

Questions That Answer

by Piya Tan

We are facing a global financial crisis. The experts with their theories are wrong after all. Often it takes longer to prove an expert wrong; an average thinking person like yourself is likely to learn faster.

The grand economic theories will always be wrong, and seriously wrong, if they are based on greed, which is the case in our global systems. Yet we can still stay safe if we know how greed works and avoid it.

We are facing a big financial crisis; that is, if you forget that money is only a means to ends. Money is only useful for what it buys: it is of instrumental value.

Things like life and happiness are of intrinsic value. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to answer what is life really for, or what is happiness for. They are good in themselves.

If we lose money, we can always work hard again to rebuild your wealth. But to lose life or health, or true friends, or not knowing how to be happy, means we do not really know how to live life fully.

Money is a good servant, but a bad master. During hard times, there are more false gods, sick gurus and empty friends around. It is wise to avoid them if you can't awaken them.

Hard times such as the current global financial crisis are occasions to find out some real truths about life. Here are a few questions that reveal some vital facts of life:

"Who are those who have not let me down in such moments?" They are our true friends.

"Who are those who have made life more difficult for me in such times?" Either we do not understand them better, or they do not really care for us.

"During such difficulties, have I learned what my true priorities in life are?" Finding a new job is only a temporary priority. What are our life-long priorities?

"What am I often unhappy about? Why do I feel upset about these things? What pattern (causes and effects) do I notice that lead to my unhappiness here?" If you think you know the answer, think again.

"What are the good things about myself that I notice when I lost my job? Or, what positive things about myself do I notice when I lost a lot of money? Then ask WHY do I think that way?" When an answer comes to mind, ask WHY to that answer, until you feel some sense of peace.

Hard times mean that we need to plant new good karmic seeds because we have fully enjoyed our old ones.

Hard times make us see life in true light: we now see better than we used to. For, it is because of hard times that Buddhas arise in this world.

Remember how the Buddha sat all alone under the Bodhi tree, even after all the five monks have deserted him. In our more difficult moments and in our most crucial moments, we will need to help ourselves, and we can!

The Buddha says:

And if you know that neither you nor anyone else can benefit from such a situation, you should, ungrieving, bear it all, and think:

"How now, how shall I best apply my strength to what's at hand?" (Thana Sutta, A 3:54)

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