

Social and Spiritual Development Strand  
Spiritual and Moral Education

Unit 1: Spiritual and Moral Education

## **Module 1.2: Spirituality in Traditional and Contemporary Melanesia**



**Additional Support Material**

## Acknowledgements

Materials written and compiled by Sue Lauer (PASTEP adviser) and Philip Nolis (Lecturer – OLSH Teachers College, Kabaleo).

*In consultation with:*

Helen Walangu	PNGEI
Bulida Gawaga	PNGEI
Pastor Timothy Kising	Balob TC
Philip Nolis	OLSH Kabaleo
Rev Rawali Rakawin	Gaulim TC
Ken Kenamu	Gaulim TC
Agnes Kami	Holy Trinity TC
Barbara Arnold	Dauli TC
Nick Kansa	SBTC Wewak
Caroline Pile	Madang TC
Dorrie Hancock	Guest
Sr Katherine Meyer	HTTC

Layout and diagrams supported by Nick Lauer

Date: 30 April 2002



*Primary and Secondary Teacher Education Project*

Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID)  
GRM International

*Papua New Guinea-Australia Development Cooperation Program*

## Unit outline

Unit	#	Modules
Unit 1	1.1	Morality and Ethics in Contemporary Society (Core)
Spiritual and Moral Education	1.2	Spirituality in Traditional and Contemporary Melanesia (Core)

## Icons



Read or Research



Write or Summarise



Activity or Discussion

## Table of contents

Myths and legends.....	1
Stories from world religions.....	6
<i>The Epic of Gilgamesh</i> .....	9
Bible References.....	10

## ***Myths and legends***

### **Friends (a legend from New Ireland)**

Retold by Dianne McInnes

Many years ago the rooster and wallaby were very good friends. They lived in a house close to the sea. This sea went all around the land of New Ireland province. The two friends liked to be together. They often walked in the bush. Sometimes they went down to the beach.

One day the friends went down to the beach. 'Do you know how to fish in the sea?' asked the rooster. His tail flew in the wind.

'I have caught many fish,' said the wallaby. He thumped the sand with his tail.

'Wallaby, do you want to go fishing tomorrow?'

'Yes Rooster. Tomorrow we'll go fishing.'

As the sun set Rooster and Wallaby went to bed. They wanted to get a full night's sleep. Rooster dreamed of catching more fish than Wallaby. Wallaby didn't like fish. He dreamed of sailing out to sea where the dolphins jumped high out of the water.

Next morning as the sun was rising, Wallaby and Rooster woke up. They ate some food. Wallaby liked the fresh green grass. Rooster dug up some wriggling worms. After Rooster cut a big taro leaf, Wallaby helped him carry it to the beach.

The water was calm. The sea looked blue. The two friends made the taro leaf into a canoe. They carried the taro leaf out into the water and got into it. Rooster was in the front. Wallaby sat at the back.

They sailed out from the beach. They went so far out that they couldn't see any land. The two friends sang sea songs as they scooped up the fish. Neither Rooster nor Wallaby liked eating fish, so they threw the fish back in the water without hurting them. As the wind blew, the feathers of Rooster waved in the air. When Rooster saw an island he called out. 'Look an island. Let's go close to the land.' The two friends paddled closer to the island.

At the water's edge some girls were collecting shells. As the rooster and wallaby came closer to the island, the girls saw them in the taro leaf canoe. The girls thought the Rooster looked pretty with his bright feathers blowing in the wind. One of the girls called out. 'My husband is sitting in the front.'

Wallaby heard the girl so he said, 'Rooster, change places with me. You sit at the back. I want to sit in the front.' So they changed places. The wallaby put up his tail. The wind didn't make it wave like the feathers of the rooster. The girl called out again. 'My husband is sitting at the back.'

Wallaby asked Rooster to change again. 'Rooster, sit in the front. I will sit at the back.' Rooster and Wallaby kept changing places. The girl always called out that she liked the rooster.

Rooster became angry at Wallaby because he wanted to change places so many times. Rooster jumped on the taro leaf canoe to make it sink in the water. Then Rooster flew to the beach and ran into the bush.

Poor Wallaby tried to swim. But he couldn't swim. He didn't know how to swim. He nearly drowned. As the fish swam past him he begged, 'Please help me, Fish. Take me to the shore.'

'No, no ' said a fish. 'If we go near the beach, the people will kill us and eat us.'

A turtle swam up to Wallaby. 'Hello Wallaby. You shouldn't be out here if you can't swim.'

'Please take me to land,' Wallaby asked the turtle.

'All right, I'll take you to the beach. I'm going to lay my eggs in the sand,' said the turtle.

