

The Autobiography of  
**Venerable Ācariya**  
**Thoon Khippapañño**

*Volume Two*

By Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño



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*Written by*  
**Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño**

*Translated by*  
Neecha Thian-Ngern



SAN FRAN DHAMMARAM TEMPLE  
SAN FRANCISCO

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## Translator's Note

The Sanskrit version of words like “karma” and “dharma” are prevalent in Buddhism’s English narrative today. However, the Theravāda tradition uses Pāli, so those familiar Sanskrit words will take on slightly different spellings in some cases—such as “kamma” and “dhamma.” Additionally, there are differences in meaning highlighted by instances when dhamma is capitalized or not. In its uppercase form, Dhamma means the Buddha’s teachings, while its lowercase form refers to the laws of nature, the truth about the way things are, or mental objects.

As is common in any language, Pāli words can take on different meanings depending on their context. For example, paññā mainly translates to wisdom but can also denote examination, analysis, thought, reasoning, discernment, or intuitive insight. Avijjā and moha mean ignorance and delusion, respectively. When translated into Thai as “loeng,” the definitions of avijjā and moha expand and take on more descriptive definitions that may aid the reader in understanding what ignorance and delusion mean in Dhamma: lost, stray, disoriented, enraptured, spellbound, captivated, obsessed, intoxicated, stupid, and of course, delusional and ignorant. Avijjā and moha mean not knowing, or not seeing things as they are in reality. It is believing a lie or fantasy and not knowing the truth.

The widespread practice of silent, sitting meditation that is the face of Buddhism today is commonly referred to as “samādhi.” However, the original Pāli term doesn’t only come in the tranquil version. Samādhi translates to concentration or unification of the mind. Calm, serene meditation is only one of many incarnations of concentration.

In this text, “meditation” will primarily be used to refer to the contemporary connotation of samādhi (sitting or tranquil meditation) and not the denotation of the word (contemplation or deep reflection).

Buddhist teachers and texts, including this one, frequently mention kilesa and taṇhā. But what exactly are they? Taṇhā is desire. Kilesa literally translates as torment of the mind but is more commonly translated as defilement or mental impurity. Defilements are the things, the representations, or the embodiments of desire. For instance, expensive cars, the latest and greatest gadgets, brand name clothing, or a large house in an affluent neighborhood are all defilements associated with the desire to be rich. Like desires, defilements are limitless. Luang Por Thoon often refers to defilements and desires as deceiving us and leading us to be reborn within this world.

Āsava is sometimes mentioned alongside kilesa and taṇhā, but tends to take on more prominence shortly prior to one’s attaining full enlightenment, when one realizes that all āsava will be destroyed. Āsava is commonly defined as canker, taint, or mental intoxication. In a practical sense, when kilesa and taṇhā come together, āsava results. For instance, brand-name items are the defilements (kilesa) connected to the desire (taṇhā) to be well-known in society. Once you procure those items, you attribute your acceptance and popularity to owning them. Or if you don’t procure them, you attribute your lack of acceptance and lack of popularity to not owning them. Either way, the impression or bias gained from that permanent view is called āsava. Āsavas intoxicate the mind, leading you to see things sideways and get caught up in illogical, senseless notions.

Ñāṇa and dassana are important concepts in Luang Por Thoon’s teachings. Ñāṇa is knowing or understanding. Dassana is seeing or

realizing. For instance, the Buddha taught that birth, aging, sickness, and death are normal. So, we know that aging is normal. Every day, we see actual evidence of how we have aged—wrinkles, white hairs, loss of strength and flexibility—and how things around us age—toothbrushes fraying, clothes wearing thin, vegetables wilting, food going stale. However, if you don't fuse the theory that you know with the reality that you see, you won't be able to profoundly penetrate the truth about aging. Once you do connect them, you will both understand and realize the indisputable truth about aging—it is impermanent, it causes suffering, it isn't who we are and it doesn't belong to us, and it is normal. This is the "knowing and seeing" that Luang Por Thoon frequently refers to throughout this text.

In Thai, *ārammaṇa* denotes mood, emotion, or temper. In Pāli, *ārammaṇa* denotes an object, sense-object, preoccupation, or focus of the mind at a given moment. *Ārammaṇa* is basically the sense-object, or what happens when the internal sense-bases (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body) interact with the external sense-bases (form, sound, scent, taste, touch). Once the interaction occurs, there are three types of preoccupations: 1. pleasing (*iṭṭhārammaṇa*), 2. displeasing (*aniṭṭhārammaṇa*), and 3. indifferent, neither pleasing nor displeasing (*upekkhā-ārammaṇa*). When the pleasing *ārammaṇa* occurs, you repeat it in order to hold onto it. When the displeasing *ārammaṇa* occurs, you try to push it away to get rid of it. When you don't feel completely fulfilled about something because it isn't clearly pleasing or clearly displeasing, it becomes a lingering, unresolved *ārammaṇa* (this is referred to elsewhere as a neutral *ārammaṇa*). The residue of these three types of preoccupations or objects (*ārammaṇa*) that you hold onto are called mind-objects (*dhammārammaṇa*). Pleasing *ārammaṇas* (*iṭṭhārammaṇa*) lead to

desire for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*), displeasing ārammaṇas (*aniṭṭhārammaṇa*) lead to desire for non-existence (*vibhava-taṇhā*), and indifferent ārammaṇas (*upekkhā-ārammaṇa*) lead to ignorance (*avijjā*).

Sammuti is a term found in both Pāli and Thai. In Thai, sammuti means pretend, assume, suppose, or not real. It is translated from Pāli into English as general opinion, consent, construct, convention, supposition, or anything that is conjured into being by the mind. It is labeling things so that they can be referred to and then coming to perceive those things in terms of those labels. For instance, “mother,” in a technical and objective sense, is the physical being that provides an egg. But “mother” has been expanded to include common cultural norms: one who loves, nurtures, and raises you; one who stays at home, cooks, and cleans; one who sacrifices her life for her child. And once you buy into these conventional characterizations and begin to expect “mother” to be a certain way, suffering arises when a mother doesn’t raise her own child, a mother is abusive and neglectful, a mother doesn’t fit into the homemaker mold, or when it is the child who sacrifices for the mother. These labels, constructs, and conventional realities are the sammuti that make up the world as we know it. That is why Luang Por Thoon refers to this world as the “mahā-sammuti,” or great sammuti.

Puñña is translated as merit or meritorious action, but for those who didn’t grow up in a Buddhist culture, what does that even mean? Making merit can be a virtuous deed that is tangible, like donating goods to a respectable temple or building a pagoda to honor the Buddha. It can also be intangible, like observing the precepts or dedicatedly practicing Dhamma. Its cousin, kusala, is translated as wholesome, skillful, or clever. Luang Por Thoon has explained in Q&A

sessions that kusala is wisdom (*paññā*), and kusala comes before puñña. Kusala is the wisdom to seek and recognize opportunities to make merit in a way that leads to heaven or enlightenment. Commonly referred to together, “puñña-kusala” basically represents something good, or good kamma. Their counterpart, *pāpa*, is translated as demerit or evil. Like puñña, *pāpa* can be tangible, like stealing something, or intangible, like disrespecting a teacher. In other words, it refers to something bad, or bad kamma. Buddhists are encouraged to cultivate puñña and abstain from *pāpa*, as we will have to account for all of our actions—both good and bad.

Navigating naming conventions can be confusing, as there are many ways of referring to a single individual. When Thoon Nonruecha ordained, he was given a Dhamma name reflecting his lightning-fast wisdom: Khippapañño. Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño is his full, formal monk name, while Luang Por Thoon or simply Luang Por is the familiar name his students call him. “Ācariya” is the Pāli word for teacher (Ajarn, Ajahn, or Ajaan are the common Thai versions), that is typically used for monks who have been ordained for at least ten rains retreats. “Kru Ba” is a Thai term for teacher that is used to address junior monks in the northeastern regions of Thailand. “Phra,” which means monk in Thai, is used like the “Venerable” prefix to a monk’s name—Phra Ācariya Thoon, or simply Phra Ācariya. In Thai, “Luang” means honorable or venerable, “Pee” means elder sibling, “Por” means father, and “Pu” and “Ta” mean paternal grandfather and maternal grandfather, respectively.

As for Thai naming conventions for places, “Ban” is the Thai term for village. So, for example, Champa Village would be referred to as “Ban Champa.” “Wat” means temple, and “Pa” means forest, so the forest temple at Champa Village would be named, “Wat Pa Ban

Champa,” while the temple at Nong Waeng Village would be named, “Wat Ban Nong Waeng.”

The Thai language does not require pronouns or subjects. For instance, “I want to see you” can also be stated as “want to see.” Perhaps it is because enlightened individuals have destroyed the sense of identity (*attā*) that they characteristically communicate in this indirect, objective manner. Their sentences are more like general statements about a situation instead of the actual individual in that situation. Unanchored by pronouns or subjects, these sentences tend to float and can be interpreted a number of ways. Having known Luang Por Thoon personally, and having translated his sermons and books, I feel that he is very particular and precise when it comes to word choice and word order. I have also found that his sentences can take on different meanings when I revisit them after a slight change in perspective. Because of this, I have made every effort to maintain the integrity of Luang Por’s writing style, especially in sections with Dhamma teachings. Sometimes a sentence might feel more natural written in a more common way, but oftentimes the slight awkwardness can compel you to really think about the difference in emphasis or meaning. For example, consider phrases like, “the ghost caused many people to die” versus “the ghost killed many people,” or “internal elements and external elements,” versus “internal and external elements,” or “the mind knows and sees” versus “my mind knows and sees.”

Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño’s autobiography, off of which this translation is based, contains additional content that Luang Por Thoon did not originally write as part of his autobiography. The section written by Luang Por Thoon’s students after having gone to seek out additional information on Luang Por Thoon’s life as a

layperson merely reiterates what Luang Por Thoon himself already wrote regarding his life before ordination. As such, it has not been included in this translation. However, the sections that were added on Luang Por Thoon's life's work and his passing have been included and updated in this translation.

A glossary is included at the back of the text.

## Preface

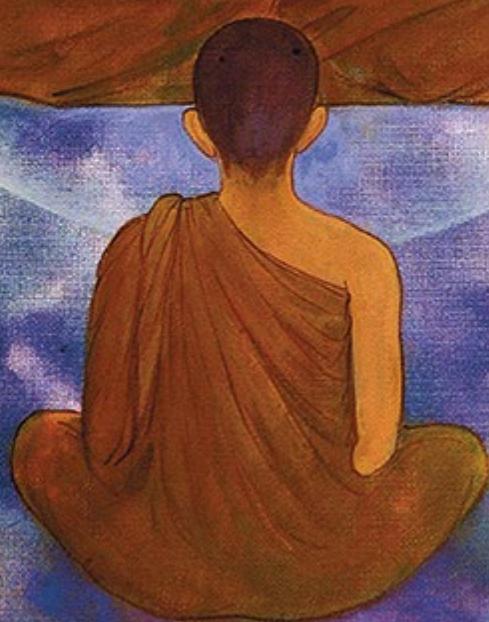
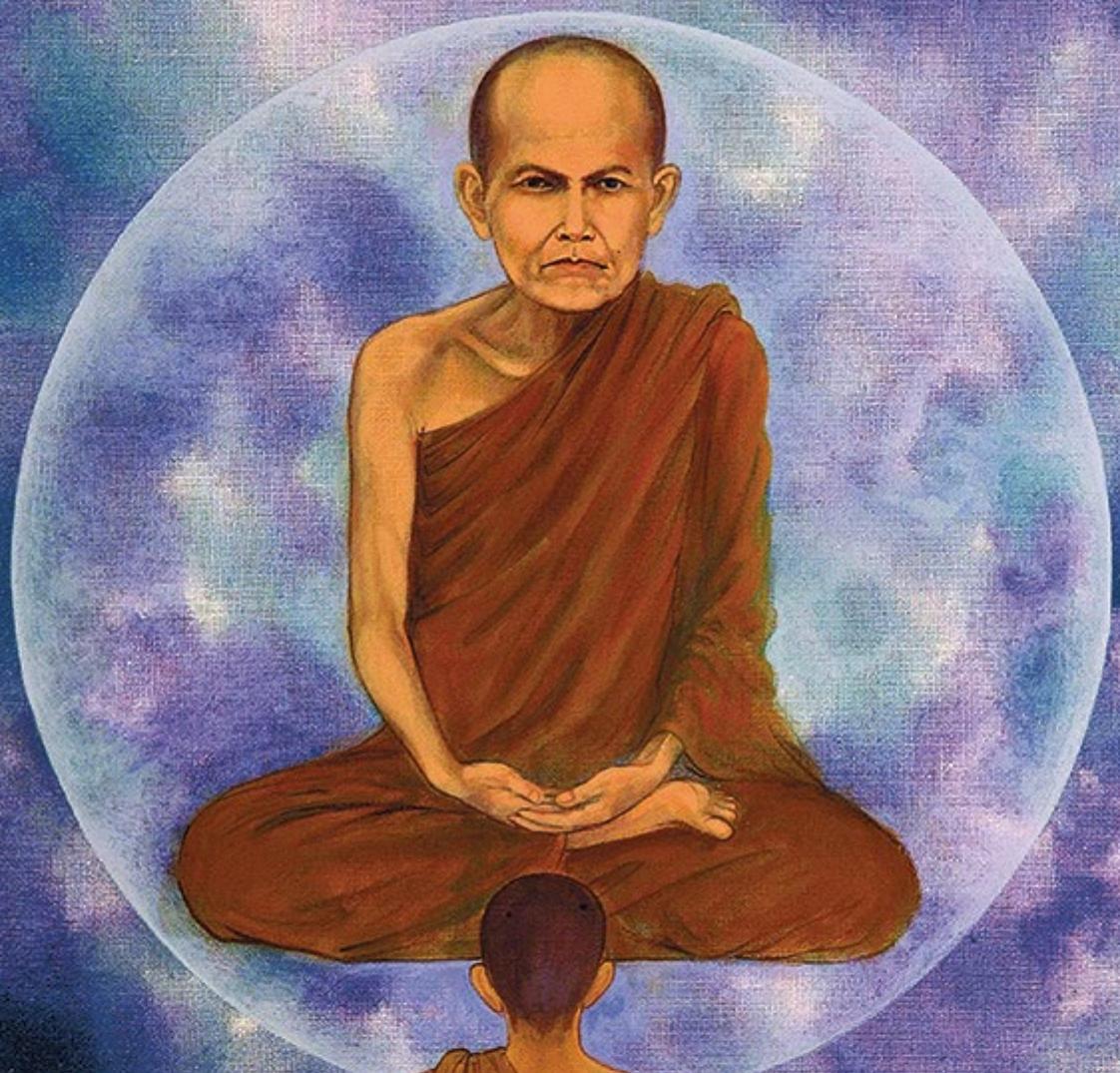
Several of my students requested that I write an autobiography so that my many followers could understand how my life and Dhamma practice transpired. They reasoned that if I did not write it at this time, many uncertainties could arise in the future. Because my students range from being very young to very old, the elderly could pass away and miss out on the opportunity to learn about my life. Even the younger students could meet a fate that would similarly strip them of the chance to read my life story. Or, if I passed away before I had a chance to put my life into writing, everyone would miss out. Future generations would not know about my life, either.

Upon hearing these pleas and considering that my life story could benefit others, I decided to write about it. It would be impossible to write an extensive, comprehensive biography, as it would swell into a massive book. I will only write enough to paint an adequate picture of my life. The entire autobiography is factual. These are actual events that transpired. The majority of the stories are about my own life, while some involve famous teachers. My life story is pretty peculiar, and you may doubt whether or not these stories are true. You may think that my life is unbelievable or even downright impossible. In fact, you might even feel enough contempt to lose faith in me. Regardless, the events that transpired are a very real part of this world, have been for past eras, and will indefinitely continue to be in the times to come.

Once you read my autobiography, use your own insight to determine which stories can be used as a model for your own personal benefit. Don't waste your time critiquing the stories or Dhamma

methods that are incongruent with your personality. Leave them be. Lastly, may all readers excel in mindfulness and wisdom. May you come to understand the universal truth in any matter which you contemplate. If you have cultivated perfections of character in past lives and are kammically ripe to attain a level of enlightenment in this lifetime, may your aspirations come to fruition.

Phra Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño





## A Visit from Luang Pu Mun

The following night, I rested in the mind's residence (vihāra-dhamma) as usual. Luang Pu Mun came to visit me in my hut (kuṭī) on that night and other nights, for a total of four consecutive nights. If I were to recount the conversations we had, it would be a long story. We only spoke about the Dhamma. Each time Luang Pu Mun came, he treated me familiarly. He expressed his happiness for me despite my never having known him in this lifetime.

Back when I was as a novice monk (sāmañera) in 1949, Venerable Ācariya Som was going to take me to Luang Pu Mun's funeral, but because of my educational and testing obligations I wasn't able to attend. Throughout the course of being ordained and practicing, whenever I was stuck on a method (upāya) of practice (patipatti), I never asked for help with the issue. There was never a time in which I couldn't solve it on my own and I never asked a teacher for help with whatever issue it was that gave me pause. If I felt unclear about a Dhamma topic, Luang Pu Mun would come and give me a Dhamma metaphor (upāya) that would immediately make me think about that Dhamma topic. It was as if Luang Pu Mun was my chief mentor, advising me on what was wrong and what was right at all times. And this is despite never having known Luang Pu Mun in this rebirth (jāti). Why did Luang Pu Mun shower me with such benevolence (mettā)

and compassion? Sometimes, it would be Luang Pu Mun's voice warning me, but most times, it would actually be Luang Pu Mun himself appearing in the meditative visions (nimitta). It became a regular occurrence. Since the day I was ordained, Luang Pu Mun has visited me no fewer than one hundred times.

What was the nature of the relationship that Luang Pu Mun and I shared in the past? You will discover that in this book. I will explain it in the chapters to come. You will understand our relationship. How did what happened in the past connect with the present rebirth? You will discover the effects of kamma and believe in the effects of kamma. Good and bad kamma affect one other. It is just like the phrase that we chant, "we are related through our actions." Let us cultivate good kamma so that it is what accompanies us.



## Desiring to Know the Pinnacle of Meditation

One day, I purposefully considered where meditation (samādhi) ultimately ended and what it was like. I was one who easily attained meditative tranquility, but what was the supreme refined meditative state like? I wanted to meditate and try it out. The manuals simply state that there are four fine-material meditative absorptions (rūpa-jhāna) and four immaterial meditative absorptions (arūpa-jhāna), which comprise the Eight Attainments (aṭṭha-samāpatti). In order to enter these meditative absorptions (jhāna), one must have prior experience.

I began to meditate to a level of tranquility in meditative absorptions, progressing from the first absorption (paṭhama-jhāna), to the second absorption (duṭiya-jhāna), third absorption (tatiya-jhāna), and fourth absorption (catuttha-jhāna). These are the four fine-material absorptions. Then, I continued on to the immaterial absorptions of infinite space (ākāsañcāyatana), infinite consciousness (viññāṇañcāyatana), infinite nothingness (ākiñcaññāyatana), and neither perception nor non-perception (nevasaññānāsaññāyatana). These are the four immaterial absorptions. Then, I went further, into what is called saññā-vedayita-nirodha, or cessation of consciousness and sensation. Once the mind (citta) entered saññā-vedayita-nirodha, it couldn't remain there for long and it couldn't advance any further.

At that point, it automatically withdrew in descending order to nevasaññānāsaññāyatana, ākiñcaññāyatana, viññāṇañcāyatana, and ākāśānañcāyatana. Then it proceeded downward into rūpa-jhāna: catuttha-jhāna, tatiya-jhāna, dutiya-jhāna, and paṭhama-jhāna. At that point, it climbed back up to arūpa-jhāna and saññā-vedayita-nirodha. Then, it descended once more. That's how it was. This went on for two nights. The third night was the same. I tried to direct the citta to remain in saññā-vedayita-nirodha for longer, but was unable to do so.

Then, there was a brightness that radiated throughout the entire universe. When I looked into the light, I saw the Buddha descending. The kuṭī that was a small hut expanded into a larger hut. I laid out a seat (āsana) and the Buddha came down to sit on it. I bowed onto the Buddha's lap and waited to hear what the Buddha would say about the purpose of his visit. As I was bowing onto the Buddha's lap, he said, "Thoon, I rejoice (anumodanā) with the fruits (phala) of your practice (paṭipatti) that is complete." Then the Buddha said, "In doing meditation, once you enter saññā-vedayita-nirodha, you cannot advance any further. Pull back a bit." Having said that, the Buddha left the hut. The citta exited the meditative state and I thought about the level of meditation in which the Buddha had wanted me to remain. I understood the entirety of the method (upāya) that the Buddha had given me. What I have recounted will make many people doubt or refuse to believe that it is even possible. That is a matter of personal discretion. Whether you believe or do not believe is your prerogative, but this is what really happened to me.





## A Vision of Riding a White Horse

One night, I experienced a vision (nimitta) of riding a white horse. There were two visions about my riding a white horse. The first was in 1961, during my first rains retreat (vassa). You have likely already read about how that ride transpired. The second was in 1963, during my fifth vassa, at Wat Pa Ban Si Wichai, Wanon Niwat district, Sakon Nakhon province. I experienced a vision of a horse being offered to me along with the words, "This is your horse. In not too long a time, you will definitely get to ride this horse." That horse was huge and beautiful. It was fully saddled and harnessed. Its white hairs sparkled and shone as if all of them were diamonds. You have probably already read about that vision. I already rode that horse in 1969.

In this vision of riding a white horse, the white horse was unlike the previous horses. It was as if I were sitting on the back of the horse, but my butt and the back of the horse didn't touch. It didn't feel like I was sitting on the horse's back, but I was on its back. I didn't control the horse and there was no sound of an announcement at all. Instead of being delighted at getting to ride the horse, I felt indifferent. I wasn't excited in any way. Then, the mind (citta) withdrew from meditation (samādhi).

I contemplated the meaning of the nimitta and immediately understood that the horse was visāñkhāra, or divestment of all



material things. Whatever I would think, those thoughts would be pure (*pārisuddhi*) and come from purity of Dhamma (*pārisuddhi-dhamma*). They would be thoughts that came from purification of knowledge and vision (*ñāṇa-dassana-visuddhi*). They would be thoughts without the allurements of mental intoxications (*āsava*). They would be ordinary thoughts. Or, to describe it in a more sophisticated means (*upāya*), it would be *pārisuddhi-ñāṇa*, or knowledge that is pure. While I am still alive, this pure knowledge (*ñāṇa*) is separate. It does not mix with the four elements (*catu-dhātu*) or the five aggregates (*pañca-khandha*) at all. Regardless of whether or not I am still alive, this *pārisuddhi-dhamma* will never become clouded or obscured in any way. Though I still possess the four elements and five aggregates, it is merely a conventional reality (*sammuti*) of “self.” It is “self” only in supposition (*sammuti*). However, this purity is not self, and self is not purity. I dare tell the world, “*Pārisuddhi attānam samāhitam*.<sup>1</sup> This was the final proclamation on that day.<sup>2</sup> Does what I have explained here conflict with the Pāli Canon (*tipiṭaka*)? One could say it conflicts one hundred percent, because the Tipiṭaka states that, in this day and age no one will attain enlightenment at a high level. This is what people have studied, and correspondingly, they are uninterested in practicing. They have already declined attainment (*pativedha*).

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<sup>1</sup> Purified by oneself, steadfast in a single preoccupation (*ārammaṇa*).

<sup>2</sup> The day in which Luang Por Thoon attained full enlightenment, as detailed in Volume One.



## An Omen of Shooting a Pistol

One night, as I was settled in meditation (*samādhi*), it appeared that I had a pistol in my hand. It was a small pistol. I raised it up and tried pulling on the trigger. A bullet exited the pistol very quickly, and its noise was deafeningly loud, like a jet plane rocketing into outer space. I sat listening to the sound of the bullet until there was no more noise. The bullet landed very far away. The moment that the bullet landed, there was an extremely loud noise. The loud noise reverberated through distant lands. Simultaneously, the sound of the discharged pistol boomeranged and resounded around the world, and then up into the skies. It was like the sound of thunder roaring in succession. The loud noise continued for a long time.

The mind (*citta*) withdrew from meditation and I contemplated the meaning of it all. I instantly understood that it was a personal matter involving me and the Buddhist religion. In the coming eras, while I am still alive, I will be a part of helping to disseminate Buddhism. I will help the Buddhist community (*buddha-parisā*)<sup>3</sup> better understand the foundations of the Buddha's teachings to a significant degree. I will help others realize the fruit of practice in a way that aligns with the path and fruit of enlightenment (*maggaphala-nibbāna*). How many or how few rests on the practitioners

<sup>3</sup> The fourfold Buddhist community of male monastics (*bhikkhu*), female monastics (*bhikkhuni*), laymen, and laywomen.



themselves. As for myself, I am one hundred percent ready to train and teach, but how much the receiver will receive depends on the situation.

Upon considering it, it probably won't transpire how I'd like it to. This is because there are many prominent teachers (*ācariya*) in the current era who interpret the methods (*upāya*) and ways of practice differently. This reflects the old adage, "bits of money,"<sup>4</sup> meaning that the methods of teaching aren't aligned in the same direction. Different people interpret things differently, causing views to be misaligned. For instance, there are many prominent teachers in this era. The nature of their renown depends on the methods and ways of each teacher. As for the students who catapult their teachers to fame, there are many groups and congregations. As such, there are many reasons why a teacher could achieve fame. For example, fame for black magic, for possessing magic incantations; fame for reading the stars and foretelling the future; fame for meditation, for proficiency at entering absorptions (*jhāna*); fame for having supernormal powers (*abhiññā*) of some kind; fame for possessing true virtues; and fame for many other reasons. Mostly, teachers achieve celebrity status from the advertising efforts of their students. It is as if in this era, there are numerous fully enlightened (*arahant*) noble individuals (*ariya-puggala*). Thus, practitioners must train their wisdom (*paññā*) and train their rationality to be ready. Seek out a teacher who is famous for possessing true virtues. Once you choose a teacher who has true virtues, you will also receive results that are true (*dhamma*) from the teachings of that teacher.

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<sup>4</sup> This Thai adage refers to receiving income or money in bits and pieces too insubstantial to be of actual use, and spending it all without gaining anything.



## An Omen of Dogs Chasing a Rabbit

One night, I contemplated that, “*From this moment forward, I will benefit the people to the fullest. Namely, I will disseminate the teachings of the Buddha (dhamma) to the people, so that they receive information and material about the Buddha that is true and authentic; in order for them to develop sammā-diṭṭhi, or right view according to the teachings of the Buddha, so that their minds are firmly established in Buddhism; in order for them to preserve and pass on the Buddhist religion for ever and ever; and in order for Buddhism to be a treasure for them to hold and cling to in their minds, so that it will be a refuge for our descendants who are last to be born, in the future.*”

I made a resolution (adhiṭṭhāna), “*Whether this dissemination of the Buddha’s teachings (dhamma) will be ridden with obstacles or smooth and convenient, may I know and see that reality.*” Then, I meditated to steadfast focus and experienced a vision (nimitta) of a field so vast and expansive that it stretched as far as I could see. I saw two dogs chasing after a rabbit. It was a close chase. Both dogs were of the same color. That is, the color of forest tradition (kammaṭṭhāna) monks. The dogs chased after the rabbit, side by side. They were only about two meters behind the rabbit. One dog seemed to be faster on its feet and was going to cut in front of the other dog in order to bite the rabbit. But the other dog wouldn’t allow that dog to cut in front



of it and bite the rabbit, so it leapt and bit the dog attempting to cut in front of it. It willfully clamped down and shook that dog. The dog that was bitten didn't bite back. It tried to wriggle its way out of the dog's jaws.

Once free of the biting dog's jaws, the dog focused on resuming the rabbit chase. During the tussle, the rabbit had run far ahead, but the two dogs continued their chase. Upon closing in on biting the rabbit, again, that same dog picked up its stride in order to cut in front of the other dog and bite the rabbit. And again, that same dog was displeased, as it was afraid of being disgraced, so it leapt and bit the dog again. The dog that was bitten wriggled but didn't bite back and slipped out of the dog's jaws. Then they resumed chasing the rabbit. The third time, they went at each other again. The two dogs kept fighting amongst themselves, and the rabbit ran into the forest.

Then, the mind (citta) withdrew from meditation, and I used wisdom to analyze the events of the nimitta. I discerned that there would surely be obstacles in my dissemination of Buddhism. I thought about the two dogs fighting amongst themselves. What was there to gain? Why was it that way? If that dog did not get bitten, it surely would have nabbed the rabbit. And once it got the rabbit, it would be a shared outcome that benefitted them both. I reflected further on why that dog had a tendency to bite, and I knew that it was about being disgraced. It thought, "*I run faster than other dogs. I am the only one who runs faster than any other dog. Why is this dog cutting in front of me? I can't allow it. I must bite him first.*" It was a dog that was filled with conceit (māna) and pride (attā). It didn't know how to yield to other dogs. If it had let the other dog chase after the rabbit, it would have been a communal gain.

Once I understood the dog in-fighting metaphor, I internalized it and applied it to the issue of my dissemination of Buddhism. I was convinced that it would be rife with obstacles, and those obstacles would come from a fellow kammaṭṭhāna monk damaging his peers. It would be a monk inclined to damage his own faction. Individual interests would surely be involved. There's an old proverb, "Hitting the fish in front of the bamboo fish trap." It means hitting the fish in front of someone else's fish trap so that all of the fish will rush into your own trap. Similarly, one who likes to damage other people's reputations and defame others through various means also seeks to benefit. "*Once the devotees (saddhā) lose faith in other monks, they will all rush to me, only me.*" And one will elevate oneself and intimidate others by slandering and disparaging others. "*I am the only one who writes the Dhamma well. I teach the Dhamma better than anyone else. I am the only one who possesses high virtue. Everyone else is inconsequential.*" Even if others practice well and practice correctly, one will not acknowledge it. One will only proclaim to devotees that, "That monk practices wrong, teaches wrong, and is a fake, deceitful monk." One will not acknowledge the truth from others whatsoever.

All of this will surely happen to me, because the dogs' fighting is an omen of things to come. If it doesn't happen, then my nimitta must be wrong. Thus, I was confident that the omen of the dogs fighting was definitely not wrong and the monk intent on destroying me definitely existed as well. We are at the end of the Buddhist religion. Monks will belong to separate factions and each faction protects its own interests. If there is some way to break or take down a different faction, one must do it in order to preserve one's own company of devotees. Once a monk belonging to a different faction is respected and highly regarded by devotees, one will think that that monk is

going to cut in front of oneself and one will be afraid that one's own company of devotees will turn to another monk. So it becomes necessary to find some way to lock in one's own company of devotees. If there is an opportunity to attack the other monk, then it must be done and it must be said. If one has been ordained for many rains (vassa), one uses the power of that seniority to attack the junior monk without even considering unity.

When it comes to the number of vassas, respect must be given according to the monastic code of discipline (vinaya). That is customary and normal. But vassas cannot be used to gauge an individual's virtue, because virtue is determined by behavioral tendencies (*vāsanā*) and perfections of character (*pāramī*) that have been cultivated in past rebirths. For instance, during the Buddha's era, young novice monks (*sāmañera*) were able to practice cultivation in a way that bore virtue. If the mind possesses reason aligned with Dhamma, issues of conflict will not arise for that practitioner in any way. Once an issue arises, they must consult one another according to the monastic code of discipline and discuss it rationally. They shouldn't fight amongst themselves like the aforementioned dogs. In this way, they will unreservedly and truly be the disciples (*sāvaka*) of the Buddha.

Monks are a symbol of the Buddha when it comes to disseminating and teaching Buddhism to the people. They should train themselves to be aligned with the code of monastic discipline. It is better to aim to destroy mental intoxications (*āsava*) and defilements (*kilesa*) from the mind such that none remain than it is to aim to destroy someone else. In this era, few forest tradition monks remain. Those with many vassas should comport themselves in a way that junior monks can depend on. Don't play favorites or create divisions. Don't allow personal

interests to play a role. Even if you have riches, status, acclaim, or happiness, don't lose yourself in them. Monks are charged with studying and practicing (*paṭipatti*), training and teaching the people, and being of use to oneself and to others. Endeavor to train yourself to be friends with everyone. Train your mind to see others in a positive light. This is the character of one who will become a sage who is wise in the Dhamma. Don't train yourself to bully others in various ways. In this way, you will be a true "sāvaka-saṅgo," or a true community of disciples.



