

# **LESSONS OF LIFE**

## **BY LOK KRU BUTH SAVONG**

### **(TRANSLATED FROM MEREAN CHIVIT)**

#### **1 – GOOD PERSON LEARNS TO ADVISE HIMSELF**

Some people might study a great deal of general subjects, but they are unable to educate and tame themselves. Therefore, they are careless in action, speech and other expressions. Action, speech, and other expressions tell us their self-education, self-advice, or self-discipline.

As human beings, if we fail to tame, educate and advise ourselves, no one may train us to be a good person, just as a skillful driver only knows how to drive but has no discipline and no goal.

#### **2 - GOOD BEGETS GOOD**

Whether people know, see, or do not know or not see, praise or not praise, gain or lose, goodness is the work that needs to be done because it is a special reward the good-doer will receive in a timely manner.

#### **3 - GETTING SALARY, BUT LIFE HAS RUN OUT FOR 30 DAYS**

There are many people who work with monthly salary. They normally look forward to their pay at the end of each month. In this regard, they never think of life that has run out for thirty days too. Life draws closer to death or death comes closer and closer. Well, we get the money but our life has run out. Life is very precious. Even a millionaire or a great capitalist has nothing to guarantee his/her life. When death comes, he dies. If life can be guaranteed by property, the rich will not agree to die. 30-day life is worth more than a 30-day salary. The wise, therefore, ought to accumulate and keep goodness in their hearts, so they will not waste their precious life.

#### **4 - OBSERVE AND LEARN FROM NATURE**

If we are humble enough, both good people and bad people could be considered as our teachers. Good people are models for us to see that these are good, and we should follow their foot steps. While bad people receive bad results, they are examples for us to see, we should avoid and not associate with them.

Our past mistake could be considered as our teacher as well, we only have to be sure that we will not repeat the same mistake again.

If we learn to observe trees, forests and mountains, we would gain knowledge and develop wisdom from them. All of these natures reveal their own truth.

#### **5 – SEE PEOPLE IN A POSITIVE WAY**

Looking at other people and see only their good side is best practice and give honor to the person. This also trains and advises us to be more open and not self-centered. Normally, most people always look at their own good parts and look at the others for their faults. It would be better if we could learn to practice to do the opposite. This means we should try our best to find our own faults, and look at the others for their good parts, to a certain extent enough for us to see through. This is aimed to reduce our own faults, on one hand, and to bring happiness in daily life, on the other.

#### **6 - TO BE GOOD OR BAD DEPENDS ON THOUGHTS**

There is nothing bad unless we think it is bad. One thing is bad for a person, only because he thinks it is so bad. But, the same thing is not bad for another person, only because he does not think that way. This shows that to be bad or good does not rest on the external feature; it rests on the thoughts of each individual. Then, why should we agree to let our thoughts do bad things for us?

#### **7 - IF YOU'RE AFRAID OF GETTING DIRTY DON'T TOUCH IT**

A pig asks a lion to fight with him because he is jealous of the lion's reputation. But, the lion refuses to fight because the pig is so dirty with feces all over his body. Because the lion does not want to get dirty with feces, he refuses to fight and gives in to the pig. However, the lion's reputation does not abate.

Sometimes, good people also need to ignore the bad people and not counter-attack them. It is not because they are too frightened to resist but, it is because the good people do not want to get involved in different scandals.

## **8 - WHILE HATRED IS SUFFERING LOVE IS ALSO SUFFERING**

If someone does something bad to us, we are not happy and thereby creating a kind of suffering: suffering of hatred. It is inclined to the anxiety of rejection. If someone does something good to us, we LOVE the satisfaction, the attraction, and we want it to last forever, to have and to own the person or the feeling. This is another kind of suffering: suffering of love. It is inclined to the anxiety of attraction. And when someone says something bad about that person, it hurts us as well. The two types of suffering cannot bring happiness. When we can renounce dissatisfaction and satisfaction and rest the mind in equanimity, we will become free and live in supreme happiness.

## **9 - IF YOU DON'T WANT DANGER WATCH OUT FOR THE BAIT!**

A deity approached the Enlightened One and said, "This life is so insignificant. When old age leads to death, there is no resistance at all. Those who see the fear of death should make merits that bring them happiness".

