would cry and beg.

At the Temple, she'd sit and listen to every chant, every prayer and kept her focus on me. During a 24 hours retreat, our Master was meditating and suddenly, he envisioned a small girl with blonde hair and light skin wearing dark grey clothing. Her two legs had purple bruised lines from a whip and was sitting next to me. Her eyes, filled with tenderness, looked up at him. Shocked, Master looked again, but all he could see was Shea sitting next to me. After that, I started to feed her more human food.

In March of 2012, I dreamt that Shea got hit by a car. It was that very moment when I had an uneasy feeling that she may not have much time left. Seeing that I was holding Shea and crying, Dang-Ngoc (*Jenny*) became concerned and asked me why. I then told her and Dang-Thanh (*Nancy*) of my dream and enlisted them to help me prepare for Shea's depart.

On April 15, 2012, I gave Shea a lecture about donation, she barked a few times so I had asked:

"Would you like to donate some of your stuff?"

She wagged her tail excitedly, so I brought out all her possessions such as toys, clothes, blankets, beds and grooming tools. I told her to pick out all the items she wanted to keep, and we'll take the rest to Good Will and donate them to the poor dogs. Shea then grabbed 3 toys, one red, one pink clothed and a pink necklace with a white crystal on it.

I asked again to make sure, *"That's all you wanted to keep?"*

She barked once for yes in reply.

Afterwards, I asked Tam Truc (*Lewis*) to take her stuff and donate it to Good Will.

Lewis also asked Shea again, *"Are you sure?"*

Shea barked twice again for 'sure, sure.'

Shea then sat by the window and waited for Lewis to come back and show her the donation receipt. She seemed pleased and content.

At 10 P.M., on May 28th, 2012.

After we got home from the Temple, Nancy's family followed me home because Nancy herself wanted to help me transfer master's VHS lectures from years ago to a DVD. As we got home, Shea ran outside happily greeting us.

While outside, she took advantage of the situation and did her business on the neighbor's lawn from across the street.

Since we were busy bringing food inside the house, I couldn't see Shea, so I called for her.

With no streetlights, the neighborhood road was dark. Shea, being so small and having a dark coat, she was not easily seen. I called for her loudly to go home, and suddenly a car from afar was speeding about 60 mph in a 25mph limit road toward us.

With this, I had a feeling that Shea would run across the street since I had called her. So I ran towards the road and seen the car drove past her fast. It seemed as if a white ghost had passed by. I heard a shriek in the middle of the road, as the white car disappeared.

As I ran toward the shrieking sound, I saw Shea laying on her side with blood coming out of her mouth. I jolted with shock and picked Shea up. The blood from her mouth was all over my hands and had wetted her face as well.

I cried loudly and called everyone to come out for help, Nancy touched Shea from her head to her legs and said, *"Her bones have not fractured."*

I then transferred Shea to Nancy's arms and ran into the house to find a place in my prayer room in front of Buddha's table, for Shea to lay. Jenny went to fetch the *Dharani blanket* and Shea's bedding.

We laid Shea in front of Buddha's statue and took the blessed Dharani water for her to drink and to wash her face.

Nancy examined her again and said that:

"Shea had deadly, internal damage from the car hitting her at a high speed, which collided with her body as she fell to the road."

Her entire face was swollen, including her eyes, nose and lips. All of her left teeth were all fractured too. She must've had damages to her liver and spleen; therefore, causing dark red blood spilling from her mouth.

Because the car didn't run over her, Shea's body was still intact. She still smelled nice since Jenny gave her a bath earlier and since she already did her business. Nancy's family stayed all night to help me with *supportive recitation* till Shea's last minute...

Shea's heart-mind must've been strong. Although, her body and face were in pain, she had not once cried or yelped. At the sight of this, no one could contain their tears, and no one dared to cry out loud. We kept on chanting the *Dharani*. As Shea heard us blowing our noses, she looked up at our faces; one by one. Hue-Tri had reminded us not to cry because it would cause Shea to feel guilty for leaving us. The blood from her stomach kept flowing out, but we all tried to focus on *chanting our Dharani Mantras and maintain our dharani's hand sign* for over an hour. For we didn't know if Shea's bleeding had stopped from some time now. She seemed to be in less pain than before, her breathing evened out as she slept. Everyone took a break and taking turns chanting *Dharani Mantras* for her...

