



When Animals Go to Heaven

**How to Provide Spiritual Care to Your Pets
According to Buddhist Teachings**

by

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CONTENT

Preface	3
Chapter 1: The Prince's Steed	4
Chapter 2: A Peaceful-Hearted Frog	6
Chapter 3: The Bats' Favorite Verses	8
Chapter 4: A Helpful Elephant	10
Chapter 5: From Dog to Deva	12
Chapter 6: An Ethical Heron	14
Chapter 7: A Misbehaving Elephant	16
Chapter 8: A Buddha-to-be Chipmunk	19
Dhamma for Pet Owners	21
Pure Love Meditation	24
End Note	25
About the Author	26
Words of Merit Dedication	27

PREFACE

Human beings have associated with animals for a long time, whether for labor, consumption, entertainment, companionship, or any other purposes. There are many kinds of animals that humans keep as pets, such as snakes, mice, squirrels, dogs, cats, monkeys, fish, elephants, horses, cattle, birds, rabbits, turtles and insects. Some people even keep dangerous animals like scorpions and tigers. However, the most popular pets seem to be dogs and cats.

Most people never think that these animals can go to heaven or become deities. However, according to the Lord Buddha's teachings, with some exceptions, animals are eligible to be reborn in heaven if they have developed their minds in certain ways. Although it is clear in Buddhist teachings that animals cannot attain enlightenment like humans, they are still capable of developing their minds and liberating themselves from the limited form of a living creature like an animal to become a celestial being. In fact, in Buddhist scriptures, there are many stories about animals that committed good deeds and learned *Dhamma*, the Lord Buddha's teachings. In some rare cases, there are even meritorious animals that are more virtuous than common people, such as in the case of 'Buddha-to-be' animals that cultivate virtues in order to become Buddhas in the future.

This book aims to share these wonderful stories from Buddhist scriptures about animals that developed themselves in ways that enabled them to be reborn as a deity or human or become better animals. Pet owners can eventually take this book as a guideline for developing the spiritual quality of their pets so that their pets can achieve a happier and more meaningful existence, not just while they are alive in the human world, but also in the afterlife. Readers will also learn how to pave the way to heaven for their pets or even make this world a heaven for them. This will be the best gift for pets and animal companions as a token of appreciation for their love, loyalty, and friendship.

CHAPTER 1

The Prince's Steed

When the Lord Buddha was still a young prince, he enjoyed living in his beautiful palace, where only young people were allowed. Prior to His enlightenment, the Lord Buddha was named 'Prince Siddharta.' The prince was elegant and well educated. He learned how to ride a steed and owned a beautiful white one named 'Ghandaga.' This steed is one of the most notable animals in Buddhist history. Its name has been renowned for more than two thousand and five hundred years. Although Ghandaga was just an animal, it was a meritorious being that had the great duty of transporting Prince Siddharta to his destination for ordination.

Ghandaga was well loved by the prince, as it was one of the most beautiful and powerful steeds in the palace. It was born on the same day as the prince, so it was considered a 'co-birth' being. On the day that Prince Siddharta decided to renounce his luxurious life and become a monk, he rode on Ghandaga to escape from the palace in the middle of the night. The prince was accompanied by Channa, his close attendant, who was also another co-birth being. Ghandaga was charged with taking the prince far from his homeland, walking throughout the night without any rest. Finally, Ghandaga took the prince and Channa as far as the bank of the Anoma River.

At the serene bank of the Anoma River, Prince Siddharta cut his hair with a sword and changed his attire into simple monk robes. He handed his luxurious clothes and ornaments to Channa and ordered him to travel back to his home. Channa was assigned by the prince to tell King Suddhodana about his ordination. The moment Siddharta, the newly ordained ascetic, turned and walked away from Channa and Ghandaga, the steed died of a broken heart. As soon as the steed took its last breath, Ghandaga was reborn in heaven as an angel named 'Ghandaga Deva' by the power of the merit it had earned from transporting the *Bodhisatta* or Buddha-to-be successfully to ordination. Since the day of Prince Siddharta's ordination, Ghandaga Deva still enjoys his celestial wealth in heaven in the form of a male deity.

PET TIPS 1:

We can see that an animal can be raised to do good deeds which allow them to develop a good heart, whether they are aware of it or not. The merit from such good deeds will consequently enable them to be reborn in a happy realm like heaven or as a human. In the present day, there are animals that can perform good deeds like Ghandaga, such as horses or donkeys that carry ordainees (persons who are about to enter ordination) in an ordination procession. These horses and donkeys earn merit in return, and their merit will empower them to become higher beings like humans or deities.

Other than carrying ordainees, animals can accomplish other forms of meritorious acts. For example, in Sri Lanka, elephants are allowed to join the procession to celebrate the Lord Buddha's tooth relic. These elephants are beautifully decorated as a way to honor the Lord Buddha. Also, in some remote areas of Thailand, monks ride donkeys while they go on their alms rounds. Although these animals have to invest their labor, they will be rewarded with merit that develops and improves their minds and life forms.

Not only do these animals receive merit, but their owners also receive merit from having their animals do wholesome and charitable deeds. On the contrary, animals that are directed to commit unwholesome deeds will accumulate sin in return, along with their owners. Animals that are guilty of unwholesome deeds can be found in the case of animal fights or other competitions. These animal fights and competitions may even involve gambling and promote the violation of animal rights and well-being.

CHAPTER 2

A Peaceful-Hearted Frog

When talking about frogs, most people would think of a detestable animal that eats insects. Despite the fairytale about a frog becoming a prince after being kissed by a princess, most people these days would never believe that a clammy little frog could become a handsome deity. However, many stories from Buddhist scriptures demonstrate that *Dhamma*, hell, and heaven are shared by humankind and animals, regardless of their nationality, religion, and gender, in the same way that we all share the same sun and moon. There is no rule in Buddhism that prohibits animals from being reborn in heaven, with no exception for frogs. The Lord Buddha taught us that anyone who has a clear and clean mind when he or she is about to pass away will eventually head to a wholesome realm. This truth is applicable to all living beings, whether humans or animals. The following story will illustrate how a frog can become an angel without a kiss from any princess.