## **A Vision of Luang Pu Mun Pointing Out Someone Lost in Jhāna**

One night, as I settled into meditation (samādhi), I experienced a vision (nimitta) of Luang Pu Mun coming to ask me a Dhamma riddle. Luang Pu Mun would frequently visit me by way of nimitta. I regarded it as a customary, normal event. Whenever he visited, Luang Pu Mun would act informally, treating me familiarly every time. It was like a father with his son—talking, laughing, and being cheerful about things. That night, two events occurred. A phenomenon appeared in the east. There was a large circle with a roughly one-kilometer diameter. Within the circle, there were some spots that were bright, some spots that were less bright, and some spots that were dark and black. Each spot was locked into its respective position, constantly spinning around, and doing so at a significantly rapid rate.

Then, with his right hand, Luang Pu Mun tapped my shoulder, and with his left hand, pointed to the spots within the circle and said, “Thoon, what is this?”

“With permission, Luang Pu. Those are the cycles of rebirth (vatṭa-cakka) that the world’s sentient beings are cycling through, following the pull of the Three Realms.”

Luang Pu continued to ask, “What causes them to cycle through the Three Realms?”

I replied, “With permission, Luang Pu. What makes the world’s sentient beings cycle through the Three Realms is taṇhā, or desire for various sensual pleasures (kāma-guṇa). They are caught up in worldly predilections.”

Luang Pu asked, “How many levels of desire are there?”

I replied, “With permission, desire has two levels: 1. desire of a low level, or the desire for sensual pleasures, and 2. desire of a high level, or the desire for merit (puñña) and wholesomeness (kusala).”

Luang Pu asked, “How are merit and wholesomeness considered desire?”

I replied, “With permission, Luang Pu. Merit and wholesomeness are desires in a good way. All merit and wholesomeness arise from desire. Even those who are deluded by and attached to fine-material absorptions (rūpa-jhāna) and immaterial absorptions (arūpa-jhāna) are included in desire—that is, desire of a refined level. Once lost in fine-material absorptions or immaterial absorptions, one must continue to cycle through rebirths in this world. This is because merit and wholesomeness are only things that accommodate happiness, accommodate life’s conveniences, or merely alleviate a measure of suffering (dukkha). For the most part, everyone must experience suffering in this world. Because humans don’t know themselves, they get lost in desire-based happiness—namely, love and enjoyment from sensual pleasures. Little do they know, happiness from sensual pleasures is the cause of suffering.”

As I was talking to Luang Pu Mun, I noticed a great elder monk (mahā-thera) lying face up, sound asleep, and off to one side. Luang Pu pointed and said, “Look, Thoon. A monk lost in immaterial



absorptions." I saw and knew the entirety of what being lost meant. Then, my mind (citta) released from meditation, and I thought about that mahā thera monk and considered how one becomes lost in absorptions (jhāna). In this era, that mahā thera monk was elevated by his students to fully enlightened (arahant) status. Seeing as how his students have declared his attainment as an arahant, let that issue be on his students. One shouldn't say anything that will sow discord. In this day and age, there are a substantial number of student-conceived arahants. Despite knowing full well, one shouldn't say something that destroys the beliefs of others. Viewed from another angle, it is a good thing that there are still people who pay attention to believing that arahants still exist in this day and age. Whether someone is a real arahant or fake arahant is a separate issue. In this current era, this is how mental development practice (bhāvanā-paṭipatti) is being taught and this is how people are practicing—excessive teaching of meditation (samādhi) methods. What's worse, they teach, "Go on and meditate. Once the mind reaches a calm state, wisdom (paññā) will arise." Little do they know that too much meditation will turn into absorptions, and they will get lost in absorptions without being able to find a way out.

According to historical accounts, that mahā thera monk was one of Luang Pu Mun's students. But he possessed a deliverance of the mind (ceto-vimutti) disposition and enjoyed the tranquility of meditation. Consequently, his citta was in a continuous state of tranquility for a long time. The first time, he probably thought that wisdom would arise, and so he carried on meditating continuously. Eventually, his citta sank into meditative absorptions and supernormal powers (abhiññā) arose. He performed many different miracles and the devotees greatly respected and admired him. In the end, he passed

away into immaterial absorptions and was reborn as a divine being in the Formless Sphere (arūpa-brahma). That is why he is sound asleep to this day. In the Metteyya Buddha era, he will continue to be lost in immaterial absorptions for a long time. This is because the lifespan of divine beings in the Formless Sphere is extremely long. If someone meditates and falls deep into immaterial absorptions, in this day and age, it'll be very difficult to fix. That person would have to be left to continue to be lost in immaterial absorptions.

Fine-material absorptions and immaterial absorptions are not restricted to a religion. A person of any faith can cultivate absorptions. Even a person of no faith can cultivate absorptions and develop supernormal powers. This is because meditating and cultivating absorptions are universal principles. Hermits (tāpasa) and ascetics (isi) have done it before. Before Buddhism arose in the world, there were already people meditating and cultivating absorptions. As they were cultivating absorptions, they were not aware of where they would be reborn once they died. This is called meditating and cultivating absorptions with delusion such that delusional concentration (moha-samādhi) unknowingly arises. We are Buddhists and we should study this issue well.

There are three types of individuals who can fix those deluded by and stuck in absorptions: 1. the Buddha, 2. those who have tormented each other in past relationships, and 3. those with good wisdom (paññā). Outside of these three circumstances, it is impossible to fix one's delusion of absorptions. Teaching people to cultivate absorptions can be done. If someone possesses a deliverance of the mind (ceto-vimutti) personality, they will be able to attain tranquility in meditation and absorptions. And once they have developed those meditative states, who will be the one to fix it? In this era, there is no

Buddha. Is your wisdom strong enough for you to be able to fix it yourself? Or who is the individual who has tormented you in the past? Those who are lost in tranquility, lost in absorptions, and lost in supernormal powers are not ordinary individuals. They are individuals who possess great conceit (*ditṭhi*), arrogance (*māna*), and pride (*attā*). They will not easily yield to anyone. They are extremely sure of themselves. If someone says something that doesn't correspond to their sense of who they are, they will not listen. For the most part, that which is being taught today is taught by commoners (*puthujjana*). Thus, concentration (*samādhi*) must be done in accordance with your personality. If you are of the deliverance through wisdom (*paññā-vimutti*) type, forcing yourself to meditate to tranquility and develop absorptions will be ineffective. You will need to develop steadfastly focused concentration (*samādhi*), which matches with your personality, in order to be effective.



## A Review of Āsavakkhayañāṇa

May the reader review the knowledge of the extinction of mental intoxication (āsavakkhayañāṇa) once more in order to properly understand it. Even if it is impossibly out of reach, it should still be studied. Āsavakkhayañāṇa is the fruit (phala) that arises for the last time, and it will only arise in those who will attain full enlightenment (arahant). Those who have attained other levels of enlightenment (ariya-puggala)—non-returners (anāgāmī), once-returners (sakadāgāmī), and stream-enterers (sotāpanna)—will not experience āsavakkhayañāṇa yet. Āsavakkhayañāṇa is defined in manuals as knowing how to extinguish mental intoxication (āsava). But I would like to define āsavakkhayañāṇa as knowing that mental intoxication will be extinguished, simple as that. There is no “knowing how” to extinguish mental intoxication because that already happened during other processes like developing continuous insight (vipassanā) to the level of developing continuous insight-knowledge (vipassanāñāṇa) and going through the cessation of suffering and extinguishing the fuel that causes suffering (nirodha). No fuel remains for defilements (kilesa) and desires (taṇhā) to conjure up new existences (bhava) and rebirths (jāti). Within the mind (citta), there is no fuel for any mental intoxications to endure. Even the body and mind (dhātu-khandha) are physical elements that are pure. There is no fuel for any mental intoxications, defilements, or desires to linger. Therefore,

the process of extinguishing all mental intoxication has already taken place. This final stage does not involve the doing of anything anymore. Thus, I would like to translate āsavakkhayañāṇa as simply the knowledge (ñāṇa) that āsava will be extinguished. That's it. If I have mistranslated it, then I apologize.

Once āsavakkhayañāṇa has arisen, it is instantly known that mental intoxications will become extinct within a carimaka-citta, or last thought moment. The fruit of enlightenment (arahatta-phala) then arises in a blink of an eye, in a mere split instant. When you realize that mental intoxications will become extinct, you can be in any posture (iriyāpatha). During the Buddha's time, when individuals were to attain arahantship, some would attain enlightenment in the standing posture, some would attain enlightenment in the walking or going posture, some would attain enlightenment in the sitting posture, some would attain enlightenment in the lying down posture, and some would attain enlightenment in a half standing half lying down posture like Venerable Ānanda.

When a practitioner reaches this point, they are considered the perfect and ultimate embodiment of "one is one's own refuge." It is quite astonishing. It is a virtue that has never existed before in your life. In the past, you have been born and died in the rounds of rebirth (vatṭa-samsāra) for such an extremely long time that it is utterly impossible to quantify the number of existences or process the number of rebirths. Now, you have been able to experience this astonishing Dhamma for the first time. What is this astonishing Dhamma like? Only those who have awakened to the Dhamma will know it on their own without having to ask anyone. That's why it is called paccattam, or only knowable by the individual.

The very moment that you awaken to the Dhamma, all doubts you have about yourself instantly cease. What ethnicity you are, what language you speak, or what status you hold are all unimportant. You can be a monk or novice (*sāmanera*), a female or male layperson, or of any age. When you practice (*paṭipatti*) Dhamma to this point, this astonishing Dhamma is bound to be able to occur. Once this astonishing Dhamma happens to someone, there is no need to go and ask anyone anymore. Even if the Buddha were sitting right there, there is no need to ask him. This is the complete cessation of all self-doubt.

In this age, if someone were to awaken to this astonishing Dhamma, all doubts they have about themselves would similarly cease. They would all be just like those during the Buddha's time. They wouldn't need to receive an affirmative declaration (*vyākaraṇa*) from anyone at all. These are those who have made it past the stream of the world. Even those who attain enlightenment at lower levels, such as attaining enlightenment at a non-returner (*anāgāmī*) level, attaining enlightenment at a once-returner (*sakadāgāmī*) level, or attaining enlightenment at a stream-winner (*sotāpanna*) level, will similarly know that they have attained enlightenment at their respective levels. There is no need to ask anyone and no need to be evaluated by anyone. It is like eating food. Once you are full, you know that you are full. Why would you ask anyone? Attaining enlightenment is the same way.



## Only the Arahants Experience Āsavakkhayañāṇa

The knowledge of the extinction of mental intoxication (āsavakkhayañāṇa) only occurs to those who will attain enlightenment at the fruit of enlightenment (arahatta-phala) level. It absolutely will not occur to noble individuals (ariya-puggala) of other levels because they still possess mental intoxications (āsava). The non-returners (anāgāmī) still possess mental intoxications of a refined nature. When they die, they will be reborn in the Pure Abodes (suddhāvāsa) of the Brahma realm. That is where they shed their refined mental intoxications. Then they enter enlightenment (nibbāna), otherwise known as brahma-nibbāna.

If a practitioner cultivates meditation (samādhi) in such a way that their mind (citta) is tranquil in the four fine-material absorptions (rūpa-jhāna) and four immaterial absorptions (arūpa-jhāna)—collectively referred to as the Eight Attainments (aṭṭha-samāpatti)—if they die in that absorption (jhāna), they will remain in an ordinary Brahma realm. They will be unable to continue on to enlightenment. When the power of their absorption diminishes, they will return to the human world to be reborn once again. The defilements (kilesa) and desires (taṇhā) they already possess will arise within their minds again. They will possess greed (lobha), possess anger (dosa), possess ignorance (moha), possess lust (rāga), and possess desire for sensual

pleasures (kāma-guṇa)—namely, form, sound, scent, taste, and touch—just like any ordinary person. They will be pleased and content to have a family and offspring, just as is normal.

Thus, you should properly discern the expected outcome of your current mental cultivation (bhāvanā) and practice (paṭipatti). Are you headed for a rest in one of the Brahma realms or practicing mental cultivation for the attainment of the path and fruit of enlightenment (magga-phala-nibbāna)? You have to orient your practice in the right way. If you desire to head toward the path and fruit of enlightenment, but your practice methods (upāya) resemble those of the hermits (tāpasa) and ascetics (isi), you will immediately be headed the wrong way.

I would like for you to observe in a rational manner why Bhikkhu Siddhattha had made a determination (pañidhāna) while sitting under the Sri Mahā Bodhi tree, “*If I do not become enlightened as a Buddha in this place, I will continue to sit here until my blood, flesh, skin, sinews, and bones decay. If I do not become enlightened as a Buddha, I absolutely will not leave this seat.*” Observe why the Buddha had made his determination in that spot and not elsewhere. The Buddha had sat in many places, so why hadn’t he set a determination like he did at this spot? The answer is that at that moment, āsavakkhayañāna had already arisen in him. Even if he didn’t make the determination in this way, in the pre-dawn hours of that night, he would become enlightened as the Buddha anyway. The Buddha’s enlightenment didn’t happen because of his determination in any way. The determination was merely a reiteration of the victory. He had already experienced āsavakkhayañāna, so he knew that all mental intoxications would be extinguished at that time.

Let us look back and see what led to the emergence of āsavakkhayañāṇa. When the Buddha floated the golden tray, how did he apply it as a Dhamma metaphor in his practice? What was the process? He proclaimed that he had discovered the path to enlightenment by himself. How did he discover it? Let us study this properly. The Buddha's enlightenment was not due to the determination he made on that day. That was merely a symptom.

You should do some studies of the histories of those who attained enlightenment and became arahants during the Buddha's time. Is the attainment of enlightenment as an arahant the same as the enlightenment of the Buddha? The answer is that they are the same. The term "enlightened" is particular to the Buddha. The term "attain enlightenment" is used with the disciples (sāvaka); to use "enlightened" is inappropriate. It is like how the term, "eat" is used with commoners, but "partake" is used with the king.<sup>5</sup> The result of partaking in food and eating food is the same—being full. Is the āsavakkhayañāṇa of the Buddha and the āsavakkhayañāṇa of arahants the same or not? The answer is that they are the same. They are alike in knowing that mental intoxication will be extinguished. The purity (pārisuddhi) of Dhamma for the Buddha or a pacceka-buddha,<sup>6</sup> and the purity of Dhamma for an arahant are equal. That's why it is called nibbāna. The mental intoxications have similarly been completely extinguished and there is similarly no more returning to be born and to die within the Three Realms of Existence. Thus, you should study the Dhamma so that you understand it.

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<sup>5</sup> The Thai language has a standard vocabulary, a clerical vocabulary used with religious figures, and a royal vocabulary used with royalty. For instance, for "eat," commoners "kin," monks "chan," and kings "sawoey."

<sup>6</sup> A silent, non-teaching Buddha.

When āsavakkhayañāna occurs in those who are about to attain enlightenment and become arahants, will there be a determination (adhitṭhāna) made or not? The answer is that it isn't proper to make a determination like the Buddha. Even if you do not make a determination from the feeling of āsavakkhayañāna, you still know that mental intoxications will be extinguished just like they were for the Buddha anyway. That is why it is improper to make a determination in order to be like the Buddha. If someone were to ask, "In this day and age, if someone were to attain enlightenment and become an arahant, would it be the same as during the Buddha's time?" The answer would be that it is the same. Those who attained enlightenment as arahants during the Buddha's time and those who attain enlightenment as arahants in contemporary times are the same in every aspect. They are equal in the purity of Dhamma (pārisuddhi-dhamma). They are the same in completely extinguishing defilements, desires, and mental intoxications. Therefore, they reach the same place—nibbāna. However it was during the Buddha's time, that is how it must be in contemporary times. However those who attained enlightenment and became non-returners (anāgāmī), once-returners (sakadāgāmī), or stream winners (sotāpanna) during the Buddha's time were, that is how it must be when people attain enlightenment in contemporary times. The noble individuals' virtues at each stage and each level are entirely equal.



## A Nimitta of a Group of Dancing Devas

One night, around 3 a.m. when it was completely dark, I experienced a meditative vision (nimitta) of music. It was a beautiful, melodious sound. At first, I thought it was the villagers playing so I didn't pay it any attention. A bit later, the music grew louder. It struck me that, "*The houses around here are in the forest and mountains, far from developed civilization. How did they obtain such instruments to play? It is probably impossible that the villagers in the countryside will have the money to hire a band to listen to.*" Then, the music became more pronounced and I listened intently in order to discern the direction of its source. I determined that it came from the west, and I also knew that there were no houses in that direction. From where I was, the nearest house was ten kilometers away, and it was a large forest with tall mountains, so any sounds definitely would not reach me this far.

Then, I directed my mind (citta) to the sound of the music. Once I directed my mind, I saw a large palace illuminated with bright lights and decorated with an assortment of flowers. It was very beautiful. The group of people playing the music didn't appear to be human at all. They were a group of young deities (devaputta) and adult deities (devatā). All of them were dressed in celestial (dibba) garb. They glistened and wore exquisitely beautiful necklaces and breast chains. Men and women were paired off, and they smiled and were cheerful



with one another. They seemed to be very happy and enjoying themselves to the fullest. They danced in a graceful manner.

I continued to think about where this group of devaputtas and devatās had come from. At first, I thought that they were devaputtas and devatās from Tāvatiṁsā, the heavenly realm of the Thirty-three. All of them were equally beautiful. When the musicians and the group of roughly two hundred who were dancing had had their fill, they adjourned and departed. After contemplating, I discerned that they were the tree dwelling deities (rukkha-devatā) that resided in this large forest. I could remember the direction in which they lived, so after eating my meal, I walked over to where they had been playing. I remembered the entire site. I saw a large, leafy tree whose leaves provided a thick canopy of shade. I told the villagers, “Do not cut this tree, no matter what. It is the site where devaputtas and devatās come to play. At the arranged time, they will convene here to play, as is their custom.”

These celestial beings still possess defilements (kilesa), desires (taṇhā), greed, anger, and delusion, just like we humans do. If they are displeased with humans, they will make humans sick to the point of dying, even. What we call ghosts are of this same group. At times, they transform into celestial beings and at times they are ghosts. It is just like with humans. At times we are devatās, or manussa-devo, one with a body of a human and a mind of a celestial being, manussa-peto, one with a body of a human but a mind of a hungry ghost (peta), or manussa-tiracchāno, one with a body of a human but a mind of an animal (tiracchāna). A single human is capable of being a celestial being, a hungry ghost, an animal, or a demon (asurakāya). What someone is can be discerned from their behavior and actions. Or you can observe yourself—what are you?

In Buddhism, we do not favor the term “ghost,” but opt to elevate them and call them celestial beings (devatā). For example, rukkha-devatās are celestial beings that reside in trees, bummatta-devatās are celestial beings that reside in caves, abysses, or on the ground, and geha-devatās are celestial beings that reside in people’s houses. How do celestial beings live in people’s houses? I will presently relate a historical account.

During the Buddha’s time, Venerable Soṇa was a student of Venerable Mahā Kaccāna. A group of five monks had gone to disseminate Buddhism in the countryside. There were people who wanted to take higher ordination as a monk (upasampadā), but there weren’t enough monks to carry out the ordination. So, Venerable Mahā Kaccāna sent Venerable Soṇa to seek the Buddha’s permission for a monastic community (saṅgha) of five to be allowed to ordain monks in the wilderness or in the countryside. Venerable Soṇa had a natural talent and could sing intoned recitations (sarabhañña) very melodiously. After Venerable Soṇa finished paying his respects to the Buddha, the Buddha granted permission for Venerable Soṇa to share the Buddha’s hut (kuṭī). In the evening, the Buddha had Venerable Soṇa perform an intoned recitation about the Dhamma. Once Venerable Soṇa finished, the Buddha expressed his appreciation (anumodanā) and said, “Sādhu.” Then, celestial beings from all over joined in expressing their appreciation, each saying, “Sādhu,” in succession.

There was another group of devatās called geha-devatās residing in Venerable Soṇa’s mother’s house who similarly said, “Sādhu” in unison within that house. Perplexed, Venerable Soṇa’s mother asked, “Who is saying ‘Sādhu’ to me here? Why is it that you have never said ‘Sādhu’ to me before?”

The devatās said, “Honorable mother, we are devatās. The ‘Sādhu’ that we said was in fact for Venerable Soṇa, your son, because Venerable Soṇa is resting in the Buddha’s kutī and has performed an intoned recitation for the Buddha. The Buddha said ‘Sādhu’ and had rejoiced (anumodanā), so we devatās, wherever we may be, are all joining in saying ‘Sādhu’ together.”

Venerable Soṇa’s mother asked the devatās, “When did you come to live in my house? And for what purpose are you living here?”

The devatās replied, “We have been living in your house for a long time now. We came to live here because it is warm and comfortable. Plus, we get to receive merit (puñña) and virtue (kusala) because you pray and practice mental cultivation (bhāvanā) every night. We feel comforted, happy, and pleased to rejoice (anumodanā) with you every night. We request to continue to reside here in your home forever. We will protect you and take care of you so that no evil befalls you. No ghosts or demons will do anything to you. May you grace us with your benevolence (mettā) and permit us to continue to reside here forever.”

After hearing the devatās say this, Venerable Soṇa’s mother gave her consent for the devatās to reside in her home. She prayed and practiced mental cultivation and dedicated the merit and virtue to the devatās on a regular basis. The home was filled with happiness and bliss. No disasters, ghosts, or hungry ghosts (peta) could ever come near the house.

After reading about Venerable Soṇa’s mother, let us take after her example and endeavor to train ourselves to do chanting and practice mental cultivation on a consistent basis, as well as regularly uphold the Five Precepts (pañca-sīla). Once someone possesses

morality (sīla-dhamma), the scent of morality (sīla) and righteousness (dhamma) is bound to have a fragrant aroma that scatters in all four directions, both along the ground and into the air. The devatās will want to approach and be near you and reside in your home. Wherever those who possess morality live, ghosts will be unable to come near because they will feel agitated and bolt. Within the house, there will be happiness and prosperity. No disasters will come near, as the devatās will help take care of you and your family to ensure your eternal happiness.



## At Wat Tham Klong Phen

After the rains retreat (vassa) ended, I returned to Wat Tham Klong Phen. The plan was, if Luang Pu Khao Anālayo were to ask about the results of my practice of mental cultivation (bhāvanā-patipatti), I would tell him about it. But if he didn't ask, I would not have to say anything. Or if another teacher (ācariya) asked about the results of my practice, I would first have to consider which teachers I should tell or should not tell. It isn't that anyone who asks will be told. Staying at Wat Tham Klong Phen, however foolishly I had acted before, that was how foolishly I would act on my return.

I arrived at Wat Tham Klong Phen when it was dark, around 8 p.m., so I didn't go to pay my respects to Luang Pu at his hut (kutī). I spent the night at the temple. The following morning, Luang Pu came to the pavilion in order to depart for alms (piṇḍapāta) at a Mae Chee's<sup>7</sup> home. I went to bow to Luang Pu at that time. I hadn't even finished bowing when Luang Pu asked me straightaway, "How are you, Thoon? What was the outcome of your practice? Tell me about it."

It wasn't the appropriate time and there were many elder (thera) monks sitting there, so I told Luang Pu, "With permission, Luang Pu.

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<sup>7</sup> Mae Chee is a Thai term for an ordained female who observes the Eight Precepts or Ten Precepts, shaves her head, and wears white. Mae Chees are not required to live a monastery and may live at home or in communities.

This evening, I will go to your kuṭī and tell you about it.” Luang Pu nodded and left for alms at the Mae Chee’s home.

In the evening, after all of the monks and sāmañeras had cleared out of Luang Pu’s kuṭī, I had the opportunity to be alone with him. I asked Luang Pu for permission and told him about the fruits (phala) of my practice (paṭipatti). After telling Luang Pu about it, he remarked, “Very few people are capable of experiencing this kind of fruit of practice.” He said, “I have also experienced the same thing. When it comes to fruits of practice that are real and genuine, you needn’t say much. Just a few sentences and you instantly know the entire significance. These days, those who will know the fruits of practice like this are few in number.” Luang Pu asked, “How long had you been ordained before coming to reap the fruits of practice?”

“With permission, Luang Pu. I had been ordained eight days shy of eight years when I reaped the fruits of practice.”

Luang Pu grinned and said, “It’s probably due to old perfections of character (pāramī). Having cultivated so much in past lives, they have become the causes and conditions (paccaya) of your attainment being this quick.” Luang Pu asked, “Before wisdom (paññā) arose, what was the metaphor (upāya) used for contemplating?”

I asked Luang Pu for permission and told him about the causes and conditions that led to wisdom arising and recounted the skunk vine story. What I related about the skunk vine is entirely identical to what I have previously described. I explained how I used wisdom to contemplate and how I used the metaphor to draw parallels to defilements (kilesa) and desires (taṇhā).

When I finished, Luang Pu grinned and said, "The cause, conditions, and metaphor that you have described resemble mine. The only discrepancy is the difference in object. The use of wisdom to contemplate, as you have described it, is entirely like mine."

I took the opportunity to ask Luang Pu, "With permission, Luang Pu. What causes and conditions precipitated the emergence of your wisdom metaphor?"

Then, Luang Pu proceeded to tell me about what happened decades ago. He described it in detail and sequentially, as if it were an experience that had taken place only two to three days ago. The events that Luang Pu spoke of were very sharp in his memory. He related the incidents that had caused wisdom to arise. "One afternoon, I went to bathe in the river below a hillside. It was during a time when people were harvesting rice. When I looked at the rice fields, I saw yellow grains of mature rice everywhere. At that time, I hadn't bathed yet so I sat down. I watched the rice as it was being harvested and the thought emerged in my mind, *'The rice that they are harvesting comes from grains of rice from last year, because grains of rice contain the germ that leads to rebirth. Once someone takes a grain of rice which contains this germ and sows it into dirt that is moist from the water, the germ that exists in the grain of rice will begin to break out and sprout from that grain of rice. Initially, the germ is a small white dot. It sends roots into the ground and extracts fertilizer from the ground for sustenance. From a grain of rice, it grows into a small plant. Many days later, the rice plant grows more beautiful, like a straw plant. After roughly one month, it is uprooted and replanted in the dirt. The rice plant matures and grows larger. Once it reaches full maturity, there emerge ears of*



*young grains of rice with soft hulls. Then, the rice grains with soft hulls mature into rice inside of the hulls. And the rice germ is contained in the tip of the grain of rice within the hull. Then, the farmers collect the rice that contains the germ to use in propagation. The grain of rice is then regenerated. It generates grains of rice just like the grains before.”*

Luang Pu explained further, “When a grain of rice that contains the germ falls into moist soil, it will grow into a plant and into grains of rice once more. But if you remove the hull and use your fingernail to remove the germ from the tip of the grain of rice and take that remaining grain of rice and sow it into soil moist with water and fertilizer, that grain of rice will not regenerate into a plant at all. Or if you take that grain of rice with its hull and cook it over a fire so that it burns, and then you sow it into the soil, it also will not regenerate. This is because the germ within the grain of rice has been destroyed. Gone are the causes and gone are the conditions to be reborn again.

“Once I finished contemplating the grains of rice, I internalized (opanayiko) the grains of rice, drawing parallels inward to my body and inward to my mind. Then I used wisdom to contemplate further. The entire rice plant was like my body. The grains of rice were like my mind. The germ in the tip of the grain of rice was like defilements and desires. Using a fingernail to break off the germ contained in the grain of rice is like using mindfulness (sati) and wisdom (paññā) to contemplate and eradicate various defilements, desires, and mental intoxications (āsava) from the mind. Once the mind no longer has defilements and desires as the fuel leading to rebirth, from where would existences (bhava) and rebirths (jāti) come? Once there are no more existences or rebirth, then how would there be any more aging, sickness, death, suffering, distress, sadness, grief, or shame?”

Thus, the issues of the mind and issues of defilements and desires attaching themselves to the mind are important issues that must be fixed. They must be eradicated from the mind within this lifetime in order to prevent the protraction of your rebirths (*bhavajāti*) as you continue to be reborn in various existences. Readers, the period in which Luang Pu Khao used wisdom to contemplate the grains of rice was when insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) arose. On the surface, it seems that at the time he was using thoughts to contemplate in an ordinary fashion that was not any different from the thoughts and contemplations of typical practitioners. But there was one thing that was not the same, namely the strength of his mind, the strength of his mindfulness, the strength of his wisdom, and the strength of his perfections of character (*pāramī*) that had come together perfectly. All of the *pāramī* that had been cultivated in the past and the *pāramī* that Luang Pu had practiced in the present rebirth, the five spiritual faculties (*indriya*) that were fully mature and courageous, as well as the strength of all of the other efforts that Luang Pu had cultivated had all come together perfectly. Consequently, *vipassanā-ñāṇa* arose at that moment. The strength of *vipassanā-ñāṇa* then executed every last defilement, desire, and mental intoxication so that none remained in the mind. It was what extinguished the fuel, or desire (*taṇhā*), that leads to rebirth in various existences (*bhava*). It is this strength of *vipassanā-ñāṇa* that is the prominent attribute that enables a practitioner's attainment of enlightenment as an arahant in this lifetime. May you all understand this. You should adopt this as a model to some extent.

"After that, I took a bath in the river. While I was bathing, I contemplated the filthiness of every part of the body. It was as if I were washing a corpse in the water. Seeing as the body is dirty, it

must be washed with water. Seeing as the mind is dirty with defilements and desires, it must be washed with mindfulness and wisdom. With strong mindfulness and wisdom, defilements and desires will easily detach and fall from the mind. Mindfulness and wisdom are the detergent that directly washes the mind clean of defilements and desires. Wherever the fuel for rebirth is buried in the mind, there wisdom scrubs so that the dirtiness of defilements and desires can no longer bind to or cling to the mind. Even though defilements and desires have been bound to the mind for a long time, with strong mindfulness and wisdom, eradicating desires and mental intoxications from the mind is a task easily accomplished.

“After I finished bathing, I scooped water into a bamboo flask and carried it back to my *kutī* straightaway. The walk back was essentially a means (*upāya*) of walking meditation (*caṅkama*). When I arrived at the *kutī*, I put the bamboo flask inside and came out to continue walking meditation. I used wisdom to contemplate in a continuous manner. I contemplated with wisdom in the same manner (*upāya*) I had contemplated the grains of rice in order to teach the mind at all times. The contemplations were supported with reason in a manner that corresponded to principles of reality and in a manner such that the mind knew and saw the suffering (*dukkha*), harmful consequences (*dosa*), and perils (*bhaya*) of rebirth (*jāti*)—namely, birth, aging, sickness, and death—and that nothing is self or self-belongings at all times. The *vipassanā-ñāṇa* that arose was incredibly courageous, resolute, and steadfast, and it did not permit defilements and desires to establish themselves whatsoever. Whatever it was that I contemplated, I would know and see the entirety of it according to reality until comprehensive clarity arose in the mind (*citta*) and all doubts about it vanished. The methods (*upāya*) used in those

contemplations were the same as what you had described, Venerable Thoon.

"When it got dark, I went into my kuṭī and settled down to contemplate further." Luang Pu recounted, "After a short time of using wisdom to contemplate, the citta needed calmness. I directed the citta into a fully calm state." Luang Pu explained, "In the many years since I began to practice, this was my first time experiencing the citta being calm. Previously, the citta had experienced a measure of calm but it was like a flash of lightning. A mere split second later, the citta would retreat and I would use wisdom to contemplate universal truths (sacca-dhamma) thereafter. But this time the citta was in a very steadfast state of calmness." Luang Pu said, "I recalled Luang Pu Mun's teaching, 'Venerable Khao, if the citta's calmness reaches the basis of consciousness (cittassa-ṭhiti),<sup>8</sup> do not force the citta to withdraw itself. Let the citta remain in that calmness. Once the citta is replete from meditation (samādhi), it will withdraw on its own. Do not allow the citta to completely withdraw, however. Be mindful to focus the citta a bit. Then, use wisdom to contemplate on universal truths thereafter.'

"Then, I effectively practiced according to Luang Pu Mun's teachings." Luang Pu Khao said, "The meditative calm transpired according to everything Luang Pu Mun had said. Once the citta began to withdraw from the calmness, I was mindful to focus the citta slightly and used wisdom to contemplate the grain of rice metaphor thereafter. I internalized the metaphor, reflecting inward to my body and reflecting inward to my mind until there arose clear knowledge and realization

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<sup>8</sup> The Thai text uses a phrase that translates to "the big foundation of concentration (samādhi)," which likely refers to the basis of consciousness (cittassa-ṭhiti). Cittassa-ṭhiti means stability of the mind (citta). It is the essential form of the mind in which the mind is steadfastly still.

of the defilements and desires that were rooted in my mind. Then, there arose in my mind the knowledge and realization of the suffering, harmful consequences, and perils that the mind experiences because of defilements and desires."



