

## A Fading Dream of an Orphan

*A Wisdom Story from Myanmar*



Gam Seng is a seventeen-year-old High School boy from one of the remote villages of the northern part of Myanmar. Like many other youth, he has a dream. He wants to become a doctor or a teacher in order to contribute to the development of his native land. These are his dreams and he is quite confident about achieving one of them despite the fact that he is an orphan under the care of his grandparents who are still struggling at their old age to support the only grandson they have. Poor Gam Seng never got to know his father who was killed by a land mine while working in the family farm before he was born. Furthermore, the tragedy did not end there; his mother died just a few days after giving birth to Gam Seng. It happened that a war broke out near Gam Seng's village and the whole village had to flee to a distant jungle for safety. Thus, Gam Seng's mother had to give birth to him in the jungle without any medical assistance. Due to the hardship and lack of medical care, baby Gam Seng's mother became critically ill and finally died; reluctantly leaving behind her newly-born first child to the care his grandparents.



As baby Gam Seng grew up, his birthplace gradually became peaceful. He had a happy childhood and attended a promising school to fulfil his dream. But one day, all the happy moments came an end while Gam Seng and his classmates were eagerly pursuing their dream in the classroom and deeply paying attention to the lesson of the

teacher, there was suddenly a loud explosion. The classroom was filled with smoke and for a moment, no one could say a word or make a move. By the time Gam Seng gained his consciousness, what he could see was people running all over and their messy classroom. Although nothing happened to Gam Seng and the students sitting at the back row, the teacher and four students sitting at the front row were slightly wounded by the shrapnel that scattered from the explosion. Gam Seng and his other classmates had to rush the wounded ones to the nearby clinic for immediate treatment. But that was not the end. Even before any of them could have time to recover from the trauma of the explosion the whole village was forced to flee as another prolonged civil war had broken out and it was moving closer to the village.

It has now been three months, and the people still could not return to the village and no one can tell when their school will reopen again. Gam Seng is just sitting under a tree with a miserable look on his face as it dawned upon him that there seems to be less and less hope for him and his friends to be able to go back to school and prepare for the national examination that is just a few months away. The exam is crucial for Gam Seng and his friends because it will determine the type of courses they can take at the University.



He felt so hopeless and wanted to stop the war that had tormented his family for a long time and it is now becoming a stumbling block for his future. But he felt so helpless. Thinking the matter over however, he realized that he is not alone. He has friends who are in a similar situation. With this second thought, Gam Seng found strength to hope and pray that he and his friends will still be able to pursue their dreams of schooling if the war will only come to an end, one day in the near future.

*Joseph M. SJ*