One day, when the Lord Buddha was still alive, He was delivering a sermon to laypeople with a soothing voice made possible by the power of the merit he had accumulated for eons. At that time, there was a frog listening to His voice calmly without understanding what the Lord Buddha meant. As the frog heard the sermon, the Lord Buddha's voice softened and calmed the frog's mind until it felt more peaceful. Soon after that, there was a cowboy passing by that area. The cowboy had a walking stick in his hand, and he struck the stick onto the ground when he passed by the frog. Unfortunately, the walking stick struck directly onto the frog's body, killing it immediately. Once the frog died, it was reborn in heaven as a handsome, male celestial being. The being was surprised that his spirit had left the frog's body and become a deity in heaven by the power of the merit gained from listening to the Lord Buddha's teachings peacefully. Since that day, the angel has remained joyfully in heaven until the present.

PET TIPS 2:

The story of a frog that listened to the Lord Buddha's melodious voice and was reborn in heaven after its accidental death reminds us of a scientist's discovery on water crystals. This scientist discovered that the shape of water crystals can vary as a result of external factors, such as the words spoken to the water. If we compare water to a creature's mind, we will see that both can be conditioned by a voice, even though the meaning is not understood, since sound and voice can be considered as a means for transferring both good and bad energy from its source. When the voice conveys a good and truthful message, it carries good energy that can somehow penetrate one's mind. Therefore, the mind can be conditioned by a voice just like a water crystal is reshaped after it receives the energy transmitted through a voice. The only difference is that a creature's mind is more subtle than water because it is neither solid nor liquid, and it cannot be seen with naked eyes.

In conclusion, if we have fish, turtles, dogs, cats, squirrels and other pets, we can improve or condition their minds with pure and beautiful sounds by conversing about good things with them. Talk to them with beautiful and compassionate words full of good wishes and care. Although they may not understand what we mean, they will be able to absorb the good energy from our heart, more or less. For example, we may chant to or bless them with good words or even sing beautiful songs to them that promote a sense of peace, harmony, love and kindness. These messages will both soothe their ears and their minds. As a result, their minds will be improved gradually until they have good hearts like we do. We may even notice aggressive pets becoming calmer and better behaved.

CHAPTER 3

The Bats' Favorite Verses

The *Theravadian* Buddhist scripture called '*Tipitaka*' is divided into three major parts, namely *vinaya*, *sutta*, and *abhidhamma*. The *vinaya* part contains rules and codes of conduct for monks, whereas the *sutta* part is made up of the sermons the Lord Buddha gave to his disciple(s) on different occasions. Lastly, there is the *abhidhamma*, or high *Dhamma*, which are the advanced teachings that the Lord Buddha delivered for the first time to the deities in heaven. The *abhidhamma* is profound and difficult to comprehend, and Thai Buddhist monks usually chant *abhidhamma* verses during Thai Buddhist funeral services with the belief that the spirit of the deceased will earn a lot of merit from having these verses chanted in dedication to him or her. In the present day, Thai people associate the chanting of the *abhidhamma* with this inauspicious occasion. However, in reality, the *abhidhamma* was so special that the Lord Buddha imparted it for the first time to celestial beings. Although very few Thai people understand the meaning of *abhidhamma* verses chanted in Pali, it does not mean that listening to them is useless. There is an example of animals that heard the *abhidhamma* and were reborn in heaven without understanding the verses. How could this be? The following story will tell you.

During the age of the Lord Kassapa Buddha, there was a flock of bats living on a mountain. In that area, there were two Buddhist monks who loved to chant *abhidhamma* verses. Thus, the bats had opportunities to listen to the *abhidhamma* frequently even though they did not understand the verses at all. Gradually, they developed mindfulness as they listened to the verses. After the bats died, they were reborn in heaven and enjoyed the celestial paradise for the period of one 'Buddha-Interval,' or the duration between the birth of a Lord Buddha and another Lord Buddha. Later on, these bats were reborn as humans in the lifetime of the Lord Gotama Buddha (the present Lord Buddha of this time), and they were ordained as Buddhist monks. Afterward, they had a chance to study the *abhidhamma* with the Most Venerable Sariputta, who was recognized by the Lord Buddha as the disciple who had the most excellent wisdom. Later, these monks, who used to be bats in their past lifetime, managed to attain enlightenment.

PET TIPS 3:

It is unbelievable that even animals that lived in the darkness like bats were capable of developing their minds over their lifetimes until they became enlightened persons. Although the *abhidhamma* is a particularly profound and cryptic teaching of the Lord Buddha and is difficult to comprehend for common people, the bats listened to the verses until they became familiar with it. It is as if these verses prepared a good foundation in their minds. In spite of the fact that they lived their lives in the form of less capable animals, unable to attain enlightenment, the *abhidhamma* verses rooted in their minds like a seed of wisdom. This allowed them to develop mindfulness, which enabled their minds to become meritorious, purer, and clearer. As a result, they were able to be reborn in heaven. In the beginning, their minds were like dry soil, in which the Bodhi seed rooted with difficulty. However, once they became humans, their minds were like crumbly, nutritious soil that allowed the small Bodhi tree to grow quickly and become fruitful and peacefully shady. When they had a chance to study the *abhidhamma* again as humans, this allowed them to enjoy the fruits of enlightenment.

Common people, even Buddhists, may never think of teaching *Dhamma* to animals because it is always believed that the profound Dhamma is suitable for capable beings like humans only. As a result, nobody would ever think of teaching Dhamma to pets. Contrary to expectations, however, teaching Dhamma to animals helps prepare a good foundation for further mental development in their future lifetimes. We may not realize that when we chant or pray at home, our pets may be listening to our chanting and prayers. They may develop mindfulness like the aforementioned bats that heard the monks chanting the *abhidhamma*. Allow them to enjoy your chanting and prayers, as this may open the way to heaven for them. Who knows? They may be reborn as humans who can chant and pray like we do. Just give them the opportunity, which is free of charge.