I quietly got up to make food because it was now after midnight and none of us had eaten dinner yet. While we were eating, Nancy ran into the kitchen and said,

"Velvet, you need to see Shea immediately! She sat up and wanted to look for you! Jenny is trying to calm her down right now."

I quickly put down my chopsticks and ran to Shea, I saw her stretching out her neck to look at me while I sat next her. I asked her:

"Are you less in pain now? You need to sleep more, Má (mom) will always be next to you. Don't worry, I won't leave you. I'll be right here next to you 'till your last breath."

Shea stretched her neck to listen to me again, then laid down to continue her sleeping. Her breathing was now even, as if nothing had happened. I chanted *Dharani* for Shea many times. Everyone else took turns chanting *Dharani* and *Amitabha's name*.

As Shea slept, she heard her two sisters calling her name out during the Repentance prayers, she immediately sat up and turned her body toward Buddha and quietly listened to every word for over an hour. At this sight, everyone was saddened and we cried.

After the prayer session, Shea had laid down and kept her eyes on me. She was able to open her eyes wider now, much clearer than how swollen and blood shot they were earlier. I used the blessed water to wash her face and let her drink from it again. Again, I put the *Dharani* blanket on her. I continued to lecture to her while she listened,

"The karma for being an animal and karma for being human, we have to endure pain and sorrows that were caused by many previous lifetimes and building more evil deeds as we live... If we were able to be reborn into the heaven realm, then we are able to receive a more blessed life than living on earth as a regular human. Although this lifetime you have carried the body of an animal, spiritually, you looked toward Buddhism's 3 jewels deeply. This might change your karma. If you truly want to, you could go to any realm you desire."

After 4am, everyone was still sitting around to perform supportive recitation. I laid down next to Shea, still chanting and my hand petted her head gently... Because I've been so tired, I've fallen asleep. Suddenly, I heard a soft voice telling me,

"Following your prayers for me mom, I now have 4 angels here ready to take me to heaven."

It's true, 4 angels were there wearing clothes from heaven and their bright bodies stood there waiting. Awakened, I told everybody there about the 4 angels who came for Shea. Everyone then went down on their knees and bowed to give respect to the 4 angels. Suddenly, there was a lovely fragrance that came from the prayer room and we all could smell it and were happy for Shea.

Shea then sat up and stepped away from the *Dharani* blanket, she came to me and leaned on my body for the last time. I didn't want her conscience to feel guilty and sad about leaving, if so, she wouldn't be able to go to heaven. So I kept my feelings and didn't want her to hug me, I laid her down and said,

"Má (mom) is very happy that you're able to go to heaven, leaving your animal form and your chance in becoming human. In heaven, remember to chant Buddha's name and continue practicing Buddhism so you can go to Buddha's realm and see me again".

Her eyes looked at me lovingly more so and tears in her eyes had poured down her cheeks made me welled up inside. I tried to hold back my tears, trying hard to prevent them from falling so that she could leave in peace.

It was almost 5:30 A.M. and Shea was still awake and resting in peace following the chanting. Her eyes looked up brightly at me and I spoke quietly in her ear:

"Listen to me and go to sleep, mom loves you."

Shea listened to me, placing her head down her bed and closing her eyes. Her breathing even, I then quietly stood up to go wash my face. The sun rays had now passed through the window, we were all tired. Nancy afraid that Shea would wake up and not see me, so she laid down next to Shea with *Dharani* blanket over her head. About 5 minutes, Shea looked up at the person under the *Dharani* blanket and whimpered a few times... seeming distrusting. Nancy took off *Dharani* blanket trying to scare Shea. Her action made us laughed.

Seeing that I came back into the room, Shea happily stood up, walked toward me and fallen onto me. I brought her back to her bed and said:

"Mom went to wash my face, don't worry, I'll be here next to you when you leave. It's morning now. The angels have been waiting all night. You must listen to mom and leave now. Stay in heaven, don't you reincarnate as a mortal again. Humans in this realm are becoming more evil every day. Master is already in Pureland, eventually, I will too. There won't be anybody left here for you to visit. So go now, don't look back, and don't miss us."