Wallaby stood on the back of the turtle, while the turtle swam to the shore.

There were people fishing near the beach. One man shouted loudly. 'Look! Look! Here comes a turtle.'

'Sssh! We'll catch the turtle,' said one of the women who were fishing.

When Turtle and Wallaby came into the shallow water, Wallaby jumped off Turtle's back and ran up the sand into the bush. Turtle started to come up the sand. Although she swam fast in the water, she moved slowly on the land.

Some men ran over and grabbed the turtle. They tied ropes around her and put her under a house. 'Tomorrow we'll have a big feast,' said one of the men.

'Let's make it a singsing and everyone one in the village can come,' said another man.

'Turtle meat is very sweet. Everyone likes it,' said a woman.

Next morning, the older people went to their gardens to get taro and pitpit for the feast. 'Children, watch the turtle,' said one of the women.

Big tears ran down the turtle's face. She had come to the beach to lay her eggs. Now she was a prisoner. The people were going to eat her. Wallaby felt very sorry for his new friend. He put grass and flowers and bird's feathers all over himself. The he came out of the bush and danced near the trees at one end of the village.

The children ran to watch the dancing wallaby. The children didn't see the turtle slip out of her ropes. She moved down the sand into the water as quickly as she could. When the turtle was hidden under the water, Wallaby pointed to the sea. When the children turned to look at the sea, Wallaby ran quickly into the bush.

McInnes D (?). Friends – Long-taim bipo stori, McInnes, Boroko

## The first PawPaw tree (a legend from Buka, North Solomons Province)

Retold by Dorah Getsi

Long ago in the Buka area there lived an old man. His name was Hamioko, which means PawPaw (papaya). He lived all alone in a house made of sugar cane stalks beside the Gagan river. He was unhappy because no one from the nearby village wanted to talk to him.

On the other side of the Gagan river there lived a giant snake. The village people were afraid of the snake because they believed he liked to eat people. Hamioko wasn't afraid though. He had never seen the giant snake. In fact he didn't even know what a snake was.

One day the snake began crossing the river and eating animals and insects on the side where Hamioko and the village people lived. The people believed that the snake would soon try and eat them too. They collected large amounts of food and water to store in their houses, then they went inside their houses and locked the doors. Hamioko was too old and weak to gather lots of food and water by himself so he had only small amounts in his house.

A few days after the village people locked themselves in their houses, Hamioko ran out of water. He took his coconut water container to the river and had a drink. After satisfying his thirst, Hamioko stood by the river and listened to the sounds made by the moving water. He didn't know that the giant snake was lying on the river bank close to where he was standing. The snake smelled Hamioko and became very hungry.

Hamioko liked watching the moving water and listening to its sounds so much that he decided to sit down for a while on a nearby log. The log was really the giant snake! But Hamioko thought he was sitting on an ordinary log.

After a while Hamioko decided to go home. But when he started to stand up something knocked him to the ground. Poor Hamioko! It was the giant snake that knocked him down. The snake wrapped its body around Hamioko then bit him, killing him instantly. The snake then ate all of Hamioko's body except his head. Hamioko's head was left lying on the river bank when the snake moved off into the bush.

Many weeks later the villagers finally stopped hiding in their houses. They noticed that Hamioko didn't come around the village and wasn't at his house. They decided that the giant snake must have eaten him. Then one day they noticed a new kind of plant growing on the river bank. It was growing on the spot where the snake had left Hamioko's head. The plant grew and grew very quickly and after a while it bore fruit.

The plant that grew on the river bank was the first PawPaw tree. Since that time the people of Buka have plenty of PawPaws to eat.

Getsi D (1986). "The first pawpaw tree",  
in *Paradise Tales*, Robert Brown and Associates, Brisbane

## How the Sun was Made

For a long time there was no sun, only a moon and stars. That was before there were men on the earth, only birds and beasts, all of which were many sizes larger than they are now.

One day Dinewan the emu and Brolga the native companion were on a large plain near the Murrumbidgee. There they were, quarrelling and fighting. Brolga, in her rage, rushed to the nest of Dinewan and seized from it one of the huge eggs, which she threw with all her force up to the sky. There it broke on a heap of firewood, which burst into flame as the yellow yolk spilled all over it, and lit up the world below to the astonishment of every creature on it. They had been used to the semi-darkness and were dazzled by such brightness.

A good spirit who lived in the sky saw how bright and beautiful the earth looked when lit up by this blaze. He thought it would be a good thing to make a fire every day, and from that time he has done so. All night he and his attendant spirits collect wood and heap it up. When the heap is nearly big enough they send out the morning star to warn those on earth that the fire will soon be lit.

