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“My religion is very simple, my religion is compassion.” –  
Dalai Lama



## LUNAR NEW YEAR WISHES

*Tet* (Vietnamese Lunar New Year) is a big festival in Vietnam and amongst Vietnamese people all around the world. It marks the start of the spring season and a new lunar year. Many Vietnamese people return to their families and friends for this occasion. They wear their best clothes and prepare many delicious cuisines to share with their cherished ones. Another practice that is common is wishing friends and families good luck, prosperity, good health, success in businesses or studies and for the fulfillment of any personal wishes.

This practice of wishing people the best of is done especially at Tet because it encourages us to remember that we all need some positivity in life and it helps create good karma. When we wish others the best of luck and they wish us back the best of luck, the cycle will continue and generate good luck for all.

Young kids or unmarried individuals also benefit from these wishes by receiving *li xi* (red pocket money) from the older people who reward these younger ones for their wishes. These *li xi* generally contain money, coins or notes and can even contain lollies. Now with the improvement of technology, people are more innovative and are able to attach gift cards or something the youth can scan and gain some monetary value.

Wishing each other luck at the start of the year is a common practice amongst not only Asian but also Western cultures. It is a form of sharing and expanding luck without expecting much in return from the recipient of the well wishes. Although it is only word of mouth, it is still an action and it is an action of sowing good wishes/deeds. If we sow good karma, we can also reap good karma.



**“So far so good and so near so bad” Covid19**

In the midst of Covid 19, we hear and we see tragedies from far and near. As we are part of the whole, we are more or less directly affected by the pandemic like many millions of people around the world, living in fear for the present and the unknown future, millions of people living in distress for their daily basic survival needs, millions are struggling for medical aids etc... The Covid19 not only kills the economy of the world but damages enormously the mental health of people in the long term and this leads to many other damages such as the beliefs in super natural being, relationships have been destroyed due to the containment, lockdown, all forms of socialising becoming restricted, except for online contact. In this context, let us examine the affects of relationships in these times.

As the proverb says “Absence makes the heart grow fonder” means “so far so good”. Before the pandemic, people were always constantly yearning for spending more time together with our loved ones, so they can learn to live, to laugh and to love. On the other hand, they were also afraid that the other may have external affairs at work. But togetherness does not always end up with happiness, in actual fact, hatred arises and relationships are ruined becoming “so near so bad”! Internal affairs are even more devastating, the divorce rate is unbelievably high after the Covid19 pandemic lock down has been relaxed. Why? Is it the Covid19? Or is it due to the over interactions? Or is it financially related? Etc... I must say it is about mental instability, I believe devout Buddhists do take sensible precautions and take the lock down as an opportunity to further enhancing or developing or renewing relationships, time for breaks, to catch up, for reflections or corrections or for spiritual development. In other words, the Covid19 outbreak should bring people together spiritually, leading to stronger bonds in relationships, this is the time whence, the intense practice of the loving kindness-metta and mindfulness is needed the most. The attitude matters and it is not about the external events.

Over many years of teachings, we can see and experience the concept of impermanence of the world and fragility of human lives, I am certain that, if we have the right attitude with the adversity of situation and apply teachings of Buddha we shall be at ease and at peace.

May we all pray for the peace of human kind and Covid19 will soon be over!  
With Metta and Karuna,

Thay Thich Linh Tan



**TET INTERVIEW WITH LIEN BAO**

Q1: Tet is an important time of the year to mark the beginning of spring and to celebrate a new lunar year with our families and friends, how do you spend time in Vietnam or Australia celebrating Tet?

A: You are right that the Lunar NY (Tet) is a very special occasion to celebrate with our families and friends. I arrived in Australia at a very young age and unable to remember celebrating it in Vietnam. I would say there are three main phases to Tet: beginning, middle, and end. The beginning of Tet is marked with the preparation for Tet in which I prepare my own home (e.g. cleaning, clearing out the clutter etc...) as well as getting myself and love ones ready for Tet, such as buying new clothes to wear during Tet, food and getting ready for the red packet ‘li xi’, also assisting Loc Uyen Phap Vien to prepare for Tet. The middle phase is of course celebrating it during the Tet period, and the end phase marks the end of Tet that involves packing away the Tet decorations. Whilst it is a special occasion for us, it is unfortunate that in Australia I only feel the Tet vibe whenever I’m surrounded within my family, friends, temple and Vietnamese community.

