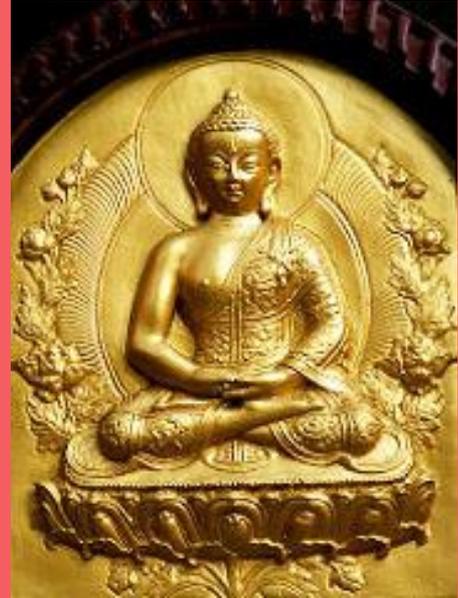
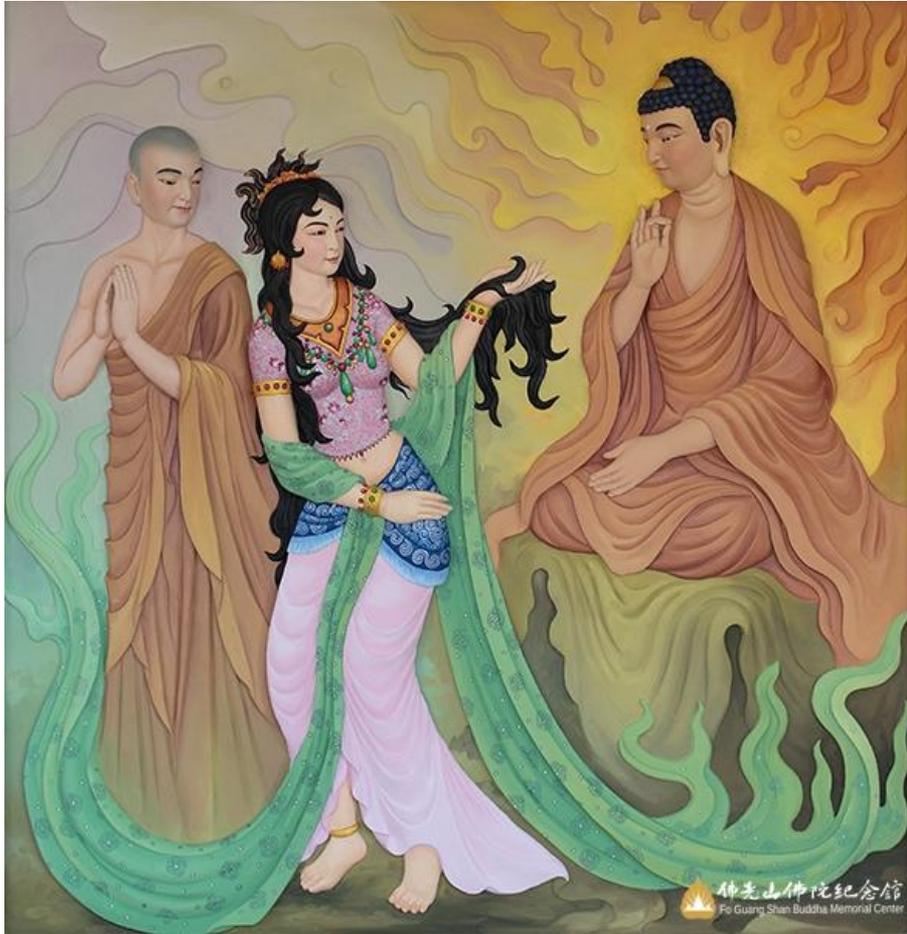


# Stories of the Buddha



by FGS Buddha Memorial Center



## Matanga's Conversion

Among the Buddha's monastic followers, Ananda was the youngest and the best looking. His face was as glorious as the full moon, and his eyes were as pure as lotus blossoms. He was also very intelligent. Once he heard the Buddha's words, he would never forget them.

Once, when Ananda was on his way back from collecting alms, he came across a young servant girl named Matanga. Ananda was thirsty, so he asked her for some water.

Matanga was very pleased, and respectfully offered Ananda water with both her hands. Ananda did not regard her with any contempt, but politely thanked her with a nod. Matanga was very grateful for his gesture, and was enchanted by Ananda's charm and elegance. After Ananda finished drinking and left, she gazed at him as he walked away, and her heart filled with love and admiration for him.

