

The Publisher's Foreword

Most people do not think of death as being close to us. We generally wait for special days designated by society, such as Father's Day, to take our fathers to dinner. Only on Mother's Day do we buy jasmine flowers and bring them to our mothers to pay respect. On Songkran, we make merit for our ancestors. On Valentine's Day we buy flowers for our boyfriend and girlfriend. We give birthday gifts, and we only stop smoking on World No Smoking Day. Only on religious holidays do we go to the temple, etc.

Since we do not see the significance of every moment of our lives, we all lead careless lives. We thought that there is plenty of time left, so we always procrastinate. Let's wait...Do it later. It's not the right time yet. There is, nevertheless, no reassurance that we will live until the end of our lifetime.

The book "Our Time Is Limited" will prompt us to recognize the value of our lives. How to make our lives most meaningful for ourselves and others. Because every living day is a day for undertaking something that you want to do, what you have not had a chance to do. If we let each day pass by meaninglessly, we are losing regrettable

opportunities, the opportunity to be born in the realm of bliss, to be born human and to learn Buddhism.

Hence, one should make every day worthwhile. Make the best out of every day, so there will be no regret. You will not feel sorry afterwards. As a matter of fact, you should appreciate every single moment that you are still breathing, and you can be considered a prudent person. You would also be following this advice by Lord Buddha:

...And now, I must caution you all that

All mental formations [Saṅkhāra] normally deteriorate.

You must all earnestly practice heedfulness.

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Make your life meaningful

Life itself is not valuable. One is born, goes to school, gets a job, starts a family, grows old, gets sick, and dies. It's all the same. But why was Luang Poh Kūṇ Parisuddho's life precious?

As recorded in the book published to commemorate Luang Poh Kūṇ's 77-year anniversary, we learn that he had devoted his life to the good of our country. Throughout his life, he donated over five billion baht to charities. This is the answer from a humble monk who did not live for himself. All the funds that he received were given to hospitals, public health clinics, schools, universities for monks, to build toilets, to provide medicine to the needy, and for other social causes. He gave so much that he barely had little personal savings. This was because when he received something, he gave it away. He would give to anyone. Each day, when he woke up, someone would be there to present to him their project. And he would also support it. It was always like that, throughout his life.

Luang Poh Kūṅ was, therefore, different from other monks who received funds and put it in their personal bank accounts. And these monks get into trouble. A billionaire is not a monk, and it must not be part of a monk's conduct. It is, instead, the conduct of a businessman, a layperson. The venerable abbot gave what he received, so we all loved him because he never did anything for himself.

When he passed away, it was decided that his body should not be kept at his temple. When he was still alive, he knew that a lot of people would go to the temple to pay respect if his body was kept there. Everyone would fight over everything that had to do with him, whether his robes, his alms bowls, spittoons, or mattress. If he did not leave behind a will, it would be chaos. In the end, the funeral took place at Khon Kaen University because he knew that so many people would come. And they certainly did.

Why was the life of King Bhumibol a worthy one?

When the king passed away, the public truly mourned his death. We never felt so sad about anyone's passing as much. A person who was in every Thai's heart. His energy was tremendous, and it was nothing to do with wealth or status. When we saw him seated on the throne, we did not feel the connection to him in that position. In fact, we felt deeply attached to his presence in the fields and mountains, working as he sat on dirt. This was how we loved

him. Our Beloved Father sat on his throne only a few times, during royal ceremonies. But in our minds, we remember Our Father walking in the mountains, forests, fields, amongst common people. This is how we remember him.

One's life becomes worthy, when one is not born only to serve one's own needs. But to serve others. To do that, one needs to develop oneself. If you can sustain yourself, then you sustain others. Train yourself as someone who is self-sufficient, and then help others along the way. We all must, therefore, learn from Luang Poh Kūṇ and King Bhumibol who have captured the hearts of all Thais.

The same goes for our own lives. If you want to live for yourself, ask yourself what you want and how much you need to get what you want. To live for oneself is very easy: a house, a car, and enough money to get by. That's all. If you just think about yourself, your life would be very easy but not worthy. Because birds can do that too. They get up, fly from their nest to find food, return to feed their young, and that's all. You are already successful. If a human being is born just to find food to fill his or her stomach, they are no different from a little bird.