## Nirodha, the Cessation of Suffering

"Nirodha, the cessation of suffering, arose just like you already described, Venerable Thoon." Luang Pu stated, "At that time, there was no consciousness in anything. Though I had eyes, ears, a nose, a tongue, and a body, there was no consciousness of any form, sound, scent, taste, or touch because consciousness (*viññāna*) had ceased. Consciousness of the eyes didn't exist, consciousness of the ears didn't exist, consciousness of the nose didn't exist, consciousness of the tongue didn't exist, and consciousness of the body didn't exist. There was no sense impression of form, no sense impression of sound, no sense impression of scent, no consciousness of taste, and no consciousness of physical contact whatsoever. The eyes I had were merely eyes. The ears I had were merely ears. The nose I had was merely a nose. The tongue I had was merely a tongue. The body I had was merely a body. They could not be put to any use. This was the cessation of the physical aggregate (*rūpa-khandha*).

"Then the mental aggregates (*nāma-khandha*) ceased. *Vedanā*, which denotes the various preoccupations (*ārammaṇa*) of happiness (*sukha*), preoccupations (*ārammaṇa*) of suffering (*dukkha*), and preoccupations (*ārammaṇa*) of neither happiness nor suffering, was unable to feel anything at that time because consciousness (*viññāna*) of preoccupations (*ārammaṇa*) did not exist. *Saññā*, or memory and

recognition, was unable to remember anything at all. This was because consciousness (*viññāṇa*) of memory (*saññā*) had already ceased. Consequently, there was no remembering of anything at all. Saṅkhāra, or mental formations, was also unable to form any mental formations. This was because there was no consciousness (*viññāṇa*) of mental formations. Before, the mind had previously thought of various things, but now it could not think anything at all. Once only consciousness (*viññāṇa*) ceased, both the physical aggregate (*rūpa-khandha*) and mental aggregates (*nāma-khandha*) completely stopped and went silent. They could not work anymore. ‘I’ didn’t exist, ‘you’ didn’t exist, contentment didn’t exist, and discontentment didn’t exist.”

Luang Pu Khao went on, “The use of wisdom (*paññā*) to contemplate was exactly how you described. Developing continuous insight (*vipassanā*) was the same. Developing continuous insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) was the same. Nirodha, the cessation of suffering and the cessation of the cause of suffering, were the same. Āsavakkhayañāṇa, knowing that mental intoxication will cease, was the same. If you practice the same way, you must know and see the same things. When you eat from the same dish, the food tastes the same to everyone. Similarly, practice that begins from a certain cause will later result in an outcome that is the same for all. Paṭivedha, the attainment of enlightenment, is the result (*phala*) that is the same. How slowly or quickly one will achieve understanding depends on how much pāramī one has cultivated. Whether one reaches understanding quickly or slowly is unimportant because the result that emerges is purification (*pārisuddhi*) that is the same. The cessation of defilements and desires and the extinction of mental intoxication is the same. The same place is reached—enlightenment (*nibbāna*).”



## **Luang Pu Khao's Āsava Ceased That Night**

Luang Pu Khao recounted, “That night, once nirodha, the cessation of suffering (dukkha) and the cessation of the cause of suffering, was over, the knowledge of the extinguishment of mental intoxication (āsavakkhayāñāṇa) arose. I knew on my own that defilements (kilesa) and mental intoxications (āsava) would be extinguished then. Courage arose within me, exactly as you described, and I proceeded to sit there without needing to do anything. It was nearly light when the attainment of enlightenment occurred in a flash, right as I was sitting there. I was conscious that I had just attained enlightenment. The purification (pārisuddhi) that is release to enlightenment (vimutti-nibbāna) also arose in a perfect, replete manner. The war between defilements and desires (taṇhā) and mindfulness (sati) and wisdom (paññā) that had been fought from the very beginning up to the present was considered over and done with that very night.”

After conversing about the Dhamma with Luang Pu for many hours, I bowed to Luang Pu and headed back to my hut (kuṭī). Luang Pu had instructed, “Come back tomorrow night to discuss the Dhamma again, alright? In the many years since I have known the Dhamma, I have never discussed the Dhamma with anyone for this long, because I didn’t know who I could talk to that would speak the same language.” Luang Pu even mentioned, “Once, a long time ago, I spoke to Venerable

Mahā Boowa about the Dhamma. But we didn't speak for long because we were at a function we had been invited to. We merely spoke about the main points. Since then, only you have gotten me to talk about the Dhamma again."

The following night, when the coast was clear of monks and novices (*sāmañera*), I went up to Luang Pu's *kutī* to continue our Dhamma conversation. That night, Luang Pu led me to his bedroom so that we could talk as much as we wanted. That night, Luang Pu brought up self (*attā*) and not-self (*anattā*) as the first topic. Luang Pu remarked, "In order to know and see *anattā* with clarity, once the mind (*citta*) has fully entered *magga-samañgī*,<sup>9</sup> you must go in and extinguish all *attā*. If there is no *attā* to extinguish, then there is no *anattā*. Therefore, *anattā* is something that isn't anything, and there is no anything, there is no 'me,' and there is no 'you.'

"Initially, there must be self (*attā*)—self in form (*rūpa*) and self in mental factors (*nāma*). Nirodha, the extinguishment of suffering and the extinguishment of the cause of suffering, must extinguish the wrong views and extinguish the wrong understandings that the mind has clung to and mistakenly believed substantiated form and mental factors being self. Once this wrong understanding is destroyed, form and mental factors are merely form and mental factors. That's all. There can no longer be any delusion of self because you know and see very clearly that the truth is, self is merely a convention (*sammuti*) of outward action (*kiriyyā*). However, that which is not displayed externally (*akiriyyā*), which is the basis for seeing self as not-self, has to do with the universal truths (*sacca-dhamma*) of reality. While you are still alive, you continue to rely on self (*attā*) until the lifespan of your body and mind (*dhātu-khandha*) is no longer sustainable. But,

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<sup>9</sup> Magga-samañgī is the unification of the Noble Eightfold Path in the mind.

there is nothing to bind or connect to the purity (pārisuddhi) because you clearly know and clearly see that form (rūpa) is not self, self is not form (rūpa), form (rūpa) does not exist in self, self does not exist in form (rūpa); feeling (vedanā) is not self, self is not feeling (vedanā), feeling (vedanā) does not exist in self, self does not exist in feeling (vedanā); memory (saññā) is not self, self is not memory (saññā), memory (saññā) does not exist in self, self does not exist in memory (saññā); mental formations (saṅkhāra) are not self, self is not mental formations (saṅkhāra), mental formations (saṅkhāra) do not exist in self, self does not exist in mental formations (saṅkhāra); consciousness (viññāna) is not self, self is not consciousness (viññāna), consciousness (viññāna) does not exist in self, self does not exist in consciousness (viññāna). If body and mind (rūpa-nāma) are not self, self is not body and mind (rūpa-nāma), body and mind (rūpa-nāma) do not exist in self, self does not exist in body and mind (rūpa-nāma). That is, self (attā) has been destroyed. That is why it is called not-self (anattā). There is no ‘animal,’ there is no ‘human,’ there is no ‘body,’ there is no ‘self,’ there is no ‘me,’ there is no ‘you’ in anything. Thus, it is merely a condition of nature (sabhāva-dhamma) that we speak of in terms of conventional reality (sammuti). There’s only emptiness. There is no meaning (nimitta) or significance in the convention (sammuti).

“It’s like the number zero. Even if you were to line up a great many zeros, it would not have any significance in terms of value. If you were to lead them with 1-2-3... all of the zeros would signify value and indicate amount.”

Luang Pu then drew a comparison to a muntjac. “There was a muntjac that went to live in a forest grove on a small hill. Thousands

of people encircled the forest grove, and each and every person saw the muntjac enter the grove. Then, those thousands of people who formed a ring around the forest grove walked into the forest, maintaining the airtight ring formation with everyone lined up shoulder to shoulder facing into the forest. They turned over every leaf and blade of grass, but they did not see the muntjac. Then, they razed the trees and grass to the ground so that only a level dirt ground remained. The thousands of people went and stood there until the area was completely filled in and not even a fraction of an inch's worth of empty space could be found. Even so, the muntjac was not seen.

“The assumption that the four elements (*catu-dhātu*) and five aggregates (*pañca-khandha*) are self (*attā*) is the same way. Once your insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) goes in and contemplates until you know and see according to reality, there is no four elements, there is no five aggregates, there is no self in the five aggregates whatsoever, and nirodha, the cessation of suffering and cessation of the cause of suffering, has all occurred. Thus, it is called *anattā*, or emptiness. There is nothing that is self (*attā*) at all. Ignorance (*avijjā*), delusion (*moha*), and wrong views (*micchā-ditṭhi*) have caused us to hold onto this kind of wrong assumption for eternity. That is why we have cycled through birth and death for so long.”

I asked Luang Pu, “With permission, Luang Pu. Where did you look for the muntjac?”

Luang Pu replied, “At Long Khot sub-district, Phrao district, Chiang Mai province during December. As for the day or year, I used to be able to remember all of it. But after so much time has passed, *saññā anicca*<sup>10</sup> has eaten it all up. As for the time, it was nearly light.

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<sup>10</sup> *Saññā anicca* translates to impermanent memory. It refers to the inability to remember.

I attained enlightenment in the sitting posture (iriyāpatha). After I knew that I had attained release from the Three Realms, it was like you said, Venerable Thoon. I suddenly thought of the Buddha and I thought a lot about Luang Pu Mun. In thinking of them, it wasn't that I wanted the Buddha or wanted Luang Pu Mun to make a declaration (vyākaraṇa) about me. I merely thought of how grateful I was for the Buddha and how grateful I was for Luang Pu Mun. That's all. It was due to the Buddha's benevolence (mettā) and sympathy for all sentient beings that he established the Buddhist religion for us. If the Buddha did not leave us with the religion, we would never be able to know and see the truth of the Dhamma. In this era, Luang Pu Mun studied the Buddha's teachings and found the path correctly. He practiced (paṭipatti) until he successfully achieved full enlightenment as an arahant. He then taught his many students who continue to attain arahantship to this day. This gratitude is the reason why I thought of him."

Then Luang Pu began to ask me questions. "What kind of comparison did you draw to the awakening to the Dhamma? Tell me about it."

"With permission, Luang Pu. I compared having awakened to the Dhamma to taking a large chunk of red charcoal with flames coming from it, submerging it in water, and leaving it for a long while. When you pick it up, you know that the fire in the charcoal has been completely extinguished. When you touch it with your hand there seems to be residual heat, but the fuel for fire has completely been extinguished. Even if you pour fuel onto it and light it, fire will not emerge from that chunk of charcoal."

Luang Pu grinned and said, "That's a good comparison. It's just like mine."

I asked Luang Pu, "With permission, Luang Pu. Shortly after you had awakened to the Dhamma, did you think about wanting to teach the Dhamma to anyone?"

Luang Pu turned the question back to me. "What about you? Did you think about wanting to teach the Dhamma to anyone?"

"With permission, Luang Pu. If I say it, it's like I am imitating the Buddha. The truth is that I did not want to teach the Dhamma to anyone because the Dhamma was so refined and therefore difficult for anyone to comprehend. I felt that way for about five minutes, then I thought about the reason I had come to awaken to the Dhamma at that time. Why wouldn't others be able to awaken to the Dhamma like me? Each of us has cultivated perfections of character (*pāramī*) in order to achieve release from suffering. If I can awaken to the Dhamma, then others can awaken to the Dhamma just like I did."

After hearing what I had to say, Luang Pu laughed and said, "I was the same way. It is a natural thing that occurs organically. This kind of thing arises momentarily and then vanishes on its own because you realize that if you can know the Dhamma, then others must be able to know the Dhamma just like you. If someone were to come and learn the Dhamma from you, you would be willing to teach them."

I continued to ask Luang Pu, "With permission, Luang Pu. Within the three to four days following your attainment of Dhamma, did your mind possess any kind of strength?"

Luang Pu exclaimed, "Indeed! Strength arose in my mind at that time. It was as if I could carry an entire mountain or uproot a large tree in its entirety and carry it somewhere far away. But if my physical strength wasn't ready, nothing could be done."

Then Luang Pu asked me the same question. “What about you? How was it?”

I answered, “The same as you, Luang Pu.”

There was one thing I asked Luang Pu about for which he provided a very clear answer. It was something we discussed only between the two of us. I have never told anyone about it because people in this day and age wouldn’t believe it anyway. When speaking about arahants, most people don’t even believe that arahants truly exist in this era. What I asked Luang Pu was, “Regarding arahant relics (arahant-dhātu), once a teacher (ācariya) or someone who is an arahant dies and is cremated, all of their bones turn into sacred relics (dhātu).<sup>11</sup> Why does that happen? And when does it start to happen?”

Luang Pu didn’t want to answer. He even said, “How do you understand it to be? Tell me.”

“With permission, Luang Pu. I asked you first. You have to answer me first.”

Luang Pu then explained why bones become sacred relics (dhātu). He said, “Regarding bones becoming sacred relics (dhātu), it only happens to the bones of those who have attained enlightenment as arahants. The bones of holy individuals (ariya-puggala) of other levels are not yet able to turn into sacred relics because there are still defilements (kilesa). The bones turn into sacred relics because of the

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<sup>11</sup> When a non-enlightened person’s bones are cremated, they turn a gray color or into ash and remain that way. For those who are fully enlightened (arahant), all cremated body parts and bodily liquids turn into sacred relics. The appearance of each arahant’s sacred relics differs, but will typically resemble small stones, crystals, gemstones, or pearls. Larger bone pieces may initially resemble coral—some even contain a tint of color, such as gold or green—but will transform into stone-like relics over time. Hair tends to gradually clump together and transform into relics as well.

virtue of the purification Dhamma (visuddhi-dhamma).<sup>12</sup> In other words, pure Dhamma (pārisuddhi-dhamma) has arisen. This pure Dhamma purifies every part of the body as well. Even the bones are purified by this pure Dhamma. From the moment that one attains this pure Dhamma, the Dhamma starts to purify the elements (dhātu). No more than seven days later, this pure Dhamma has purified the elements in various body parts, making them all pure. While still alive, the bones are just normal bones. After death, the bones are burned and transform into sacred relics."

I asked Luang Pu, "When the pure Dhamma was purifying the elements, did you know it?"

Luang Pu replied, "Yes. Why wouldn't I know it?" Then he asked me back, "Did you know when the pure Dhamma was purifying the elements?"

I answered, "Yes."

Luang Pu said, "It's the same. That's how it happened to me."

I then asked Luang Pu about the fruit (phala) of applied practice (patipatti) and theoretical knowledge (pariyatti). "With permission, Luang Pu. How are theoretical knowledge and the fruit of practice different?"

"Oh! The knowledge from theory and the fruit that arises from practice are very different because theoretical knowledge is coarse Dhamma while the fruit of practice is very refined. It is like knowing

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<sup>12</sup> If you are stuck on an issue and a particular Dhamma metaphor effectively washes away all doubts pertaining to that issue, that Dhamma is Dhamma that purifies, or purification Dhamma (visuddhi-dhamma). The result of Dhamma that purifies (visuddhi-dhamma) is pure Dhamma (pārisuddhi-dhamma).

the name of food or knowing the name of fruit but never having tasted the food or fruit. It is impossible to correctly guess what the taste will be like. Theoretical knowledge and applied practice are the same way. If you only study theory but don't practice, you will never experience the flavor of Dhamma at all. If someone experiences the flavor of Dhamma, then they have not wasted their life."

Luang Pu added, "This era is a Venerable Pothila era. People are showing off the empty scriptures they are carrying. People in this era don't believe that the fruit of practice, or paṭivedha, exists. That's why they aren't practicing. Or if they do practice, they are practicing too much in the way of the hermits (tāpasa) and ascetics (isi). The instructors have misunderstood and misinterpreted the Dhamma, thus giving rise to wrong perception of the theoretical doctrine (pariyatti). Upon putting it to practice, it becomes micchā-paṭipatti, or wrong practice. The results that arise from wrong practice (micchā-paṭipatti) are results that are wrong (micchā). They are not in accordance with the noble fruit (ariya-phala) of the Buddha in any way. This era is at the end of the Buddhist religion, so this is how it has to be. There is no way to fix it. This is the point where the Buddhist religion declines. It is the Buddhist community (buddha-parisā) that is causing the decline, and it will continue to decline progressively."

Then, Luang Pu asked me the same question. "What are your thoughts about theoretical knowledge and applied practice?"

"With permission, Luang Pu. There is a great difference between theoretical knowledge and applied practice. Theoretical knowledge is like oil that is extracted from the ground. You cannot make use of it in a vehicle or machine quite yet. You have to take that crude oil and refine it until it becomes a pure oil. Then you will be able to make

effective use of it. Similarly, Luang Pu, the crude oil is like theoretical knowledge (pariyatti) and refining that oil until it becomes pure is like applied practice (paṭipatti). Getting beneficial results from the use of that oil is like the fruit of practice (paṭivedha) that we call pārisuddhi-dhamma, or Dhamma that is pure at all times. It does not decline in any way. Regardless of where you are or what posture you may be in, the purity is dispassionate (virāga-dhamma), it is unshakable (akuppa-dhamma), and it is Dhamma that does not relapse. Every arahant must be this way. That is why they are 'kataṁ karaṇīyam,'<sup>13</sup> or one who has no further tasks to accomplish."

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<sup>13</sup> Kataṁ karaṇīyam: what had to be done is done.



## A History of Cycling Through Rebirths

After I had related the results of my practice (*paṭipatti*) to Luang Pu, we began to talk about the past, about the history of cycling through birth and death in various existences. Luang Pu asked, “In regards to the place in which you attained enlightenment, did you contemplate how you and that place were associated?”

“With permission, Luang Pu. I had been a dog there before. I had died there in the past.”

Luang Pu laughed and said, “There has to be an associated rebirth because in cycling through rebirths in this world for such a long time, we have been born as every type of sentient being.”

I turned the question back to Luang Pu. “With permission, Luang Pu. What was your link to Long Khot?”

Luang Pu replied, “I was formerly a muntjac that lived in that area. I grew old and died naturally.” Luang Pu only asked this question in order to test whether I would know about my past rebirths.

Luang Pu started on a new topic, asking me which perfection of character (*pāramī*) I cultivated that served as my main foundation, and since when and in what era I had begun cultivating it. After Luang Pu asked this question about such a deep topic, I related to him what

I knew. “With permission, Luang Pu. In a previous era, a long time ago, I had developed truthfulness (sacca). Whatever I did, I did so earnestly. If I was determined to do something, I had to carry it out according to that determination. I trained myself to be one who is true at all times. If I was determined to do something that didn’t violate the code of moral conduct (*sīla-dhamma*), I had to do it according to that determination. I vowed to myself that I would be a truthful person. If I were to say anything about any matter to anyone, I would train myself to be a person who speaks the truth in every matter. I was truthful with myself and truthful with others, as well. I was honest with myself and honest with others, as well. I didn’t fool myself and I didn’t fool others. I didn’t speak to incite and I didn’t speak falsehoods to anyone. Whatever the truth was, that was what I would say. Thus, it was the cultivation of the perfection of truthfulness (*sacca-pāramī*) that took first place.

“The cultivation of the perfection of wisdom (*paññā-pāramī*) was second. The method (*upāya*) of developing the perfection of wisdom was to train my discernment and train myself to observe various situations and contemplate, analyze, judge, and ponder them in a rational manner. If this is the cause, what will be the result? If this is the result, what was the cause? What was a wrong cause, a right cause, a wrong result, or a right result? I used reason as the basis for making decisive judgments. The important thing is not to side with yourself. Once you have a problem, you must think and fix your own problem. Once someone else has a problem, you must think and help them fix the problem. This is how the perfection of wisdom is developed in a worldly way.

“As for the basis of cultivating the perfection of wisdom in a Dhamma way, the Three Common Characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*) of

impermanence (*aniccam*), suffering (*dukkham*), and not-self (*anattā*) must be used as elements in the cultivation of wisdom. With permission, Luang Pu. I continuously developed these two perfections as my core principles until they became a part of my mindset. When I was born into this lifetime, I was conscious that I was someone who possessed truthfulness (*sacca*). I was conscious that I possessed great integrity (*sacca*) in what I did and what I said. As a child and as a teen, I was conscious that I was unlike others. I didn't like those who didn't possess integrity and I didn't like those who told falsehoods. Deep in my mind, this is how I felt.

"Now for the question about the era in which I cultivated these perfections. With permission, Luang Pu. There was a time in which I was reborn during the Sikhī Buddha's dispensation. During that era, the monks had appointed me the *ārāmika-vatta*, or one who attends to monks and novices (*sāmañera*) and takes care of lodging (*senāsana*) within the temple. I ministered to a great number of arahants. I treated every single monk and *sāmañera* with respect because I admired and had faith (*saddhā*) in them. I was deferential, gracious, and humble toward all monks and *sāmañeras*. There were no fewer than five hundred monks and *sāmañeras* in that temple. My daily responsibilities were boiling water for the monks and *sāmañeras* to drink, boiling water for the great elder monks (*mahā-thera*) to use in bathing, taking hot water and food to elder monks at their huts (*kuti*), wholeheartedly attending to monks and *sāmañeras* that were sick, looking after the cleanliness, sweeping and cleaning the elder monks' *kuṭis*, cleaning the pavilion, and cleaning within the temple grounds with attentive industriousness. I trained myself to always be on time. Whenever I was doing anything, I would be determined to do it successfully. I was determined to lessen the burden on the monks and *sāmañeras*.



so that they could be happy. I was obedient and compliant. I would not make the monks and sāmañeras within the temple worry.

*“At that time, I was very exhausted but I endured. I had vowed (sacca) to myself that, ‘I will minister to the monks and sāmañeras in this manner forever. Even if this exhaustion claims my life, may I honor the Sikhī Buddha, honor the Dhamma, and honor all of the monks and sāmañeras. May the resolve (adhitṭhāna) of this verbal promise (sacca-vācā) serve as the mindset and aiding condition (paccaya) that leads to my clearly knowing and truly seeing the Buddha’s true doctrine (sad-dhamma) in the future.’ As for the perfection of wisdom (paññā-pāramī), I trained myself to be one who is thoroughly rational at all times. The other perfections of character (pāramī) were byproducts that came in tow. I desired to attain release and achieve enlightenment (nibbāna) starting from that era onward. The perfection of truth (sacca-pāramī) and the perfection of wisdom (paññā-pāramī) were my prominent traits. I trained myself to have this mindset. If I was determined, it wasn’t impossible and I could do it.”*

Luang Pu prodded me further, “How did you cultivate wisdom in a Dhamma way?”

“With permission, Luang Pu. In order to cultivate the perfection of wisdom (paññā-pāramī) in a Dhamma way, I used the Three Common Characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and not-self as the basis in wisdom contemplations. Regardless of whether an object is governed by a life-force (viññāṇa) or not governed by a life-force, everything arises from the cause of mental formations (saṅkhāra). Once it arises, it cannot remain constant. It inevitably changes and transforms, as is normal. It exists momentarily and then ceases, as is normal. Whether it ceases quickly or slowly depends on the causes

and conditions (*paccaya*) within itself. This is how it is in this world. These are characteristics common to the elements (*sāmaññalakkhaṇadhātu*). Every single thing inevitably possesses the condition of arising according to causes and conditions, and must cease according to those causes.

“All suffering inevitably converges in the mind. There are many causes and conditions that cause suffering to arise within the mind. Suffering arises from internal causes—that is, ourselves—and suffering arises from many different external causes and conditions, such as extreme heat, extreme cold, or extreme hunger. When you want something external but do not get it according to your wishes, mental suffering can arise. If you do not want something that you dislike but end up getting it, you can experience mental suffering. Consequently, you experience pleasing preoccupations (*ārammaṇa*) at times and displeasing preoccupations (*ārammaṇa*) at times. You are attached to external things and think they should remain with you forever. You don’t want to be separated from them. Once that thing does separate from you, your mind suffers.

“Suffering from internal causes stems from the body to which the mind is bound and occupies. The mind is delusional and thus wrongly perceives that, ‘this body belongs to me.’ Little does it know that the body contains the causes of the mind’s suffering within itself, such as aging or affliction from various maladies. This is because the body harbors clumps of diseases within itself.

“Another type of suffering (*dukkha*) is natural suffering (*sabhāvadukkha*), or the innate suffering that exists in everybody that is born. It is the suffering of posture (*iriyāpatha*), as there exists no single posture in which you can remain happy forever. Initially, you say that standing is happiness, but after standing for a long time, suffering

arises in the mind. You could say that walking is happiness, but after walking for a long time, suffering can arise in the mind. You could say that sitting is happiness, but after sitting for a long time, suffering can arise in the mind. You could say that sleeping is happiness, but after sleeping for a long time, suffering arises in the mind as well. Consequently, postures must constantly be changed in order to alleviate suffering. The postures are changed repeatedly, countless times. So long as the mind inhabits the body, it must continue to suffer like this until the day it dies. When the body is going to die, there is an even greater increase in suffering. It is the beginning of the disintegration of the elements (dhātu). During that period, there will be a lot of suffering, but there is no way to remedy it. Even if you fear death, you still have to die anyway.

“In regards to the method of developing wisdom of anattā, you must constantly contemplate that anattā is something that has ceased to exist. To say it is an ‘animal,’ ‘person,’ ‘self,’ ‘me,’ or ‘you,’ is invalid because it has all ceased to exist. To construct (sammuti) a name for it as this form or that form is invalid. For instance, when the four elements (catu-dhātu)—earth, water, wind, and fire—come together as a ghana, or a clump or group, and a mind (citta) and consciousness (viññāna) inhabit it, we call it a physical body (rūpa). We can suppose (sammuti) that it is ‘me’ and ‘mine.’ Whenever the citta leaves the body, the body’s work is done. Even though the earth element and water element are still present in the dead body, without the wind element and fire element, the body will disintegrate, rot, and decay. If you were to burn it, all that would remain would be bone fragments. You would be unable to continue to call those bones ‘self’ (attā) any longer. Thus, it is called anattā, meaning something that has ceased to exist.

“Every living being in this world, without exception, is the same in this way. Whether it is something occupied by consciousness or not occupied by consciousness, everything inevitably ceases to exist. Every single thing reverts back to its original elements. This is called, ‘*sabbe dhammā anattāti, yadā paññāya passati, atha nibbindati dukkhe, esa maggo visuddhiyā.*’<sup>14</sup> Once one with strong wisdom contemplates according to reality in this way and the mind (*citta*) knows and sees the truth that all phenomena (*sabhāva*) that arise as is normal must cease as is normal, *nibbidā*, or dispassion about repetitive rebirth, inevitably arises in the mind (*citta*). Practicing thinking in this way on a frequent basis is referred to as the method for cultivating wisdom in a Dhamma way.”

After listening to my explanation, Luang Pu immediately broke into a smile and said, “Gee, that’s a very good method of training in wisdom contemplations.”

After I finished relating my cultivation of *pāramī* to Luang Pu, I wanted to know how Luang Pu cultivated his *pāramī*. “Which *pāramī* was the most solid for you, Luang Pu?”

Luang Pu explained, “Back then, I was also born during the dispensation of the *Sikhī* Buddha. I was the head of a band of wagon merchants and I had many employees. White rice was our main product at that time but we also offered other wares. I helped my workers arrange things to sell in other towns and purchased things from other towns to sell in our own town. At that time, it was the end of the rainy season and the wagons weren’t completely dry. As the leader of the merchants, I drove the first wagon and led the rest of

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<sup>14</sup> All phenomena are not-self. When one sees this with discernment, one grows weary of suffering. This is the path to purity.

the group. My wagon became bogged down in the mud. The oxen were unable to pull the wagon out of the mire, so I beat them with a birch cane in order to compel them to do so. The oxen pushed forward with every ounce of strength they could muster but were still unable to free the wagon from the mud. Consumed with anger, I beat the oxen without even considering how they would feel. I whacked them with the cane unrelentingly until they both collapsed and cried out in pain. Then I pulled the oxen back onto their feet. I called some workers over to help push the wagon and it was eventually unstuck from the mud.

“Afterward, I directed my workers to park the wagons somewhere. When I went to detach the oxen from the wagon, I noticed the tears streaming down and soaking both of their faces, and I was stricken with grief. I suddenly felt sorry for the oxen, so I led them to a place where they could drink water and eat grass. At that time, my eyes were fixed on their tears. The thought occurred to me, *‘The oxen were dragging a heavy wagon and the wagon got bogged down in the mud. The oxen didn’t have enough energy to pull the wagon out from the mud.’* The oxen drank a bit of water and just stood there in tears without eating the grass. I thought, *‘If I were an ox pulling a wagon this heavy and the wagon got stuck in the mud and the owner beat me this feverishly, how much pain and suffering would I feel?’*

“At that moment, I felt such deep loving-kindness (mettā) and sympathy for the oxen. I touched them and used my hand to rub their backs and told them, ‘From now on, I will not hit you or coerce you anymore. Take me to sell these wares first and when we get back, I will not use the two of you for trading anymore.’ Then, I proceeded to fetch some young grass for them to eat. I stroked their heads and bodies and showed them affection. I told them, ‘I’m sorry that I used



the birch cane to hit the both of you so feverishly that it caused you both such pain.' When we continued on our way, I sat on the wagon platform and continued to tell them, 'Keep pulling the wagon, alright? From now on, I will not hit you anymore,' and rubbed their backs with my hand. Whenever we parked the wagons, I would lead them to water and find grass for them to eat.

"I noticed that the oxen's spirits had been lifted. I spoke to them and smiled at them repeatedly. After we finished trading, we headed back to our town. While I was sitting on the wagon, I kept thinking to myself, *'I am taking too much advantage of the oxen. They are pulling a wagon that is heavy and I am making it heavier by sitting on it.'* As I was sitting atop the wagon, I thought about the oxen's situation, contemplating how *'the oxen are charged with pulling the wagon and I shouldn't make them work too hard. If I were doing a task or carrying something and the load was too heavy, I would also feel suffering. If someone else forced me to carry something heavy, I would feel even more suffering. Thus, I should not use these oxen for such heavy work anymore. From here on out, I will stop trading because I feel bad for the oxen.'*

"Once we reached our town, I sold everything and completely stopped trading. I was determined to go to the temple and cultivate wholesome deeds (kusala). At the temple, I listened to Dhamma from a fully enlightened (arahant) monk who spoke about loving-kindness (mettā), having sympathy toward fellow humans as well as sympathy toward animals (tiracchāna). He said, 'We humans possess mindfulness and wisdom and know what is wrong and what is right. Do not use your power to exploit other people or animals. Train your mind to have love and sympathy for all people and for animals of all types and irrespective of type in this world.'

“During that time, I had trained my mind to have mettā. I also wanted to ordain, and I was able to do so according to that determination. After I was ordained, I developed continuous mettā on a regular basis until I felt great love and sympathy for humans and animals. The temple in which I was ordained had no fewer than five hundred monks and sāmañeras.” Luang Pu remarked, “The temple attendant (ārāmika-vatta) who looked after the monks and sāmañeras during that era was you, Venerable Thoon. It appears that we cultivated pāramī together in the era of the Sikhi Buddha.”

I proceeded to ask Luang Pu, “With permission, Luang Pu. Do you recall if there are any monks or sāmañeras who were ordained alongside you during that era who were reborn and were ordained alongside you in this era?”

Luang Pu responded, “There are, but some of them haven’t ordained while some have.”