CHAPTER 4

A Helpful Elephant

The elephant is another animal which plays an important role in Buddhism. Even the Lord Buddha himself was once born as an elephant. However, the Buddha-to-be animal was able to prove that, even in the form of an elephant, he could accumulate meritorious deeds. More importantly, animal owners also have a strong influence in promoting their animals to do good deeds and charitable works, either religious or non-religious. It is impressive when we see elephants using their trunks to give alms to others, offer robes to monks, or water plants in a Buddhist temple. In addition, they can also carry Buddha relics on their backs during enshrining ceremonies and Buddha statues and monks' robes during merit making events.

The following story is about an elephant that has become one of the most renowned in the Buddhist world due to its good deeds. This elephant is called 'Erawana.' We can see statues of the multi-headed Erawana elephant in many temples. The story of Erawana is as follows:

Once, there was a young man called 'Maka.' He was a gentleman who loved to do charitable works. To achieve his mission more quickly, he persuaded thirty-two of his friends to join him in doing various good deeds, such as building shelters along the trail and constructing roadways for public use. However, the village chief became jealous, so he informed the king that Maka and his friends were robbers. As a result, they were arrested, and the king decided to punish them by ordering them to lie down and having their bodies covered with mats. Then, the king arranged for an elephant to step on them. Maka suggested to his friends that they should extend their compassion to the elephant, and this made the elephant unwilling to step on their bodies. The king was surprised, so he demanded additional interrogation. After the king realized the truth that they were falsely accused, he punished the village chief instead and rewarded Maka and his friends. The king also gave the elephant to Maka so that it could assist in his charitable works. After that, the elephant helped Maka and his friends in doing many more meritorious deeds. They built a public hall, to and from which the elephant was used to transport people. After the end of their lives on earth, Maka was reborn as the king of heaven, or Indra, and his friends became associate chief deities. Erawana, the helpful elephant, was also reborn as a male deity, or deva, in heaven too. Whenever Indra wished to ride on an elephant for transportation, the Erawana deity would disguise himself as a celestial elephant to serve as a vehicle for Indra and his friends. In the present day, Erawana is still enjoying the fruits of his charitable deeds in heaven as a deity.

PET TIPS 4:

From this story, we can see that when owners direct their animals to do good or charitable deeds, both of them earn merit, which can enable them to be reborn in heaven together. This means that they can be reunited again in the afterlife, as Maka was with Erawana, by committing good deeds in conjunction with one another. The laws of karma destine that those who have done good deeds together will encounter one another again. They may be reborn as relatives, kin, friends, or co-workers, depending on their karma. Those who have beloved pets may wish for their pets to be reborn in heaven in the afterlife. This story shows us how we can help our pets to become devas and devis, and we can even see them again after we die. In the case of Erawana, he assisted Maka, his owner, in his charitable deeds. After he died, he became an angel like his owner. His duty is to be a vehicle for transportation like he was on earth. Wouldn't it be a surprise if our beloved dogs were reborn in heaven and became the guardian angels of our celestial mansions? There is a Buddhist saying that 'make merit together, and you will see each other again.' This is true even for pets and their owners. In addition, it is a good idea to do good deeds in dedication to our deceased pets as well, just like we do for our beloved relatives.

CHAPTER 5

From Dog to Deva

Nobody would ever expect that our canine companions that love to nap aimlessly during the daytime could become beautiful angels in heaven too. However, before they can do so, they have to carry out good deeds first. How can they accomplish good deeds without hands like humans? In fact, good deeds can be committed with any part of the body, such as mouths and feet. Good deeds can be made not only to Buddhist monks in order to earn merit, but also to anyone in order to cherish their good hearts.

In Buddhist scripture, there is a story of a dog that was reborn as an angel named ‘Kosaga.’ Once, there was a Silent Buddha who did not deliver sermons to anyone. The Silent Buddha chose to spend his retreat period at the shelter of a man who had a dog. Whenever the Silent Buddha walked out for alms, the dog would accompany him and act like a security guard, protecting the Silent Buddha by barking along the way in order to scare off other dangerous animals in the area that might harm the Buddha. The dog served the Silent Buddha the best it could as an animal. At the end of his retreat, the Silent Buddha had to leave the man’s house and return to his monastery. He walked out from the man’s shelter and flew into the sky, leaving the dog behind. The dog was brokenhearted and died as a result of its love for the Silent Buddha. After the dog died, he was reborn in heaven as a male deity and given the new name ‘Kosaga Deva.’ Kosaga has a special characteristic that is superior to other angels: his voice is mellifluous and superbly beautiful due to the merit he gained from barking to protect the Silent Buddha from harm. It is said that when Kosaga deity whispers, his voice can be heard all over the heavenly paradise.

PET TIPS 5:

Although most animals have no hands with which to take part in charity or religious works, they can still use any parts of their bodies to make merit. Their owners should teach or train them to do as many good deeds as they can, such as showing respect to others, guests, and family members. They may also be trained to greet or welcome people who are not suspicious. Moreover, the owners should train their pets to behave well and never hurt each other in order to promote a sense of peace and serenity in their homes. Make sure that they will not hurt innocent people. Otherwise, this will only become a sinful deed for them, even if they are only following their instinct. If we bring our pets to public places, we must be responsible for their actions, such as when they defecate, urinate, or cause any damage. It is ideal for the owner and the pet to be involved in good deeds together, such as entertaining less fortunate people, caring for seniors, helping the blind and handicapped, and sniffing for smuggled drugs.