Match the value of gold with your merits

When human beings serve others, they make their lives worthwhile. Their lives become magnificent, admirable, inspiring others to emulate. Everyone must die one day, and on our cremation day, the final day, people will come and lay sandalwood flowers. Why this flower? This is because its scent is a dhamma riddle. We lay this flower which signifies the scent of the dead, to remind us all that the most fragrant of all is one's merits and the sandalwood flower is the symbol.

Today, we have all forgotten the significance of this flower. In fact, we do not need it. If we make merit, dedicating ourselves to others, rejoicing in serving others, when we die, the good deeds performed for other fellow human beings, to the world, will be much more fragrant than the flower, more enticing than any flowers.

Only some flowers are fragrant.
But all righteous people are fragrant.

Thus, if we devote ourselves to doing good things, there is no need for sandalwood flower. Always remind ourselves to do good things. When our last day comes, will our good deeds be fragrant as flowers that emanate throughout the land, drawing people to be part of our last moment. The good deeds that we perform in our lives will be like gold. It is a golden invitation to the most distinguished guests to attend our funeral. But without any virtue, who would want to come?

I have seen many funerals. Most memorial books given out at the funeral contain 2-3 pages about the dead's life. The rest are prayers, medicine formulas, recipes and other material to add to the contents of the book. This reflects a life not well-lived. If we lead sensible lives, the memorial books will amount to hundreds of volumes, as the life of King Bhumibol. Hundreds of thousands of books have been published about his life, but there is always more to tell about his majesty's virtues. Thousands of mouths cannot completely describe his meritorious acts.

Thus, when we pass away, the memorial book should be filled with stories about our merits. It should not be a problem for those left behind writing the book about our virtues, our stories. Whatever aspect of our lives is touched, there is something admirable to inspire others. If one can do that, one's life becomes most worthy. Others can rely on you for support.

Live only for yourself, and it's all over at your death.
Live for the people, and you live forever.

When your birthday comes around, therefore, ask yourself if you have done enough to help others. If not, you should start right away. The value of your life is not whether you have been born a respectable person, but it is up to how you lead your life. If you only live for yourself, you are just another human being. You are born and die to fill the earth. But if you are born to help others, you succeed and then make yourself useful to others, your birth into this life will make this earth a more beautiful place, more valuable, more dignified.

How could we make this society and this world more beautiful than on the day we were born? This is my birthday blessing to everyone.



Contemplation of death is comforting

Death is something that we all must study about and be aware of. In most people's view, death is not a subject that we should talk about. If we mention it while eating, someone could hit you. People think death is bad omen. But the Buddha said that death is an auspicious occasion. When you contemplate death, you become acutely aware of it. You are awakened to the reality that we all must die one day.

When you realize that you are about to die, you will become enthusiastic about engaging in righteous acts. But most people do not want to acknowledge this. They see death as a sorrowful, frightening event. But for the Buddha, he sees death as something that we must keep in mind perpetually.

One who contemplates death with every breath is a mindful person. Thinking about death reminds us to take care

of our parents before death arrives. When was the last time you had a meal with your parents? How many days of the year do you spend with them? Have you ever cooked for them? When we think about death, you will remember to do good things. Have you done them? Have you set aside time for your children, wife and husband? With death in mind, meaningless matters will disappear from your life.

Phra Sasana Sophon (Jam Jatatsallo) composed this poem:

Death contemplation can be comforting.

It will diminish your love, delusion, and sañsara.

It will scatter the dark clouds of anger.

It will minimize your pride and anxiety.

Death contemplation can be comforting. It will diminish your love, delusion, and sañsara. Some people are intoxicated by wealth and power. They want everything all for themselves. Billions and trillions. But they actually get to spend just a little. The moment they realize death is upon them, they say, “Why do I want so much because I’m dying?” Your desires subside. Some are so attached to fame, fortune and power, and everything else. When they think about death, they understand that they cannot take any of the medals, trophies, or funeral wreaths with them, not even when they are placed in their coffin. The afterlife has no use for these objects, whether you are an army general or a colonel. These things mean nothing in your life after death. Why do you work so

hard for all this material gain? When death is on your mind, you let go of your cravings and blind attachment.