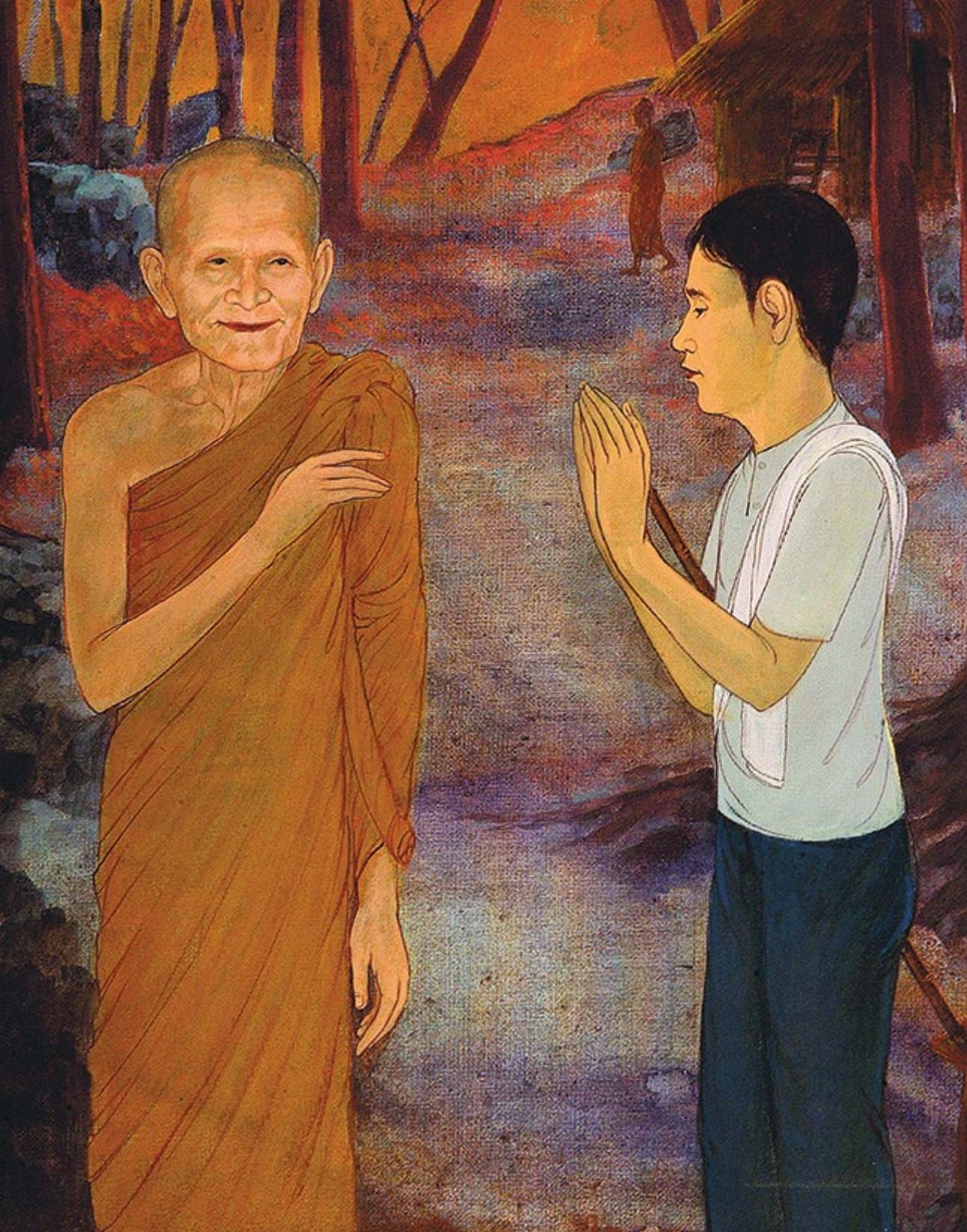
“Who are the ones that have been ordained in this era, Luang Pu?”

Luang Pu answered, “There is Luang Pu Dune, Luang Pu Chob, and Luang Pu Lui<sup>15</sup> whose faces I can still remember. Other than that, I can’t recall.” Luang Pu then asked me, “What about you, is there anyone you remember that has been reborn in this era?”

I told Luang Pu, “There are two that I can remember clearly because their kutis were near my lodging. One is you, Luang Pu, and the other is Luang Pu Luang of Wat Samran Niwat, Ko Kha district, Lampang province. Luang Pu Boowa of Wat Pa Nong Saeng, Luang

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<sup>15</sup> Luang Pu Dune Atulo (Phra Rajavuddhacariya) of Wat Burapharam in Surin province, Luang Pu Chob Thānasamo of Wat Pa Sammanuson in Loei province, and Luang Pu Lui Candasāro of Wat Tham Pha Bing in Loei province.



Pu Boonma, who lectured on ‘arise, cease,’ Venerable Ācariya Wan, and Venerable Ācariya Juan<sup>16</sup> also cultivated pāramī together during that era. I was the monks’ attendant during that time, so I remember many of the teachers (ācariya).”

After recounting how we got started in our cultivation of pāramī, Luang Pu posed the question, “In the era of our current Buddha, did you practice in the Buddha’s dispensation while he was still alive?”

“With permission, Luang Pu. If you want me to recount the story, it’s going to be long!”

Luang Pu replied, “It doesn’t matter if it’s long. Just tell it.”

I began by bringing up Luang Pu Mun in this lifetime. “In this life and in this rebirth, I have never seen Luang Pu Mun. When I was ordained as a sāmañera in 1949, Venerable Ācariya Som was going to take me to Luang Pu Mun’s funeral. However, I had a prior learning commitment in Maha Sarakham province so I was unable to attend the funeral. I only knew of Luang Pu Mun’s name from books and from his picture. I only came to know Luang Pu Mun in my meditative visions (nimitta) after I had ordained as a forest tradition (kammaṭṭhāna) monk.

“One night, I contemplated Dhamma in a manner that didn’t result in comprehensive clarity. No matter how much I contemplated, I couldn’t erase my doubts. I was still unsure of whether it was wrong or right. Two nights had passed, yet I was still unable to interpret the Dhamma of that particular topic. There wasn’t comprehensive clarity. So, I left the Dhamma issue as it was and went back to focusing on a

<sup>16</sup> Luang Pu Luang Katapuñño of Wat Samran Niwat in Lampang province, Luang Pu Boowa Siripuñño of Wat Pa Nong Saeng in Udon Thani province, Luang Pu Boonma Mahāvero of Wat Pa Si Wichai in Sakon Nakhon province, Venerable Ācariya Wan Uttamo of Wat Tham Apai Damrongtham in Sakon Nakhon province, and Venerable Ācariya Juan Kulajeṭṭho of Wat Chetiya Khiri Wihan (Wat Phu Thok) in Bueng Kan province.

meditative mantra (parikamma). Once my mind (citta) entered a serene state, Luang Pu Mun appeared and provided suggestions on how to fix the issue, and then he disappeared. My mind (citta) withdrew from the meditative state at that moment and I used wisdom to contemplate the methods or metaphors (upāya) that Luang Pu Mun had recommended. I developed comprehensive clarity in my understanding of that issue and all related doubts immediately ceased. It was as if Luang Pu Mun had set upright what was overturned so that I could see the truth.

“Luang Pu Mun often appeared in my nimittas. He would appear when I was unable to reach a level of comprehensive clarity in my Dhamma contemplations of a particular issue. He would come and suggest a method or metaphor that would get me thinking and that fostered comprehensive clarity every single time. Since I started practicing, I have never asked any teacher for help in resolving issues or doubts. For the most part, I used wisdom to contemplate and solve Dhamma issues by myself. Only occasionally would Luang Pu Mun come and help me. From my first rains retreat (vassa) to my eighth rains retreat (vassa), Luang Pu Mun appeared to provide me with metaphors in my nimittas no fewer than one hundred times. It made me wonder why Luang Pu Mun visited me in nimittas so often. Was I somehow associated with Luang Pu Mun in the past? What had been the nature of our relationship? Thus, I made a mental determination (adhitṭhāna), ‘*May I know what happened in the past rebirth in which I had a relationship with Luang Pu Mun. May this matter be known to me.*’ Then, I got into place and practiced contemplation (bhāvanā) and meditation as usual.

“That night, there appeared a large temple somewhere. It was cool and pleasant. There were around five hundred monks living

together and each monk was very determined and earnest about practicing mental cultivation (*bhāvanā-paṭipatti*). Luang Pu Mun was the abbot who presided over the entire community of monks (*saṅgha*). I was the most senior monk after Luang Pu Mun. Back then, Luang Pu Mun's leadership style was decisive. Every monk and *sāmañera* strictly adhered to the code of monastic discipline (*vinaya*). If one of them violated the *vinaya*, Luang Pu Mun would call him in and give him instruction. All of the monks and *sāmañeras* greatly feared and also greatly revered Luang Pu Mun. There was no slacking or recklessness in any part of the daily routine. Walking meditation (*caṅkama*) and sitting meditation (*samādhi*) were practiced constantly. When Luang Pu Mun taught the Dhamma, he was incredibly resolute, intense, and serious.

"At that time, Luang Pu Mun had become afflicted with distortion of perception (*saññā-vipallāsa*). No monk could admonish him. I did not dare to admonish him either. He was a very stern person. I don't know where he erred in his practice. One morning after he finished his meal, he sat there dully, not speaking to any other monks. I noticed his irregular behavior but didn't dare ask him about it. Then, he turned to the *saṅgha* and announced in a stern voice, 'I am going to disrobe and leave this community.' I pleaded with him in various ways but he would not listen. After his announcement, he turned to face his seat, bowed three times, then rose to get a white robe to wear. He undressed and tossed his ochre robes aside. I pleaded with him but was scolded, 'Don't bother me.' Once dressed in white, he walked out of the pavilion.

"I consulted the community of monks (*saṅgha*) about what we should do. The *saṅgha* nominated me to propose something and make a decision. I announced to the *saṅgha*, 'No one is to leave this pavilion.



Everyone is to sit here, send a mental stream of benevolence (mettā) to our great teacher (ācariya), and contemplate (bhāvanā) and will (adhitṭhāna) his prompt return to us.' I arranged for three monks and three laymen to trail him at a distance. 'Wherever he goes, you go. Don't let him see you or become aware that you are following him. Don't let him go anywhere on his own at all.' Then, the three monks and three laymen immediately set out to follow him. The saṅgha and I paid homage to the Buddha and chanted. We resolved (adhitṭhāna), 'We call upon the virtues of the Buddha, call upon the virtues of the Dhamma, call upon the virtues of the Ariya-Saṅgha, and call upon of the perfections of character (pāramī) that we have cultivated to help inspire Venerable Ācariya Mun to promptly return to us today.' Every monk had to do this.

"Thereafter, we focused our minds (citta) and contemplated (bhāvanā) and made the asseveration of truth (sacca-adhitṭhāna), 'If venerable Ācariya does not return, we absolutely will not rise or leave this pavilion. Even if we must die, we are willing.' Every single monk was determined in this resolution (adhitṭhāna). At around 4 p.m., Luang Pu Mun walked back into the temple on his own. Upon seeing him enter the temple grounds, the saṅgha and I went to welcome him. We surrounded him and conducted him to the pavilion. We invited him to sit on the seat (āsana) arranged for him but he refused to sit there. The saṅgha and I bowed in respect to him but he forbade us from saluting (vandana) him and forbade us from bowing to him. He suddenly said, 'What am I? My wearing white like this means that I am no longer a monk, doesn't it?'

"I respectfully told him, 'With permission, Ācariya. That action does not sever your monkhood in any way. You merely had a momentary lapse, that's all.' Then, I declared to the saṅgha, 'May the

saṅgha acknowledge that at this moment, our ācariya's monkhood is still complete and whole; it has not been severed. If the saṅgha feels that our ācariya is still a monk, then may we all rejoice (anumodanā) together.' Thereafter, all of the monks rejoiced and said 'Sādhu' in unison.

"Then, I presented him with his monastic inner garment (antaravāsaka), upper garment (cīvara, uttarāsaṅga), and outer robe (saṅghāṭi).<sup>17</sup> After he was properly dressed, I invited him to sit on the prepared seat (āsana). The saṅgha and I bowed to him and then sat in silence. Luang Pu Mun gave an exhortation (ovāda) to the saṅgha, 'From this moment forward, Venerable Thoon is hereby appointed to govern in my place. All of you must remain under Venerable Thoon's instructions (ovāda) and governance. As for me, I wish to have freedom. If I didn't have Venerable Thoon as a student, I don't know what would become of me. From now on, let me live in an ordinary and private manner. May all of you remain under Venerable Thoon's instruction and governance. I will only preside as leader of the saṅgha.'

"I asked Luang Pu Mun for a blessing, 'With permission ācariya, the saṅgha and I request your blessing. May the saṅgha and I be permitted to minister to you as part of our duty to our teacher (ācariyavatta), just as before and for all of time.' He nodded. Thereafter, the saṅgha continued to attend to him.

"From then on, Luang Pu Mun never scolded any monk ever again. He isolated himself and practiced mental cultivation alone. When it was time to perform various duties or functions (vatta), he

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<sup>17</sup> These are the three robes that comprise a monk's uniform.

carried them out just like any monk or sāmañera. When it was time to bathe, monks and sāmañeras would go and bathe him as usual. When it was time for the alms round (*pindapāta*), he went out for alms just as every other monk and sāmañera. When it was time to eat, he ate with everyone in the pavilion. I carried out the duty of giving blessings. When it was time for Pātimokkha, I led the saṅgha in chanting the exhortation of monastic discipline (*ovāda-pātimokkha*). On holy days (*uposatha*), I was the one who admonished the monks and sāmañeras. In order for Luang Pu Mun to feel comfortable and at leisure, I endeavored to perform my duties excellently. No conflicts that required the settlement of issues (*adhikarana*) arose within the saṅgha. I continued to govern the saṅgha.

“Once in a while, Luang Pu Mun would praise me in front of the other monks in the temple. ‘Venerable Thoon has done a good job governing the saṅgha because every monk strictly adheres to the monastic discipline.’ Governing was easy and there weren’t any problems. This is the reason why Luang Pu Mun exhibited such benevolence (*mettā*) toward me and trusted me completely. Then in this lifetime, Luang Pu Mun came to help me solve various problems and gave me methods of contemplation that resulted in comprehensive clarity. It wasn’t Luang Pu Mun himself that came. Rather, it was just the virtue of the sympathy he had for me that manifested in the visions (*nimitta*).”

After telling Luang Pu Khao about the personal experiences that linked me to Luang Pu Mun, I asked Luang Pu Khao, “With permission, Luang Pu. Were you reborn during the Buddha’s era, while the Buddha was still alive? I respectfully invite you to tell me about what happened in the past.”

Luang Pu smiled and immediately said, “During that time, I was a newly ordained (navaka) monk. I had been ordained for only a few days and didn’t yet know what was wrong or right according to monastic discipline and didn’t understand what the code of conduct was. However, I had good intentions for monkhood, was eager to practice, and desired to be free from suffering. Back then, there were around five hundred monks who had also been newly ordained during that same period. Each monk wasn’t quite familiar with the discipline.

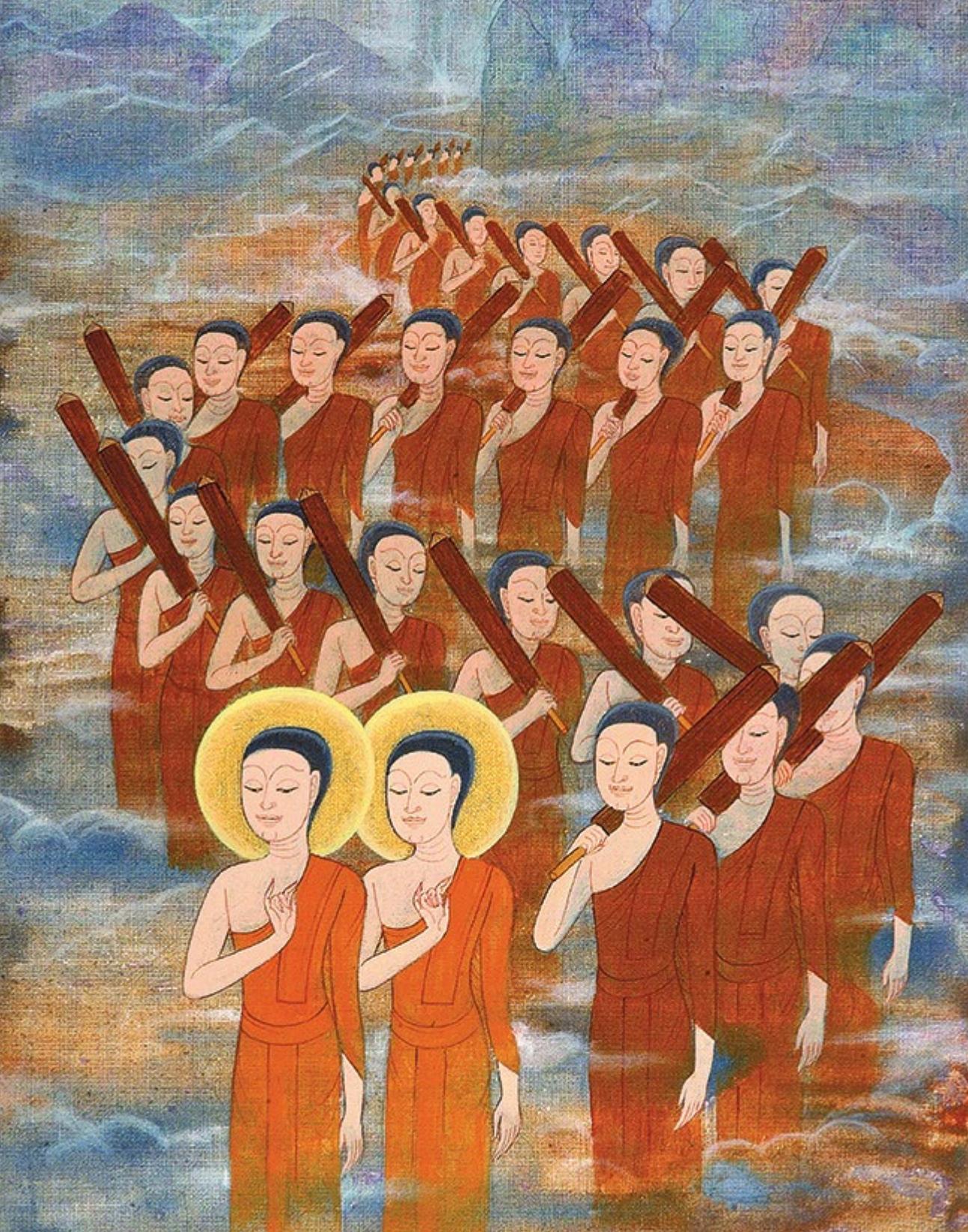
“A monk who ordained before us invited us to form a community. He said, ‘There is a teacher (ācariya) who practices well. He is strict in the discipline and in his code of conduct, is very orderly, and he is a fully enlightened (arahant) monk. He is thoroughly wise, clever, and sharp. His path of practice leads directly to the path and fruit of enlightenment (magga-phala-nibbāna). His methods of practice enable practitioners to reach the path and fruit of enlightenment more quickly.’ I believed it because I already wanted to practice in order to reach enlightenment. That teacher monk spoke to many of the new monks about these same claims. Every monk believed them. There were ever more ready to become that teacher’s students. All of the new monks were prepared to follow him. When the time came, we all set out together.

“When the roughly five hundred newly ordained monks arrived at their destination, there was an elder (thera) monk already awaiting them. Then, the teacher monk who led us there directed all of the new monks to go and bow to the elder monk and await his instruction (ovāda). The elder monk gave an exhortation. ‘Saṅgha, you must all follow the same code of conduct. There are altogether five rules. This is the direct path and the quickest method of disciplining the mind in order to eradicate all of the defilements and mental intoxications

within it: 1. Do not eat meat of any kind, 2. Live entirely in the forest, 3. Wear only robes made of rags from dust heaps (*parīsukūla*), 4. Live entirely off of food from alms-begging (*pīṇḍapāta*), and 5. Only dwell at the foot of a tree. Every monk must strictly abide by these five rules.' The head instructor who established these rules and presided over the *saṅgha* was named Venerable Devadatta. The monk next in command was named Venerable Kokālika and there were many other monks down the line. Thereafter, all of the monks practiced according to the five rules in a serious manner.

"A short while later, I saw Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Moggallāna come to this monastery and act friendly with Venerable Devadatta. One night, Venerable Devadatta allowed Venerable Sāriputta to give a Dhamma lecture to the new monks. At that time, I greatly admired and had deep faith in Venerable Sāriputta's Dhamma. He taught the Dhamma in such a beautiful way and with reason that could undoubtedly be believed. This led to a change of heart. I would definitely ask to follow Venerable Sāriputta. At that time, Venerable Devadatta was one of great pride (*ditṭhi*) and conceit (*māna*). He refused to listen to Venerable Sāriputta's Dhamma sermon at all. All he did was lie there uninterested and fall asleep. Venerable Kokālika also fell asleep. It could have been due to the magical powers (*iddhi*) of Venerable Mahā Moggallāna or the magical powers (*iddhi*) of the Buddha that Venerable Devadatta and Venerable Kokālika fell asleep. When it was nearly light, Venerable Sāriputta said, 'New monks, whoever wishes to go with me, I will take you to pay homage (*vandana*) to the Buddha right now.'

"All of the new monks immediately got ready. Once everyone was ready, all of the new monks set out with Venerable Mahā Moggallāna and Venerable Sāriputta. Back then, I really liked Venerable



Sāriputta's Dhamma and pledged myself as a student of his from that moment forward. I did not achieve any path and fruit of enlightenment (magga-phala-nibbāna) back in those days though. I did, however, greatly admire and feel strong devotion (saddhā) for the Dhamma and for being ordained. I was determined in my practice and was willing to sacrifice my life in devotion to the Buddhist religion until the day I died."

I asked Luang Pu, "In this present lifetime, when you practiced mental cultivation, did Venerable Sāriputta come and teach you the Dhamma?"

Luang Pu replied, "It's just the same as you. You have never seen Luang Pu Mun in this lifetime, yet why does he appear to teach you the Dhamma? It's because you have been linked to him in past lives. It is the same for me. I have also had visions (nimitta) in which Venerable Sāriputta comes and teaches me." Luang Pu stated that Venerable Sāriputta frequently appeared to teach him the Dhamma. You may wonder how this could be possible or whether Ācariya Thoon has made all of this up. For assurances, you could go ask Venerable Ācariya Boonpeng Khemābhīrato of Wat Tham Klong Phen. Luang Pu Khao has intimated this to monks and sāmaneras on many occasions. However, I asked Luang Pu directly. That's why he explained it in such detail.



## Luang Pu Asks About Hell

Luang Pu asked me, “Have you ever gone to hell (naraka)?”

“With permission, Luang Pu. I have gone to hell.”

Luang Pu asked, “What kind of deeds (kamma) sent you to hell?”

I proceeded to recount the story about when I went to hell to Luang Pu. “Once, when I was married, my wife had a younger sister. She was a fully blossomed woman of great beauty.” I really don’t even want to write about this. You all can surmise what transpired on your own. However, I did tell Luang Pu about how I violated the precept (*sīla*) of refraining from sexual misconduct (*kāmesu-micchācārā*). “After I died, those actions (kamma) resulted in my going to a sub-hell called *Aggi-bhaya*.<sup>18</sup> This hell was all fire and existed specifically to punish those who had violated the sexual misconduct (*kāmesu-micchācārā*) precept. This hell was an enormous tunnel with steel walls and steel floors. The steel plates that encircled this hell were very thick, and it was an expansive hell. Wherever I looked, all I would see was fire shooting out of the red-hot steel plates. Every part of my body was burnt to a crisp. After my body had been burned, the flames

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<sup>18</sup> *Aggi-bhaya* translates to fire danger. The hell realm that Luang Por describes here could possibly be one of the eight hot hells called *Pratāpana* (the “great heating” hell of fiercely scorching heat while being pierced by tridents) or *Saṅghāta* (the “crushing” hell of being crushed by big hot things) to which sexual sinners are typically subjected.

would die down. Then, it would regenerate and I would get burned by the flames again. This continued for a very long time.

“There were many people subjected to this hell. I don’t know who was there because you couldn’t recognize anyone. All men and women who violate the sexual misconduct precept will be subjected to this hell. Nothing can be compared to that suffering and torment. Once the fires of hell die down, all that remains of you is a skeleton. The heat scales down to a warm vapor. Skin and flesh regenerate. Then, the flames of hell erupt once more. That is how it was for who knows how many years. After the kamma had been exhausted, I knew that I was free from hell. I mentally resolved never to break the sexual misconduct precept again. I was so terrified of the heat from the flames of this hell that I was scared straight. That resolution formed a mindset that has stuck with me until this present rebirth. In this lifetime, I feel shame. I would not dare to break this precept because of the shame I feel within. I would not act like an animal (*tiracchāna*) anymore.”

After I finished my story, Luang Pu guffawed and exclaimed, “You and I went to the same hell!”

Then, I asked Luang Pu Khao to tell the story about when he went to hell. Luang Pu Khao said, “A long time ago, I also went to the same hell. It wasn’t from violating the precept with my wife’s younger sister like you, but I was indiscriminate and lay with any woman.” He laughed as he spoke. “When I died, the hell-guardians (*niraya-pāla*) captured me and sent me to this hell. When I first fell into the hell, it was pitch dark and I didn’t know which direction to go. Then the soles of my feet grew hot. Wherever I stepped, there it grew hot. I leapt away and stood somewhere else but the heat rose again. I hopped

from place to place until my head hit the walls made of hell steel and nearly died. Then, it got hot. Flames burst out from every direction and the heat intensified exponentially. Once those flames shot out toward me, my body would become dry and crisp. It is impossible to draw any kind of comparison to that heat. I bore the suffering and torment of that hell for a long time.”

I asked Luang Pu further, “Have you ever broken this precept again, in this lifetime?”

Luang Pu replied, “It was the same as before,” and laughed. “I wasn’t scared straight because I couldn’t remember.” Luang Pu said, “Wherever Mister Khao went to court a young woman, his father would have to prepare to sell oxen to pay reparations. Let’s just say that of the many oxen that filled the corral, hardly any remained.”

One time, Luang Pu said, “One night, I went to the temple. There were many young women there that night. When they were finished at the temple, the women exited the pavilion. I was a touchy-feely kind of man. I sought an opportunity to get my hands on my female target. In the temple courtyard, there was a rectangular post set in the ground but I didn’t notice it. My eyes were only on the woman. As I was trying to find a way to grab her, I didn’t see the post and my head slammed into it really hard. One *Bam!* and I collapsed right there. My head burst open, I fell to the floor, and blood spurted out. I was mortified in front of my friends, mortified in front of the woman, and in agonizing pain.” This description is likely sufficient for you, the reader, to understand what Luang Pu Khao was like. Luang Pu said, “In this lifetime, if my practice of mental cultivation didn’t enable me to attain release, I would have surely had to revisit that same old hell.”

I teased Luang Pu, “If that’s so, the hell-guardians probably remember your face! If the hell-guardians had daughters, they likely wouldn’t trust you. They would have to guard their daughters especially well. They would dole out even harsher punishment than that of the hot hell in order for Mister Khao to be scared straight. Isn’t that right, Luang Pu?” Luang Pu laughed heartily until tears came out of his eyes. That night, we spoke of things to change the mood. You, the reader, will also get to smile inwardly as well.

I asked Luang Pu about another matter. “With permission, Luang Pu. Back when you were married and your wife had an affair and you were going to take a sword and slice both of them to pieces, what happened? Why would you have dared to take it that far?”

Luang Pu laughed and said, “Back then, I was only focused on working to get rich. I didn’t have time for her because I was so exhausted from work. I worked from the morning and didn’t head home until it got dark. The woman was—well you know. When a husband doesn’t pleasure his wife, she looks to another man to supply a cure for her boredom. At first, I didn’t know. Later on, the villagers told me about it. Then, I found a way to observe her. I would act like I was heading out to work and then hide so that she wouldn’t see me. That man went into the house. It was just as the villagers had said. At that time, I felt very indignant. I resolved to kill both of them with my own hands. So I took my sword and sharpened it. I would slice them into pieces to my satisfaction.

“As I sharpened the sword, I contemplated that, *‘I am about to commit evil (pāpa) kamma here, aren’t I? Killing someone is easy. Once I do it, the evil falls onto me. Another thing is, the police are going to*

*catch me and throw me in prison. I will spend a great many years in prison. My parents and relatives will feel shame around the other villagers. To commit evil kamma because my wife is having an affair just won't do. If she really was my wife, she would have to submit both her body and mind only to me. But here, she has shared her body and shared her mind with someone else. Thus, this woman is not truly my wife. If I were to find another woman to be my wife and that woman did the same thing, then what would I do?*'

"And then it occurred to me, '*In that case, maybe I should ordain as a monk. I wouldn't have to commit evil kamma anymore.*' Once I thought of ordaining, I wanted to ordain as a monk that very instant. I hadn't even sharpened the sword sufficiently. I decided to leave to ordain as a monk right away. I stopped sharpening the sword and put it away. Then, I grabbed some clothing essentials and went to enter myself as a candidate for monkhood (*nāga*) and receive ordination as a monk at a house temple (*wat ban*). However, the temple's abbot and the monks and novices (*sāmañera*) did not practice (*paṭipatti*). I couldn't live with them so I left that temple in order to practice mental cultivation (*bhāvanā-paṭipatti*) by myself.

"After being a monk for five rains (*vassa*), I learned of Luang Pu Mun. I went to listen to his Dhamma lecture and was filled with devotion (*saddhā*) and admiration. I decided to change my monastic affiliation from the *Mahā Nikāya* order to the *Dhammayut* order.<sup>19</sup> Luang Pu Lui and I were candidates for monkhood together. Phra Dhammachedi (Joom Bandhulo) was our preceptor (*upajjhāya*). Thereafter, I studied methods of practice from Luang Pu Mun until I

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<sup>19</sup> A monk who desires to change the monastic order with which he is affiliated must re-ordain as a monk in the new order and reset his *vassa* count to zero. Re-ordination may be done to facilitate practicing and living with monks in that new order; as monks of different orders are not permitted to participate in official *Saṅgha* activities—like *Pātimokkha* and *Kaṭhina*—together.

formed a solid understanding of how to practice. It took me twenty years of practice to truly know and see the truth of the Dhamma. I reflected on what happened in the past when I was a layperson. My life has reached this point because my wife was the main cause. I consider her a great benefactor of mine. If my wife hadn't been like that, I definitely would never have become like this. I would have delusionally cycled through birth and death without end. I have achieved enlightenment in this lifetime because of my wife. As such, I always dedicate merit to her."



## About Devaputtas and Devatās

The following night, we discussed young deities (devaputta) and adult deities (devatā). As usual, Luang Pu was the one who asked the first question. “Have you ever been reborn in heaven (sagga)? Tell me about it.”

“With permission, Luang Pu. I have been to heaven innumerable times. Each time I went to heaven, I became more enraptured in sensual pleasures (kāma-guṇa). This is because in heaven, there is happiness in sensual pleasures. The delight captivates you and you lose yourself in it. Previously, I had never practiced Dhamma. I was wildly captivated by heaven. In one lifetime, I did practice (paṭipatti). I contemplated heaven and my mind grew exceedingly sick of it. A life in heaven wastes time for Dhamma practice, as it extends the time it'll take you to reach the path and fruit of enlightenment (magga-phala-nibbāna). This is why I resolved, *‘In each rebirth (jāti), may I not be reborn in heaven. May I be reborn as a human in every lifetime in order to cultivate as much perfections of characters (pāramī) as possible and practice mental cultivation (bhāvanā-paṭipatti) in a continuous manner for the purpose of achieving the path and fruit of enlightenment quickly.’*

“As a result, I was reborn into this lifetime with a mindset that was different from others. When others spoke of heaven, my mind

grew weary and I didn't even want to hear the word 'heaven.' I didn't know why I was this way. Only after practicing did I realize that in a previous lifetime, I had desired to skip heaven. That was why my mindset was one of being fed up with heaven. Heaven is merely a place for a brief rest or a place for a vacation and temporary lodging. When merit (*puñña*) and moral goodness (*kusala*) are exhausted, a rebirth in the human world is warranted once more. This journeying back and forth between the human realm and heaven has gone on for who knows how many rounds. It is repetitive and a waste of time.

"Celestial beings (devatā) are divided into two large groups. One of the groups includes celestial beings starting from the Cātummahārājikā heavenly realm, celestial beings from the Tāvatiṁsā heavenly realm, celestial beings from the Yāmā heavenly realm, celestial beings from the Tusitā heavenly realm, celestial beings from the Nimmānarati heavenly realm, up to celestial beings from the Paranimmita-vasavattī heavenly realm. These higher-level celestial beings do not frequently visit the human realm because they are so happy in heaven that they're oblivious to all else. When they are able to regain awareness, their merit and moral goodness have been depleted, thus warranting a return to the human realm again. If they are reborn and encounter sages or wise men (*paññita*) or if they have good companions (*kalyāṇamitta*), then that is fortunate. If they are reborn where there are foolish (*bāla*) people with evil tendencies, they might unknowingly commit evil deeds. Then when they die, they will be headed toward one of the planes of misery (*apāya-bhūmi*) of hell (*naraka*), hungry ghost (*peta*), animal (*tiracchāna*), or demon (*asurakāya*).