Jenny called the veterinarian to let them know that we'll be bringing Shea in at 6 A.M. --- Shea listened to it all, she looked up wide eyed at Jenny and turned her head and looked at everyone one last time. After that, she laid down on her bed while looking at me... Everybody there focused their mind to chant Buddha's name except for myself. I chanted the *Mantra* to help Shea's conscious so she can leave easily. Not even 10 minutes later, Shea had left with the angels and didn't look back. I chanted the *Mantra* without breathing to prevent my tears from falling. In my heart, I am happy for her. In my mind, I told her,

"Go honey, don't look back, be a good girl and continue your practice so you can meet me in the Buddha realm."

After Shea had left with the angels, we prepared to take Shea's body to the veterinarian for cremation. We then found out that it will take a week for us to pick up her ashes.

The next night, around 4 in the morning, I had a feeling that Shea returned home to visit me. In my heart and mind, I told her,

"Why did you come back here again?"

Why didn't you listen to me?

Go back to heaven and be happy, go now."

I made food the next morning and bought beautiful clothing, shoes, gray cloaks, a book called Daily Practices of Western Pureland Buddhism, and beads. I burned them as an offering for Shea so she could have all the necessary tools to do her daily practice. After my meditations and prayers every day, I had offered all the merits to her.

Three nights later, also around 4 in the morning: I had a reverie and feeling that Shea was lying next to me. I yelled at her:

"Why are you back here again? Why are you not happy in heaven? In heaven, everything is better than this realm. You're now a beautiful angel, you have to stay in heaven."

I then heard a beautiful voice of a young girl softly saying,

"I don't like the Heaven realm Mama, I want to go to Pureland."

I was shocked and fully awoken by then. All day that day I couldn't sit still, I didn't know how to help Shea. In Buddhism law, Shea is only a small dog, not human. Therefore, she didn't have the ability to wish toward Pureland. People chant Buddha's name and have to have, *"Belief, Will and Commitment."* They have to dedicate and practice their entire life and they're not even sure if they will be able to go to Pureland. So how could a small dog like Shea compare? Because animal karma is part of the 3 dark paths of the reincarnation concept. (*3 evil realms: Hell, Hell-Dwelling Beings, and Animal.*)

For an animal to be reborn as a human is already hard. Going to heaven is even harder, and for sure, can't go to Buddha realm. In order to go to Buddha realm, she would have to be reborn as a human, practice and wish very hard to go to Pureland. Then, there might be a chance that she could go to Pureland. I only know that I need to pray to *Kwan Yin Bodhisattva* (*Quán Âm Bồ Tát*) to help Shea. During my daily Dharani meditations that night, I saw myself visiting a very large Buddhist temple. The decorations were extravagant with many monks residing there, yet it was silent and peaceful. I had asked a monk where this temple was located, the monk replied,

"This temple is in the heaven realm, go inside and greet the Buddhas inside the great hall."

Inside the temple, the décor was even more extravagant and indescribable. All the Buddha statues were extremely tall and their craftsmanship were very detailed unlike the Buddha statues in our realm. The statues looked surreal and as if Buddha was there in his pure form, I had never seen such beauty in my life. If I had to compare the Buddha statue between the two realms, the difference would be outstanding. In my heart, I felt light and happy. I suddenly heard a voice from behind:

"I have summoned you, Velvet, here to see where Shea practices."

I immediately knelt down and prostrated to *Kwan Yin Bodhisattva*. She softly told me to stand up. At that moment, a young beautiful nun came out to adorn *Kwan Yin Bodhisattva*. Attire in heaven was much more beautiful compared to earth. The angels that practiced here seemed so elegant and quiet, not like the monks here on earth who laugh and talk loudly. Bodhisattva spoke to me,

"That's Shea, do you not recognize her?"

I was shocked, she was just here a few days yet her form has changed outrageously beautiful. I couldn't contain my excitement and tears had streamed down my cheeks due to happiness. Bodhisattva continued,

"Even though Shea carried animal karma throughout her life, she lived next to you. She was able to learn and contain the mantra energy. You have taught her how to practice and got the Sacred Seal of the 3 Jewels stamped on her head. Shea is now the daughter of the Buddhists 3 jewels. That's why she was able to reincarnate to heaven. I have sent her here to this temple so she could continue her practice. Three years later, I will bring her to Pureland like she had wished."

I continued asking,

"I have sent the Dharma books, and clothing for her. Did she receive that?"

Bodhisattva smiled and answered,

“Don’t you worry, all the books are here in Heaven. Every day, there are different Bodhisattvas from Pureland coming here to give lectures. In that group is Hai Quang Bodhisattva also, teaching them how to practice”.