CHAPTER 6

An Ethical Heron

In Buddhism, a precept, or *sila*, means the normality of human beings. For example, the five precepts translate to the five normal behaviors of human beings. Therefore, one who fails to observe the five precepts may be considered to be an incomplete human being. In the present day, we find that it is difficult for people to observe these moral precepts. Thus, nobody would ever think that an animal could observe them either. However, there is an exception for this fact, as there is a story of a heron that succeeded in doing so since it was hard for her to perform good deeds in other forms. As a result, the merit from observing the five precepts enabled her to be reborn as a human who had more opportunities to do good deeds. After the end of her human life, she was reborn as a beautiful female deity, or devi.

The story of a heron that observed the five precepts is directly related to Indra, the king of heaven. According to Buddhist scriptures, when Indra was a human named Maka, he had four wives. His first three wives were involved in doing charitable works just like he was. After they passed away, they were reborn in heaven as Indra's consorts again. However, Suchata, the fourth wife was only interested in her beauty. She thought that the merit made by her husband would also transfer to her, so she did not assist him in any good deeds. After she passed away, she was reborn as a heron because she committed neither good deeds nor bad deeds. The heron had to catch fish in a stream for food until one day, Indra wondered where his fourth wife was, so he searched for her with his divine eye. Then, he found that she had been reborn as a heron. With sympathy, he came down to earth in order to meet the heron and brought her to heaven with his power. However, the heron regretted that the other wives had been reborn as female deities while she had become an animal. Therefore, she begged Indra, the king of heaven, to bring her back down to earth. Indra granted her wish and taught her to observe the five precepts. He advised the heron to eat only dead fish so that she would not break one of the five precepts by killing other creatures. The heron followed his advice strictly, and she died soon after because she found it difficult to find dead fish to eat. After the heron died, she was reborn as a woman in a village, who was able to make merit and perform more good deeds. After the woman passed away, she became an angel in heaven, and Indra brought her to live with him happily as another consort.

PET TIPS 6:

According to the Lord Buddha's teachings, the merit earned from observing the precepts is greater than the merit gained from the practice of charity because it is much more difficult to accomplish. The five precepts are (i) abstention from killing; (ii) abstention from stealing; (iii) abstention from sexual misconduct; (iv) abstention from false speech; and (v) abstention from consuming alcohol. Most common people find it difficult to observe all five precepts, so it is even more difficult for animals to do so. However, Suchata, the heron, is a good example that it is actually possible for animals to observe the precepts.

Any pet owners who wish for their pets to be reborn as humans or deities must take good care of them by preventing them from committing misdeeds that break the moral precepts. For example, we should not allow our pets to commit sexual misconducts or kill or hurt others. When you feed your pets, make sure that you do not feed them other living animals so that both the owner and pets do not break the precepts. Do not feed your pets alcoholic beverages or let them consume any drugs and narcotics. Indulge your pets with nutritious foods and beautiful words only. Keep your promise, and do not lie to your pets. Keep instructing and training your pets to perform only good deeds and avoid bad deeds. Simply speaking, train them not to misbehave. In this case, the precepts also involve having discipline in their daily lives, such as sleeping, eating, defecating, and urinating in the proper places.

CHAPTER 7

A Misbehaving Elephant

It is noticeable that people who love to watch soap operas are different from those who love to watch documentary films. Their attitudes tend to differ more or less. When one watches soap operas, one's mind absorbs the variety of emotions expressed by the actors and actresses. This may cause one to become an emotion-driven person. On the contrary, one who always watches documentary films tends to absorb their logical and rational way of presentation. Therefore, such a person's thoughts will rely on reasoning, facts, and careful contemplation. Simply speaking, one will turn into a wisdom-based rather than emotion-driven person.

Pets are the same as people in many ways. They can learn both good and poor behaviors from their owners and other surrounding factors. It is likely that they would follow their owners' examples. For instance, if a pet owner does not have discipline with mealtimes and bedtimes, pets may not eat and sleep at the right time, just like their owners. On the other hand, if a pet owner has a fixed schedule for his or her daily activities, pets will be positively affected as well. Thus, pet owners who wonder why their pets behave in a displeasing way should first look inwards and see if they themselves or the surrounding environment are having an influence on their pets.

The story of a misbehaving elephant is a good example from Buddhist scriptures that illustrates how people can directly affect the behavior of animals. According to the story, there was once a king who had a favorite elephant called 'the auspicious elephant.' The auspicious elephant was a beautiful elephant believed to bring good fortune to its owner. Therefore, the king took good care of the elephant by providing it with a well-built shelter. The king also assigned a mahout to feed and shower this elephant. The elephant had plenty of food, and its living conditions were better than those of common people. However, later on, this polite and elegant elephant became aggressive, and it started to hurt people, even the mahout. The king was bewildered by his elephant's misbehavior, so he sought advice from a royal pandit. After learning about the elephant, the royal pandit went to its shelter during both daytime and nighttime in order to look for the true cause of the problem. Finally, he discovered that there was a group of bandits who gathered together at the back of the elephant's shelter at nighttime. These bandits kept conversing about the bad things they had committed, using aggressive language and mannerisms. The pandit concluded that the auspicious elephant had picked up the aggressive behavior of the bandits. Thus, the pandit informed the king of this fact. The king then ordered that the bandits be put away and arranged for

virtuous scholars to politely converse about good things behind the elephant's shelter instead. Soon afterward, the auspicious elephant became polite and gentle again.