"Therefore, being reborn in a higher heaven makes it exceedingly difficult to cultivate perfections of character (*pāramī*). Each day and

each night, not a single thought is given to merit or moral goodness. There is only the constant savoring of happiness of celestial (dibba) preoccupations (ārammaṇa). They are oblivious to humans making merit, giving charity (dāna), upholding the precepts (sīla), and contemplating (bhāvanā). Even if humans call out and invite them to participate in the merit making and moral goodness, these higher-level celestial beings don't participate in the events. Those who do join in the events are lower-level celestial beings like tree dwelling celestial beings (rukka-devatā) and ground dwelling celestial beings (bummatta-devatā)."

Luang Pu asked further, "So tell me about how they join in the festivities and the way that they live. Have you ever been a lower-level devatā, Venerable Thoon?"

I then asked for permission to tell Luang Pu the story. "This group of deities is close to humans. Specifically, the house dwelling deities (geha-devatā). In one lifetime, I was born in the human world. I was the leader of a group of male devotees (upāsaka) and female devotees (upāsikā). I led the faithful (saddhā) in cultivating moral goodness at various temples and proclaimed to the public that they should make merit and give charity to the public. There was a temple by a large cave. A great number of monks and novices (sāmañeras) resided there together. I regularly led the devotees to cultivate moral goodness at this temple. After I died, I was reborn as a young tree deity (rukka-devaputta). I resided in that expansive forest. I had magically transformed a large Sal tree into a beautiful palace. I was the leader of a group of deities. Many of the devotees that had joined in making merit back then had been reborn as tree deities (rukka-devatā).



“On important Buddhist days such as the 8<sup>th</sup> lunar day and 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> lunar day,<sup>20</sup> I regularly led the group of deities to cultivate moral goodness at this temple as well as to cultivate moral goodness at other temples. We would set out around 3-4 a.m., before the humans would arrive. The means of transport was not the same. Some groups magically conjured ships while some groups magically conjured palaces, and they floated along together in groups. It was a beautiful sight. They floated at an elevation a few meters above the treetops. Some groups set out for different destinations, according to their desires. They had to report to me where they were headed every single time.

“Another type of event was those in which the deities are invited to join in making merit at various places. These types of deities frequently attend events of this nature, such as merit making at temples or merit making for a house in which they were invited to attend. The invitation is the ‘Sagge...’<sup>21</sup> phrasing commonly used by humans today. There are many groups of deities that join in the events, such as tree deities, ground deities, and house deities. The deities that dwell in the houses of humans have an advantage over other groups of deities because they already reside among humans. Whenever there is merit making at a house, these deities will know before others and spread the word amongst themselves. If the homeowner is going to make merit, the deities will inform their kind. The tree deities also participate in this merit. A house in which deities reside must be a house of virtue in which there is the constant

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<sup>20</sup> The 8<sup>th</sup> lunar day (first quarter moon or last quarter moon) and the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> lunar day (new moon or full moon) are holy days (uposatha).

<sup>21</sup> An Invitation to the Devas: “Samantā cakkavālesu, atr’āgacchantu devatā... Sagge kāme ca rūpe giri-sikharataṭe c’antalikkhe vimāne...” From all around the galaxies, may the devas come here...Those in the heavens of sensuality and form, on peaks and mountain precipices, in palaces floating in the sky...

cultivation of moral goodness and chanting in homage to the Buddha and mental cultivation conducted on a regular basis."

I will now explain some background history for the sake of understanding. During the Buddha's time, there was a house that belonged to Venerable Soṇa's mother. Back then, Venerable Soṇa Kuṭīkaṇṇa had recited an intoned recitation (*sarabhañña*) for the Buddha. After he finished, the Buddha rejoiced (*anumodanā*) by saying, "Sādhu, Sādhu" and deities from all around also had to rejoice in saying, "Sādhu, Sādhu" together. The deities that resided in Venerable Soṇa Kuṭīkaṇṇa's mother's house also joined in rejoicing (*anumodanā*). Thus, the tree deities, ground deities, and house deities have an advantage over the higher-level deities because of their proximity to humans. They are able to cultivate merit and moral goodness along with humans on a regular basis. There is much to say about deities. What I have explained are merely examples to facilitate your understanding.

After I finished my speech on deities, Luang Pu conceded, "That's how it really is." He added, "Being a lower-level deity is advantageous because you get to cultivate merit and moral goodness along with humans regularly and you receive merit that humans share with you. Those who are to become higher-level or lower-level deities must cultivate merit and moral goodness exclusively in the human world. Those who are to become a Buddha, a silent Buddha (*paccekabuddha*), or the many noble ones (*ariya-puggala*) must all cultivate perfections of character (*pāramī*) in this human world as well. Therefore, this human world is the place in which we are able to develop our *pāramī* to perfection. That is why those who are able to be reborn in the human world and encounter the Buddhist religion are considered most fortunate.

“However, it is unfortunate that after being reborn as a human, folks don’t cultivate goodness for themselves. They lose themselves in desires and only cultivate evil (pāpa) kamma for themselves. After they die, they go to suffer and burn in hell, or are reborn as hungry ghosts, animals, or demons. This is because the human world is at the center of it all. Whatever it is that someone will become—such as a Buddha, a pacceka-buddha, an ariya-puggala, a male deity (devaputta), a female deity (devadhītā), or an inhabitant of one of the four lower planes of misery—everyone has cultivated deeds (kamma) in this human world.”



## **Luang Pu Tells Me to Disseminate the Religion**

Luang Pu Khao told me, “See here, Thoon. From now on, focus on disseminating the Buddhist religion. Train monks, novices (*sāmañera*), and laypeople to understand the correct way to practice (*paṭipatti*), because it is extremely difficult to find someone who is capable of teaching the correct way to practice.” Luang Pu’s good intentions were likely due to his desire to find someone to help lighten or share his load.

I asked Luang Pu for permission to express my perspective. “Luang Pu, in regards to the methods (*upāya*) of training and teaching the Dhamma to monks, *sāmañeras*, and laypeople, I am wholly ready. Ever since that day in which I understood the universal truth (*sacca-dhamma*) at Pa Lun, all of the other Dhamma for teaching people also arose simultaneously.” I reasoned with Luang Pu, “At this time, I am still a young monk. The faith that monks, *sāmañeras*, and laypeople have in me is practically nonexistent. Even if I were to explain the truth about practice, complete with correct principles of cause and effect, they will reproach me for speaking of Dhamma beyond my own ability. As of now, I have only been ordained for nine rains (*vassa*). Though the listeners may feel confident about the high quality of Ācariya Thoon’s Dhamma teaching, the other thing they will feel confident about is my being a young monk who may one day disrobe.

“Therefore, I am not suited to train monks, sāmañeras, and laypeople in the Dhamma right now. The reason is that I am one who knows myself (attaññū). I realize that I am a young man. This era is unlike the Buddha’s era. Back then, the Buddha would guarantee that a monk or sāmañera was firmly established in the Dhamma. It is not that way in this era. People only want to hear the Dhamma from older monks of many vassas. Their faith will hinge on the individual. Only if the individual is an old monk of many vassas will the Dhamma he teaches be of benefit to them. If they do not believe in the individual, the Dhamma he teaches will be worthless.

“With permission, Luang Pu, please wait for a while. Once the timing is appropriate, I will disseminate the Dhamma to the fullest. During this period, if I were to give a profound Dhamma teaching, they would accuse me of speaking of Dhamma beyond my ability. In reality, my ability is already perfectly primed and ready, but it is my age that is not ready. Thus, let it be in accordance with kālaññū, or proper time. Whenever attaññū, kālaññū, and parisaññū<sup>22</sup> are ready, that is when I will reveal myself.”

After hearing my reasoning, Luang Pu nodded and said, “In that case, don’t remain in seclusion for long. There may be monks, sāmañeras, or laypeople whose perfections of character (pāramī) are primed and ready. Allow them the chance to hear the true Dhamma. They might be able to attain a level of enlightenment in this lifetime. Don’t let their lives be for naught. Help teach them and train them. Don’t let their opportunities go to waste. These days, those who are truly determined to practice still exist. Allow them to also understand the correct way to practice, because one day, they might become an asset in Buddhism’s future.”

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<sup>22</sup> Parisaññū: one who knows the assembly or knows the society.

There were many Dhamma topics that Luang Pu and I discussed, but I have only selected a few of them to write about here. From then on, I adopted a Neanderthal's character while living with others. I assumed the persona of one who hadn't attained any Dhamma whatsoever. At Wat Tham Klong Phen or any other temple, that persona enabled me to get along with everyone perfectly well. This was because of a Dhamma topic that I practiced until it became embedded in my mindset. That is, the Seven Virtues of the Righteous (sappurisa-dhamma): 1. Dhammaññutā, train oneself to be one who knows the cause, 2. Atthaññutā, train oneself to be one who knows the consequence, 3. Attaññutā, train oneself to be one who knows oneself, 4. Mattaññutā, train oneself to be one who knows moderation, 5. Kālaññutā, train oneself to be one who knows proper time, 6. Parisaññutā, train oneself to be one who knows the assembly, and 7. Puggalaññutā, train oneself to be one who knows the individual.

I regarded these seven Dhamma methods (upāya) as an important personal theme. When you live in a society at large, you must understand how to comport yourself in that society. Each individual's nature is different. You must adapt yourself in order to survive in that society. When applying these themes, it isn't necessary to practice them in the order delineated in manuals. Just understand the situation you are facing, select the appropriate Dhamma topic that solves and eliminates that problem, and be sure to solve it in time. Do not leave that problem to fester and do not allow it to spread far and wide. It must be solved promptly.



## Fixing My Teacher's Wrong View

After the rains retreat (vassa) ended, it was Kathina season. I had the opportunity to help sew Kathina robes at Wat Pa Nong Saeng where Luang Pu Boowa Siripuno was the abbot. In the morning, I went to pay my respects to Luang Pu Boowa. He grinned and after I finished bowing to him, he immediately asked, “How was practicing in Chiang Rai province? You probably gained something valuable to share, right? Tell me about it.” Then, I described every aspect of the fruits (phala) of my practice to Luang Pu Boowa. The manner I had related it to Luang Pu Boowa was the same in which I had related it to Luang Pu Khao. After I finished recounting the fruits of practice to Luang Pu Boowa, he said, “Well! You practice mental cultivation (bhāvanā-patipatti) far away and return with something valuable to share with your teacher (ācariya). This is how it should be! Those who have attained release from suffering (dukkha) are few and far between. For the most part, there is a fear of suffering despite not even knowing suffering or seeing suffering yet. The path to enlightenment (nibbāna) must pass through this suffering. If you truly know suffering and see suffering through wisdom, you will be able to conquer suffering. Those who are afraid of suffering must therefore continue to drown in this world’s suffering.” Luang Pu asked, “How many vassas had you been ordained as a monk before knowing the Dhamma?”

"With permission, Luang Pu. I had been a monk for eight vassas."

Luang Pu Boowa asked, "You told Luang Pu Khao about this already, right?"

I answered, "I told Luang Pu Khao already."

Luang Pu asked further, "What did Luang Pu Khao say?"

I answered, "Luang Pu Khao rejoiced (anumodanā)."

Luang Pu Boowa said, "Now that you have successfully taught yourself, go and teach your teacher because he is a very stubborn bullheaded monk."

Luang Por Boonma was the monk who taught me the Dhamma about "arise, cease" back when I was a layperson, yet he was still extremely engrossed in meditative attainments (jhāna-samāpatti) and had developed many supernatural powers (abhiññā). That is why no one wanted to fix this problem for him. Those who have supernormal powers from meditative attainments possess strong views (ditṭhi). They are highly confident that their practice will lead to the path and fruit of enlightenment (magga-phala-nibbāna). What's more, the belief that wisdom (paññā) will arise from tranquil meditation (samādhi) is deeply fixed in their minds.

Although Luang Por Boowa had nominated me to grace my teacher with a Dhamma lecture, I wasn't entirely confident that I could give him one. That, and he was a prolific Dhamma lecturer himself. If he started speaking about the Dhamma and there was someone to sit and listen, he could talk for the entire day. He would talk in circles on the topic of the mind (citta) being calm and the various symptoms of the mind (citta). Then he would relate it to

meditative attainments (*jhāna-samāpatti*) and then relate that to supernatural powers (*abhiññā*). I had listened to his lectures before and I knew that what he described did not lead to the path and fruit of enlightenment in any way. I had never been able to warn him though, because I wasn't like him and he was my teacher. Previously, I didn't dare speak the Dhamma with him at all. I was always the listener. But now I had enough strength. However, I didn't know whether I would be able to fix his wrong views. In any event, I'd give it a try. Who knows, we might be tormenting-mates.<sup>23</sup>

That night, I went to Luang Por Boonma's hut (*kuṭī*). At that time, he was doing walking meditation (*caṅkama*). Once he saw me, he stopped doing walking meditation. He asked a few questions and led me into his *kuṭī*. After I finished bowing to him, Luang Por Boonma immediately asked, "How was it? I heard that you went to practice in Chiang Rai province. Was the mental cultivation practice good? Tell me about it."

I replied with docile humility, "With permission, Luang Por. I can manage to stand on my own two feet."

Then he said, "That's all there is to it. If you are truly determined, you don't need to practice mental cultivation somewhere far away. There are many places in our northeastern region where someone can practice *dhutaṅga*. Here, at Wat Pa Nong Saeng, it is suitable (*sappāya*) for practice. The only thing that is missing is true determination."

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<sup>23</sup> A tormenting-mate is someone you are frequently paired with in numerous rebirths. However, unlike a soul-mate, a tormenting-mate is not limited to a romantic pairing. It can be a daughter-mother, teacher-student, brother-sister, best friends, or any other pairing that allows you to love, hate, nurture, hurt, sacrifice for, and exact revenge on the person to which you cling most. The reason it is called a tormenting-mate may be because when the bonds of attachment are this strong (from lifetimes of reaffirming that this person is crucial to your identity) it's tormenting to be with them but also tormenting to be without them.

Seizing the opportunity, I asked for permission and said, “In regards to determination, how do you set your determination so that it is right?” Then, he explained about meditation, explained about serenity, and explained about the Eight Meditative Attainments (*atṭha-jhāna-samāpatti*). Owing to his proficiency in them, his explanation of serenity and his explanation of meditative absorptions (*jhāna*) were very refined in nature.

I had to sit there and listen to him for about an hour. There was no opportunity for me to get a word in. After he was worn out from talking, he stopped to drink water. This is when I found my opening. “With permission, Luang Por. You are the reason that I ordained as a monk. Back when I was a layperson, you taught the Dhamma to me with two short words, ‘arise, cease.’ I applied that Dhamma theme to my practice until I achieved pleasing results.”

I told Luang Por Boonma, “I have listened to you teach the Dhamma for a long time. You have explained about serene meditation. You have explained about the Eight Meditative Attainments. That mindset that you mentioned is like a cow bound to a post.”<sup>24</sup> Then he went still and didn’t respond. Seeing as how he wasn’t responding, I asked for permission and spoke about methods of practice and spoke about the fruits of practice. I told him, “Everything that you have explained is completely unrelated to the path and fruit of enlightenment. Where do you think the path and fruit of enlightenment is, Luang Por?”

He replied, “Oh, the path and fruit of enlightenment are extremely far away. I don’t even know if I will make it in this lifetime.”

I said, “You talk about the attainment of extinction (*nirodha-samāpatti*), Luang Por. I thought you were already an arahant because

<sup>24</sup> This idiom refers to an action or manner that is repetitive and ends up right where it started, just like a cow bound to a post that circles the post but ends up in the same place.

nirodha-samāpatti is the mind's residence (vihāra-dhamma) of only non-returners (anāgāmī) and arahants. Commoners (puthujjana) can only achieve the Eight Meditative Attainments (aṭṭha-jhāna-samāpatti). They are absolutely unable to enter into extinction (nirodha). Arahants or those who have attained the path and fruit of nibbāna do not necessarily have to enter nirodha-samāpatti. Why haven't you used wisdom to contemplate universal truths (sacca-dhamma) in order to develop true understanding and true realization?"

He asked me, "What are the fundamentals of using wisdom to contemplate universal truths? Can you explain them to me?"

"Yes, I can explain them to you, sir." I then bowed to Luang Por three times and asked him for permission. "Now, don't misinterpret this as the student teaching the teacher." I began to explain the principles and methods of using wisdom. I started with "arise, cease" from back when Luang Por Boonma taught it to me when I was a layperson. Then I expanded upon the topic of "arise, cease" by expounding "arise, cease" in a coarse way, "arise, cease" in a moderate way, and "arise, cease" in a refined way. I explained it in a consecutive fashion. I explained how to use wisdom to contemplate "arise, cease" at the insight development (vipassanā) level, explained about "arise, cease" at the insight-knowledge (vipassanā-ñāṇa) level, explained about the extinction of suffering (nirodha), and explained about the knowledge of the extinction of mental intoxication (āsavakkhayañāṇa) that arose at Ban Pa Lun during that final day. Threatening tactics and consoling tactics were both implemented. Precisely how they were implemented is a private matter.

While he listened to me explain the Dhamma from beginning to ultimate end and describe how the fruits of Dhamma practice must



be, Luang Por Boonma sobbed. He used a handkerchief to dab away his tears the entire time. Then he said, “I raise my palms together in respect (*vandana*). Sādhu to the Dhamma that you have explained and to the fruits (*phala*) of the Dhamma that you have received.”

Then, I employed a consoling technique, “Luang Por, your perfections of character in this lifetime are primed and ready. I am lucky to have been your student. I will never forget the favor that you bestowed upon me. While I was a layperson, you gave me a Dhamma sermon on “arise, cease.” I became a monk and practiced mental cultivation continuously and I constantly used the “arise, cease” metaphor in my contemplations until I achieved the results that I just told you about. Now, I have explained that Dhamma to you. I am imploring you to change your method of practice because the old way you have practiced does not lead to the path and fruit of enlightenment in any way. The old method that you have been practicing is the way of hermits (*tāpasa*) and ascetics (*isi*). That method is the path that leads only to the Brahma world (*brahma-loka*). The more you practice it, the more deluded you become. You cycle back and forth through meditative absorptions (*jhāna*) and cannot find a way out. If you were to die right now, you would immediately be reborn in the Brahma world. You’re advanced in age now. Your practice of mental cultivation has been incorrect all along and it has wasted your time for so long.

“I have guided you to the path so that you can understand the methods of practice. Henceforth, may you go and practice at Ban Fang Daeng, Chiang Saen district, Chiang Rai province. You can go any day, just don’t dally. Realize that the methods you have been practicing were wrong, Luang Por, and start over. It’s not too late. From now on, don’t teach the Dhamma to anyone, no matter what. Even when it

comes to discussing something, if it isn't necessary, don't speak. If you are going to speak, say as little as possible because talking too much isn't good at all. It compels the mind (*citta*) to scatter toward the object (*ārammaṇa*) you are talking about and you must think of the words to say. Using wisdom to contemplate Dhamma will not be continuous. Otherwise, I will leave you to your fate and consider it the last lifetime that you and I will ever meet. There isn't much of life remaining for you before you die. I wish for you to reach the end of suffering while you are still alive. Or what do you have to say?"

He said, "If you think I should go, I will go."

"Will you promise me, Luang Por, that from now on, you will no longer teach the Dhamma to anyone?" He promised.

The next day, he packed his things for the trip. I helped him pack his things. Then he went and bid farewell to Luang Pu Boowa. Luang Pu Boowa gave an exhortation that emphasized, "This is the last stage of your life now. Practice so that you reach the end of suffering in this lifetime. Going forward, do not be deluded by serenity or deluded by absorptions (*jhāna*). Use wisdom to contemplate a lot." Then, we took a minibus to send him off on a large bus headed to Chiang Rai province. His children accompanied him to his destination.

Thereafter, I went and told Luang Pu Boowa about what had happened. I told him about how I had tormented Luang Pu Boonma and employed various tactics. Luang Pu Boowa laughed heartily and said, "That's how it has to be done. He is a bullheaded monk with great conceit (*māna*) and pride (*attā*) who won't listen to anyone and practices mental cultivation incorrectly but doesn't even realize it, and won't listen to anyone because he considers himself entirely correct." That year, Luang Por Boonma spent the rains retreat (*vassa*)

at Ban Fang Daeng, Chiang Saen district, Chiang Rai province. He accelerated his practice of mental cultivation to the maximum. Eventually, he came to clearly know and truly see the ultimate truth (sacca-dhamma) within that very vassa.

Fixing the problem of wrong mental cultivation (*bhāvanā*) for someone lost in serenity and lost in absorptions is not something that can be done by anyone. The only exceptions are the Buddha tormenting and fixing someone, someone with good wisdom who has a good understanding of the principles of deliverance through the mind (*ceto-vimutti*), or someone who has been a past tormenting-mate. These are the entities capable of fixing someone deluded by serenity and deluded by absorptions.



## **Luang Pu Khao Tells Me About the White Elephant**

After the Kathina at Wat Pa Nong Saeng was over, I returned to Wat Tham Klong Phen. I discussed the Dhamma with Luang Pu as usual. One day, it was just the two of us. Luang Pu asked me, “Thoon, have you ever experienced a meditative vision (nimitta) of riding a white elephant?”

“With permission, Luang Pu. I have experienced a nimitta of riding a white elephant once.”

Luang Pu said, “How did you ride it? Tell me about it.”

I asked for permission to recount the following to Luang Pu, “One night, after I settled into a meditative state, the world became bright and everything became visible. I glanced up at the sky and it was bright and illuminated as well. At that moment, I saw Luang Pu Mun sitting on the back of a large white elephant. There were many other teachers (ācariya) sitting on the backs of white elephants that were all lined up. Then, the white elephant that Luang Pu Mun was sitting on floated up into the air and the other white elephants carried the teachers floating up into the air, as well. Then it came time for the white elephant that I was sitting on. We floated up after the large white elephants. The elephants floated in the air and formed a large



circle. Each white elephant was adorned with diamonds and precious gemstones and draped in exquisite golden cloths. In the sky, there was a radiance that gleamed and sparkled and illuminated the entire sky. There was an announcement, ‘This is the group of white elephants that Luang Pu Mun has led to ultimate bliss—release to enlightenment (vimutti-nibbāna)—in this era.’

“Then my mind (citta) withdrew from the meditative state. I contemplated that it was something normal for those who have reached this point in practice to be considered perfect and the highest blessing (uttama-mangala). The white elephant is a king’s royal elephant, so it can be interpreted as the king of Dhamma. This refers to those who have finished their studies, meaning those who have finished with the sense-bases (āyatana). Or in other words, those who have completely finished Prayog<sup>6</sup><sup>25</sup>—the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind.”

Thereafter, Luang Pu only smiled and said, “Back when I was with Luang Pu Mun, Luang Pu Mun announced to the community of monks (saṅgha) that, ‘After I have died, there will be a young white elephant who will fly back and forth and perform various miracles so that the people will know and see his many abilities.’ Upon hearing that, the elder (thera) monks assumed it to mean that in a future era, there will be a young arahant who will display his knowledge and his abilities and disseminate the Dhamma so that the public will be aware of the truth of the universal truth (sacca-dhamma). There will be many who follow in his practice who achieve results (phala).”

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<sup>25</sup> Prayog indicates one of nine levels of Pāli scholarship. In this context, “Prayog 6” is unrelated to Pāli scholarship, but is merely used to indicate a difficult achievement—shedding attachment to the six sense bases (āyatana). In other words, those who have attained arahantship.

I asked Luang Pu Khao, “With permission, Luang Pu. Has that young white elephant been born yet?”

Luang Pu said, “He has already been born.”

I asked Luang Pu further, “Where is that young white elephant? I want to know. I want to go pay respects to him.”

Luang Pu grinned and said, “I’m not telling. Find him yourself.” Venerable Ācariya Wan Uttamo and Venerable Ācariya Juan Kulajetṭho also mentioned this young elephant to me. When I asked them who it was, they would not tell me either.

If the question were asked of me, “Has that young elephant been born yet?” I would also answer that he has already been born. I do not know where that elephant is. You might see him but not know that he is a white elephant because that white elephant might have painted himself black in order to conceal himself. That’s why no one knows. May you all search for that young white elephant. Once you find him, kindly send me the news so that I may go and pay my respects and listen to the Dhamma from that white elephant to my heart’s content. Luang Pu Khao said that Luang Pu Mun’s predictions were very accurate. Whatever he says will happen, happens. This was because Luang Pu Mun was proficient in knowledge (*ñāṇa*). He knew that which had happened in the past (*atītarīsa-ñāṇa*) and knew that which would happen in the future (*anāgatārīsa-ñāṇa*).



## The Three Marvels

Many people might interpret Luang Pu Mun's statement about the white elephant's miracles differently from Luang Pu Mun. This is because most people have read textbooks or have often listened to teachers (*ācariya*) speak of miracles being performed by those with magical powers (*iddhi*) to travel through the ground or soar through the air. For instance, when reading about supernormal powers (*abhiññā*), there is: knowledge via the eyes (*cakkhu-ñāṇa*), otherwise known as the divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*), or the ability to direct the mind (*citta*) to see divine beings (*devatā*), hell (*naraka*), and other things; knowledge via the ears (*sota-ñāṇa*), otherwise known as the divine ear (*dibba-sota*), or the ability to direct the mind to hear sounds of divine beings, hell beings, and other sounds; knowledge of the minds of others (*ceto-pariya-ñāṇa*), or the ability to direct the mind to know the thoughts and views of others; magic powers of the mind (*manomaya-iddhi*), or the ability to direct the mind to become something or to become many people; and psychic powers (*iddhividhi*), or the ability to fly to and from anywhere. Most people assume that this is what miracles are.

The meaning of Luang Pu Mun's statement about the young white elephant performing miracles refers to three marvels: 1. the marvel of psychic power (*iddhi-pāṭihāriya*), or the ability to perform

various kinds of magic, 2. the marvel of mind reading (ādesanā-pāṭīhāriya), or the knowledge (ñāṇa) of the minds of others and the ability to speak in a way that traps the minds of others, and 3. the marvel of teaching (anusāsanī-pāṭīhāriya), or the ability to teach the Dhamma in a reasonable way that enables the listener to understand the meaning, the ability to explain Dhamma themes that others find difficult to understand in a way that is easy to understand, and the ability to explain lengthy Dhamma topics in an abbreviated, concise manner that others can understand.

Of these three marvels, the first two can be cultivated. However, the Buddha did not encourage this. The Buddha praised anusāsanī-pāṭīhāriya, or the third marvel, because it relates to the Buddhist religion and the path and fruit of enlightenment (magga-phala-nibbāna). Thus, Luang Pu Mun's statement about the young white elephant's miracles refers to the marvel of teaching (anusāsanī-pāṭīhāriya). He will be someone capable of teaching the Dhamma according to the Buddha's teachings in a correct way so that people will develop right views (sammā-ditṭhi) according to the true path. He will teach the Dhamma so that people understand the methods of practice that lead to the path and fruit of enlightenment. This is what Luang Pu Mun meant. May you all understand this in order to find the young white elephant more easily. You should not wait to see when he will fly into the sky, when he will travel through the earth, or when he will vanish from in front of you. If that is how you will look for him, you are guaranteed to not find that young white elephant because you have misinterpreted what is meant by miracle. May you understand him accordingly.



## **Paying Respects to Venerable Ācariya Wan Uttamo**

On one occasion, I went to pay my respects to Venerable Ācariya Wan Uttamo of Wat Tham Apai Damrongtham, Song Dao district, Sakon Nakhon province. Venerable Ācariya Wan had a prudent and well-mannered nature. He was reserved in speech. If it wasn't necessary, he wouldn't say it. You could say he was someone who didn't know how to joke around. Whenever he spoke, there was substance and reason. He didn't speak playfully or in jest. He was a student of Luang Pu Mun. Back then, the community of monks (saṅgha) appointed Venerable Ācariya Wan to be Luang Pu Mun's regular monk attendant to minister to him and look after his requisites (parikkhāra), from looking after the monk hut (kuṭī) and cleaning it regularly, to taking Luang Pu Mun's alms bowl and washing it, and regularly tending to the alms bowl and other requisites. After Luang Pu Mun passed away, Venerable Ācariya Wan established a temple where he permanently resided at Wat Tham Apai Damrongtham. I went there to seek quietude with him.

One night, as my mind (citta) settled into a state of meditation (samādhi), I experienced a meditative vision (nimitta) of Venerable Ācariya Wan walking toward me and asking me, "Venerable Thoon,



since you achieved enlightenment, have you been to see the levels of the Brahma world (brahma-loka) yet?”

I replied, “Not yet, sir.”

He said, “Go and take a look. Back then, after Luang Pu Mun’s attainment of enlightenment, he went to see the levels of the Brahma world.”

I asked Venerable Ācariya Wan, “What about you, venerable ācariya? Have you been to see the levels of the Brahma world yet?”

He replied, “I have already been there. I want you to see how they live in the Brahma world.”

Since Venerable Ācariya Wan said that, I would go and see for myself. I altered my mind (citta) in order to enter a meditative absorption (jhāna), and my body floated upward very fast. I stopped and glanced back down at the human world. The human world looked like a circle or like a large lake. Then my body floated upward again and I stopped to glance back down at the human world again. The world looked like it was the size of a large lotus leaf. My body floated upward again and I stopped to glance back down at the human world again. This time, I could no longer see the human world. I floated upward until I reached the Immortal Realm (arūpa-brahma). Once I reached the Immortal Realm, my eyes swept over everything and all I could see was light that sparkled. After I was done seeing it, I was going to head back down to the level of the Fine-Material Realm (rūpa-brahma) to see how it was.

I proceeded to float downward until I reached the Fine-Material Realm. In that level of the Fine-Material Realm I saw people being very still. They weren’t moving at all. Some were standing very still,

some were sitting very still, and some were lying down very still. There were a great number of people stuck in this level of the Brahma realm. If someone is able to reach the level of fine-material absorptions (*rūpa-jhāna*) in meditation, after they die in that state of fine-material absorptions, their mind (*citta*) will be reborn in an existence (*bhava*) called a fine-material existence (*rūpa-bhava*), where the lifespan is eternally long.

Thereafter, I decided that I wanted to go see the Tāvatiṁsā level of heaven (*sagga*) because in the Buddha's era, many arahants got to visit that level of heaven. It was a level of heaven in which Indra was king. I wanted to see it too. My body floated on downward and passed other levels of heaven until I reached the Tāvatiṁsā level. It looked like just another town. It was large and expansive and stretched as far as the eyes could see. There were various palaces of disparate sizes. Each palace radiated different lights and colors. The intensity of each palace's light gleamed and reflected off of one another.

I saw one palace that was tall and large and emitted a very beautiful bright light. I floated down to get a closer look. I was around forty meters away from the palace. Then, I saw a heavenly being (*devatā*) walk out of the palace, spot me, and slip back into the palace. I heard yelling, "Lord mother! A venerable monk has come to visit us! He is sitting in the air, outside of our palace." "Where is he? Where is he?" Then they emerged and peered at me. The leader said, "We respectfully invite you to come into our palace, venerable sir."

I knew that there were only women inside that palace and, as a monk, I should not enter. I told them, "It is improper for me to go into the palace because I am by myself."



The heavenly being said, “In that case, we invite you to come closer to the palace, venerable sir.”

I floated downward, around ten meters from the palace. I was at an elevation where they wouldn’t have to turn their faces up too high.

Then, the heavenly beings, who numbered no fewer than ten thousand, emerged onto the palace balcony. They sat in the heavenly being’s salutation (*deva-pañāma*)<sup>26</sup> position, in a nice and orderly manner. Then they bowed three times and the leader of the heavenly beings led the group in saying, “Sādhu, sādhu, sādhu” in unison. The voices echoed considerably. They asked me, “Venerable sir, where have you come from?”

I told them, “I went to visit the Brahma world. Seeing as there was a good opportunity, I stopped by to visit here.”

They all said, “Sādhu, sādhu.” The leader said, “We are very fortunate that your venerableness has come here to grace us. It has been a long time since we have bowed in respect to a venerable one. Back when the Buddha was still alive, Venerable Mahā Moggallāna and Venerable Sāriputta visited us often. Since then, a long time has passed until we saw you, venerable sir. This is considered our incredible fortune. We invite your venerableness to come up here to grace us again. We all request to hear the Dhamma, as well.”

At that moment, I thought of Ācariya Wan. He had told me to go see the Brahma world. Now that I had seen it, I would hurry back down to report to him. He was probably waiting for me at that moment.

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<sup>26</sup> The *deva-pañāma* position is sitting upright with legs folded to one side and palms pressed together in a budding lotus position at the chest (*vandana*).

So, I told the group of heavenly beings, “I will not be staying for long because I have a matter in the human world that I must return to.” I asked the heavenly beings, “Since when have you been living in this palace?”