Q2: Going to the temple is an important part of celebrating Tet, how does your family celebrate Tet at the temple?

A: On the eve of Tet, our family visits a few temples that we regularly visit and towards the end of the night we meet up at one particular temple. At the temple, we light incense and pray to deities for blessings and good luck in the year ahead. We usually stay at the temple until the clock ticks over past midnight which marks the start of Tet, then we exchange greetings with Thay, our family and those at the temple. This year, however, the temple that we went to near our home had completed the chanting and everyone started to leave the temple early and so we went back to my mum's home and caught the special moment together at my mum's home. For the temples that we didn't get a chance to visit, my mum and I continue to visit them and exchange greetings with Thay on day 1 and during the Tet period.

Q3: What are your favourite foods during Tet?

A: Bánh tét and the vegetarian food that my mum cooks during Tet

Q4: What is one thing that stands out about Tet to you?

A: There are a lot of things that stands out about Tet for me. One of them is being involved in making bánh tét at Loc Uyen Phap Vien prior to Tet; the other is day 1 of Tet whereby my entire family, including cousins, gathers at my mum's house to celebrate Tet together.

Q5: This year in 2020, it is the year of the metal rat, what does this mean to you?

A: During my early years, I tend to follow the zodiac signs, buy the zodiac horoscope at the temple during the Tet period and read up on what it means each year for my zodiac sign for that entire year. Nowadays, I'm reluctant and haven't been doing that, as my limited Buddhism knowledge taught me that we should believe in 'nghiep' and 'qua' (karma), and go towards the 'realising path' that involves the intellectual, knowledge, wisdom etc... In this year of the metal rat, I'm hoping to continue to attend, learn and apply more of the Buddhism teachings. Thank you to Thay for conducting the Buddhism classes and looking forward to attending many more classes.

Q6: Can you name a few common traditions of Tet and why are the traditions important?

A: Yes, sure...one: no sweeping, swearing, arguing, saying unlucky words etc. on day 1 of Tet as they wash away the good luck as the elders have been saying. Two: wearing new and bright colour clothing, especially in red, as some say that this brings good luck and a start over fresh in the new year; Three: Family getting together to celebrate this special occasion to mark a new beginning and fresh start to the year.

Q7: During the teachings by Thay on Tet, what was something he talked about that stood out to you?

A: One thing that stood out for me was that we should be fortunate and be grateful of who and what we are.



## DHAMMAPADA

### Dhammapada Verse 63 (English)

The fool who knows that he is a fool can,  
for that reason, be a wise man;  
but the fool who thinks that he is wise is,  
indeed, called a fool.

### Kinh Pháp Cú Phẩm Ngũ Câu 63 (Vietnamese)

Người ngu nghĩ mình ngu,  
Nhờ vậy thành có trí.  
Người ngu tưởng có trí,  
Thật xứng gọi chí ngu.

An explanation of this verse in Vietnamese by Dieu Phap can be found on our website if you would like to view our students' work. Our website has been redesigned and the newsletters can now be found at:

<https://nalandaaus.site/index.php/news/> or in the News page at [www.nalandaaus.site](http://www.nalandaaus.site).





## UPCOMING EVENTS

- Vesak Day in May
- Ullambana Day in August



## END NOTE

Thank you for continuing to view our newsletters, this is the first issue for 2020. We apologise for any mistakes found in the newsletter and thank you for your understanding. Also, I would like to say a big thank you to Thay Thich Linh Tan and Chi Lien Bao for their contributions to the writing of this newsletter. If you would like to give some feedback, please visit [nalanda.us.site](http://nalanda.us.site) and have your say in the contact us page.

“Peace comes from within,  
do not seek it without.”  
Buddhist Quote



Above: Thay and students on New Year Occasion.