PET TIPS 7:

Although pet owners may often be unaware of this factor, a pet's surroundings can enhance both good and bad habits in it. We should be mindful of the behaviors of our pets and look for the true causes of aggression, meanness and moodiness, or inappropriate defecation and urination. Then, we can solve problems by consulting with a veterinarian or pet specialist who knows how to train them. Pet owners should create a good environment for their pets. Make sure they have a tidy, clean, and hygienic place to sleep, eat, defecate, urinate, and exercise. Their food should be nutritious, clean, and safe in order to promote good health. Furthermore, the owners are especially influential to the pets. If the owners are moody and aggressive, watch movies and TV programs that promote violence, and listen to aggressive music, the pets in that environment will absorb this aggressiveness into their minds. This can truly cause a psychological impact, as in the case of the auspicious elephant that became aggressive because he learned from the bandits. When the behaviors of our pets suddenly change or they get sick for unknown reasons, pet owners should inspect surrounding factors and consider what may be the true causes of such changes. Then, the causes can be identified, and the problems can be solved appropriately. Pet owners may seek additional advice from veterinarians or other experienced pet owners, as some misbehaviors or problems may have developed since the pet's birth or during the initial stages of its life with the owner. Also, some behaviors are unique to certain species of animals, and the owner should be aware of these beforehand. One who wishes to become a pet owner should learn about and research an animal before choosing it as a pet.

CHAPTER 8

The Buddha-to-Be Chipmunk

On our planet, the population of animals is greater than that of men. Simply think of the number of animals in our home when compared to the number of family members, and we can see that the number is very different. Among the millions of animals that exist, each has different behaviors based on various factors. For example, dogs are usually playful, while cats are gentler. Sometimes, our pets may do something peculiar, and it is difficult to tell what they are thinking or doing. If we study the Lord Buddha's teachings, we will find that some animals are 'superb beings' called '*Bodhisatta*,' or 'Buddhas-to-be.' This means that such animals are in the process of developing themselves to attain Buddhahood in the future. To explain this fact, we must look to the fact that Buddhists believe in reincarnation. Sometimes, one may be reborn as an animal, a man, a woman, an angel, or even a demon, depending on one's karma. Therefore, Buddhists believe that some animals used to be humans and vice versa. A *Bodhisatta*, or Buddha-to-be, can either be an animal, a human, or a deity who wishes to become a Buddha in the future. Thus, a *Bodhisatta* has to go through the process of self-development, or, in other words, to cultivate perfection for eons until he or she can finally become an enlightened Buddha.

Sometimes, a *Bodhisatta* may be reborn in the form of an elephant, a monkey, a bird, or even a small animal like a chipmunk. However, as an animal, the *Bodhisatta*'s heart remains more virtuous when compared to other animals. These virtues motivate the *Bodhisatta* to perform good deeds and cultivate further perfection. Who knows if the pet dog, cat, or bird that lives with us could be a *Bodhisatta*? Isn't it a surprise to hear that the noble Lord Gotama Buddha was once reborn as a small chipmunk? His story is as follows:

Once, there was a *Bodhisatta* chipmunk that lived with his family on a tree. One day, there was a big storm and flood that caused the chipmunk's nest to fall down from the tree and float into the sea. Unfortunately, the chipmunk's baby was still in the nest. When the Buddha-to-be chipmunk saw that, he did not run away but ran to the shore, dipped his fluffy tail into the seawater, and flapped it with the hope of drying the sea and rescuing his baby. The Buddha-to-be chipmunk did this for seven consecutive days, but it was impossible to dry the sea. Then, a deity looked down from heaven and felt pity for the chipmunk, so he came down to earth and told the chipmunk that it was impossible to dry the seawater. Hearing the angel's words, the chipmunk asked him to go away, explaining that he did not want to converse with a lazy person. Upon hearing this reply, the

angel flew to the sea, picked up the baby chipmunk, and returned it to the Buddha-to-be chipmunk. Finally, the chipmunks were reunited again.

Many people may doubt how the chipmunk could have been cultivating perfection by trying to dry the seawater, as it seems like an unwise and futile action. According to Buddhist scriptures, however, the *Bodhisatta* chipmunk was cultivating perseverance, which is one of the ten perfections (generosity, discipline, renunciation, wisdom, perseverance, patience, truthfulness, compassion, resolution, and equanimity) to be cultivated by every Buddha-to-be, without which he cannot attain Buddhahood. When the *Bodhisatta* chipmunk was trying to dry the seawater, his heart was full of determination in persevering to help his baby. Although his body was that of just a small animal, he had such a great and powerful heart. To explain this fact, we may say that the energy from his effort and perseverance charged his mind like electricity does to a battery. If the *Bodhisatta* chipmunk had simply let his baby die hopelessly without trying to help, there would have been no energy in his mind. On the contrary, his mind would have been full of sorrow and mournfulness, which would have weakened him even more. This story illustrates that the mind is crucial in Buddhism, whereas the physical body is secondary. Therefore, we should not treat our pets just like toys and think that they are inferior beings because they could very well be *Bodhisattas* with great hearts aimed at future Buddhahood.

DHAMMA FOR PET OWNERS

Dhamma, or the teachings that the Lord Buddha delivered throughout the forty-five years after his enlightenment can be grouped into 84,000 categories. His teachings vary, ranging from dealing with a small issue like teeth brushing to a big issue like the formation of the universe. For the caring of animals, we can apply some Dhamma topics to our practice for the benefit of both our pets and ourselves. In this book, the author would like to introduce (A) The Four Virtues for a Good Heart; (B) The Four Supportive Actions; and (C) The Four Supportive Factors.

(A) The Four Brahma Virtues:

Compassion + Mercy + Empathetic Joy + Equanimity

Pet owners should start by keeping their hearts virtuous and in a good state. The four basic virtues for pet owners are the Four Brahma Virtues, which comprises of compassion, mercy, empathetic joy, and equanimity. To practice these virtues is to prepare our minds to be ready to cope with different behaviors from our pets, whether pleasing or displeasing since pets are animals normally driven by their instinct. This causes their behaviors to be somewhat unpredictable.

Before owning a pet, we should be aware that animals are normally inferior to us in terms of wisdom, knowledge, virtue, and capability. Therefore, they may not be obedient or react in the same way that humans would, except some *Bodhisattas in the form of* animals. Sometimes, their behaviors may annoy, cause damage to, or even hurt us.