They responded, “We have been living in this palace since the Buddhist dispensation of the Kassapa Buddha, sir.”

“What merit (puñña) did you all make that led to having such a large and beautiful palace?”

They said, “We made merit in many ways. We built prayer halls (uposatha), monasteries (vihāra), and great noble relics pagodas (mahā-dhātu-cetiya).<sup>27</sup> We gave charitably (dāna), upheld the precepts (sīla), developed mentally (bhāvanā), and cultivated many other merits.”

I asked further, “Why aren’t there any men living with you?”

The leader replied, “Back then, I was the leader in cultivating these merits. There were no men involved in any way, sir.”

I simply told them, “Recollect the merits and moral goodness (kusala) that you all have cultivated. Do not be reckless with life because change is bound to occur. When it comes time, even the heaven that you live in must change. The merits and moral goodness of heaven can be exhausted. You will be reborn in the human world, cultivate merit and moral goodness, and return here again. May you all live in mental happiness forever.”

After the exhortation ended, they said, “Sādhu, sādhu, sādhu” in unison and bowed three times. I bid farewell to the heavenly beings

<sup>27</sup> A great (mahā) noble relics (dhātu) pagoda (Pāli: cetiya, Thai: chedi) is a pagoda in which arahant relics or the Buddha’s relics are enshrined.

and floated downward to the human realm in order to tell Venerable Ācariya Wan all about it. Once I floated down to the monk hut (*kuti*), my mind (*citta*) disengaged from the meditative state and I was able to review everything that happened in an orderly fashion.

The following day, I went to pay my respects to Venerable Ācariya Wan. It was just the two of us, so I told him all about my meditative vision (*nimitta*). Then, Venerable Ācariya Wan asked a question about practice (*patipatti*). So, I told him all about it, just like I had told Luang Pu Khao. Venerable Ācariya Wan said, “The mind (*citta*) that can reach this point is a mind that is very refined. Everyone who reaches this ultimate point will be like this. However, very few are able to do so. It cannot even be quantified as a percentage because there are so many things that are obstacles making it difficult for a practitioner to make it through.”

I did not dare to ask him when and where he had attained enlightenment because it is improper for a junior monk to ask a senior monk. Venerable Ācariya Wan was greatly respected and trusted. He stood out when it came to giving Dhamma sermons. If he were still alive, the propagation of Buddhism in this era would advance significantly.



## Paying Respects to Venerable Ācariya Juan

During that period, Venerable Ācariya Juan had charged a monk to “tell Venerable Thoon to come visit” because he was in the process of constructing a bridge around Phu Thok<sup>28</sup> to use for circumambulating with candles. I will briefly relate Venerable Ācariya Juan’s background. He and I enjoyed a close relationship. He told me everything about his life as a layperson. He also told me about the events before he was ordained. Venerable Ācariya Juan’s personality was different from that of Venerable Ācariya Wan. Venerable Ācariya Juan liked to speak in a playful manner and mixed in jokes at times.

He told me that as a layperson, he had liked this one young lady but they lived in different villages. One day, he attended a Kathina ceremony. He was using a paraffin lamp that gave off bright light. He spotted a young lady who was very beautiful. When the lamp’s light touched her face, her skin appeared soft and ivory-colored. He could not resist. He had to go and talk to her. He asked where she lived and she told him. After he returned home, he continued to think about that young lady. He just couldn’t forget her. He determined that he would have to marry her. The next day, he went to visit the young lady he had set his mind on. Once he arrived at her house, the skin

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<sup>28</sup> Phu Thok, or “lonely mountain,” refers to the isolated 359-meter-tall sandstone hill in Bueng Kan province where Venerable Ācariya Juan founded Wat Chetiya Khiri Wihan (Wat Phu Thok).

that had seemed beautiful had changed because she was afflicted with deer-leprosy, or psoriasis. She was awful to look at.

Later on, he took a liking to another young lady in the same village. She was the village beauty that all of the young men were sweet on. He decisively made up his mind, *"I will definitely marry this young lady."* Venerable Ācariya Juan was observant by nature. He contemplated the matter of the young lady, *"This young lady is truly beautiful. After we are married, will her beauty last forever?"* He drew a comparison, *"Married women were once beautiful like this young lady. After having a family, that beauty vanished. They look just like ordinary villagers."* Though he was contemplating, he still felt love for her. He just had to marry her.

Back in those days, there weren't any toilet rooms. You would have to go outside of the house and find a place to defecate in the forest, and the pigs would eat it. The thought came to him, *"What are this beautiful young lady's feces like? Are they beautiful like the person?"* One day, he hid in the forest in order to see her feces. The first day, he didn't make it in time. The pigs ate them all up first, but he was not disheartened. The next day, he hid just like before. After the young lady finished defecating, she hurriedly left. He hurriedly emerged from his hiding place to take a look. Upon viewing her feces, he saw both round and flat tapeworms crawling all over. He reflected, *"It is only the skin that makes this young lady beautiful. Inside, it is entirely dirty and filthy."* The love he had for that young lady started to gradually wane. He used her feces as a contemplation metaphor (upāya). After contemplating this young lady, he contemplated how other young ladies would all be the same way.

I asked him, "Venerable ācariya, so it was feces that led you to ordain as a monk then?"

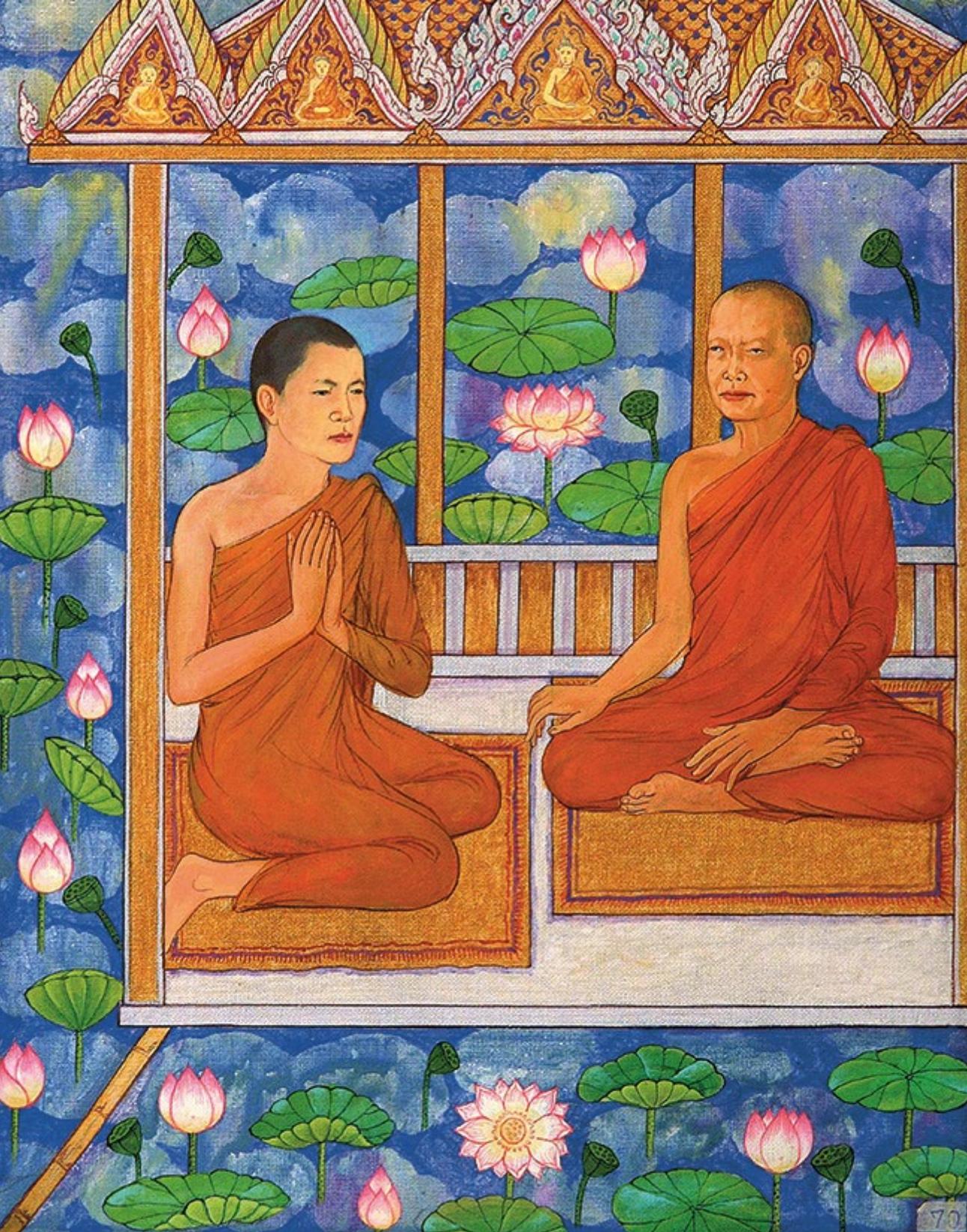
He answered, “That’s right. If I didn’t see her pile of feces, I definitely could have married that young lady.”

This is another kind of Dhamma metaphor. Those skilled at thinking can see a pile of feces and use it as a wisdom metaphor. How must you think in order to effectively change your view? You must use your own methods of thinking. For instance, Venerable Ācariya Juan saw the pile of feces and was able to use it as a metaphor to develop right views. We have seen these things a lot but have never thought about them in a Dhamma manner. There are numerous methods of thinking that will change wrong views to right views. Only, we don’t want to think or contemplate at all. We should use our own thoughts effectively.

One night, as I settled into meditation, I saw a large pond that measured around 500 meters by 500 meters. In the middle of the pond stood a large and very beautiful palace. I observed a monk walking back and forth within that palace. I thought, *“Which ācariya is that, walking in that palace?”* Then, the monk stood facing me. I looked at him and clearly saw that it was Venerable Ācariya Juan. I yelled over to him, “Venerable ācariya! I am going to go to the palace to see you! Where is the bridge?”

He pointed to a bamboo pole that lay draped from the shoreline of the pond to the palace and said, “Here is the bridge. If you are capable, then come on over.” It was a small stalk of dried bamboo floating on the water. There was no handrail to hold onto.

I thought, *“If Venerable Ācariya Juan was able to make it, then I must be able to make it as well.”* Then, I tried stepping on the bamboo. The bamboo appeared to be firm and unmoving. I walked briskly



along the bamboo and reached the palace a moment later. I entered the palace and paid my respects.

Venerable Ācariya Juan said, “Thoon, you are sufficiently capable that you made it to me.”

Thereafter, my mind emerged from the meditative state and I discerned that Venerable Ācariya Juan had already awakened to the Dhamma as an arahant. When we had resided together, he had never spoken to me about the fruits of practice. He didn’t exhibit any signs of being an arahant whatsoever. He was a monk who had concealed the secret of his virtue very well. He comported himself just like any ordinary monk or novice. He acted normally. There was no indication of his being an arahant at all. Venerable Ācariya Wan’s character and Venerable Ācariya Juan’s character were completely different. Venerable Ācariya Wan was the deep water, deep shadow type while Venerable Ācariya Juan was the deep water, shallow shadow type. That is why the way they physically and verbally expressed themselves differed. That night, I appraised Venerable Ācariya Juan and instantly knew that he was already an arahant. Ordinarily, I am not one to examine others to see who possesses virtue and who does not possess virtue. I am not interested in those matters. Only if there is cause to do so will I consider the implication of the matter, that’s all.

The following day, I told Venerable Ācariya Juan about the nimitta. After I finished, he asked me, “What did you think of it, Venerable Thoon?”

I replied, “After I came out of the mediation, I then knew that you had already attained release, venerable ācariya.”

He said, “Look Thoon, I have never told anyone about myself. Since you came to know about me like this, I will go ahead and just

say it—I attained release a long time ago. I have never told anyone about it. I merely implied it to Luang Pu Khao, just so that he would know. I didn't say it straight out like I am with you right now." He said, "Now that you know about me, don't tell anyone else about it, alright?"

I promised and said, "I will not tell anyone." Venerable Ācariya Juan has since passed away. I am only writing about him so that later generations can know about it. If Venerable Ācariya Juan were still alive, I would not tell anyone about him because I already gave him my word. I didn't ask him when he had attained enlightenment though, because it is improper for junior monks to question senior monks.

Afterward, Venerable Ācariya Juan told me about when he was with Luang Pu Mun, namely how Luang Pu Mun taught mental cultivation practice (*bhāvanā-paṭipatti*) and how he taught his students. Luang Pu Mun was very skilled in teaching both methods for meditative calm (*samatha*) and insight development (*vipassanā*). However, for the most part, people focus on the meditative techniques and don't understand the methods of cultivating continuous insight (*vipassanā*) or the methods of using wisdom to contemplate.

Venerable Ācariya Juan proceeded to ask me, "When you awakened to the Dhamma, where did it happen?" I told him all about it just as I told Luang Pu Khao. Then Venerable Ācariya Juan said, "Very few are capable of awakening to the Dhamma like this because these days, people don't believe that people can practice mental cultivation effectively. Most people assume that the era of the noble ones (*ariya-puggala*) is over. Most people assume that all arahants must perform miracles and exhibit magical powers (*iddhi*), and that every arahant must be the same. That is actually not how it is. During the Buddha's time, the arahants who were capable of exhibiting magic

powers were few in number. Mostly, they were just capable of extinguishing mental intoxication (āsava). In this era, there are no arahants who are capable of exhibiting magic powers. Since there aren't any, people assume that there are no arahants. That's why they believe that the era of arahants is over. If you were to tell them that arahants still exist, they wouldn't believe it. The best course is not to talk about arahants with anyone. There is nothing to gain from talking about it because this is how it is supposed to be in this era." Though Venerable Ācariya Juan possessed supreme virtue, no one knew because he hid himself well. He got along with everyone and didn't have any problems.



## Returning to Wat Tham Klong Phen

After returning to Wat Tham Klong Phen, I drew from Venerable Ācariya Juan's method (*upāya*) of self-concealment in order to co-exist with others. I adapted in order to live with the others effectively. Wherever you go, wherever you are, whatever society you are in, if you know how to be a fool, you will live in peace. I reflected on Venerable Mahā Kaccāna's teaching, "One with eyes should be as if blind, one with ears as if deaf, one with wisdom as if mute."<sup>29</sup> Don't pay any mind to the things that you see. When you hear sounds, don't pay those sounds any mind. Those are other people's issues. Don't bring them in as preoccupations (ārammaṇa). "One with wisdom as if mute" means that whatever society you are in, do not make yourself prominent or boast of what you know or that you are smart. Even if, within your mind, you are knowledgeable and smart, do not put it on display so that others know. It is better to be wise and act the fool. Or in other words, keep the blade in the sheath. If you can train yourself in this way, wherever you may be, you will be at peace. For one thing, endeavor to be one who always loses. Don't endeavor to be the one who triumphs over others. Don't use actions to defeat others. Don't use speech to defeat others. Don't argue with anyone whatsoever. If you can do these things, you will forever live in peace.

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<sup>29</sup> From Theragāthā 8.1 (Pāli Thag 494-501): Mahā-Kaccāna.



## **One Evening, Luang Pu Has Me Tell Him About Lifespans**

"With permission, Luang Pu. Regarding the lifespan of humans in this world, in each era and each age, the lifespan of humans is not the same. In some eras, the lifespan is short and, in some eras, the lifespan is long. The lifespan of humans in this world both rises and falls. When the human lifespan is on its ascent, the lifespan will reach ten million years. When the human lifespan is on its descent, the lifespan will bottom out at ten years. During a short lifespan, the human stature will be short in accordance with the lifespan. When the lifespan increases, the human stature will become taller and larger. This is a principle of nature. This is how it must be. However, people in today's day and age do not believe that it is possible because they want to see it at this very moment. The changing of the lifespan happens slowly. It takes as long as one hundred years until the lifespan changes. When it comes to the topic of lifespans, people cannot see it physically demonstrated, so we need to talk about human testaments from each era and each age. There must be proof from the Buddhist religion to support it, in order to be able to visualize what it was like in each era. I will speak of the Buddha era (bhadra-kappa) in which there are five Buddhas. Thus far, four have already become enlightened and become Buddhas.

“1. The Kakusandha Buddha was born into the world when the human lifespan was 40,000 years. He taught the Buddhist community (buddha-parisā) so that many attained enlightenment (nibbāna). The Buddha entered final enlightenment in accordance with the lifespan of that era. Thereafter, there was a suñña-kappa, or era devoid of Buddhism. Thereafter, the human lifespan decreased naturally. That is, after 100 years, the human lifespan decreased by one year; after 100 years, the lifespan decreased one year, and so on until the human lifespan reached 30,000 years.

“2. During that era, a Buddha arose in the world. His name was Koṇāgamana Buddha. During that era, the human lifespan was 30,000 years. The Koṇāgamana Buddha graced humans with the Dhamma so that many attained enlightenment. The Buddha entered final enlightenment in accordance with the lifespan of that era. Then there was a suñña-kappa. It was a long era (kappa) devoid of Buddhism. The human lifespan continued to decrease. Every 100 years it decreased by one year until humans in that era had a 20,000-year lifespan.

“3. During that era, a Buddha arose in the world. His name was Kassapa Buddha. During that era, the human lifespan was 20,000 years. The Buddha graced humans with the Dhamma so that many attained the path and fruit of enlightenment (magga-phala-nibbāna). The Buddha entered final enlightenment in accordance with the lifespan of that era. Then there was a suñña-kappa. It was a long era devoid of Buddhism. The human lifespan continued to decrease. Every 100 years it decreased by one year until the humans in that era had a lifespan of 100 years at the minimum.

“4. Then a Buddha arose in the world. His name was Gotama Buddha. Gotama Buddha is the current Buddha that we all respect



and venerate. He taught the Buddhist community (buddha-parisā) so that many attained the path and fruit of enlightenment. The Buddha laid forth the Buddhist religion to last for 5,000 years and then entered final enlightenment. As it stands now, over 2,000 years have passed in the Buddhist religion and the human lifespan has decreased by 25 years. The human lifespan right now is 75 years at the minimum. Hereafter, the human lifespan will continue to decrease. Every 100 years it will decrease by one year. Another 6,500 years from now, the human lifespan will only be 10 years. During that period, there will not be any religion in the world whatsoever and there will not be any laws to back up any government. People will live like the animals in this world. During that era, the dark age (kaliyuga) will arise in order for society to transform into a new era.

“During that era, people with virtue (puñña) will come down to be reborn in order to transform that society into a society of a new era. It will be a society in which the human lifespan increases. Many heavenly beings (deva) will descend to be reborn in the era when the human lifespan is 10 years. There will be another group of devas who will care for and protect them. Their fathers and mothers will fall into the dark age (kaliyuga) and murder one another until no one is left. The devas who come down to be reborn will live together like husband and wife. Those who come to be reborn as their children will all be those who possess merit (puñña).

“Then, there will be a change. The human lifespan will begin to climb. After 100 years, the lifespan will increase by one year to become 11 years. After another 100 years, the lifespan will increase by one year to become 12 years. Every 100 years, the human lifespan will increase by one year until it reaches 20 years, 50 years, 100 years, 1,000 years, 10,000 years, 100,000 years, 1,000,000 years, and

10,000,000 (koti) years. While the lifespan increases, a Buddha will not come to be born and become enlightened. The human stature will increase in accordance with the lifespan. As for marriage, people will live a very long time before they marry. There will be a long gestation period before giving birth. Childhood will last a long time before being grown enough to get married. This is how it will be for people in that era.

“Once humans reach a lifespan of one koti years, the lifespan will begin to fall. People born in that era will become bored with life because they live for so long. The elderly will live long lives. They will become annoyed with their own lives. Then, the lifespan will change. Every 100 years, the lifespan will decrease by one year. It will continue to decrease until it reaches 9,000,000 years, 8,000,000 years, 7,000,000 years, 6-5-4-3-2-1,000,000 years, 900,000 years, 800,000 years, 7-6-5-4-3-2-100,000 years. When the human lifespan is not greater than 100,000 years, a Buddha can come to be born and become enlightened. Basically, a Buddha will only come to be born and become enlightened when the human lifespan is on its way down. The human lifespan will decrease every 100 years by one year. Humans will have a 90,000-year lifespan, and then an 80,000-year lifespan.

“It is during the period of the 80,000-year human lifespan that the Metteyya Buddha will be born and become enlightened as a Buddha. He will teach the Buddhist community (buddha-parisā) and many will attain the path and fruit of enlightenment. When it is time, he will enter into final enlightenment. During the religion of the Metteyya Buddha, there will not be a Buddhist religion established in the human world at all. When the Metteyya Buddha attains final enlightenment, the religion will be over. People during that era will possess merit (puñña) and behavioral tendencies (vāsanā) that they

had previously cultivated. I, for one, have cultivated perfections of character (pāramī) in this life and surely would have gotten to be reborn during the religion of the Metteyya Buddha."

Think about it and calculate it yourself. How long is it from today until the era of the Metteyya Buddha's religion? It will be a number many digits long.

"After the Metteyya Buddha's religion, this Buddha era (bhadra-kappa) of five Buddhas will come to its end. Then, there will be a new Buddha era, which will not be of the same length. The number of Buddhas who come to be enlightened during each Buddha era are not the same. Some Buddha eras have one Buddha, some have two Buddhas, or some have three Buddhas. The Buddha eras in which there are a small number of Buddhas will have a very long era devoid of Buddhism (suñña-kappa). Each Buddha era will have no more than five Buddhas, as I have already explained. As for the lifespan, it will continue to decrease until it reaches 10 years.

"Thus, the human lifespan will rise and fall according to how I have explained it. During the era of a short lifespan, there will be many fools (bāla) born into the human world. It will be that way across the entire world. It is natural and must be that way. This current age is an age in which the lifespan is on the decline. People will behave more aggressively. Everything will become more extreme. Greed (lobha) will become more extreme. Lust (rāga) will become more extreme. Anger (dosa) will become more extreme. Ignorance (moha) will become more extreme. Thus, this extremeness will continually increase. This is how it must be throughout the world. It will happen according to every one of the Buddha's prophecies. The Buddha's 16

prophecies came about because of King Pasenadi of Kosala's dreams<sup>30</sup> (supina-nimitta). The Buddha prophesied how the human world will change and that is how it must happen. It cannot be fixed. The Buddha possessed anāgatamśa-ñāṇa, or accurate knowledge of what would transpire in the future."

Luang Pu Khao asked, "Venerable Thoon, where did you study this?"

I explained, "I am someone who seeks out ancient texts and analyzes the content in terms of reason and plausibility."

Luang Pu said, "Come and tell me more about the world tomorrow, alright?"

The next evening, Luang Pu asked, "What are you going to tell me about tonight?"

"With permission, Luang Pu. I will talk about the natural perils (bhaya) of this world that are unavoidable and will surely affect all humans. This is naturally how it must be. There are no humans who can control the world's natural disasters. People who are born into that era will experience great suffering and misery. Even the wise will be impacted. Once that era arrives, that is how it must be. Whether created by humans or naturally arising, these natural disasters will cause humans across the world to experience suffering and misery.

"Aggi-bhaya, or perils caused by the heat in the world, will intensify. The temperature will rise each year. It will be dry and desolate in this world and there will be forest fires in certain places. It will be suffocating everywhere. A few hundred years in the future,

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<sup>30</sup> King Pasenadi's dreams and the Buddha's interpretations can be found in the Mahāsupina Jātaka, or in Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño's *The Buddha's 16 Prophecies*.



the heat in this world will become more extreme and will greatly affect the body and mind.

“Udaka-bhaya, or perils caused by water, will affect all humans throughout the world. Plants and crops will be destroyed, and many homes will be flooded. This will bring about starvation and misery. Rice will become scarce, all types of food will become expensive, and things used to survive day to day will be hard to come by. Many people will die of starvation. All humans will experience misery and suffering. Rain will not fall according to the season. Some places will experience flooding. Some places will experience drought.

“Vāta-bhaya are natural perils caused by wind. When wind is added to fire-based perils and added to water-based perils, the intensity will be magnified. If wind is added to fire, the heat in the world will increase. If wind is added to water, the oceans will become agitated. The ocean waters will form large waves that crash into each other. Ships traversing the oceans will be greatly impacted. Commerce between countries will experience problems with shipping goods. Wind-based perils will become more extreme. If wind crashes into a forest or houses, there will be destruction. All humans who reside there will suffer hardships. Wind will flow to and fro over an expansive area across the world. Airplanes that provide convenience and comfort in traveling throughout the world will experience problems. They will be utterly unable to fly through wind-based perils. Even satellites that traverse the solar system will lose signal communications. The information sent down to the human world will experience problems as well. Information from computers or the internet that provide humans with convenience and comforts will experience problems. After the satellites encounter setbacks, it will be impossible to go up there to fix them.

“No matter how astronomically powerful they may be, airplanes will be unable to make it past these wind-based dangers. During that era, many people will die. In each country, everyone will live isolated and on their own, unable to reach others by phone or receive any kind of communications. These situations will definitely happen in the world. A few hundred years from now, the truth will be evident. Once these three big perils serve as the cause, the perils that branch off of them will follow. For instance, roga-bhaya, or the peril of disease, will cause humans in that era to experience great suffering and misery.”

I don't want to talk about the future any more than this, because even if I talk about it, no one will believe it anyway. Some might even think that Luang Por Thoon is insane.



## How to Avoid Natural Disasters

If you believe that natural disasters will truly occur many hundreds of years in the distant future, there is only one way to avoid them. That is, cultivate merit (*puñña*) and moral goodness (*kusala*), give charitably (*dāna*), uphold the moral precepts (*sīla*), and practice mental development (*bhāvanā*). After you die, you will get to rest in heaven (*sagga*). Let the terrible dark age (*kaliyuga*) pass first. After 6,500 years, then come down to be reborn. That would be good. During that era, the dark age will be over. If you are to be reborn and die over and over during this era, you will definitely encounter these natural disasters. I wish for the young men and women who have a long life ahead of them to study what I, Phra Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño, have explained here. Is there sufficient information to be believed? Study the news of the world, as it may help you decide.

It is glaringly evident that most people in this era do not believe in good kamma, bad kamma, or that kammic retribution exists. Consequently, they do whatever they want. Many people say that hell (*naraka*) doesn't exist, heaven doesn't exist, there is no rebirth after death, or doing good or doing evil won't have any effect on the next rebirth whatsoever. These beliefs are not new. They have existed since before the Buddhist religion. After the Buddha arose, this type of people continued to say these things. This type of people will

continue to exist in pair with this world for a long time. In this era, this type has increased in number. Thus, “asevanā ca bālānam, pañditānañca sevanā.”<sup>31</sup> Consorting with fools (bāla), wrong views in accordance with those fools are bound to arise. Consorting with the wise (pandita), right thoughts and right views in accordance with Dhamma are bound to arise. This is precisely what is meant by the decline of the religion. People will decline from the Buddhist religion. People declining from the religion does not mean that everyone will decline simultaneously. Rather, they will gradually decline a bit at a time. Once the requisite 5,000 years have elapsed, all people will have completely declined from the religion. No one will be able to recollect the Buddha’s teachings (buddha-vacana). During the age in which religion goes extinct in this world, the human lifespan will only be 50 years.

Even though the Buddhist religion will have gone extinct in the world, the universal truths (sacca-dhamma) will still exist in pair with the world forever. Only, no one will recognize them as universal truths at all. Think back to the time the Buddha taught the religion. He drew from sacca-dhamma, the truth that exists in people, to teach people. He did this because each person already has truths (sacca-dhamma) within them, only they do not know it. After the Buddha advised them of it, they came to realize, “*So this is the truth (sacca-dhamma)*.” It is these truths that the Buddha disseminated to all of the Buddhist community (buddha-parisā) and that were inscribed into manuals and given conventional names (sammuti-paññatti). These conventional names are merely the name of the truth (sacca-dhamma). Studying them is only studying their conventional names.

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<sup>31</sup> “Asevanā ca bālānam, pañditānañ-ca sevanā, pūjā ca pūjanīyānam, etam-maṅgalam-uttamam.” Not consorting with fools, consorting with the wise, paying homage to those who deserve homage. This is the highest blessing.

It isn't diving deeper into the real universal truths (sacca-dhamma) in any way. It is like only knowing the name of food but never having actually seen the food and never having tasted the flavors of the food. Likewise, if you only study the conventional names but do not practice, you will never know the results of practice (paṭivedha). You will not know the flavor of the Dhamma. Though you study the flavor of the Dhamma in the manuals, you will simply know according to the manuals. But the doubts over that Dhamma will persist forever.



## Nai Singh of Ban Pa Lun

I have written about Nai Singh of Ban Pa Lun's story so that you readers know about it. It may serve as an example (upāya) to train your mind to some degree. In 1969, the same year that I spent the rains retreat (vassa) at Ban Pa Lun, Mr. Singh would often come and help out at the temple. One day, he was cleaning up my hut (kuṭī). There was some free time, so I asked him, "Singh, have you ever been ordained?"

Mr. Singh replied, "No, I have never been ordained. I don't want to be ordained."

I asked, "Why don't you want to be ordained? When you were younger, did you go to the temple?"

He replied, "Yes, I did."

I asked, "For what purpose?"

He replied, "Just to hang out with friends."

I asked, "Have you ever chanted in reverence to the Buddha?"

He replied, "No, because I do not know how to read."

I asked Mr. Singh, "Have you ever listened to the Dhamma from a teacher (ācariya) before?"

He replied, "No. I don't even know what Dhamma is."

I asked, "Have you ever done sitting meditation (samādhi)?"

He said, "No, I have never done that either."

I told Mr. Singh, "If you have never meditated, then train your wisdom (paññā) instead."

He asked, "How do I train my wisdom?"

I told Mr. Singh, "Just use your thoughts."

He asked, "How do I train my thoughts?"

I told Mr. Singh, "Use the normal thoughts that you already have. Before, you used your thoughts in a worldly way, thinking about making a living, thinking about tilling the field, or thinking about making money and acquiring various belongings. Have you ever used your thoughts like this?"

He replied, "Yes, I have."

"Have you ever thought that these belongings are your belongings?"

He said, "Yes, I have thought that."

I told him, "Take those thoughts and retrain them. Always think, 'All of these belongings that I have, none of them belong to me forever. All of these belongings are merely belongings to temporarily rely on. While I am alive, these belongings are only used to facilitate convenience day to day. Once they are used up, more are acquired and utilized beneficially.' Always think, 'These belongings are the world's belongings. There is no one who owns these belongings'

forever. The quantity of belongings or money I own is not important. In a few days or years, I will definitely have to die and separate from those belongings. The money I own, the house, and all the fields will fall into the hands of my children and grandchildren. Think about it. Those who have died before me owned even more belongings than I do. When they died, who was able to take their belongings with them? All of these belongings will be left in this world. Even my children and grandchildren will be unable to take these worldly belongings with them. They will merely rely on and survive off of these belongings until the day they die, just like I do. Why is it that I know how to think about wanting belongings? I must also know how to think about not wanting.”

At that moment, I felt that Mr. Singh was listening to my reasoning with concentration. I told him, “Think about five things: 1. Think about acquiring belongings, 2. Think about belongings leaving you, 3. Think about dying and leaving belongings behind, 4. Think about how no belongings can be yours forever, and 5. Think about how you merely rely on belongings temporarily. In a few days, you will separate from them. This body of yours and all of those belongings will decay and decompose into the earth element, the water element, the wind element, and the fire element.”

I told Mr. Singh that, “When thinking, only use your own thoughts. Don’t copy anyone else’s thoughts. Think according to your own reasons and logic. Use your brain when thinking. In other words, think silently and not aloud so that others will hear. Think in this way, continuously, for around seven days. Whatever you come up with, come and tell me about it.” Mr. Singh agreed and then took his leave to return home. He went and practiced thinking according to the methods I gave him.

Mr. Singh had promised to come and report his progress within seven days. However, after only three days, Mr. Singh came to report his progress. At the *kutī*, I asked him, “How is it going, Singh? Do you know how to think according to what I taught you about training your own thoughts yet?”

Mr. Singh answered with confidence, “I know how to think now. At first, the thoughts were all jumbled up. But after thinking about each thing on its own, I felt that my thoughts were clearer and connected. Once I was able to think about one thing, thinking about the second thing became easier. As I was working, I was still able to think about that topic. The thinking was even better at night. I practically didn’t sleep at all. Sometimes I thought while sitting and sometimes I thought while lying down. The more I thought, the more my mind became disenchanted, and I didn’t want any belongings at all. It was just as you said, ācariya. There are no belongings that belong to us. We say they are ours, but that is merely what we think. Those belongings do not say that they are ours in any way. In not too long, we will die and separate from each other. I realized that this body is sustained by the food that we eat. The strength that we possess comes from the food that we eat. If we did not eat food, our bodies would lose strength and die. Thus, food is merely consumed in order to sustain the body. Other belongings are only supplementary.” Mr. Singh then asked me, “What else should I think about now?”