The Enlightened One repeated the deity's word. But, where the deity said, "should make merits", the Buddha made a different reference, saying, "Those who see through peace should abandon all worldly baits (**LOKA AMISAM PAJAHE SANTIPEKKHO**). **LOKAMISA** is referred to as the worldly baits covering all enticements of sensual pleasure.

The deity said softly while the Buddha said serenely..

## **10 - THE DHAMMA IS CLEAR AND SUITABLE TO BE ABSORBED**

The Enlightened One said his Dhamma is like clear water suitable to be swallowed. Just as clear, clean water that can be bathed and swallowed so as to get rid of humidity and thirst and to satisfy our physical need, the Buddha's Dhamma is an advantage to our heart and mind. It is a tool to put out anger and truly quench the mental thirst.

## **11 - TRAIN TO BUILD UP GOOD PROPENSITY**

Those who are far-sighted should learn to give up step by step. By doing this, they build up good propensity and temperament for themselves. This predilection will gradually take deep root in their hearts, get strong and will not be easy to break. Focus on giving support and donation will steadily grow wider and wider to such an extent that we can do an action that other people find it hard to do, just as the Enlightened One, who gave up everything for the goodness and happiness of all beings.

## **12 - DON'T WANT WHAT IS NOT AVAILABLE**

Everything originates from causes. It is not because the other does not give us variety of goodness we need in daily life, but it is because there is no cause to make the goodness happen. So, the goodness does not exist in the mind of that person toward us.

Normally, we are displeased and angry with the others because we think he/she fails to give us what we need. But, if we knew the fact that the other person does not have anything is because there is no cause we would not be angry with him/her. In fact, it is not the other person that does not want it to happen, it is us who do not deserve it. In this regard, it can be likened to something that does not exist in us. We need many things from our own selves. But, we cannot even make it ourselves, let alone the others.

## **13 - LOSS OF VIRTUE IS A BIG DISASTER**

Most people depend on worldly gains or material riches for their happiness, fulfilment and independence but suffer damages to spiritual wealth. Very few who depend on mental capacities, wisdom and spiritual wealth for happiness and freedom. Damages to mental wealth is a real big loss and a disaster for all human beings.

## **14 - TO GET HAPPINESS IS TO IDENTIFY SUFFERING THROUGH WISDOM**

No life exists smoothly and free from sufferings. But, if we know how to think or use it skillfully, sufferings will make a cause leading to a stable happiness.

We know the coldness of the trees because of the sunlight surrounding them. The wise, when life is surrounded by the heat of suffering, can identify happiness in the place where suffering occurs.

## **15 - OUR MAIN GOAL IS PEACE**

If the ultimate goal in life is peace, what has been damaged is not really damaged, because the most valuable asset is a peaceful mind established in the Dhamma of the sage. What we have gained is called only "mere gain" because all properties in the world belong to the world. We just come and use them temporarily and soon leave them behind.

## **16 - FEEL THE SAME FEELING BUT GET DIFFERENT EFFECTS**

Any one thing can bring disaster to one person. But, the same thing will not be harmful to another person. It depends on his/her stamina. If we put poison onto an open wounded hand/palm, the poison will filtrate the whole body through blood vessels and lead to damage to life. But, if we put the same amount of poison onto an unwounded healthy hand it finds no way to permeate into the body and thus causing no damage to life. Likewise, the same feeling happens to different people and it produces different effects as well.

## **17 - IF THE MIND IS HURT IT MUST BE HEALED**

A person is affluent in anger because he has a wounded mind of hot-temper. Even a little word getting into his ears from the other people causes the pus [or the power of anger] to run out through his hands, legs, behavior, facial expression and speech. Then, it spreads foul smell blowing down and against the wind to warn other people off his evil actions.

For the people who have stable, clean and healthy mind, no matter how bad feelings touch them, these bad feelings are unable to permeate into their bodies to distress their healthy wholesome mind, just as water cannot permeate through lotus leaves or unbroken diamonds.

## **18 - SELF-CENTEREDNESS BASICALLY AFFECTS THE OTHERS**

No matter how high education of external knowledge and external subjects a person has obtained, his thinking process and consciousness can never be clean and brilliant unless he also studies and practices spiritual values and aspects.

The study of external knowledge alone does not help us reduce our egocentric idea. Social differences lead to stabbing and killing, all evils originate from egoism, thinking about one's own life and not caring for the life of the others.