After we have become aware of both the pleasing and displeasing behaviors of our pets, we should keep our minds compassionate at all times by filling our hearts with love and good blessings, wishing our pets to live happily and always being ready to forgive them without any vengeance or anger toward them. The next virtue, mercy, motivates us to help our pets be free of suffering and problems.

Empathetic joy makes us feel happy when we find that our pets are happy. The last virtue, equanimity, allows our minds to remain indifferent or unperturbed when our pets are out of control or misbehaving. Moreover, if they get sick, become handicapped, or die, we must be able to understand the fact of life: all creatures are subject to death. We should not be so sorrowful that it affects our lives, as we have will have already taken care of them the best we could.

(B) The Four Supportive Actions:

Generosity + Kind Speech + Helpfulness + Consistency

Now that we have the four virtues of Brahma, which help to condition our minds, we put them into practice through the four supportive actions, which comprise of generosity, kind speech, helpfulness, and consistency. Generosity means the giving of sustenance, such as food, medicine, water, shelter, training, and other necessities in the pets' lives in order to give them good lives without burdening ourselves as well as others. What we give to pets should not cause a big financial burden on ourselves but should be reasonable, as we still have to take good care of our parents, spouses, and children. Additionally, pet owners should learn to 'forgive' pets and keep them from harm or death by their own hands or others.

Kind speech allows pet owners to communicate with their pets, either through verbal or physical language. We should communicate with them in a kind way, teaching and training them with good intentions, without rude words or aggressiveness. Although they are animals, we should not lie to them, speak to them with harsh words, or treat them violently. If we do so, whether our pets understand it or not, our bad thoughts, speech, and actions still translate to sin and impurity because bad speech and actions stem from a corrupt mind.

The next action is helpfulness, which means that pet owners should always help their pets in any way they can when pets are in trouble. For example, pets should be taken to see veterinarians when they are sick. If they are working animals, the owners should not overuse them and force them to work too hard, as this is a violation of animal rights and well-being.

The last one is consistency, meaning that pet owners should take good care of their pets consistently throughout their lives. Some people love their pets when they are young and adorable, but as the pets get older or less useful, they may be left uncared for or receive less attention from their owners. Therefore, consistency is the guarantee for lifelong friendship or companionship for both the pet owners and the pets themselves.

(C) The Four Supportive Factors:

Pleasing People + Pleasing Food + Pleasing Place + Pleasing Dhamma

Another interesting Dhamma topic for pet owners is the four supportive factors, which are guidelines for how pet owners should maintain a good environment and surroundings for their pets.

Normally, these four factors are undertaken by those who practice Dhamma and meditation, but we can also apply it to caring for pets.

Starting with ‘pleasing people,’ pets should be cared for by their owners or other gentle, compassionate people who love them. Also, pet owners should have enough financial resources to take good care of the pets. Anyone who is considering giving pets to others should first consider if the prospective adopters are qualified or not.

The next factor is ‘pleasing food,’ meaning that the food given to pets should be appropriate, clean, safe, and nutritious enough. This does not mean that pet owners have to spoil their pets all the time by providing whatever they like to eat. Although the food we give to pets may not always be tasty or preferred by them, it should promote good health and longevity. Also, food should be given in an appropriate amount and on time.

The next factor is ‘pleasing place,’ meaning that pets should have safe, hygienic spaces for living, sleeping, defecating, and urinating. Pets should not be caged or tied up all the time. Rather, they should be allowed to exercise under the supervision of their owners.

The last factor is ‘pleasing Dhamma,’ which means that pets should receive proper training and teaching from their owners. The owners should learn how to reward their pets when they behave well and punish them appropriately when they misbehave. People who have many pets should prevent them from quarreling or fighting each other by either training them to live together harmoniously or separating them completely. Effective training and teaching methods can be obtained from websites or experienced veterinarians and pet owners. In addition, pet owners may teach Dhamma to their pets in various ways, such as teaching them to be kind to and love each other so that their minds can improve in virtuousness.

PURE LOVE MEDITATION

As explained earlier, pet owners can convey love, kindness, and good wishes to their pets through their actions speech, and thoughts. Additionally, however, there is a special technique that every pet owner can use to transfer positive feelings to their pets: meditation. The meditation method that the author would like to recommend is ‘pure love meditation,’ which allows pet owners to transmit good energy from their compassionate hearts directly to their pets, similar to how the full moon radiates its cool light.

This meditation method starts with emptying your mind, letting go of all wandering thoughts, then filling it with feelings of love, compassion, and mercy. The key is to feel as if you are radiating such feelings from your solar plexus to cover the rest of your body and outwards to your pets, similar to how the full moon radiates light all the way to the trees, mountains, and lakes on earth. Another way is to visualize the image of your pets in the middle of your solar plexus and wish them to be happy, joyful, healthy, and free from harm. In doing so, your mind will become like a radio station that transmits a good frequency to your pets, which are like radio receivers. If your mind is calm enough and free from distraction, the frequency or energy you transmit will be powerful enough to be absorbed by your pets. Aggressive pets may even turn into gentle ones as their minds are conditioned by the energy from your good heart.

To practice pure love meditation, first of all, sit comfortably, either in a sofa, chair, or bed. Then, take 3 to 7 deep breaths. Relax every part of your body and close your eyes gently as if you were to fall asleep. Then, visualize the full moon floating in the middle of your solar plexus. This full moon represents your pure and beautiful mind. Do not worry about the clarity of the visualized image because the goal of visualization is to keep your mind focused and less distracted by thoughts. Then, repeat a mantra silently in order to calm down your mind. The mantra could be ‘pure and radiant’ or any other wholesome words that promote the sense of peace and harmony.

Repeat the mantra in your mind a hundred times until your mind becomes still and focused. Then, imagine that the full moon, which represents your compassionate and pure mind, is gradually radiating the light of love, peace, and kindness to cover yourself and outwards to your pets no matter where they are, bringing them blessings of happiness and forgiveness for any wrongdoings. Do this everyday for 5 to 10 minutes before bedtime, and both pets and pet owners will be able to develop a spiritual tie that allows them to live together harmoniously and happily.

