

Phra Chamriang Candano (1948-2022)

(Phrakru Siddhikhanarak)

[Previously published as fb220812 Piya Tan]

My dear monk friend, Phra Chamriang of Kedah, Malaysia, passed away on 10th August 2022 at the age of 74 (just 1 year older than me). Many, if not most, of those who have attended the various national Dharma courses throughout Malaysia in the 1970-80s (such as DPTC, NADI and PERDANA) would recall him as a calm, pleasant and humble Thai monk who spoke good English and kept the Vinaya. He was perhaps the best educated of the traditional Thai monks in Malaysia then.

I'm deeply saddened that he should have passed away at such a relatively young age by Singapore standards, but death respects no age. In recent times, I have known the passing of a growing number of relatives, friends, even those who had made life difficult for me during my own monk years. This makes us reflect on how painful it is to know those younger than us passing away.

After the Buddha's passing, and also of Sariputta and Moggallana, who predeceased the Lord, the elder Ānanda reflected thus:

The old ones have passed away.
I do not get on with the new ones.
Today I meditate all alone,
Like a bird gone to its nest.
(Tha 1036)

In this evening of my life, such knowledge only makes me treasure the friendship and love of my wife Ratna, my daughter Chai Leng, my son Chai Seng, and, of course, you as a special friend, close as family to me, who has kept up with our sutta studies and support our Dhamma work. This is what makes our lives meaningful: it is all impermanent.

"LIFE IS IMPERMANENT" means that time is swiftly flying by; yet, if we spend even a brief moment in some sutta study, or meditation, or being kind to those whom we meet, we have learned and practised what the Buddha teaches. This is the meaning of life: help others before this opportunity leaves you.

"LIFE IS IMPERMANENT" also refers to the purpose in our life: to "know Dhamma, make Dhamma known." Often enough, people may turn to the Dhamma a little too late in life, when some sickness or accident has struck, but it is never too late to help them in every way we can.

This is a reflection on DEATH, one of my favourite reflections, as I age and my body becoming more infirm. I am fortunate to have known the Buddha Dhamma early in life, and suffered unimaginably painful lessons to strengthen me spiritually. Frankly, I have given up on the Dhamma a few times, seeing my own weaknesses and those of others. Yet, the Dhamma never gives up on me. It's always there in my breath; so I move on with it.

My remarkable wife and friend, Ratna, has been a great strength to me to this day, taking care of my health, and so allowing us to celebrate these 2 decades of sutta translation work and critical Buddhism. I know Phra Chamriang would have enjoyed reading the Sutta Discovery translations and essays, too.

Let us dedicate the merits of all our good of body, speech and mind, to the happiness of Phra Chamriang wherever he is now, that he will continue in the Dhamma life under even more conducive conditions, and gain the path of awakening here and now.

With metta always,

Piya Tan

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