

Year of the Snake 2025

This year 2025 is the Chinese year of “the snake,” one of the 12 animals of the Chinese zodiac. This ancient calendar system started in pre-scientific times; hence, it has various superstitious aspects which are often disregarded or discounted by the wise. The zodiac system remains as a traditional way of counting the years mainly for ethnic reasons and values.

Understandably, the snake in traditional belief is said to be mysteriously intelligent or wily with almost no scruples; they are snakes, after all. Or they are regarded as lowly animals. In early Buddhism, however, the snake (*uraga*) is reflected on for their wholesome qualities.

Uraga Sutta

The Uraga Sutta, the discourse on the snake (Sn 1.1), is the very first text in Sutta Nipāta, the most ancient book in the Pali canon. For a Buddhist, the qualities of a year is not defined by the zodiac animal, but we, with our positive nature, make the best of the year for ourselves, our loved ones and society.

Let us bless this Snake Year with a reflection on the Uraga Sutta:

Just as we remove the snake’s spreading venom with herbs,
we let go of the here and the beyond—
just as a serpent sheds its old worn-out skin. (Sn 1)

Now here, now gone

The meaning of the Buddha’s advice is that we must learn from our past but leave it where it is; dead and gone. The future has not arisen and will be different from what we imagine. The future depends on what we think and do now.

The best we can do is live in the present; this is all that is real and true. Even then, this here and now is gone almost as soon as it arises. We thus need to think right, act right and speak right even now. Do no evil; end any evil; do good; keep on doing good. We are thus living well now.

Happy now and ever

Yet, to live, we must let go even the now. For, in a moment, it is the past. To be mindful is to see this here and now, and be present with love, compassion, joy, and peace. This is the meaning of “Let go of the here” in the Uraga Sutta.

You can of course plan for the future, but it all depends on what you do now. Since you do not really know what the future will be, you can only prepare for uncertainties. I think these are some wise ways of preparing for the future, and yet not being attached to its uncertainties.

The 5 rules of happiness

- (1) Live now within your means; give priority to your HEALTH and body.
- (2) Save what you can for the future, but the priority is to keep a HAPPY MIND now.
- (3) Do not do anything that will curtail or remove your FREEDOM as a good person.
- (4) Live with TRUTH wisely, without having to prove or pretend yourself.
- (5) MENTAL HEALTH is most precious; let it grow with love, compassion, joy and peace.

This is the meaning of “let go of the beyond.”

Don't be superstitious

A key quality to cultivate this year is NOT TO BE SUPERSTITIOUS. Superstition is the wrong belief that you cannot change. It is like holding the snake by the tail. It is harmful to depend on external solutions for problems that have arisen in your own minds. This is like handing your remote to another.

You should grasp the snake by the neck and then fling it as far away as possible, and move away. This is the meaning of not being superstitious.

This is the year of the Earth Snake. Earth is the solid element, reflecting the certainty of SELF-RELIANCE. If you do not rely on yourself, who can you rely on? The snake moves fully in touch with earth, solid and firm.

Blessed Chinese New Year of the Snake to you and your family.

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The Snake in Singapore Chinatown.