The spirits, however, found this warning was not sufficient, for those who slept saw it not. Then the spirits thought someone should make some noise at dawn to herald the coming of the sun and waken the sleepers. But for a long time they could not decide to whom should be given this office.

At last one evening they heard the laughter of Goo-goor-gaga, the laughing jackass, ringing through the air.

"That is the noise we want," they said.

Then they told Goo-goor-gaga that, as the morning star faded and the day dawned, he was every morning to laugh his loudest, that his laughter might awaken all sleepers before sunrise. If he would not agree to do this, then no more would they light the sun-fire, but let the earth be ever in twilight again.

But Goo-goor-gaga saved the light for the world.

He agreed to laugh his loudest at every dawn of every day, and so he has done ever since, making the air ring with his loud cackling, "Goo goor gaga, goo goor gaga, goo goor gaga."

When the spirits first light the fire it does not throw out much heat. But by the middle of the day, when the whole heap of firewood is in a blaze, the heat is fierce. After that it begins to die gradually away until, at sunset, only red embers are left. They quickly die out, except a few the spirits cover up with clouds and save to light the heap of wood they get ready for the next day.

Children are not allowed to imitate the laughter of Goo-goor-gaga, lest he should hear them and cease his morning cry.

If children do laugh as he does, an extra tooth grows above their eye-tooth, so that they carry the mark of their mockery in punishment for it. Well the good spirits know that if ever a time comes when the Goo-goor-gagas cease laughing to herald the sun, then no more dawns will be seen in the land, and darkness will reign once more.

from *Australian Legendary Tales* by K Langloh Parker

### The Southern Cross

In the very beginning when Baiame, the sky king, walked the earth, out of the red ground of the ridges he made two men and a woman. When he saw that they were alive he showed them such plants as they should eat to keep life, then he went on his way.

For some time they lived on such plants as he had shown them; then came a drought, and plants grew scarce, and when one day a man killed a kangaroo rat he and the woman ate some of its flesh, but the other man would not eat though he was famished for food, and lay as one dead.

Again and again the woman told him it was good and pressed him to eat. Annoyed, weak as he was, he rose and walked angrily away toward sunset, while the other two still ate hungrily.

When they had finished they looked for him, found he had gone some distance, and went after him. Over some sandhills, over the pebbly ridges they went, losing sight of him from time to time. When they reached the edge of the coolabah plain they saw their mate on the other side, by the river. They called to him to stop, but he heeded them not; on he went until he reached a huge yaraan, or white gum-tree, beneath which he fell to the ground. As he lay there dead they saw beside him a black figure with two huge fiery eyes. This figure raised him into the tree and dropped him into its hollow centre.

While still speeding across the plain they heard such a terrific burst of thunder that they fell startled to the ground. When they raised themselves they gazed wonderingly toward the giant gum-tree. They saw it being lifted from the earth and passing through the air toward the southern sky. They could not see their lost mate, but fiery eyes gleamed from the tree.

Suddenly, a raucous shrieking broke the stillness; they saw that it came from two yellow-crested white cockatoos flying after the vanishing tree--Mooyi, they called them.

On went the Spirit Tree, and after it flew the Mooyi, shrieking loudly to it to stop, so that they might reach their roosting place in it.

At last the tree planted itself near the Warrambool, or Milky Way, which leads to where the sky gods live. When it seemed quite still the tree gradually disappeared from their sight. They only saw four fiery eyes shine out. Two were the eyes of Yowi, the spirit of death. The other two were the eyes of the first man to die.

The Mooyi fly after the tree, trying always to reach their roost again.

When all nature realized that the passing of this man meant that death had come into the world, there was wailing everywhere. The swamp oak trees sighed incessantly, and the gum-trees shed tears of blood, which crystallized into red gum.

To this day to the tribes of this part, the Southern Cross is known as Yaraan-doo, the place of the white gum-tree. And the Pointers are called Mooyi, the white cockatoos.

So is the first coming of death remembered by the tribes, to whom the Southern Cross is a reminder.

from *Australian Legendary Tales* by K Langloh Parker

## ***Stories from world religions***

### **The Bodhisattva as the Preacher of Patience**

(a Buddhist story)

This excerpt comes from Aryasura, a poet who composed the Jatakamala or Garland of Birth Stories about 200 AD.