## **19 - FAILURE TO TAME ONE'S MIND IS HUMAN ERROR**

In our current materialistic world, there is much competition, much demand, much greed and need, and much violence.

Mankind currently cannot tell what they truly want. Happiness which is easily found has become hard to find. This is because of mankind's error. That means mankind ignores spiritual education and does not see the value of cleansing and purifying the mind.

## **20 - THE GIFT OF TRUTH EXCELLS ALL GIFTS**

The suffering of mankind cannot be eliminated by physical assistance alone. As long as bad behavior of mankind remains unchanged, man is still affected by suffering.

The best way to solve this problem is to help inspire mankind to have knowledge and develop purification. Ignorance is the main root of evil deeds or all sufferings. Therefore, let those who wish to deal with sufferings in the world help mankind acquire good knowledge, obtain brightness and develop purification in their mind.

## **21 - TO KNOW DHARMA IS TO KNOW ALL**

Lack of dharma can be compared to lack of everything. Training people to have dharma can be compared to making people have everything. Everybody can experiment this meaning themselves and in all circumstances.

Despite gaining no property, the important thing is they do not want it. So, all properties are pointless. The disappearance of desire overcomes all sufferings.

## **22 - THE BODY BECOMES BETTER ONLY WHEN IT ENSHRINES VIRTUES**

This whole body, if not a place where goodness is enshrined, is deemed extremely impure, designed for great suffering, for endless burden, and evil. Although it feels certain external happiness and pleasure, that happiness and pleasure are deceiving.

The Buddha said:

**BHARA HAVE PANCAKKHANDHA**

The five aggregates are truly heavy burdens.

**NATTHI KHANDHA SAMA DHUKKHA**

The five aggregates are the most painful.

### **23 - FOCUSING ON THE INNER PART OF LIFE MEANS SEARCHING FOR THE DHARMA**

We should put our focus on the inner part of life. By doing so, we have a chance to find real peace. No matter how much happiness the outer part of life is experiencing, if the inner part is irritated, it cannot be called a happy life.

The outer life relies on the four requisites, while the inner life depends on the food of dharma (dharmahara), namely having **dharm**a as food.

Just as a man, who has good food, nice dress and comfortable lodging, but he has ailment, so, it is impossible for him to enjoy complete happiness.

Mental ailment is of course more tremendously irritating to life than physical illness. Therefore, we should focus on the inner part of life.

### **24 - IF THE MIND'S FIRE IS PUT OUT THE SOCIETY BECOMES COOL**

If the inner part of a man's mind is not at peace, he cannot call it real peace. A stable peace takes root from the inner part of the mind of each person, everyone in the society. It can be compared to a fireplace of each person, if he or she does not start the fire in his/her own fireplace, each fireplace remains cool and unlit. So, social unrest or chaos will be calmed down, leaving only peace and tranquility..

Stable peace can happen through mutual help. When we have peace ourselves, we should help the others to have it as well.

### **25 - TRAINING THE BODY, SPEECH, AND MIND MAKES THE LIFE PERFECT**

The body and speech of a well-trained person serve as tools to promote and upgrade his personality, making him worthy of respect and honor... Human beings do not become good spontaneously. We need training and education. When we have good attitude, it will produce good results in this life and produce good behavior in next life as well. Remember! Other people are just only helpers. We are the important persons for such training. If we are careless, our trainer or even the Buddha cannot train us.

When we already train ourselves, we have to play an important role: train and advise other people.

## **26 - TO RESTRAINT THE EYE-FACULTY IS THE ROLE OF MINDFULNESS**

A tamed eye is by far more patient and in control to pleasant forms than an untamed eye. It can either look or not look. If it looks at those forms, it has mindfulness to control it. It is not so fanatical about the forms that it plunges into various misconducts and outburst of reactions.

A tamed eye-mind-process uses wisdom and through wisdom sees shortcomings out of those pleasant forms. Just as toxic fruits or venomous flowers, the dangers surpass those external attractions.

## **27 - LOVE AND HATE SUPERSEDES EACH OTHER**

The moment the mind thinks of sensual pleasure, malice or aggressive thought is absent. As soon as malice or aggressive thought occurs, thought of sensual pleasure disappears. This indicates that like and dislike always wipe out each other. When there is love, there is no anger. Love and anger cannot occur simultaneously.

A person sometimes has very sweet love and sometimes has bitter hate or harsh anger, but both opposite feelings do not occur all together at a single time..