“You need to know that, earthly materials is only for the spirits in the ‘lower realms’. However, you can send her your merits from your Mantra meditations. She will be able to receive that. In 3 years practice she willing become a great man”

Unable to contain my tears anymore, I’ve allowed my tears to flow out... I awaken with tears covering my face. I was so happy that I was able to help another spirit to reincarnate to the Buddha realm.

Jenny commented:

“Shea is very lucky. From my understanding, after one reincarnated as an animal, it is very difficult to regain the blessings of human, let alone heavenly beings. How could an animal have human compassion or the capability of chanting Buddha’s name when they cannot speak? What miracle allowed them to reincarnate into a higher form?

I (Velvet) responded as follow:

“In her previous life, She must have been a wealthy lady, and also a Buddhist follower. By observing the effect we can easily predict the cause. Even as animals, there are different species, such as: dog, cat, etc... Moreover, an animal also has its own blessings.

For example, there are dogs adopted, raised by a wealthy family, rather than a poor family. Such pet would receive all the luxuries and sometimes, more so than most humans (such as soft bed, designer clothing, tasty expensive food, personal groomer, veterinarian to take care of its health and teeth, vet hospital, some dogs have diamond and gold jewelries, sitting in expensive cars) can have. They live a wealthy life, never have to sleep on a hard, cold ground.

Never have to fight against the outdoor and its elements, never have to eat left over foods, or chew on dirty bones.

A dog in a poor family is much different. It is lonely, hungry, living in sorrow, sick, sometimes abandoned by their owners, end up homeless, looking for food in trashcans, dirty, flea infested, etc....

Cats are similar to dogs. All depend on their “blessed merits.” All animals have their own merits.

But the weight of the “karma” to be an animal is very heavy. They have to reincarnate many life times as wild forms (such as rat, snake, insect, fish, worm, flea, snail, ant, fly, mosquito, cockroach, lizard, etc....) After a very long period of time, only then they could reincarnate as human. However, the first human form they will take will be one who is poor, miserable, hungry, cold, homeless, lame, ignorant, with no exposure to the Buddhist Dharma. Due to many life times being animals, animals could not cultivate any good merits to pass onto their human life for them to use.

The karma of dogs and cats are different. Its weight is much lighter. Because they are able human pets, they are able to adapt to the human lifestyle, intelligence, and understanding the human language. Therefore, they are intelligent enough to communicate with human. After leaving this form, they could reincarnate as human or even ascend to the heaven realm. Nevertheless, they cannot go to a Buddha Pureland.

Shea's situation is quite rare. Looking at the **"effect"** of Shea's life, we could clearly see the **"cause"** from her past.

As a dog, she was lucky to live with me. I taught her to chant the Dharani, Buddha's name, had her attend our 24-hour Buddhism retreats, and shaved her head as offering to the Buddha. I also taught her how to repent for her evil or bad karmas, and donated her personal items.

Daily, she drank and bathe in the blessed Dharani water.

She always wore the Dharani talisman around her neck, slept with a Dharani blanket for the past 8 years, and stamped with the Three Jewels Seal on her forehead. All the above combined had helped her ended her animal karma life in this lifetime. Whenever I chanted my mantras, I would release my seal onto her head. That helped her stay as an "innocent maiden." She would only follow me to the Temple, where I taught her to practice Buddhism. Her body and mind had been exposed the Three Jewels, and stayed peaceful for the past 8 years.

Because the **"causes"** she cultivated this lifetime is very similar to a Buddhist nun, the **"effecting karma"** she received had to justify those causes.

In summary, if an animal can change its "predetermined karma" into an "undetermined karma," then so can we. After all, we are human. We are the more complex and intelligent beings. If we use a pure heart to repent, practice, and follow the righteous Buddhism, it would not be hard for us to transform our bad karma. The "Buddhist Dharma" is sublime and miraculous. It has the power to light our path away from the three Dark realms, and recue us from the three mortal realms (human, spirits, and Heavenly beings). KWAN YIN BODDHISATVA compassionately rescues all living creatures, leaving none behind, especially those that **truly believe** and deeply wanting to be **rescued**." Thus, Jenny sobbed :

"My merits cultivation is nothing compared to Shea's. I should be ashamed of myself. Shea had set a good example for all of us to follow, and this truly motivates me to improve my own cultivated path" Nam mo Amitabha Buddha.

Bodhisattva Precept Bảo-Đăng Velvet Bias