‘Nothing is indeed unbearable to those who have made forbearance all their own, and who are great in the correct appreciation of the true nature of things. This is shown by the following story: At one time the Bodhisattva was an ascetic, eminent for his moral conduct, his learning, his tranquillity, his self-discipline, and the control he had over his mind. He had understood that life in the home is indeed attended by a great many faults and calamities: that it is governed by a perpetual concern with material gain and sensual pleasure, and in consequence is not conducive to tranquillity. He had understood that life is constantly assailed by the dust and dirt of passions, such as greed, hate, delusion, impatience, anger, self-intoxication, conceit, and niggardliness. He understood that life is apt to reduce the ability to maintain religious standards, and that it offers a field for covetousness and unfriendliness to others; and so, beset by opportunities for bad actions, it offers little scope for Dharma. The homeless life, on the other hand, he had found to be a happy one, for it is free from those faults, having abandoned all concern with material property and sense-objects. He had taken it upon himself to observe patience always and under all circumstances, he often spoke in praise of patience, and this was the virtue which he continually stressed in his expositions of Dharma. People in consequence invented for him the name “Kshantivadin” (“Preacher of Patience”), and his original family name went quite out of use.

That great-souled man lived in the middle of a forest, in place delightful for its solitude, and beautiful like a lovely garden—with flowers and fruits at all seasons and a pond of pure water adorned with pink and blue lotuses. And his presence conferred on this place the auspiciousness of a hermitage. The deities who inhabited that grove thought highly of him, and people often visited him in quest of spiritual bliss and spiritual virtue. And on this multitude of visitors he bestowed the supreme favour of expounding the subject of patience in suitable sermons which gladdened their ears as well as their hearts.

Now it so happened that the king of that part of the world, oppressed by the summer’s heat, set his mind on playing in the water, a very pleasant thing to do at that time of the year. So with his harem he betook himself to that forest, which had all the qualities one looks for in a park, and amused himself to his heart’s content. Then, tired from all this sporting about, and drowsy, he went to his splendid couch, which was luxuriously laid out, and fell asleep.

Thereupon the women, enchanted in their hearts by the beauties of the forest and unable to fill their eyes sufficiently with them, saw in the withdrawal of the king an opportunity to ramble about in casual groups, the noise of their rattling ornaments blending with the buzzing sound of their chatter. Roaming through the enchanting forest, the king’s women came to Kshantivadin’s hermitage, went into it, and their eyes fell on that most excellent sage, a sight making for peace and happiness. There he sat cross-legged under a tree, auspicious and meritorious to behold, the visible manifestation of Dharma. His deep profundity inspired awe, he shone with the lustre of his austerities, and he radiated a splendid stillness because, as a result of his diligent practice of trance, his senses remained unmoved even in the presence of sublime objects of

meditation. The glow of his spirituality subdued the minds of the royal wives; when they saw him they at once shed their usual boisterousness, affectation, and frivolity, and adopted a disciplined, modest, and respectful demeanour. He in his turn addressed them with pleasant words of welcome, etc., and showed them the civility due to guests. Thereafter, he extended to them the hospitality of the Dharma, and, in response to their queries, talked to them in terms which womenfolk can easily grasp, careful to illustrate his meaning by examples and similes.

Meanwhile the king's sleep had dispelled his fatigue, and he woke up. With a frown on his face he asked the female attendants who guarded his couch, "Where are my wives?" The attendants replied: "They are now, your Majesty, embellishing some other part of this forest. They have gone off to see what else it contains." On hearing this, the king rose from his couch, and, accompanied by his female warriors and eunuchs, marched off into the wood. To get to the hermitage he had only to follow the path which his wives had traced out in their juvenile wantonness, and which was marked by bunches of flowers, piles of twigs, and the red dye of betel leaves on the ground. But no sooner had the king seen Kshantivadin, that great seer, surrounded by his royal wives, than he was seized by frenzied wrath. This was due to the bias he felt against him as a result of an enmity nursed during previous lives. In addition, drowsiness still deranged his composure and jealousy dulled his judgement. He had but little power to appreciate the true nature of the situation, and in disregard of all the rules of self-control and polite behaviour, he submitted to the evils of anger. Sweat broke out over his body, his colour changed, he trembled all over, he frowned, and his eyes, dark red, became dull, revolved, and stared. Gone were all his loveliness, grace, and charm. He shook his golden bracelets, rubbed his be-ringed hands, and scoldingly said to the best of Seers: "Hey, you! Who is it that scorns our Majesty, by lifting his eyes to our harem wives? Concealed in the garb of a Muni—a low-class meatseller's behaviour!"

And scornfully the king continued: "Now you will have an opportunity to show your passion for patience!" And, as one cuts a lotus from its stalk, so he cut off with his sharp sword the Sage's right hand, which in a prohibitive gesture was slightly extended towards him, with its long and delicate fingers raised aloft.