END NOTE

Buddhism teaches us that nothing in this world happens by chance, but everything occurs due to karmic forces. Our beloved pets may have once been our relatives or friends in past lifetimes, with whom we developed some kind of karmic relationship that brings us together again in this lifetime. Therefore, we should take good care of them instead of thinking that we are their bosses or the owners of their lives and can mistreat them if we want. Like human beings, animals love their own lives and need safety. When we hurt them, they feel pain. Some even cry and struggle to flee. As such, we should make sure that when we have pets, we treat them well, as if they were our companion or relative. According to the laws of karma, one has to reap what one sows. This means that what we do today will return to us in the future, either good or bad. Therefore, if we treat our pets well, they may be reborn as human beings in the future and return to take good care of us. What's more, if your beloved pets are reborn as an angel, wouldn't it be nice to meet them again in the heavenly paradise?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pittaya Wong or Pittaya Tisuthiwongse (Peter) is a Thai Buddhist who was born at Bangkok Christian Hospital on 6th December 1975. He is a Chinese-Thai, given the Chinese name Hlu Jin Xiang when he was born. In his childhood, he had been educated at reputed Catholic Schools (Assumption College, Thonburi and Assumption Commercial College, Bangkok, since grade 1 to grade 12. By the way, his parents had cultivated Buddhism deeply into his heart since his was young by teaching him how to recite the Buddhist chanting and make merits at Buddhist temples.

After he completed grade 12, he had a chance to further his education at California State University of Los Angeles, Pasadena City College, and finally earned a B.A. in economics at the University of Washington, Seattle in 1998, where he had an opportunity to explore various Buddhist texts from different tradition at the library.

As he returned to Thailand, he earned a Master's Degree from a famous university in Bangkok, but he finally returned his degree to his scholarship provider to prevent dispute(s). After his graduation, he became a Buddhist monk at Wat Paknam in Bangkok given the monastic name as 'Dhammavidhu', having His Holiness Somdet Phramaharatchamangkhalachan (Chuang Varapunyo), Pali Scholar Level 9, the current acting Supreme Patriarch of Thailand and the abbot of Wat Paknam Temple, as his preceptor. Pittaya spent around six months in the monastic community and disrobed to live his life as a Buddhist layperson or upasaka.

From his experience in the monkhood and Dhamma practicing and learning, he draws pictures and writes some books and articles related to Buddhism as well as translating several books and articles from Thai to English, which are publicized via www.meditation101.org, with the aim to share Buddhist teachings to English speakers in order to promote peace and harmony among humankind.

WORDS OF MERIT DEDICATION

What is dedication of merit? Dedication of merit in Buddhism is an amazing practice which allows the ‘merit’ or ‘*punya*,’ the pure energy that occurs in our mind when we have wholesome thought, speech, and action, to be dedicated to others. We may compare the merit energy to the transferable electricity or frequency which cannot be seen with naked eyes. However, the difference is that the merit dedicator does not lose his or her merit energy when s(he) dedicates merit to others. When someone dedicates merit, and the dedicated person accepts it willingly (appreciating or rejoicing in the dedicated merit either mentally and/or physically), merit energy will occur in both the dedicator’s and the dedicated person’s mind as their minds become meritorious. This is like lighting up the first torch and use this first torch to light up other torches. However, the merit energy which occurs to the dedicated person’s mind is only around 10 to 20% of the original merit volume depending on the level of appreciation of the dedicated person. The merit energy can bring about success and prosperity in many ways to its owner.

“I, the author of this book, would like to recollect
 all the meritorious deeds I have done,
 including the publishing of this book and dedicate to
 the Very First Wholesome Primordial Lord Buddha,
 all other wholesome Lord Buddha(s), Silent Buddha(s),
 the wholesome Supra-mundane Chakkavatti(s)
 or the Dhamma Nurturer(s), the fully enlightened Buddhist disciples,
 the Noble Buddhist disciples,
 all of the aforesaid from the very first ones who have existed
 in the existence, and the following ones until the present,
 and the ones who will exist in the future, throughout the existence.

I would like to dedicate all of my merit to:
 Lord Metriya Bodhisatta and his team,
 all other wholesome Bodhisatta(s) or the Buddha-to-be persons, ...

The Most Venerable Master Kowida,
The Most Venerable Pandita, The Most Venerable Uttama,
His Holiness The Supreme Patriarch(s) of Thailand,
His Holiness The 19th Supreme Patriarch of Thailand,
The Most Venerable Phramongkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro),
the discoverer of Dhammakaya Meditation, and his team,
His Holiness The Dalai Lama(s) and all Rinpoche(s),

His Holiness Somdet Phramaharatchamangkhla
(Chuang Varapunyo) Pali Scholar Level 9,
The Most Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh,...

The Thai Monarchs & Royalties,
His Majesty King Bhumibol and Her Majesty Queen Sirikit
of Thailand and Their Royal Family Members,
Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn,
all of the wholesome mundane Chakkavatti(s) and their retinues,..

My wholesome Dhamma masters and teachers,
 the Sangha Community of Thailand, Wat Paknam (Bkk), and all over the world,
 The Most Venerable Phrabhavanakosolthera (Theera Dhammadaro),
 The Most Venerable Phrarajbrahmathera (Veera Kanuttamo),
 Venerable Nattanan Kulsiri & associates,
 The Most Venerable Phrathepyanmongkol
 (Sermchai Jayamanggalo) and his team,
 The Most Venerable Phrabhavanakosolthera
 (Choowith Akkaviccho) and his team,
 Venerable Phramaha SuvithVijjaysako and his team,
 Venerable Mongkol Manggalo & associates,
 Venerable Kru-Ba Krisda Sumedho,...

