



Human Age

(Laos and Thailand)

Once, long ago, when the world was newly created, Phya Thaen, the highest god and creator, sent all creatures to earth. As he was sending them down, he would tell each of them how many years they could live on earth. When all creatures had left, he realized that he forgot to tell four creatures how many years they could live on earth. So, he called them back.

“Human, Buffalo, Dog, and Monkey, come here,” said Phya Thaen.

“Yes, My Lord,” said the four creatures.

“I have sent you down to earth without telling you how many years you could live on it. I am going to tell you now,” said Phya Thaen.

“Yes, My Lord,” said the four creatures in unison.

Phya Thaen turned to the human and said, “Human, you may live on earth for thirty years.”

“Yes, My Lord,” said the human.

Phya Thaen turned to Buffalo and said, “Buffalo, I created you to help the human work in the field. You have to work hard all day long. I give the same amount of time as I had given to the human, thirty years.”

“Thirty years of hard work? That’s too much,” thought the buffalo.



So he said to Phya Thaen, “My Lord, may I have just ten years?” asked the buffalo.

“Are you sure you want only ten years?” asked Phya Thaen.

“Yes, My Lord; ten years is enough for me,” confirmed the buffalo.

“Then, ten years you may have,” said Phya Thaen.

The human saw the chance of living on earth longer. So he said to Phya Thaen.

“My Lord, may I have the twenty years that the buffalo does not want?” asked the human.

“Are you sure you want the buffalo’s age?” asked Phya Thaen.

“Yes, I am sure, My Lord,” said the human.

“Then, twenty more years on earth you may have,” announced Phya Thaen.

“Thank you, My Lord,” said the human.

Phya Thaen then turned to Dog and said, “Dog, I created you to help the human work at night. You have to work hard all night long, guarding the human’s property while he rests at night after his hard work. I give the same amount of time as I had given to the human at first, thirty years.”

“Thirty years of sleepless nights? That’s too much,” thought the dog.

So he said to Phya Thaen, "My Lord, may I have just ten years, like the buffalo?" asked the dog.

"Are you sure you want only ten years?" asked Phya Thaen.

"Yes, My Lord; ten years is enough for me," confirmed the dog.

"Then, ten years you may have," said Phya Thaen.

The human again saw the chance of living on earth longer. So he said to Phya Thaen.

"My Lord, may I have the twenty years that the dog does not want?" asked the human.

"Are you sure you want the dog's age?" asked Phya Thaen.

"Yes, I am sure, My Lord," said the human.

"Then, twenty more years on earth you may have," announced Phya Thaen.

"Thank you, My Lord," said the human.

Phya Thaen then turned to the last creature, Monkey, and said, "Monkey, you are a funny creature, I created you to help entertain the human after his work. You have to make him laugh and relax. I give the same amount of time as I had given to the human at first, thirty years."

"Thirty years of being funny? That's too much," thought the monkey.



So he said to Phya Thaen, “My Lord, may I have just ten years, like the dog and the buffalo?” asked the monkey.

“Are you sure you want only ten years?” asked Phya Thaen.

“Yes, My Lord; ten years is enough for me,” confirmed the monkey.

“Then, ten years you may have,” said Phya Thaen.

The human again saw the chance of living on earth longer. So he said to Phya Thaen.

“My Lord, may I have the twenty years that the monkey does not want?” asked the human.

“Are you sure you want the monkey’s age?” asked Phya Thaen.

“Yes, I am sure, My Lord,” said the human.

“Then, twenty more years on earth you may have,” announced Phya Thaen.

“Thank you, My Lord,” said the human.

And the four creatures returned to earth. Since then, the human could have ninety years on earth while the buffalo, the dog, and the monkey could have ten years each.

In Thai and Lao traditions, it is believed that people behave like human beings only in the first thirty year of their lives. From the age of 31 to 50,

human beings are hard-working like the buffalo. From the age of 51 to 70, human beings behave like the dog. They become sleepless at night because of their worries about so many things in their lives. From the age of 71 to 90, human beings could be funny to the young in two ways. First, they become forgetful. Their forgetfulness may look funny to the young. Second, as they have lived so long, they have collected a lot of experiences and stories. They could tell stories to entertain the young.