From that time on, Matanga used many ways to lure Ananda. When Ananda would come out from Jetavana Monastery, Matanga would be overjoyed and she would follow close behind him. Even when Ananda wanted to distance himself, she would still keep very close by. Ananda thought she was shameless, and often returned to the monastery before collecting enough alms.

The rains retreat was set to start soon, during which the Buddha and his disciples would not leave the monastery. Matanga anxiously waited three months for the retreat to end, and when Ananda emerged again to collect alms, she followed right behind him. Ananda felt helpless. When he returned to the monastery, he knelt in front of the Buddha and said, "Lord Buddha, a woman named Matanga is trying to seduce me. She follows me everywhere I go. Lord Buddha, please kindly help me get away from her."

The Buddha smiled and said, “Ananda, why does a woman render you helpless? This is because you have too heavily emphasized listening and learning and have not sufficiently emphasized practice and upholding precepts. Once confronted by seduction, you feel too weak to resist. Do not worry, I can help you. If you follow my advice you should never run into such trouble again.” The Buddha then told Ananda to bring Matanga to him.

Ananda went out as ordered and saw Matanga still wandering outside the front door. Ananda then walked up to her and asked, “Why do you always follow me around?”

On hearing this, Matanga was overjoyed and replied, “You are such a fool, why would you ask such a question? When you first asked me for water, your words were so gentle and sweet, and you treated me so kindly and lovingly. I was willing to give you all of my heart, but you ran away without a word. You and I are both young and attractive. I want you to enjoy life’s pleasures; my love for you will never change.”

Ananda replied somewhat shyly, “My teacher, the Buddha, would like to see you. Come with me and the Buddha will decide what is right for me.” Matanga hesitated, but when she heard that the Buddha would make a decision, she mustered her courage and overcame her shame. She went with Ananda to where the Buddha was residing.

“Do you wish to marry Ananda?” the Buddha asked her directly.

“Yes.” Matanga replied with her hands in front of her chest and her head bowed.

“Marriage between a man and a woman requires the permission of the parents. Can you ask your parents to come here to discuss it?”

“My parents have given their permission, and my mother has also met Ananda. If you do not believe it, I can go home right now and bring my mother here.”

Matanga went home and brought her mother to Jetavana Monastery. When she returned she bowed to the Buddha and said, “Lord Buddha, my mother is here to pay homage to you.” The Buddha then asked her mother, “Have you given your consent for your daughter become a nun and then she may marry Ananda. Do you agree?”

Matanga’s mother replied, “It is all right with me. I would be very pleased with this.”

The Buddha then ordered, “You may now return home and your daughter will remain with us.”

After her mother left, the Buddha said to Matanga, “Since you are to marry Ananda, you must first become a nun and practice diligently. When your practice is as cultivated as Ananda’s, then I will conduct the wedding ceremony for you.”

Matanga was all set to become Ananda’s wife, and she happily shaved her head and dyed her robes. She wholeheartedly listened to the Buddha’s teachings and diligently practiced, as instructed by the Buddha. She lived the life according to the teachings in the monastic community just like the rest of the sangha.

Matanga’s mind became calmer day by day. She then realized that her attachment to love in the past was actually despicable behavior. The Buddha often taught that the impurities of the five desires were the source of all suffering. Only the foolish moth would plunge into the fire to be burnt. The ignorant silkworm would weave its cocoon and be bound. The desires for the five senses must be eliminated before the mind can be purified and life can be peaceful.

Eventually, Matanga realized her obsession with Ananda was disrespectful. One day, with tears running down her face, she knelt in front of Buddha and repented, “Great Buddha, I have now completely awakened from my foolish dreams. I shall no longer behave as foolishly as I did. I understand that what I have now attained may even surpass the attainment of the monk, Ananda. I am very grateful to you, Lord Buddha. In order to teach ignorant beings such as us, you use all kinds of skillful means. Lord Buddha, please have mercy on me and allow me to repent. I will always follow your footsteps and walk towards the truth. I will obey your teachings and be a teacher of the truth.”

The Buddha smiled with satisfaction and replied, “Very good, Matanga! I knew that you would attain your present state of cultivation. You are very intelligent. From now on I do not have to worry about you. I am very happy for you.”

The wonderful story of Matanga’s conversion became a legend in the monastic community.

(Source: [FGS Buddha Memorial Center](#))