I told Mr. Singh, “Take the same old things and think about them again. Think over and over again on the same topics. The more frequently you think about them, the more your mind will know the truth and see the truth. Form an understanding that the belongings you own are solely to be relied on temporarily.” I knew that Mr. Singh did not know the Dhamma in a theoretical (*pariyatti*) sense at all. I

taught him in a manner that avoided theoretical doctrine so as not to confuse him. I only used examples of the truth.

I asked Mr. Singh, “Singh, when you work, before you get the rice or before you get the money, do you suffer mentally and suffer physically?”

Mr. Singh answered, “Yes, I suffer.”

“After you acquire them in each instance, use them all up, and then have to find more to consume, do you suffer?”

Mr. Singh replied, “Yes, I suffer.”

“See, Singh? We suffer because of making a living. From the past until the present, there has been continuous suffering. While we are still alive, we will carry on procuring and consuming things and suffering throughout until the day we die. After we die and are reborn, we will procure and consume things in this world once again. We are reborn (*jāti*) because of the attachment to the various belongings we own. After we die, the mind returns to be born among the attachment to those various belongings.

“From now on, Singh, tell yourself that you will not allow the mind to be attached to any belongings. When you procure them, form an understanding that those belongings are communal and belong to the family. As you continue to procure them, care for and rely on those belongings. Don’t allow your mind to cling to any of those belongings. If the mind clings to any belongings, the mind will surely return to be born among those material (*vatthu*) belongings. Train your mind and make your mind disclaim all of the various types of belongings that you possess. ‘All of these things are merely belongings to rely on while I am still alive, that’s all.’ Think in this way often and

train the mind to disclaim belongings often. Upon thinking this way frequently, the mind will gradually release and let go of these belongings. The mind will be light, as if you had removed a heavy load from your shoulders.

"If you think often, you may become exhausted from your thinking. When you are tired from thinking, use a method of resting the mind. Resting the mind doesn't involve anything special. It is simply ceasing those thoughts and making sure that, 'I will not think about anything at all.' Simply be mindful (*sati*) of breathing in and mindful of breathing out. If the breaths are coarse, be mindful that the breaths are coarse. If the breaths are refined, be mindful that the breaths are refined. When the breaths become refined, do not be afraid that you are going to die. Be mindful and focus on the refined breaths. Focus the mind (*citta*) on watching until the refined breaths vanish. Then, you will experience the amazing taste of the Dhamma."

I asked Mr. Singh, "Do you understand what I have explained to you?"

Mr. Singh replied, "I understand." I told him to go home and continue to practice.

A few days later, Mr. Singh came back to the temple. It happened to be a holy day (*uposatha*). I was explaining the Dhamma to many people as usual. Mr. Singh sat and listened as well. After I had explained the Dhamma for around 10 minutes, Mr. Singh got up and left to do walking meditation (*caṅkama*) at the temple's clearing by himself. I knew that Mr. Singh had wisdom to bravely contemplate Dhamma topics. Even after the Dhamma exhortation was over, Mr. Singh still hadn't stopped doing walking meditation. I left him to carry on with it and instructed everyone, "Do not talk to Mr. Singh. Leave him to do walking meditation alone."



At around midnight, Mr. Singh stopped and sat down to meditate alone for who knows how long. Everyone had retired to rest. In teaching the Dhamma for Mr. Singh to hear that time, I had avoided using any technical terms. I knew that Mr. Singh didn't possess any theoretical knowledge, so I refrained from using any theoretical knowledge that would confuse him. I didn't speak of aniccam, dukkham, and anattā. Rather, I spoke of change, of suffering of the body and suffering of the mind, and of things that cease to exist. This was so that Mr. Singh could understand the principles of reality. Understanding these principles of reality is what is called "wisdom arising." Once wisdom arises, contemplating on any thing will easily result in comprehensive clarity and dissolution of all doubts over that thing. The wisdom that Mr. Singh used was entirely his own. He did not borrow it from manuals in any way. That is why his practice was so straightforward and swift.

The following day, Mr. Singh came to my kuṭī to tell me about the fruits (phala) of practice that he had already obtained. He put into order all of the ways he contemplated material belongings. "The more I contemplated, the clearer the knowledge and realization of my understanding became. As for the belongings that I clung to as mine, my mind came to accept that there are no belongings that belong to me whatsoever. One night, my mind was in a state of meditative calm for an indeterminable amount of time. Once my mind emerged from the meditative calm, I contemplated the same topics that I had already contemplated. That time contemplating, my mind knew and saw the truth in a refined manner. At around midnight, it was as if my mind suddenly realized, 'sotāpanna.' That entire night, I sat replete with happiness."

Once he said this, I tried to test him, “During that moment, how did you feel about your body?”

He instantly responded, “In that moment, if someone were to take my body and cremate it, I would not mourn the loss. If someone were to ask for my heart, I would let them cut it right out of me. Or if someone were to ask for both of my eyes, I would hand them over. There was no grieving over any part of my body at all. I did not grieve or cherish any treasures or belongings. My mind did not cling to any belongings whatsoever. If someone had come to ask for all of my belongings at that time, I would have given them all away.”

I asked Mr. Singh, “As for the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Ariya-Saṅgha, the results of good kamma or bad kamma, hell and heaven, do you believe that they exist?”

Mr. Singh replied with conviction, “I firmly believe that the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Ariya-Saṅgha exist. The results of good kamma and bad kamma exist. Hell and heaven exist. From now on, the Five Precepts (*pañca-sīla*) that I follow will never be broken or tarnished in any way.”

When I asked Mr. Singh about the fruits of his practice, if I had asked about theoretical knowledge, he would have been unable to answer because he had never studied theory. He couldn’t even read or write. I could only ask him how he felt in his heart and allow him to speak straight from his heart. However he felt in his heart was precisely how he would answer. There was no need to draw comparisons to theory. As a teacher, I had to know what his words meant and to which Dhamma topics they corresponded. Whatever level of enlightenment his mind (*citta*) had attained, I would immediately know the stage of enlightenment that he was in.

In shedding the three defilements, people who have never attained a level of enlightenment will assume that first, sakkāya-diṭṭhi must be shed, vicikicchā must be shed, and sīlabbata-parāmāsa must be shed,<sup>32</sup> and then enlightenment as a sotāpanna can be achieved. This is what people who have not attained enlightenment assume. In actuality, attaining enlightenment and shedding the three defilements happens during a fleeting moment of consciousness (citta) within santati, the continuity of the incredibly rapid arising and ceasing of consciousness. The moment that enlightenment occurs is the moment that the defilements are eliminated. Those who attain enlightenment at any level will realize it on their own. It is absolutely unnecessary for anyone to issue a declaration (vyākaraṇa). It is like eating. Once you are full, you know that you are full. Why would you ask anyone? Similarly, those who attain a level of enlightenment know it for themselves.

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<sup>32</sup> Sakkāya-diṭṭhi is the delusion of self, vicikicchā is doubt or skepticism, and sīlabbata-parāmāsa is adherence or clinging to rules, rituals, or ceremonies.



## Upāsikā Lao's Story

Female devotee (upāsikā) Lao originally hailed from Kalasin province, but had been living at Ban Pa Lun for many years. She had a predisposition for practicing mental cultivation (bhāvanā-paṭipatti). While she was living in Kalasin, she had heard Dhamma teachings and had practiced quite a bit of meditation (samādhi). Her mind was firmly rooted in the Buddhist religion. She made merit (puñña) and made food offerings to Buddhist monks every day without fail. However, Upāsikā Lao had a habit of meditating and did not understand anything about mindfulness (sati), wisdom (paññā), or contemplating Dhamma. I tried to talk to her about mindfulness and wisdom, but she still did not understand.

During that period, Mr. Singh had already realized the Dhamma. I told Upāsikā Lao about Mr. Singh. "See here, Mae Lao. You have been practicing mental cultivation for a long time. Your practice hasn't made any progress. Solely meditating will not lead to the path and fruit of enlightenment at all. Comprehensive understanding of universal truths (sacca-dhamma) and sharp wisdom do not arise from meditative calm." Then I recounted Mr. Singh's story to Mae Lao, from start to finish. I told her, "Go and talk to Mr. Singh, one on one. Ask him how he started to practice. Follow Mr. Singh's example of practice. He practiced for only a few months and was able to establish

himself in the stream of enlightenment (nibbāna). If you keep shutting your eyes and practicing being dumb like this, you will die for nothing, without having attained any path (magga) or fruit (phala) of enlightenment." I could feel Mae Lao's interest growing.

Then, I told Mr. Singh, "If Mae Lao comes to ask you about your practice, tell her about it, alright? Tell her about what you practiced thinking about when you first got started."

Mr. Singh agreed and said, "I will tell Mae Lao about it, from the beginning to end."

Later on, I observed the two of them to see how their conversation would go. One day, it was the holy day (uposatha). I saw Mr. Singh explaining the Dhamma to Mae Lao. I observed from a distance, so that the two of them would not see me. Mr. Singh was illiterate and didn't possess any theoretical knowledge from this lifetime. He didn't have any prior knowledge of any Dhamma topics. I eavesdropped from afar and had a good understanding of what Mr. Singh was saying. He would express himself physically and use hand gestures while speaking. He spoke loudly and clearly. He spoke about using wisdom to contemplate how belongings don't belong to us. He explained it in stages. Mae Lao sat and listened in silence, hardly blinking. Mr. Singh spoke about the Dhamma for around one hour. Then the two got up and went their separate ways.

Around three days later, I asked Mae Lao, "Have you listened to the Dhamma from Mr. Singh yet?"

Mae Lao replied, "Yes, I did."

I asked further, "After listening to it, how was it? Did you understand what he was saying?"



Mae Lao said, “Where did Mr. Singh get that Dhamma? How is he so skilled at speaking about the Dhamma? Before, Mr. Singh was reserved with words and didn’t know any Dhamma. He can’t even read. How did he come to speak of the Dhamma in such a skilled manner?”

I told Mae Lao, “If you want to be skilled like Mr. Singh, then you have to practice like Mr. Singh. Train yourself to think about belongings such that you see the truth that no belongings are yours forever. What you believe to be yours actually isn’t. Rather, they are merely the world’s belongings. After you procure them, you assume that those belongings are solely yours. Even if they are yours, they are only yours in terms of conventional reality (*sammuti*). In a few days, they will definitely separate from you or you will die and separate from those belongings. Retrain your mind’s perspective to foster an understanding aligned with the reality that we are born into this world without any belongings attached to us. They are all newly procured. You cannot regard those belongings as yours for perpetuity. Many people have died—you have seen this. Who has been able to take their worldly belongings with them? Even your body, Mae Lao, will be shed and heaped upon the soil or burned and discarded, that’s all. That which has value or a price—the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, or any other body parts—will be burned by fire. All that will remain is bones.”

Thereafter, Mae Lao and Mr. Singh discussed the Dhamma on many more occasions, and I regularly provided wisdom metaphors and methods (*upāya*). Not long thereafter, Mae Lao had a wisdom metaphor for contemplating how no material belongings belong to us. She gained a deeper understanding of mindfulness and wisdom and of her own reasoning. She was no longer preoccupied with only practicing meditation as she had been in the past. She was able to

use wisdom to contemplate in every place and at all times. She had Mr. Singh as her teacher and regular advisor. In not too long a time, Mae Lao also became one who realized the Dhamma like Mr. Singh in every aspect. That is, they were firmly established in the basis of Dhamma attainment as stream-enterers (*sotāpanna*). They were niyata-puggalas, or those fixed on the path to the path and fruit of enlightenment and those who will no longer fall to the lower planes of existence (*apāya-bhūmi*) of hell (*naraka*), hungry ghost (*peta*), animal (*tiracchāna*), or demon (*asurakāya*). If they had to take rebirth in the human world again for no more than seven rebirths, three rebirths, or one rebirth, they would definitely get to attain arahantship, enter enlightenment (*nibbāna*), and never be reborn in the Three Realms ever again.

Though this is currently the age of Buddhism's decline, it is still possible to practice in order to attain enlightenment as a noble (*ariya*) stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*). This is because there aren't that many steps to practice, unlike the non-returner (*anāgāmī*) stage of enlightenment or the fully enlightened (*arahant*) stage of enlightenment. What is important is starting the right way. If you start off wrong, even if it is a stage of Dhamma that is easy to practice, if it is practiced in a difficult manner, it will become difficult. This is due to not understanding the methods of practice at that stage of Dhamma. There is no knowledge of how to extract the relevant aspects. There is no understanding of any of the stages of Dhamma. They are mixed up haphazardly and that patchwork is practiced. In the end, it's fruitless.



## **There Must Be Reason to Believe or Not Believe**

There must be reason behind the decision to believe or not believe. Do not allow biases to hide within your mind such that, for instance, you believe because of love or do not believe because of hatred. This is not the way of practitioners, but the mentality of fools (bāla). It is the mentality of those who are biased and lack reason. In a leader, this mentality will generate harmful consequences for others. They are the Kālāma Sutta type who believe without reason. Their beliefs aren't their own. They only believe what others say. To explain in a clearer manner, there are two types of not believing: 1. not believing when there is reason, and 2. not believing that which lacks reason. May you, the reader, consider this carefully. These issues might exist within us all. We should know our strengths and weaknesses.

The first type of not believing is not believing when there is reason. This indicates that there is reason, but that that reason cannot be believed because it lacks evidence or because there is documental proof but no human proof. For example, in the present age, the practice of mental cultivation (bhāvanā-paṭipatti) is readily supported by documental proof but lacks support in the form of human proof. The manuals do contain rational proof, and there are many people who trust the rationale in the manuals. They believe the entirety of the manuals without considering whether the rationale is true or false.

For example, when it comes to meditating, the instructors have all kinds of justifications, such as, “Go ahead and meditate. Once the mind (citta) becomes calm in meditation, wisdom will arise.” This is simply repeating the rationale in the manuals. However, there doesn’t exist any human proof that can be cited to support these claims. It is merely parroting the manuals. As for those with good wisdom and good education, despite having this much documental evidence, they will not believe that mere evidence. There must be further analysis. During the Buddha’s time, who was there whose mind attained meditative calm and experienced wisdom arising? Which noble person (ariya-puggala) was it? To whom did the Buddha teach this? Where did he teach it? Was it a monastic noble person or a lay noble person? The historical accounts of all noble persons must be studied in order to support the claim, “Go ahead and meditate. Once the mind becomes calm in meditation, wisdom will arise.” Though this is spoken with reason, this kind of reason will not be believed because during the Buddha’s time, that’s not how it happened.

People in this era lack education. They did not study the examples from the Buddha’s time. They have merely heard their teachers (ācariya) say these things and so they believe them. It is credulous belief, like those in the Kālāma Sutta. Those with good wisdom and good education will not believe this scanty evidence. I have explained it in this way in order to give practitioners something to think about. Train yourselves to be one who only has reason that is correct. Do some research on the principles of the Buddha’s teachings from during the Buddha’s time and you will understand how it greatly differs from that of this current era. People always say that they are going to practice in accordance with what the Buddha taught. Is that practice aligned with the Buddha’s teachings, as proclaimed? Or is it a mental

cultivation practice aligned with that modeled by hermits (tāpasa) and ascetics (isi)?

If the instructors and practitioners read the Noble Eightfold Path (ariya-magga), they will instantly know why the Buddha put the principles of wisdom (paññā) first. There are three stages of wisdom: 1. *suta-maya-paññā*, or wisdom resulting from studying, 2. *cintā-maya-paññā*, or wisdom resulting from reflection, and 3. *bhāvanā-maya-paññā*, or wisdom resulting from mental development. *Suta-maya-paññā* is wisdom from the studying stage when first starting out, is it not? For instance, studying the topic of morality (*sīla*), studying meditation (*saṃādhi*), or studying other Dhamma topics in order to form correct knowledge and understanding. Then, applying that in practice in order to achieve the result of comprehension (*paṭivedha*) of how each moral precept must be studied with wisdom and how each step of meditation must be thoroughly studied with wisdom. It is understanding each step of meditation, not just continuously and aimlessly concentrating on meditative phrases (*parikamma*) without knowing where it will end up. When it comes to practicing meditation (*saṃādhi*) for the purpose of right meditation (*sammā-saṃādhi*), what will cause right meditation? *Micchā-saṃādhi* is wrong meditation. What causes it? Wisdom must be used to study and understand beforehand in order to prevent mistakes from occurring.

The second type of not believing is not believing that which lacks reason. Reason is what conclusively decides what is wrong or right. However, it must be reason that is righteous (*dhammā-dhipateyya*). Use the truth as the basis. Don't side with yourself or with your own group. All of the Dhamma topics that the Buddha taught are guaranteed by principles of reason. Whatever the Buddha

said, that is what it must truly be. That which is right is truly right. That which is wrong is truly wrong. It is these truths that the Buddha proclaimed unto the masses so that they would know. Saying that the Buddha proclaimed the religion simply means that the Buddha proclaimed the truth. These truths that the Buddha proclaimed are truths that virtuous sons (*kula-putta*)<sup>33</sup> are capable of knowing and seeing. As for the truth that is so refined that it is beyond the capabilities of the *kula-putta* to know and see, the Buddha did not teach those to us. However, people in this age are practicing in their own novel way because they have little education. What's more, they interpret the Buddha's teachings in a way that is misaligned with the meaning of the original principles that the Buddha taught. However, they are truly determined. All of them desire to practice in order to reach the path and fruit of enlightenment (*magga-phala-nibbāna*). Only, they have read the Buddha's Dhamma map differently. As a result, their practice has taken a different course, as we see in present times.

Thus, if everyone practices according to the Noble Eightfold Path and practices with *sammā-ditṭhi*, or right view, as the core principle, the subsequent stages of practice will not have any problems. With right view as the foundation from the get-go, subsequent practice will be right thought (*sammā-saṅkappa*), right speech (*sammā-vācā*), right action (*sammā-kammanta*), right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*), right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), and right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*). If practice follows this sequence, there will be no problems. In current times, it is practiced in reverse, starting off with meditation (*saṃādhi*) in order to engender right meditation (*sammā-samādhi*). It is impossible. You don't even

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<sup>33</sup> *Kula-putta* (virtuous son, or young man of a good family) is a term used to describe people who are virtuous. In other words, good descendants or good people.

understand the principles of right view (sammā-ditthi). It isn't that once you do calm meditation, right meditation (sammā-samādhi) will arise on its own. This kind of view is categorically at odds with the Buddha's original principles. This is because meditation is solely a means of fostering mental happiness or fostering motivation. It cannot be used to eliminate any defilements (kilesa) or any desires (taṇhā) at all. It is only done to suppress defilements and desires for a while. It is a means of forcibly dampening the intensity of the defilements and desires. It is like setting a rock on top of grass for some time. After the rock is removed from the grass, the grass will sprout once again. Meditating merely suppresses defilements and desires in the same way.

Doing this is still better than being one whose mind is left to be dragged by worldly currents. There may be the question, "Does meditating cultivate merit and moral goodness or develop perfections of character (pāramī)?" The answer is that it surely does. It can lead to heaven (sagga) and Brahma realms (brahma-loka). As for the question, "Can it lead to the path and fruit of enlightenment in this lifetime?" The answer is no, it will not lead there in this lifetime at all. You must await a coming Buddha. Who knows which Buddha's Buddha era that will be, though? You'll just have to wait and see.



## **Sammā-diṭṭhi, or Right View, Is the Principal Foundation of Dhamma Practice**

During the Buddha's era, the Buddha proclaimed the religion. This meant that he proclaimed the truth to the masses so that they would receive communications about the truth. This is because the masses had been blind to the truth for such a long time that they came to understand the path and fruit of enlightenment (magga-phala-nibbāna) in the wrong way. This is called *micchā-diṭṭhi*, or wrong view. Those people were unaware that they held wrong views. That's why the Buddha told all these people to change those old views, because the views that they held at that time were views according to *vatṭa-saṁsāra*, the cycling through birth and death within the Three Realms without end. Even our Buddha had been that way for a long time as well. Now, however, the Buddha has *sammā-diṭṭhi*, or right views according to the principles of reality. That is why he became fully enlightened as the Buddha. Right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) is the foundation that directly fosters insight (*vipassanā*). It is not meditation that is the foundation for wisdom (*paññā*) in any way.

Let us study the Buddha's history. When the Buddha practiced meditation with the two hermits (*tāpasa*), the Buddha was able to attain full meditative serenity. Why, then, didn't this meditation serve as a foundation for the Buddha's wisdom? The monks' (*saṅgha*) lack

of education causes the Buddhist community (buddha-parisā) to understand the Buddhist religion in an incredibly wrong way. The leaders of the Buddhist religion in this current era are monks. If the monks have wrong views, then they will teach others wrongly as well. Monks with right views are few in number. The monks who lack education and do not know the Buddha's history wrongly believe meditation to be the foundation for wisdom. That's why they have been teaching this way the entire time. Consequently, the lay devotees who lack education have believed what the monks have been teaching all along.

If the monks who lead the religion understand it this way, it will be very difficult to fix or even impossible to fix. If you simply study what happened back in the Buddha's time regarding the Noble Eightfold Path and why the Buddha taught the religion by putting sammā-ditṭhi, or wisdom of right view, first, it's enough to instantly realize what is wrong and what is right. I have explained about the paññā-vimutti type and ceto-vimutti type. When the Buddha taught both of these groups, how did it differ? You will immediately understand what those differences are. When the Buddha traveled to some place to teach the religion, he didn't have everyone meditate (samādhi) in order for wisdom to arise. Everyone should read the historical accounts of how the Buddha taught the religion.

According to the historical accounts, how did the laypeople who attained enlightenment and became noble ones (ariya-puggala) practice? In the discourses (sutta), there are numerous accounts of laypeople who attained enlightenment and became noble ones. I'd like for you all to know the procedures the noble ones followed so that you'll know how they differ. For instance, for those who were to attain enlightenment at the stream-entry (sotāpanna) level, what

stage of Dhamma did they practice? What stage of Dhamma did the once-returners (*sakadāgāmī*) practice? What were the methods the non-returners (*anāgāmī*) used in their stage for the Dhamma topics they practiced? What approach did the fully enlightened ones (*arahant*) use for the Dhamma topics they practiced? Once you understand the stages and the various Dhamma topics, you will be able to select the correct Dhamma topics to practice when you practice Dhamma.

Don't practice Dhamma without knowing where it leads or ends up. It is like walking. If you do not know the path that you must take, you can get lost. The destination is nearby. You drive around in circles but cannot find the way in. It is a one-way practice. It wastes time and no benefit is gained. Practicing without having effective principles is the same way. Suppose that you have cultivated a fair measure of perfections of character (*pāramī*). In this lifetime, those perfections of character are just suitable enough for the stage of stream entry. However, you reach for the arahant stage of Dhamma. You won't achieve either stage of Dhamma. If you practice specifically and diligently to attain the Dhamma virtue of the stream-enterers (*sotāpanna*) in a continuous manner, there is definitely a chance that you will attain enlightenment and become a noble one (*ariya-puggala*) of the stream-entry level in this lifetime.

It is like when a sick person takes medication that doesn't cure their illness. The illness isn't serious, the medication isn't expensive, and you don't have to spend a lot of money on it for the illness to be cured. If you don't understand how to cure your own illness, you will use medications that are expensive and ineffective. Money is wasted and the illness isn't cured. The illness might even become resistant to medication and become a chronic illness extremely difficult to cure or unable to be cured until the day you die. Practicing follows the

same principles. If you do not study the practice methods for each stage of Dhamma attainment (ariya-puggala) and the steps involved in Dhamma topics that will lead to each stage of Dhamma, all your chances of attainment in this lifetime will have been immediately forfeited. What a shame to have the curtains close on your path and fruit of enlightenment. Just as an illness is resistant to medication, so is the mind that is resistant to the Dhamma. Thus, it is difficult to fix. However, it is not impossible to fix if there is a correct understanding of the principles that effectively lead to the path and fruit of enlightenment.



## The Buddha's Previous Teachers

Let me explain to you all the history of our Buddha's previous teachers. Back then, the Buddha practiced with the two teachers, the hermits (tāpasa) Ālāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta. Both of these hermits had cultivated ample perfections of character (pāramī) in their previous lifetimes. They possessed perfections of character primed for the fully enlightened (arahant) stage of virtue. If they had practiced in the correct way, they certainly would have attained full enlightenment in that lifetime. In that era, the Buddhist religion had not yet arisen in the world. The two hermits were truly determined in their practice. That is why they meditated until their minds (citta) attained fine-material absorptions (rūpa-jhāna) and immaterial absorptions (arūpa-jhāna), and that is where they got stuck. They could not continue on to the path and fruit of enlightenment (magga-phala-nibbāna) in any way.

During that time, our Buddha also practiced with them. The Buddha practiced meditation and attained fine-material absorptions and immaterial absorptions as well. But our Buddha realized that meditating to calm the mind in that manner was not the way to the path and fruit of enlightenment at all. Consequently, the Buddha left the two hermits and went on his way, in search of a way to practice on his own. Allow me to just explain this in brief. If more details are



desired, go and read the manuals or ask a teacher. My intention is for you all to know that the two hermits had sufficient perfections of character. Why, then, did they not become arahants?

Let us observe the Buddha's thoughts. After the Buddha became fully enlightened, he thought about his two teachers. Upon surveying with his omniscient insight, the Buddha came to know that the two teachers had passed away seven days before the Buddha had become enlightened. The Buddha exclaimed, "If those two teachers had gotten to listen to the Dhamma from me, they surely would have attained enlightenment as arahants in this lifetime." These were the Buddha's thoughts. Have you all read the manuals? If you have not, then go and read them because they might serve as an example for what you decide to do with yourself. If you hear others saying, "Meditate until you reach a state of serenity and wisdom will arise," you will have reason to refer to that during the Buddha's time, the Buddha had practiced serene meditation to the stage of fine-material absorptions and immaterial absorptions. The two hermits had practiced meditation and their minds had attained serenity in fine-material absorptions and immaterial absorptions. So then, why didn't wisdom arise? You will have these supporting reasons to refer to and will not be led to believe claims that lack reason. You will not be as credulous as before. You will know which manuals teach wrongly and you will understand the manuals that teach correctly.

You must use reason when deciding to believe something. Don't let others teach you or pull you the wrong way any longer. Don't be like those in the Kālāma Sutta. The Buddha taught not to believe manuals and scriptures. These were the Buddha's teachings. In this era, people have written many manuals. Each manual purports to be the Buddha's teachings, but contains thoughts and views that are

wrong and lack reason. This can foster wrong understanding in people with scant wisdom.

Observe the words of the Buddha, "If those two teachers had gotten to listen to the Dhamma from me, the two teachers surely would have become arahants in this lifetime." This indicates that the two teachers possessed replete perfections of character sufficient to attain full enlightenment in this lifetime. However, the two teachers had practiced in the wrong way. They were mesmerized by tranquil meditation and were pleased with absorptions (*jhāna*) until they lost themselves in them. Most of you are practicing like those two hermits, aren't you? If you continue to practice like this, even if you have perfections of character primed for attaining enlightenment and becoming a noble one (*ariya-puggala*) in this lifetime, the curtains will have closed on your path and fruit of enlightenment. However the two hermits were, that is how you will be. This is because when you similarly practice being mesmerized by serenity and mesmerized by absorptions, after death, you will similarly enter the Brahma realm.

Thus, may you all study and understand the Buddha's teachings and study your own character so that you know what type you are. Are you the deliverance through wisdom (*paññā-vimutti*) type or the deliverance of mind (*ceto-vimutti*) type? Once you recognize your personality type, when you meditate, you will know what constitutes the right amount of meditation for you. Meditation is merely a method to support mindfulness (*sati*) and wisdom (*paññā*). If there isn't any wisdom for meditation to support, then that is called a person who does not have wisdom. If that is the case, scattered thoughts will instantly emerge. That is why it is said that scattered thoughts arise in those who don't possess wisdom. Scattered thinking will not occur in those who possess good wisdom, as it will just be purely wisdom.



## A Method to Relieve Anger

There are many causes that can engender anger in the mind. All of them are basically discontentment over something that has occurred. You will know well for yourself which specific cause it is. There are numerous causes that give rise to anger in our minds. Some causes are similar while others are different. It is impossible to compile all of the causes of anger into this book because there are so many individual reasons. Mostly, once anger has arisen, there is no understanding of the methods (*upāya*) to fix that anger so that it subsides. Instead, it is the opposite. That is, there are techniques to add to and intensify the anger in the mind. These are people with a high sense of self (*attā*) who don't know how to yield to others, refuse to have their pride damaged, and don't allow anyone to criticize them. It is a mindset of refusing to yield or to understand others, but unilaterally wanting others to understand you. It is always making yourself out to be the one who is right and the one who beats others. This kind of character exists in those who are selfish, some of whom are laypeople and some of whom are ordained individuals.

As for monks (*phra*), these types of things will not exist in their minds because monks already possess morality (*sīla*) and righteousness (*dhamma*) within their minds. That is why they are given the conventional (*sammuti*) name "phra." Phra means one who is supreme

in morality and righteousness, does not cause harm or danger for others, doesn't cause trouble or suffering for others, and only generates virtuous benefit for oneself and for others in order to foster peace and happiness for society forever.

This is the method to relieve anger. Suppose that anger has arisen in your mind. As for the cause, you will know for yourself that "*it was caused by this.*" The method is, you must find a place that is sufficiently peaceful. Sit down and focus awareness (sati) solely on the preoccupation (ārammaṇa) of anger within the mind. If the anger is intense, be aware of it. If the anger is slight, then be aware of it. Keep the awareness continuously attuned to the preoccupation of anger. In other words, stay unremittingly focused and mindful of the preoccupation of anger. In not too long a time, that preoccupation of anger will gradually lessen. The anger that was intense will continue to subside. You will know that your anger has lessened. Continue doing this until the anger has weakened. As for how anger weakens, you will know for yourself that the anger has weakened. Although it may not have been completely cured, there will be some mental relief. The first time you try this method, it will take many minutes to restrain the anger. If you practice it frequently, you will become more skilled at it. After doing it for a few minutes, the anger will instantly lessen. Or if another intense preoccupation arises in the mind, this method can also be applied.

Oh, I nearly forgot! While being mindful of the anger within the mind, there is one thing that you must prevent from occurring no matter what. That is, do not send your mind to that which caused the preoccupation of anger to occur. Whenever you think of the cause of the preoccupation of anger, it will be like pouring gas onto a raging fire. The fire will burst into flames again and it may become impossible



to keep the fire under control. Thus, you must take special care of your mind and do not think of the cause of that preoccupation of anger no matter what.

After the preoccupation of anger subsides, the next step is to use wisdom to contemplate and review what happened to the mind. A minute ago there was anger in the mind. Right now the anger in the mind is not so intense, or it has diminished. Now is the time to use wisdom to train the mind and teach the mind to know the cause of the mind's suffering, as I have already explained previously. If there is a lot of anger, it will be impossible to use any wisdom. The anger needs to be lessened. The way to lessen anger is as I have previously described. Wisdom must be used to train the mind and teach the mind when the anger has already reduced in order to obtain results from using wisdom to train the mind. The mind must be made to know and see the harmful consequences and dangers inherent in that anger. What is the reason for the mind's anger? Wisdom must be used to teach the mind to recognize those causes. Later on, be careful not to let the mind become attached to and involved with those kinds of issues again. Make your mind see that there is nothing that can be exactly as you want it to be. Even you are unable to make everyone happy. There must be comprehensive wisdom to see how both you and others are all comparably afflicted by defilements (*kilesa*) and desires (*tanhā*). When conceit (*māna*) and ego (*attā*) collide, anger issues will instantly arise.

Thus, you must have forbearance and suppress your mind at all times. Train in suppressing the mind a little at a time until you become used to it. Another thing is, try to train yourself to know how to yield to others. There are many fools (*bāla*) in today's society. These fools will do and say things the way fools do. They have absolutely no regard

for others. They speak and act however they want to speak and want to act. Fools are those who speak without thinking and act without thinking or considering if it is wrong. It is what is called acting before thinking and speaking before thinking. You should not take after their example. Before acting and before speaking, you must consider whether that action or that speech will affect others. If you see that your actions and your speech will cause others to suffer, then stop.