Rev. Maechee Pook Muiprasert,
 Rev. Maechee Tanom Asawai,
 Rev. Maechee Yanee Sirivoharn,
 Rev. Maechee Lamai Choowongvudh,
 Kru (Guru) Treetar Niamkham (Hon. Ph.D)
 (the Chairperson of Luang Por Wat Paknam's Alumni Association),
 Kru Chaluay Sombatsuk,
 Rev. Maechee Rumpa Bhokamshy,
 Rev. Maechee Taweeporn Liabprasert,
 Rev. Maechee Wanjai Chookorn and her team,
 Members of Wat Paknam's Meditation Workshop (Bangkok),
 Buddhist nuns of Wat Paknam (Bangkok),
 Members of Wat Paknam's Alumni Association,...

My Preceptors, school and university teachers,
 Professor Peter Case (Ph.D), Ajahn Nantavit Pornpiboon (Ph.D),
 Assoc. Prof. Supreeya (Ph.D), Assoc. Prof. Panida (Ph.D),
 and Asst. Prof. Bhussadi of Thammasat U.

My ancestors, Grandma Kimyong and Grandpa Liangtong Thongchaitanavudh and Family,
 Grandma Fu Si, Grandpa Lo Weng Yueng & Family,

Father Sakon & Mother Duangrath Tisuthiwongse,
 Ms. Boonyawan Hiranrattanachote, grandparents, parents, siblings, sons, daughters, children, grandchildren,
 cousins, relatives, husbands, wives, descendants, family members, friends, associates, followers, fellows in
 the Dhamma, those whom I am indebted to,
 My superintendants, subordinates,

Mr. Wasan Wongassavanarumol, his family, and his guardians,
 My family's celestial guardians,

and those whom I am indebted to,
all of the aforesaid in every lifetime of mine,..

Those who secure, guard, nourish, and promote Buddhism,
the Triple Gem, and other righteous religions
in the wholesome ways,
both in Thailand and throughout the existence,

Those who secure, guard, nourish, and lookafter
the Kingdom of Thailand
such as the veterans, army soldiers, and more.

I would like to dedicate my merit to Arupa Brahma(s),
Rupa Brahma(s), celestial beings, spirits,
the supernormal bodies (*kayasiddhi*), and others, who promote,
look after, protect, guard, and secure me, my family,

the Buddhist temples and properties,
the Lord Buddha's four pilgrimage places namely
the place of birth, place of enlightenment,
place of delivering the first sermon, and place of passing away,
as well as the Lord Buddha and Buddhist monk statues,

Lord Buddha's relics, Enlightened Disciples' relics,
Buddhist pagodas and stupas, the Bodhi trees, wholesome members of the Buddhist monastic communities,
the members of
Buddhist lay communities, the public places and properties,
all of the aforesaid, throughout the existence.

I would like to dedicate my merit to the Brahma(s),
 celestial beings, and those who attend the meeting
 and deliver wholesome teachings at the celestial beings'
 assembly halls of all levels and zones throughout the existence.

I would like to dedicate my merit to all Arupa Brahma(s)
 and Brahma(s) of all levels and zones,
 the Lord and celestial beings of the sixth level of heaven,
 the Lord and celestial beings of the fifth level of heaven,
 the Lord and celestial beings of the fourth level of heaven,
 the Lord and celestial beings of the third level of heaven,
 the Lord Indra and celestial beings of the second level of heaven,
 the Four Lords and celestial beings of the first level of heaven,
 the orgs (*Yaksa*), serpent angels (*Naga*),
 bird angels (*Garuda*), and musician angels (*Gandadappa*),
 my celestial sorcerer master (*Vidhayadhorn*)
 and all other celestial sorcerers,
 hermits and ascetics, both celestial and mundane,
 earth sprites, tree sprites, celestial beings in the air, guardian angels of my house and everywhere, the
 superintendent angels of all levels and zones, the angels who record, deliver, and keep the journals of
 humans' good deeds, of all levels and zones,
 all of the aforesaid, throughout the existence.

I would like to dedicate my merit to those whom I used to harm either mentally, verbally, and physically.

May all of them know about my merit sharing and accept the shared merit,
then kindly forgive me for all of my unwholesome deeds.

May my bad karma(s) be lessened or forgiven completely.

I would like to dedicate my merit to the judges, secretaries and officials of purgatory hells (*yomaloka*), and
punished beings

in the purgatory hells and other hells of all levels and zones throughout the existence.

I would like to dedicate my merit to astral bodies, spirits, ghosts, hungry ghosts (*peta*), demons (*asurakaya*),
and monsters everywhere either near or afar throughout the existence.

I would like to dedicate my merit to those who have revenge upon me and my family, my and my family's
pets and animal companions, in every lifetime, such as Soen (playful), Lueang (yellow), Dum (black),
Maruay (come rich), Paruay (bring rich), Poppy, and Daeng (red), Golden, Jumbo, Cyndy, Hall, Tam,

and all other sentient beings

both in the wholesome and unwholesome realms

throughout the existence, as well as those who are listed in

<http://www.meditation101.org/14490096/pittayas-merit-dedication>

”

Last but not least, with special dedication of merit to

“Khun Thongdaeng (Suvannachad).”

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“May all of the dedicated ones know about my merit dedication and accept the dedicated merit. With the power of merit that the dedicated ones receive from me, may they become purer mentally, verbally, and physically... May they become even more righteous and wholesome only, as well as being prosperous in the 38 Blessings of life (*Mangala*) and the Noble Eightfold Path (*Ariyamagga*)... May they become more beautiful, wisdomful, radiantful, peaceful, happier, healthier, wealthier, and have more beneficial subordinates, praise, gain, fame, grace, as well as attaining the path and fruit (*Magga & Phala*) of Nirvana, the wholesome superknowledge (*Vijja*), and the wholesome conducts (*Carana*). May the merit yields only wholesome results to them and myself forevermore.”

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