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KOWIT RACHIWONG : THE TEACHING OF GRATEFULNESS IN BUDDHISM : A CASE STUDY OF THE ELDERLY'S VIEWS ON THE PARENT ABANDONMENT IN BUDDHIST THAI SOCIETY. THESIS ADVISORS : SUMANA TANGKANASINGH, BOON KATUTASSA, M.A., SARINTHIP SATIRASILAPIN, M. A., 160 P. ISBN 974-04-2173-3

The objectives of the research are to study the teaching of gratefulness in Buddhism, the causes and problem of parent abandonment and the elderly's views on the parent abandonment in Buddhist Thai society. The research is divided into 2 parts, the documentary and the field research. According to Buddhism gratefulness means to realize the benefits of people, animals, or things directly or indirectly and to return to them, in any way, that shows gratefulness. There are 5 kinds of gratefulness 1) to be grateful to human being 2) to be grateful to animal 3) to be grateful to material things, non-material things 4) to be grateful to oneself and 5) to be grateful to Dhamma. Gratefulness relates to the Right View as supporting each other and relates to kamma as affecting each other in this life and next lives.

The parents, previous benefactors, emphasized here are praised in the high positions as the Brahma, the first Deva, the first Teacher and the Enlightened One of children. The children can show their thanks by taking care of them, helping them in their works, maintaining the name of the family, behaving oneself in an acceptable and making merit for them when they passed away. The problem of parent abandonment in Thai society comes from 4 causes economic problems, health problems, social problems, and family relationship problems. The solution of the parent abandonment should begin from inside the family by loving each other. Then the government or society should provide social welfare for the elderly. Therefore this parent abandonment can be solved by the elderly themselves, by their children and by the government.

From the field research, it was found that most of the elderly understand the concept of gratefulness and practice in religious activities before coming to the Bangkhae Home for the Aged and they used to behave suitably to parents when they were young. From the interview of the elderly, the main cause of coming to live in Bangkhae Home for the Aged is lack of a care taker during the day. The minor cause was health problems. The people who frequently visited the elderly were the grandchildren. The place that the elderly most liked to stay in their old age was the Bangkhae Home for the Aged. What gives satisfaction to the elderly while staying at the Bangkhae Home for the Aged is the services of the officers. Concerning their children, the elderly do not need their visits. They need more the help from the government organization in spite of good services of the Bangkhae Home for the Aged.