It will scatter the dark clouds of anger. Your mind is clouded by this and that, all sorts of things that you desire. Once you accept that you will die one day, you lose sight of the useless longings. As in an old saying, the focus on your own needs shrink like buffalo hide thrown into the fire. The flames sizzle, and the hide becomes smaller and smaller. When your mind is awakened, the wants become diminished.

It will minimize your pride and anxiety. If you constantly think about death, you will not be afraid of it. When you see a friend getting cut by a knife, and you see bright red blood, you might faint. But your friend is fine because he or she has death in mind. When you are used to the concept of death, you will be ready for it.

Once, I was leading a tour of Cherntawan Meditation Center. While I was presenting to my visitors, one of my disciples came up to tell me that my godfather had passed away. I loved my godfather as much as my own father. Without him, I would not be who I am today. But I contemplate death constantly, giving sermons on the subjects many, many times. When I learned about my godfather's death, I led the tour until the end. When the visitors left, I immediately made phone calls to find out about my godfather and learned that he really did pass away. I checked inside my mind

to see how it was reacting. I found that my mind's meter was completely still, keeping its normal state.

Going back in time for about 10 years, I remember typing up a manuscript when a dog came up to my lodge and barked. A little later, the telephone rang, and the voice on the other end said that my brother just died in an accident. I hung up the phone, continued working for half a day, because I was not finished. Once the manuscript was done, I headed home to my family. If it was you, how would you have felt? Could you have continued working?

This was my direct experience. I went through deaths of so many people close to me, but my mind was calm because it has been trained for it.



Death is the Ultimate Truth

One must learn about death. If not, we will lead a reckless life, blinded by status, wealth and power, youth, fame, and glory, with the false belief that you will live forever. You do not focus on doing good things. You spend most of your time on mindless matters. Some are so obsessed with making money that they do not have time for their parents.

Some men marry, have children, but never have time to share a meal with them. For their children's birthday, they tell them to bring their birthday cake to their father's office. The day their wives and children want to leave, these man will regret it and blame their wives and children for abandoning them. You should think about who started the problem first. You start a marriage together, but you take a very small part in it, devoting all your time to making money. So many people are like that today. They do not have time for the most important things which is your life and your family, only thinking about getting ahead, making more and more money, hoping

that one day you will have time to take care of your parents when you have enough money. When your parents are gone, you will be the one to regret it. So many people struggle with death in utter sadness because they have led insensible lives.

Death is the ultimate truth which you must perpetually contemplate. It will arrive one day. Leading a prudent life is a moral obligation for all.

I once went to a funeral and saw an old lady bowing in respect of the dead so many times. She took so long that the others who came after her had to form a line for their turn. I asked her how many times she was planning to bow. She said as many times as the age.

“Whose age?”

“The dead’s age.” The dead person was 106 years old.

“What is your prayer?”

“He wrote it down for me like this.” The old lady was saying words given to her by the dead.

“Avassanī Mayā Maritabbañ.” Each time she would bow and repeat those words. She had already done it for 50 times and was aiming for 106 times to match the dead’s age.

“Grandma, do you know what these words mean?”

“No.”

“Listen. Avassañ Mayā Maritabbañ. It means, ‘That I die is inevitable.’”

“What!?” Grandma dropped the incense sticks.

“Enough then!” She exclaimed. *“I’ve been wishing for my own death more than 50 times already!”*

You see, she was reciting this all this time, without realizing that the Buddha taught us to lead a prudent life. When you go to the funeral, there are words written down to say to the dead, but it is in Pali, so you do not know the meaning. Hence, none of us can get to the heart of the teaching.

On the other hand, when you contemplate death, you will be awakened to the ultimate truth, and will lead a mindful life. Being awakened, you will not be harbor these five false beliefs:

1. That life is long.
2. That you are still young.
3. That you are healthy.
4. That there is still so much time left.
5. That you will do good deeds when you find the time.