

Master T'an-luan
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I'd like to share the story of one of seven masters, Master T'an-luan with you. Master T'an-luan lived in China about 1,500 years ago. At that time, many Buddhist sutras were brought into China from India and were translated. Master T'an-luan enthusiastically engaged in the study of Buddhism.

One day, he got so sick, that he was forced to take a rest. Although he recovered from this illness, as a result of it, he started being very concerned about his health. He thought, "I want to see my work completed, so I wish to live a long time. Thus, he started to think about a way to live long and studied Taoism which is a traditional Chinese philosophy. One day, he heard about a hermit who knew the secret teaching to a long life. He was determined to visit the hermit. However, it was a very long and difficult trip of about 1,000 miles – one way. At that time, there were no airplanes, trains or cars.

After the long trip, he finally arrived and met the hermit. The hermit immediately realized that T'an-luan had the great potential to learn his secret ways, so the hermit taught him and gave him the Taoist scripture. Master T'an-luan was really pleased, because he thought, now, he can spend much time translating Buddhist Sutras.

On the way back, Master T'an-luan met Bodhiruchi who was an Buddhist monk from India. He was an excellent minister, so he came to China from India to help to translate the Buddhist Sutras. When Master T'an-luan met him, he said to Bodhiruchi, "I just learned of the great Taoist teaching. I heard you are from India. In the teaching of Buddhism, is there a way to enlightenment that is superior to the Taoist teaching?" He asked this question with a feeling of great wisdom.

Bodhiruchi was really amazed at his question and talked to him about the ideas in Buddhism. "Do you really believe there is a secret teaching of perpetual youth and long life? There is no such a thing in Buddhism. You may live a long time, but life is impermanent. I don't think you solved this problem. By the way, you must read this book instead of thinking about the secret Taoist teaching." He gave Master T'an-luan the Sutras which included the teachings of Pure Land and Nembutsu.

As a result, he saw the truth with Bodhiruchi's guidance. Then he burned the Taoist sutra immediately although he had traveled a long distance in order to acquire it. After that, he sincerely listened to the teaching of Nembutsu and spread it widely. This is the story of Master T'an-luan.

What do you think about this story? This is not just a story. We can learn a great deal from this episode. In the story, Master T'an-luan got the Taoist book about long life. If this book is available today, would you want to read it? In my case, I am concerned about my diet, and the maintenance of my health. I am interested in different ways of staying healthy. It's important to take care of our health.

However, we sometimes encounter unfavorable situations even if we are always careful. Amida Buddha promised to save all of us and illuminates us all the time. With the light of the Buddha, we are able to see situations more clearly and ourselves as we really are. In other words, through listening to the guidance of Amida Buddha, a different viewpoint on life is provided for us.

Master T'an-luan burned the book about long life, because he realized the reality of human life through the guidance of Bodhiruchi. In addition, T'an-luan himself became aware that he was receiving Amida Buddha's compassionate working which certainly saves all of us.

Shinran Shonin said: **Our teacher, Master T'an-luan, through the guidance of Bodhiruchi, burned his scriptures on immortality, discarding them forever, and deeply took refuge in the Pure Land.**

(Hymns of the Pure Land Masters: CWS, p. 367)

Shinran Shonin introduced the story of T'an-luan and respected greatly. He even chose one character from T'an-luan's name to be part of his own name. When I consider this story about Master T'an-luan, I think that living with the Buddha Dharma is probably the best way of maintaining ourselves. Let us live our daily lives with the teaching of Nembutsu. Namo Amida Butsu.