In this life, only material compositions and immaterial factors interchange.

## **28 - DREAM IN THE SLEEP OF DESIRES**

The person who dreams in his/her sleep is always excited, pleased or scared, depending on the nature of the dream. What happens in the dream is just an illusion of lusts and desires, illusions that cover the facts and blind the eye of wisdom. What happens in the dream fades away as soon as we wake up. Confusion, love and hatred disappear and remains only pure consciousness of mindfulness and equanimity.

## **29 - BEING ABLE TO CUT THE BOND OF ATTACHMENT MEANS HAVING NO PROBLEM**

Attachment or clinging causes the mind to flutter and activate. Attachment defines everything as "our self." or "mine". When anything touches that object or "mine", it flutters and activates the mind to think, just as one end of the rope is attached to us and another end is attached to many rattling objects. If we cut the end of the rope that attached to us, no matter how those rattling objects roll up and down at the other end, the rattling would not affect us at all.

Likewise, cutting the bond of attachment means we do not make the mind flutter, but make it peaceful to worldly feelings.

### **30 – GOODNESS NEVER DECAY**

Outside appearance fades away easily. When we get more acquainted with it, it gradually loses its appeal. But, goodness is unfading. The more acquainted or more intimate we get to it, it is more suitable to absorb and the more tasteful it becomes.

All physical things that attract to us are just mental formations, but in reality keep changing and suffer ailments, decay, sickness and death, become decomposed, unpleasant at the end. In contrast, goodness that a person has fulfilled is ever lasting, durable and never decayed at the end.

### **31- PEACE IS THE ESSENCE OF LIFE**

In this overwhelmingly material world, we are extremely over powered by the conventional worldly materialistic aspects of every society. But, they are and cover only the outer shell of humans, not the inner true heart beats of humans.

The importance of a knife lies on its sharpness, not its blade. Even though the knife has a golden blade, it will be useless if it is not sharp.

A person who is always busy looking for golden blade and don't use the knife is like a person who is too busy looking for wealth and neglects his spiritual growth, can never find true peace. Another one uses his knife regularly and don't need a golden blade just like a person who is not overpowered by riches but uses his mind to find inner peace.

Knowledge, good behavior and peace are the essences of life, we should seek for these essences of life to live with harmony.

### **32 - GOODNESS ATTRACTS AND PRODUCES MORE GOODNESS**

Virtues of a good person are not pleasant nor attractive to a bad person. Likewise, bad deeds of a bad person are horrible to a good person.

The persons we associate with reflects what kind of a person we are because people of different temperaments usually push each another out, while people of the same temperaments normally come together.

### **33 – BE CAREFUL - WE REAP WHAT WE SOW**

Bad people despise good people in every circumstances, they cannot stand good people. This is because they have too little goodness seed in their heart, not even enough to spread around toward others and accept goodness back. On the other hand, bad seeds in their heart make them feel easier to associate with bad people, fools, and cruelty. We carry the bad or good seed in our mind and heart life after life. We will reap what we have planted.

Good people must not alter their goodness to satisfy bad people and should always be on the guard against their evil conviction.

### **34 - OBSERVATION OF GOODNESS MAKES LIFE PERFECT**

Building up goodness is considered difficult because it has to fight against defilements. But, protecting the goodness is more difficult. Those who endeavor to fulfil goodness and try to observe it always are considered hard to find, worthy of respect and honor, worthy of association and are good models.

### **35 - SET OUR LIFE RIGHT AND LIVE WITH WISDOM**

**SUKKHO PANNAPATILABHO** gaining wisdom leads to happiness.

Searching for wisdom is genuinely a supreme search. So, when we have wisdom as our main target, we should set ourselves in a place where wisdom will always develop.

Listening to the dharma on a regular basis, attaining merits and make efforts to wipe out deceitful actions or hindrances make the mind healthy and completely pure. This is the place where wisdom will develop and grow to an extent leading to the realization of the truth.

### **36- GOODNESS IS THE BEAM OF LIFE**

A wicked man usually feels pain because of his actions. He makes his actions a challenge to himself. When he has saved a lot of bad actions, they will interrupt his happiness and self improvement.

A man of good morality is a good man and always succeed, just as the light. Wherever there is light there is always luminosity. Brightness is the beauty of the light just as goodness is the quality of all sages.