Though his hand was cut off, he yet felt no pain, so firm his adherence to patience; His pain lay in seeing the terrible fate this butcher, accustomed to pleasure, would meet in the future. But the Bodhisattva kept silent, because he regarded the king as someone who was beyond help and who could not possibly be won over by kindness. He sorrowed for him as for a patient whom the doctors have given up. The king, however, spoke to him in a threatening manner:

"And so your body will be carved to pieces till you die! Stop this pose of piety! Your roguish cunning shall be stopped!"

But the Bodhisattva said nothing, because he knew him for a person who could not be won over by affection, and recognized that he would persist anyhow. So the king in the same manner cut off the other hand of that great-souled man, and thereafter both his arms, his ears and nose, and his feet.

No sorrow and no anger felt the Muni, when that sharp sword his frame demolished. This engine of the body must run down, he knew, and years of practice had accustomed him to patience. And when he saw his limbs drop off, this holy man, unbroken, firm and patient, felt but exaltation. No pain at all. What gave him anguish was to see the king so far estranged from Dharma.

Those who are great in true insight, whose minds are governed by pity, heed not the ill that befalls them, but that which troubles their fellows.

But the king, having done this terrible deed, forthwith succumbed to a violent fever. He rushed from the garden, and the great earth, opening wide, devoured him.

The best of Sages, however, who, thanks to his reliance on forbearance, had throughout remained firm and unshaken in his fortitude, ascended to heaven, as a temporary reward for his patience.'

Source: *Buddhist Scriptures*. London: Penguin  
[http://www.penguin.com], 1959.

### Extracts from the Daodejing

(from Taoist writings)

Refrain from exalting the worthy,  
So that the people will not scheme and contend;  
Refrain from prizing rare possessions,  
So that the people will not steal;  
Refrain from displaying objects of desire,  
So that the people's hearts will not be disturbed. 3

The highest good is like water. Water benefits all things generously and is without strife. It dwells in the lowly places that men disdain. Thus it comes near to the Tao.

The highest good loves the [lowly] earth for its dwelling.  
It loves the profound in its heart,  
It loves humanity in friendship,  
Sincerity in speech, order in government,  
Effectiveness in deeds, timeliness in action.  
Since it is without strife,  
It is without reproach. 8

He who knows the eternal is all-embracing;  
He who is all-embracing is impartial,  
To be impartial is to be kingly,  
To be kingly is to be heavenly,  
To be heavenly is to be one with the Tao,  
To be one with the Tao is to endure forever.  
Such a one, though his body perish, is never exposed to danger. 16

[The spontaneous working of] the Tao in the world is like the flow of the valley brooks into a river or sea....32

The great Tao flows everywhere:  
It can go left; it can go right.  
The myriad things owe their existence to it,  
And it does not reject them.  
When its work is accomplished,  
It does not take possession.  
It clothes and feeds all,  
But does not pose as their master.  
Ever without ambition,  
It may be called small.  
All things return to it as to their home,  
And yet it does not pose as their master,  
Therefore it may be called Great.  
Because it would never claim greatness,  
Therefore its greatness is fully realized.     37

Source: *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, vol. 1. de Bary, William Theodore, et al., eds. New York: Columbia University Press, 1960

## The Epic of Gilgamesh

The Jews were not the only people in the ancient near east who told the story of the great flood that covered the whole area they knew about. It is also in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, a story found by archaeologists. Gilgamesh was told to build a boat. It was made of wood and covered with pitch to make it waterproof. It was a huge construction, six floors high. This is what Gilgamesh says:

'All my silver and gold was loaded aboard her. All the animals I had were loaded too. I made all my family and relations get aboard, as well as the craftsmen. There were wild animals as well as domestic ones.... I looked at the weather, it was frightening so I entered my vessel and closed the door.... For seven days the wind blew and flood and storm swept the land. On the seventh day the rain stopped and flood subsided.... I looked at the sea. There was silence. The whole of mankind had turned to clay. When I looked out again, mountain ranges had appeared... and the vessel got stuck on Mt Nsair.... Seven days after arriving I freed a dove, but it returned.... Then I freed a swallow, but that couldn't find a resting place either... then a raven which did not return'.

So finally, Gilgamesh prepared an offering to the gods. The gods promised he would be like them and never die.

***Bible References***

Genesis 9: 8-17

Galatians 3:28

1 Corinthians 9: 24-27

Galatians 5:22

Romans 12: 3-8

1 Corinthians 12: 4-10

Acts 19: 1-10

Luke 11:11-13