

Messages from Buddha Heart Village

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Let me tell a story once told by Buddha: The Story of Kisa Gotami.

Kisa Gotami, born in a poverty-stricken home, lived with her husband's family. There, because she came from a poor family, she had been treated with contempt until she gave birth to her son. Then, she gained all the respect and honors a woman could ever earn.

When the boy was old enough to play here and there, he died suddenly. It came as a large blow to her hopes and her future. She could not accept the tragedy to be true; she held her son and ran into the city to seek medical treatment. Many people tried to avoid her and others mocked her, but she could not understand why. "Is it unnatural for a mother to seek a cure for her sick son?", she asked herself.

A wise man gave heed of the poor Gotami and advised her: "Gotami, as for the medicine, no one knows, but Buddha, the possessor of the ten powers, who resides at the monastery."

Gotami was replete with delight. She thanked the wise man and rushed to the monastery with her son. There, she bowed and said, "the would honored one, please give me medicine to cure my son."

Buddha had seen Gotami's good deeds and replied, "Very well, Gotami. Go to the city and ask for a few grains of mustard seeds from a house where no one has ever died."

Filled with mush hope, Gotami went to the city and asked house by house for the mustard seeds. Many people made offers to her but she could not accept them, because people had died in their houses. She walked and walked until she was exhausted; her hope had gone from low to lower; and she was in despair. When she was brimful of disappointments, anguish, and anger at the injustice of her fate, Buddha's warmth and compassion pervaded her heart. She steeped in her own mind and her hapless experiences.

She thought, "my family was poor but there were many others poorer than mine. I lost my son but no family in this city has not lost their dearest ones.

I am not alone suffering, all the people in this world suffer. This is the law: anything that is born, will die. Nothing is permanent in this world. All compound things will decay and decompose into their elements. My son's body will soon rot away, and mine will do the same. Buddha is not only compassionate and wise, but also an excellent teacher with wonderful expedients."

Gotami returned her thoughts to her worldly problems. She set her son on the fire ground for cremation, and then she buried his remains. She went back to the monastery and requested to become the Buddha's disciple. The Buddha accepted and said to her, "well done, well done, indeed."

The above story has revealed, in the human life, two of the eight major sufferings: death and the separation from a loved one. The other six are: birth, old age, illness, being with a resented one, not getting what one wants, and uncontrollable random thoughts. How to remove these common human sufferings is what Buddha has tried to teach us. These are the problems of Buddhism; and these are our own problems.

We spend most of our energy on ways to protect our decaying bodies and our self-interests, so that we rarely have the time or the desire to ponder upon the problems of life. Beyond earning a living: What is the purpose of life? What is the truth of life? How can the truth be realized?

By a long conditioning of poor education, we live in a self-centered shell, and our minds are greatly biased. If we see people being killed, we may feel sad for a while but then we think "that is the way of life." Life is indeed hard. Yet, when we ourselves having a loved one die, we think of that as a real catastrophe.

If we really want to live a happy and meaningful life, we have to, at least, walk out of that little self-centered shell to see the world as it is; not the world as we would like to see it. Only then we can see the true meaning of life.

A Buddha Heart Villager

James C.M. Yu 果空

James C.M. Yu (Kuo K'ung)

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The Law of Existence: Every entity in the phenomenal world is changing and transitory. Whatever becomes, soon passes away; whatever is born, soon dies. Every living being is a compound of the four basic elements: fluid, solid, energy, and motion. They come from Nothingness and will dissolve into Nothingness. However, the NOTHINGNESS is not the nothingness you think it is. Ch'an!