### **37- HONESTY WITH CLEVERNESS IS BUDDHA'S ADVICE**

Even though we aim to look for real advantage, we should work on it wisely, because error results in agony. Only with good intention, good timing, and good cause could reach favorable results.

Even though we could move ahead when the traffic light is yellow, we must look around to the left and right as well. This shows a good example in leading our life.

Venerable **Silavatthera** says good conduct (morality) is an excellent quality and the wise man is a noble person. If we are to win over both human beings and deities, we need to have these two virtues: morality and wisdom.

### **38 - GRATITUDE IS POWER TO A GOOD MAN**

Most people tend to mind the mistakes of the others and ignore or overlook their qualifications and goodness. As for pundits, they normally see the goodness of other people first and do not give importance to their faults. If they see any mistake, pundits look for its cause and reason behind the shortcoming and at the same time forgive and let go.

Not thinking of other people's mistakes is a major power of a wise man. As a result, he has many friends and sets good example for positive thinking.

### **39- GOOD PROPENSITY IS LIFE NECESSITY**

Results we are receiving at the present tell us the causes we built in previous life. Even though they are unknown or invisible, they do exist. Like a glittering kerosene lamp, although we cannot see the oil, the flickering kerosene shows there is truly oil there. As soon as the oil has run out the light disappears.

Today will become the past of tomorrow, and tomorrow will become the past of the day after tomorrow. Do something good today! There will be a disposition of goodness tomorrow.

If we could conquer ourselves today, we would win over it tomorrow, if we lose to ourselves today, we would be defeated tomorrow.

### **40- TAMING THE MIND IS SUPREME WORK**

Medical doctors advise us to do exercise for physical health, and that we should try to do it on a daily basis.

Buddhism advises us to work hard on taming our mind for mental health. Taming the mind involves many different approaches. But, the best approach includes meditation and insight, which we should try to practice everyday.

While physical health helps nourish the body, mental health assists in nourishing the mind.

Our mind is extremely vital for the happy and painful state in our daily life. Therefore, taming the mind should not be overlooked. The tamed mind usually brings happiness and great value to human life.

## **41- GOODNESS IS THE NECESSITY OF LIFE**

We are the by-products of our past actions. Our good or bad previous actions in previous lives make who we are, what we will face. The wise who knows the truth of life, chooses to improve and better life courses by building up new good actions and good deeds (kamma).

It can be compared to moving into a new house. we can remodel or add where it is necessary, fix the ugly parts and upgrade it as needed.

It is similar to the life's issue. Although it is formed by previous actions, we have the choice to rearrange or improve it, depending on our life's journey. As mentioned earlier, goodness is the necessity of life. Therefore, we must have strong belief in goodness when fixing ourselves up and must not lose hope or fall back in life.

## **42- MIND ENCLOSED BY GOODNESS CAN BUILD VIRTUES EASILY**

There are people who are easily prone to goodness and there are people who easily attract to evil. It seems justifiable if we put the blame on all the modern world inclination towards materialism and highly accomplished luxurious inventions.

But the true answer is not from outside. It is easy to use those outside factors as scapegoat and get away with greed, anger, other shortcomings and lusts. The problem is not from outside world but from within ourselves. So the solutions must come from our determination. Evil and goodness can never live together.

People that have their mind enclosed with virtues all the time find evils as dirty, unwholesome and disgusting, therefore, their minds are free from enormous outside temptations and defilements. On the contrary, those people whose mind are fed daily with evil thoughts and dirty temptations find these negative forces as tempting and wholesome and would do anything to fulfil these evil urges and needs.

## **43- REVERED MAN IS WORTHY TO BE HONORED**

A generally good man is well regarded; an exceptionally good man is well respected, and a supremely good man is highly revered.

People who live their daily lives complying to the law, posing no threats, nor harm nor dangers to the others are termed as generally good.

People who live their daily lives complying to the law, posing no threats, nor harm, nor dangers to the others and have established themselves in sila (morality codes of good conduct), train and restrain their senses are termed exceptionally good.

People who live their daily life complying to the law, posing no threats, nor harms, nor dangers to the others, observe full code of sila, refrain their senses, practice the dhamma through meditation and insight, purified from all defilements and temptations are duly classified as supremely good.

For the supremely good, even their belongings, their remains, and the ground they walked on become sacred and revered for people to pay their respect and gratitude.