Thag 12.1 — Sīlava

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
Source: https://suttacentral.net/thag12.1/en/sujato
Source revision: 3bc8665e0e28e70518eba94304a2fafcab80f933
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Text

Verses of the Senior Monks 12.1

The Book of the Twelves

Chapter One

Sīlava

One should train just in ethical conduct,

for in this world, when ethical conduct is

cultivated and well-trained,

it provides all success.

Wishing for three kinds of happiness—

praise, prosperity,

and to delight in heaven after passing away—

the wise would take care of their ethics.

The well-behaved have many friends,

because of their self-restraint.

But one lacking ethics, of bad conduct,

drives away their friends.

A man whose ethics are bad has

ill-repute and infamy.

One who is ethical always has

a good reputation, fame, and praise.

Ethical conduct is the starting point and foundation;

the mother at the head

of all good things:

that’s why you should purify your ethics.
Ethics provide a boundary and a restraint,
an enjoyment for the mind;
the ford where all the Buddhas cross over:
that’s why you should purify your ethics.
Ethics are the matchless power;
ethics are the ultimate weapon;
ethics are the best ornament;
ethics are a marvelous coat of armor.
Ethics are a mighty bridge;
ethics are the unsurpassed scent;
ethics are the best perfume,
that float from place to place.
Ethics are the best provision;
ethics are the unsurpassed supply for a journey;
ethics are the best vehicle
that take you from place to place.
In this life they’re criticized;
after departing they grieve in a lower realm;
a fool is unhappy everywhere,
because they are unsteady in ethics.
In this life they’re renowned;
after departing they’re happy in heaven;
the attentive are happy everywhere,
because they are steady in ethics.
Ethical conduct is best in this life,
but one with wisdom is supreme.
Someone with both virtue and wisdom
is victorious among men and gods.