## Methods of Training Wisdom

There are many methods to train wisdom (paññā). The most important thing is the method of cultivating a foundation of right views. From there, train yourself to be someone who observes various situations. After observing, train in reflecting and finding the reasons to support how something will be the cause for some kind of result. If the result has already manifested, then rewind to find the cause. If it is a good cause that leads to a good result, then you must cultivate that good cause in order to produce that good result. If you have already contemplated that "*This is what a bad result is like. This is what comes from a bad cause,*" then do not cultivate that bad cause any longer, because it will lead to a bad result. Reflecting, considering, researching, judging, contemplating, and using thought all characterize and mean the same thing. That is, spreading the issue out so that it becomes clear and evident, so that you can know and see the truth in that thing, and so that you understand the reasons why right results stem from certain causes and wrong results stem from certain causes. What kind of cause should be enacted and what kind of cause should not be enacted? What kind of cause should be expressed and what kind of cause should not be expressed? This is the method of training wisdom. Wisdom means comprehensive knowledge. There must be comprehensive knowledge of wrong causes and comprehensive knowledge of right causes, comprehensive knowledge of wrong

results and comprehensive knowledge of right results, and comprehensive knowledge of things that constitute proper action and comprehensive knowledge of words that constitute proper speech. This is the direct method of training wisdom.

In Dhamma terms, this is called yonisomanasikāra, or training in thinking and training in contemplating in a way that is right according to the principles of reality at all times. Once the mind accepts the truth, that is when we say that comprehensive clarity has arisen. Comprehensive clarity refers to when the mind has attained clarity as a result of thinking and contemplating with reasons that are true. Whenever the mind experiences this clarity, that is when wisdom has begun to arise. The term, "wisdom arising" refers to the arising of understanding and the arising of knowing and seeing according to the principles of the universal truths (sacca-dhamma). Everything that arises by a cause must cease by that cause. The words, "what arises, ceases" are only understood by those with sharp wisdom. Most people just parrot the manuals, but do not know the deeper, true meaning. Merely knowing according to the manuals in this way does not give rise to comprehensive clarity in the mind. Even if what is said is right, it is only right according to the manuals. The mind has not experienced comprehensive clarity and there is no clearing of the doubt within the mind whatsoever. If the mind still has not cleared its doubts, it will not be possible to withdraw from or let go of anything. The mind that has clung to things will continue to cling to those things and consequently cycle through rebirth as it has for so long.



## There Are Three Types of Scattering

For the most part, practitioners have received insufficient information from their teachers (*ācariya*). It may be owing to the teacher's lack of Dhamma knowledge that they are only able to teach their students about scattered thinking. Actually, there are three main types of scattering within the mind: 1. scattering,<sup>34</sup> 2. scattering along mental formations (*saṅkhāra*), and 3. scattering along the Dhamma.

The reason for each kind of scattering is attributed to a different cause. Let's start with the first type of scattering, so that you understand in a rational manner what causes the scattering. The term "scattered" refers to thinking. The cause is entirely attributed to meditating (*samādhi*) without having a method of thinking about Dhamma prepared beforehand. In other words, it is being one who does not know how to contemplate with wisdom whatsoever. When getting started, the information one receives is entirely about meditation and how to train the mind to be calm. After thinking of a meditative phrase (*parikamma*) during meditation for a few minutes, the mind (*citta*) becomes steadfastly focused and steady. Those of the deliverance through wisdom (*paññā-vimutti*) mindset will want to contemplate with wisdom (*paññā*) once the citta attains steadfast

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<sup>34</sup> Though this term simply denotes "scatter" in Thai, it is associated with "scattered thinking" in Dhamma practice.

concentration (samādhi). However, they have never prepared or trained in the principles and techniques of contemplating the Dhamma with wisdom. Because they don't know how to think in a Dhamma manner, scattered thinking arises.

Scattered thinking is characterized by thoughts that are unfounded, thoughts that are aimless, and thoughts that lack any standpoint. They are thoughts that are boundless. This eventually leads to moodiness and irritation. That is why they call it the mind being scattered and irritated. This is characteristic of those with the deliverance through wisdom (paññā-vimutti) personality who have never trained in mindfulness and wisdom before. Scattered thinking occurs in everyone.

If that person has trained in wisdom before and has thought about impermanence (anicca), suffering (dukkha), and not-self (anattā) before, after meditating and the mind attains steadfast concentration, it will begin to think. This is what is called wisdom starting to arise. Take those thoughts that have been trained in wisdom and continue thinking in that wisdom mode. If you practice in this manner, the scattered thoughts absolutely will not arise. I sympathize with those who have received wrong information from their teachers. All the techniques prohibit thought. When wisdom is about to arise, they believe that the mind is scattering. Both the instructors and the practitioners don't understand about wisdom at all. They don't know how wisdom arises so they interpret it to mean that wisdom will arise like turning on a light switch. It will just become bright on its own. This kind of belief is a wrong perception or very wrong interpretation. If, after I have explained it this way, you still do not understand, I am ready to provide clarity.

The second type of scattering is the mind (citta) scattering along mental formations (saṅkhāra). When the mind scatters along mental formations there is no moodiness or irritation whatsoever. This is because the mind scatters along with defilements (kilesa) and desires (taṇhā). There is pleasure, contentment, and desire to think in that way and it is thought about as if it were real. Stories are imagined to engender iṭṭhārammaṇa, or pleasing preoccupations (ārammaṇa), of these thoughts. Thinking in this way falls right in line with defilements and desires. Whether you think while standing, think while walking, think while sitting, or think while lying down, the more you think the more aroused you become. What's more, the thinking is done in a tireless manner. All you think about is sensual pleasures (kāma-guṇa). As you think, you smile. There is no weariness or exhaustion. There is skill and swiftness in thinking. It is what is called building castles in the sky and painting dreams. These sweet dreams are mental formations (saṅkhāra).

This manner of scattering is not scattered thinking, but merely scattering along mental formations. It is scattering that stirs up defilements and desires and gets them to surge along the world's currents. This type of scattering is not good for practice. Lingering issues involving something from many years ago are resurrected and pondered. Those old memories are dressed up and reimagined in situations that seem real. You get caught up in this happiness, this partaking in sensual pleasures from mental constructs (sammuti). The future is the same way. The mind that yearns for sensual pleasures has a tendency to think and speculate along those themes. Things are imagined in a way that satisfies the mind's desires.

Therefore, mental formations (saṅkhāra) are like electrical wires. On its own, a single electrical wire cannot make a lightbulb

illuminate. There must be a positive wire, or that which is called a ground wire, coupled with it to cause illumination. Likewise, though there are mental formations, without conventions (sammuti) to comprise those thoughts, mental formations cannot work. Or if there are only conventions but no thoughts from mental formations, those conventions will merely be conventions. Whenever mental formations and conventions come together, issues will immediately arise. In this world, we exist because we have these two things—mental formations and conventions. Mental formations and conventions can form pleasing preoccupations (*itṭhārammaṇa*), displeasing preoccupations (*anītṭhārammaṇa*), or indifferent, neutral preoccupations (*upekkhārammaṇa*) at various times. Mostly, the mind tends to seek out pleasing preoccupations. Whatever it is—form, sound, scent, taste, or tactile sensation—there is a desire for it to be pleasing. Satisfaction from getting those pleasing things can, in turn, become the cause and condition (paccaya) for displeasure.

The third type of scattering is the mind (citta) scattering along the Dhamma. In regards to the mind scattering along the Dhamma, the reader might wonder how it scatters. You should read and consider this rationally, and you will understand the characteristics on your own. It isn't that those who are very educated and very knowledgeable will experience this scattering. That is not the case. They are just those who know a lot. The positive outcome is that they become learned scholars (bahussuta) or expounders of the Dhamma (dhammadhikā) who effectively preserve the Buddha's words and teachings. They know how to arrange Dhamma topics into groupings to facilitate practice. These techniques are beneficial to the Buddhist religion. Scattering along the Dhamma similarly uses wisdom to reflect on the Dhamma. However, the difference is the mind's intent at the start.

Suppose there is a desire to know the Dhamma and see the Dhamma according to the manuals. There is the belief that frequently contemplating the Dhamma according to the manuals can give rise to clear knowledge and true realization of the Dhamma. Consequently, the various Dhamma topics are reflected upon without limits, a destination, or a conclusion. When thinking about the Dhamma in this way, the more you think, the more your thoughts scatter. Little do you know that thinking in this way is merely thinking in pursuit of knowledge, or what is known as thinking according to the name of Dhamma. However, that which is the actual universal truth (sacca-dhamma) is not known. Thinking in this way for the purpose of teaching others will result in a good outcome, but thinking for the purpose of fixing one's own defilements and desires will not result in the uprooting or shedding of those defilements and desires whatsoever.

There was already an example of this during the Buddha's era—Venerable Poṭhila. Venerable Poṭhila was very knowledgeable in terms of theoretical knowledge. He was a dhamma-kathika, an expounder of the Dhamma, during that time. It's a long story. Laypeople may not have read about it. Go and read about it or ask a teacher to tell you about it. When Venerable Poṭhila's mind scattered toward the Dhamma and the Buddha asked him Dhamma questions, he couldn't answer them despite being replete with knowledge. So the Buddha named him "Poṭhila," or one who carries empty scriptures. Thereafter, Venerable Poṭhila took that Dhamma that he had studied so well and contemplated on it at all times. His mind had scattered toward the mere name of Dhamma, but he was unable to attain enlightenment and become a noble one (ariya-puggala).

In contemporary times, there was a monk who was a Chao Khun<sup>35</sup> who had passed Pāli Scholar Level 8 of the Royal Pāli Examination and was a Dhamma lecturer. He had gone to ask for Dhamma advice from Luang Pu Khao. Luang Pu Khao asked, “Venerable Chao Khun, how do you practice Dhamma?”

The Chao Khun monk explained his method of contemplating (paññā) in accordance with various Dhamma topics. He had contemplated the topic of conception and followed the entire sequential process until he reached the topic of the mind (citta) and mental factors (cetasika), which then led to contemplating death being not-self (anattā), the four elements (catu-dhātu) returning to the original elements, and how there is nothing that is an animal, person, thing, self, me, or you. He did this continually for as long as seven days and seven nights, but there was no release of any defilements (kilesa) or desires (taṇhā) whatsoever. The greed, anger, and delusion remained the same. He asked Luang Pu, “What am I to do? What I have contemplated is correct in terms of the Dhamma.”

Luang Pu Khao said, “Venerable Chao Khun, while it is true that all of the Dhamma you have contemplated is correct, it is only correct in terms of the name of the Dhamma. This is because the Dhamma that you are contemplating, Venerable Chao Khun, is merely the conventional name (sammuti-paññatti) of the Dhamma. It is not yet the truth in the ultimate sense (paramattha-dhamma). It is like real money and counterfeit money. Real and counterfeit look the same and are even in the same bag. In practicing Dhamma don’t take after the manuals but don’t disregard the manuals. I’ll leave you to discern

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<sup>35</sup> Chao Khun, or guṇassāmī in Pāli, is a title unofficially used in speaking to or of a monk of a higher rank.



how you will practice, Venerable Chao Khun. If you follow the manuals exclusively, the Dhamma will be correct according to the manuals. It is called scattering in Dhamma.

“In ‘knowing the Dhamma and seeing the Dhamma,’ the knowing and seeing must be accomplished with *ñāṇa* and *dassana*. *Ñāṇa*, or knowing, doesn’t mean knowing the manuals. *Ñāṇa* doesn’t arise from *saññā*, or memory or recognition. *Ñāṇa* results from a cause. As for the cause, that refers to *dassana*. If there is knowing after seeing, that knowing is not wrong. *Dassana* refers to seeing. Perception or view simply refers to wisdom (*paññā*) because wisdom is the cause for perception. If there is seeing followed by knowing, no wrongness will arise. It is like seeing an elephant and knowing that it is an elephant, seeing a person and knowing it is a person, or seeing the truth and knowing that it is the truth. That’s why it is called *dassana-ñāṇa*, or seeing before knowing. *Ñāṇa-dassana* is knowing before seeing. When practicing, one must be skilled in both. That is, skilled in *ñāṇa-dassana* and skilled in *dassana-ñāṇa*. This is because some ultimate truths (*sacca-dhamma*) must be known before seen, while others must be seen before known.

“If the method of contemplating the Dhamma is not understood, even if the Dhamma is contemplated well and correctly, the thoughts will merely scatter along the name of the Dhamma. However, no knowing or seeing will occur. It will not lead to the attainment of the path and fruit of enlightenment (*magga-phala-nibbāna*) in this lifetime. This is because that contemplation of Dhamma is merely contemplating the principles and theory of what is recollected (*saññā*) from the manuals. It is not the level of practice that will enable the true knowing and true seeing of the true doctrine (*sad-dhamma*).”

That Venerable Chao Khun admitted that he had contemplated the Dhamma according to the recollections of what he had learned from the manuals, and it had turned into memory (*saññā*) wisdom (*paññā*). Thus, it was the scattering in Dhamma according to memory (*saññā*). I sat there listening, and I remember it well. If you have any misgivings, I am ready to provide advice so that you understand in a way that is aligned with right views (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). Thereafter, the Venerable Chao Khun took his leave of Luang Pu Khao. I never heard anything about how his Dhamma practice turned out.

If you know a lot of Dhamma but are not comprehensively wise in terms of mindfulness and wisdom, it will become difficult to select a Dhamma topic to practice that is compatible with your own mindset in order for the mind to eliminate defilements. Practicing Dhamma is not a problem at all. However you practice, it hits on the Dhamma anyway. The important matter is whether or not the Dhamma topic that you use to practice will enable the mind to remove, release, and reduce various defilements and desires in order to completely eradicate them from the mind. Dhamma practice is a direct means of fixing the mind's problems. As for knowing the mind's problems, in the depths of the mind there must be mindfulness and wisdom that is truly thorough in order to be able to eradicate all of the mind's problems. This is the important point in the practice of Dhamma.



## **It Is Difficult to Discern Holy Individuals**

The term noble one (ariya-puggala) refers to one who has attained a level of enlightenment. For example, attaining enlightenment as a stream-enterer (sotāpanna), attaining enlightenment as a once-returner (sakadāgāmī), attaining enlightenment as a non-returner (anāgāmī), or attaining enlightenment as a fully enlightened one (arahant). Attaining enlightenment and becoming an ariya-puggala only occurs in those who practice the Dhamma according to Buddhist doctrine. It is not limited to race, status, or caste. Regardless of your race or the language you speak, if you practice according to the Buddha's teachings and if you practice the right (sammā) way, you will be able to attain enlightenment and become an ariya-puggala.

Discerning an ariya-puggala is difficult. It is analogous to 1. deep water, deep shadow, 2. deep water, shallow shadow, 3. shallow water, deep shadow, and 4. shallow water, shallow shadow. All four of these are difficult to discern, aside from just randomly guessing. If someone has respect for a teacher (ācariya), though that individual is still a commoner (puthujjana), they will still believe that that individual is a fully enlightened (arahant) noble one (ariya-puggala). If they don't have any respect for the individual, though the individual is an arahant ariya-puggala, they will not believe it.

1. Deep water, deep shadow. Deep water refers to an individual who has attained enlightenment as an ariya-puggala. Deep shadow refers to an individual with manners. The individual's physical and verbal expressions as well as other conduct are composed and prudent. It is that individual's innate character. In this type of case, it is likely that the guess will be correct.

2. Deep water, shallow shadow. Deep water refers to one who has attained enlightenment as an arahant ariya-puggala. The shallow shadow refers to manners. The individual's physical and verbal expressions as well as other conduct are not composed at all. If they want to do something, if they want to say something, or if they want to conduct themselves in some way, they will do it however they used to. However, they will not violate the monastic discipline (*vinaya*). They are merely expressing themselves through action (*kiriya*). If someone were to encounter an arahant with this type of personality, they would not believe that the arahant was an arahant at all because their personality and their physical and verbal expression do not invite respect.

3. Shallow water, deep shadow. Shallow water refers to someone who has not attained any enlightenment at all. Deep shadow refers to manners. The individual's physical and verbal expressions as well as various modes of conduct are very composed. Their character is composed, prudent, and inviting of respect. Anyone who sees them will develop faith in them. No weaknesses or faults are visible. If you see someone with this kind of personality, you are likely to incorrectly surmise that they are an arahant ariya-puggala straightaway because of their incredibly polite mannerisms.

4. Shallow water, shallow shadow. Shallow water refers to a mind that does not possess any Dhamma virtues. Shallow shadow



refers to manners. The individual's physical and verbal expressions are not at all composed. Other conduct is not proper at all either.

Each individual's personality cannot determine the stage of Dhamma attained because personality is a unique mark of the individual. Whether an individual is an arahant ariya-puggala or a commoner (puthujjana), their character doesn't change. This is because arahant ariya-puggalas cannot change their character. The only one who can change their character is the Buddha. May you understand this accordingly.

If an arahant ariya-puggala of the deep water, deep shadow type and a monk of the shallow water, deep shadow type were put together, you would not know at all which one was an ariya-puggala and which one was a commoner (puthujjana). This is because both of them have manners and conduct themselves well. You would not know which one was the real deal and which one wasn't.

If an arahant of the deep water, shallow shadow type and a commoner (puthujjana) of the shallow water, shallow shadow type were put together, their physical and verbal expressions and other conduct would not be composed at all. You would not know which one was the real deal and which one wasn't because they are both uncomposed in their physical and verbal actions (kiriya).

When discerning Dhamma virtue, people tend to look only at the superficial, outward actions and conclude based on that, and even boast that they know how to discern who is an ariya-puggala. In reality, they cannot tell at all. This is called being a know-it-all. Even ariya-puggalas themselves can't tell each other apart. Whether during the Buddha's time or in contemporary times, they can't tell each other apart at all. Those who will be able to tell are only able to do so after

having shared a conversation. In regards to discussing each other's Dhamma stage, the individuals must be closely acquainted and trust one another to have that conversation. Some arahants, however, possess a special knowledge (*ñāṇa*) and can know the virtues of others. They will not know all others, though. They will only know those who share compatible personalities or those with whom they have shared a relationship in past lives. However, there are few who are capable of this knowledge. In cases where they have cultivated perfections of character (*pāramī*) together or have shared in happiness and suffering together over many lifetimes, it may be known. But even if they know each other's attainment, they do not advertise it, except for insinuating it to their students on some occasions.

Arahants are characteristically unbiased towards others, do not malign others, and do not speak slanderously toward other monks. They are consistently benevolent (*mettā*) and do not cause harm or danger to others. As the Buddhist religion has made its way into this era, the thoughts and views of people are bound to differ. It is often said that arahants no longer exist in this era. There is a belief that the era of the arahants is over. This is what is mostly believed. However, there are still those who believe that there are still arahants in this era, though they are so few in number that they can't even be quantified as a percentage. Thus in Pāli, "Arahanta asuññaloko," so long as there still exist those who determinedly practice according to the monastic discipline, the world will not be devoid of arahants. Though there are few arahants and ariya-puggalas of other levels, the ariya-puggalas still exist. If someone were to ask, "Who is an arahant?" As already stated, and expressed through the "deep water, deep shadow" analogy, it is difficult to discern the arahants.

In order to truly know, wait and see when that individual is cremated. If their bones become holy relics (dhātu), transform into clear stones the size of a sesame seed, or exhibit some other characteristics, that was a true arahant. They were a person of pure virtue and their bones (aṭṭhi) are pure as well. As for those of the non-returner (anāgāmī), once returner (sakadāgāmī), or stream enterer (sotāpanna) Dhamma stages, their bones will not change or transform in any way because those ariya-puggalas have not yet eliminated the defilements and mental intoxications concealed within their minds. However, some mistakenly assume that the bones of the ariya-puggalas from the stream-entry Dhamma stage up to the fully enlightened Dhamma stage will all turn into holy relics. They do not understand holy relics at all. This didn't exist in the manuals during the Buddha's time. May you all understand this accordingly.

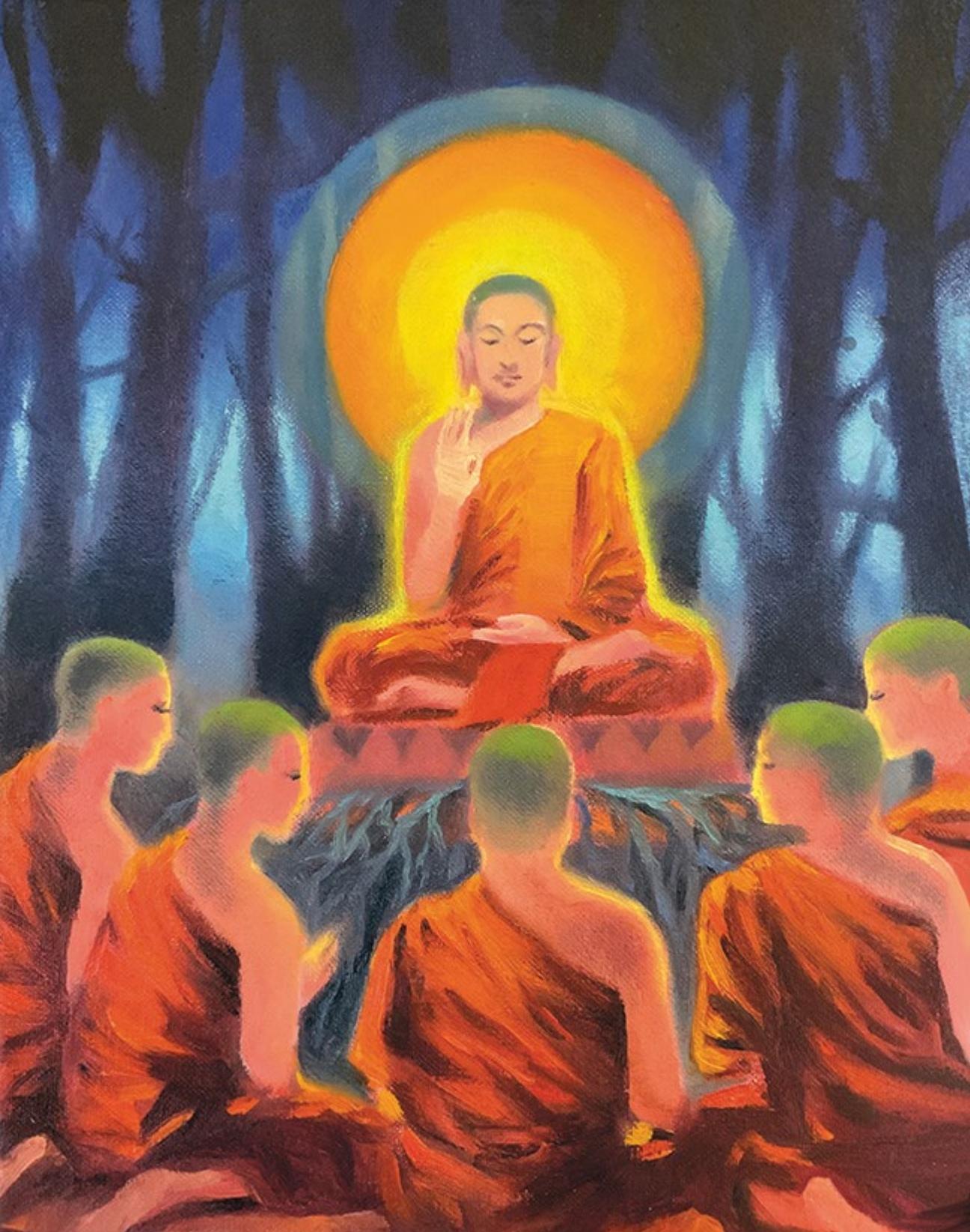


## **Closing Remarks**

Initially, I did not want to write my life story for anyone to know about it. Many of my students implored me to do so and I refused them many times. But I did tell some parts of it, and many people wanted to know more. They asked me to write it down so that future generations would have the opportunity to know about it. Why didn't I want to write about my story? Because I realize how the events that transpired in my life are different from other people's lives. Even having been born of the same parents, I possessed a character unlike anyone, as you have already read about. When I first wrote my life story, I only wrote about some parts of it, so it wasn't that complete. I wrote about more this time, but did not write about my young adult years. If I had, people would say that I was painting an idealistic picture of myself. Consequently, I have only written about my childhood and years as a monk. Many people have said that my life story is unlike that of others, as you have already read. My story can be a double-edged sword, depending on the person who interprets it. If someone already respects me, they will think in a beneficial manner. If someone does not respect me, they may think in a detrimental manner. It will be along these lines. This is a normal matter. Whoever is born into this world encounters criticism and praise. They are a pair. Even the Buddha was slandered and praised by others.

I have added new material and additional methods (*upāya*) of practice to this new version of my autobiography in order to provide thinking material for those who read the various Dhamma methods. Most of the Dhamma methods emphasize the basis of mindfulness (*sati*) and wisdom (*paññā*). This is because I have read the Buddha's history, starting from the very beginning through the cessation of the aggregates (*khandha*) in enlightenment (*nibbāna*). I have also read the historical accounts related to the period in which the Buddha taught the Buddhist religion, about how he started propagating the Dhamma and what Dhamma topics were used as the core foundation.

Starting with the Five Ascetics (*pañcavaggiya*), the Buddha used the foundation of wisdom (*paññā*) of right views as the starting point. It was a method (*upāya*) for people to change their mindset from wrong views back to right views. This was the starting point for the teaching of the Buddhist religion. People originally have *micchā-ditṭhi*, or wrong views, which have caused the perpetual cycling through rebirth in this world. That is why the Buddha chose reason as his method, such that the masses accepted the truth, saw the truth according to the teachings of the Buddha, and changed their minds to that which is called *sammā-ditṭhi*, wisdom of views that are correct and righteous. This led the Five Ascetics (*pañcavaggiya*) to attain enlightenment as the first group of noble disciples (*ariya-sāvaka*). Then there was Venerable Yasa's retinue as well as his father and mother, the auspicious group of thirty men (*bhaddavaggiya*) who were looking for a courtesan, and the three matted-hair ascetic (*jaṭila*) brothers and their retinue of 1,000, and many other groups. There were numerous people, both monastics and laypeople, who attained enlightenment and became noble ones (*ariya-puggala*).



I'd like those practicing in this era to study the histories of those who had attained enlightenment during the Buddha's time and discern how they differ from you all. Those ariya-puggalas were initially just ordinary commoners (puthujjana). After they had listened to the Dhamma from the Buddha, how did they practice? In the beginning, how did the Buddha start teaching them? I'd like for you all to read the histories of the ariya-puggalas who were laypeople like you, so that you have human proof to use in deciding in this day and age.

Practitioners don't understand the methods of training wisdom. These are my observations about why people don't want to train in wisdom. There are two observations. The first is having knowledge from manuals and not bothering to waste time on contemplations, or in other words, already knowing. They intend to use that textbook knowledge as wisdom. They don't want to contemplate any universal truths (sacca-dhamma) because they already understand the Dhamma from the texts. In actuality, that's not true. That knowledge is mere memorized textbook knowledge. It is just theoretical principles. It is like learning how to cook food and knowing that this food contains these seasonings. Merely knowing this, you believe yourself to already know how to make food to eat or you know cooking techniques. Though you do know the seasonings, you have never actually seasoned the food before. When you actually do it, who knows how the food will end up tasting?

Similarly, if you have never applied that learned knowledge toward wisdom, when you actually use it, who knows whether it will be wisdom or memory (*saññā*) of the texts. Wisdom is not knowledge. Knowledge is not wisdom. Whenever knowledge is made out to be wisdom, that will be the immediate end for real wisdom. All that will

remain is knowledge to show off to one another. This is an observation about how knowledge turns off your wisdom without your realizing it.

The second observation is that practitioners believe that once you meditate (samādhi) to a calm state, wisdom will arise. This kind of belief is a contradictory belief. Back when the Buddha had practiced fervently with the two hermits (tāpasa), our Buddha had meditated and his mind had achieved an utmost state of calm. Why didn't the Buddha's wisdom arise, then? What kind of meditation is our meditation? Is it superior to the Buddha's? As for the statement that meditating until the mind attains a calm state will cause wisdom to arise, during the Buddha's time, to whom did he teach this? Who is the example who can serve as human proof?

The concentration (samādhi) that the Buddha taught was divided into two groupings: 1. steadfastly focused concentration (samādhi), and 2. calm concentration (samādhi). The Buddha taught both of these types of concentration (samādhi) to the two types of people. The Buddha taught steadfastly focused concentration to the deliverance through wisdom (paññā-vimutti) type. The Buddha taught calm concentration to those of the deliverance of mind (ceto-vimutti) type. Now, exactly which type of personality are you? Why are you all using only calm meditation and saying that once the mind attains a calm state, wisdom will arise? Do you know that serene meditation is concentration (samādhi) that shuts off wisdom? The manuals already very clearly explain that if the mind requires meditative serenity, to leave the mind to continue to meditate to serenity until the mind is fully replete in serenity. Once the mind is fully replete in serenity, the mind will withdraw from that serenity. Be mindful not to withdraw

completely. Remain in upacāra-samādhi, or that which is referred to as steadfastly focused concentration, and direct it toward wisdom (paññā). These are the principles that the Buddha taught.

Right now, people do not understand according to the original methods that the Buddha taught. As a result, they have unwittingly developed micchā-samadhi, or wrong views about serenity. What kind of concentration (samādhi) is this? They are all touted as the Buddha's concentration (samādhi). This engenders wrong understanding and wrong views in those who lack education. The Dhamma that is being taught in this era is the same way. All of it is purported to be the Buddha's teachings. The Buddha possessed insight (ñāṇa) called anāgataraṁsa-ñāṇa and knew that those who will destroy the teachings of the Buddha (dhamma) and cause its ruin will be none other than the Buddhist community (buddha-parisā) themselves. That is why the Buddha taught (buddha-vacana) a discourse called the Kālāma Sutta, which contains ten criteria, as follows.

In the Kālāma Sutta, the Buddha warns Buddhists not to believe things that stray from reason. That reason must be the supremacy of the rule of dhamma (dhammā-dhipateyya), which uses the truth of universal truths (sacca-dhamma) as its foundation. Do not believe everything that people say. Whatever people believed in the old days, that is what people continue to believe. They refuse to question it with reason at all. The Buddha warned Buddhists not to train oneself to be one who believes in things that lack reason and not to train oneself to be one who is credulous. As a practitioner, one must train oneself to be steadfast. The term foundation refers to stability and steadfastness. Do not believe in that which is credulous, nonsensical, or in rumors.



## The Ten Criteria of the Kālāma Sutta

1. Do not believe merely because of repeated hearing or oral tradition. This means, do not train yourself to be one who is credulous. Do not take that which has been heard to be completely true. For instance, having repeatedly heard, “Go ahead and meditate. Once the mind (citta) becomes calm in meditation, wisdom will arise.” Those who do not possess strong mindfulness (sati) and wisdom (paññā) and do not have their own rationale will believe that wisdom will arise when the mind becomes calm. Thus, they will decide to believe this without having researched the Buddha’s teachings on their own at all. They don’t even know how the Buddha taught. If someone inaccurately interpreted the Buddha’s teachings, we will develop inaccurate views and we will proceed to share these views. Others who do not possess mindfulness and wisdom, and lack reason just as we do, will believe what we do, just as we believed others. It is word of mouth. These people lack education, don’t think to seek reason, and don’t read manuals. During the Buddha’s time, is this what he taught? If the Buddha did truly teach this, to whom did he teach this and where did he teach this? In which manual did the Buddha say this? What is the name of that scripture (sutta)? Upon being questioned in this way, people are unable to provide the source of the original proof. They will answer as idiots do, that they had heard their teachers teach it, so it is what must be believed. This is what is called a credulous person.

By basing decisions on what you have heard from others, if others are wrong, you will be wrong as well. It is called saddhā-ñāṇavippayutta, or belief (saddhā) that is irrational. It is belief without mindfulness or wisdom to support it. It is called setting beliefs to the wind, like a branch stuck in the mud that leans whichever way the wind blows. Likewise, the mind that lacks mindfulness and wisdom and reason as a foundation will believe according to what others say. If only one person with wrong understandings and wrong views spreads the news, others will proceed to spread the word and it will spread until it turns into a trend that cannot be fixed. An example of this is, “Go ahead and meditate. Once the mind becomes calm in meditation, wisdom will arise.” That is just for starters, and there are numerous other examples. It can be said that the era has been reached in which multitudes of Kālāmas people have been reborn together. Thus, it is difficult to fix and has brought ruin upon a great number of the Buddha’s teachings (buddha-vacana). The character of those who are sufficiently capable of attaining a level of enlightenment in this lifetime are concealed. The mind that is not sufficiently steadfast in mindfulness and wisdom will lose its way like the others, just like the foolish rabbit.<sup>36</sup> A single rabbit is the cause. Consequently, all the other animals believe that lone rabbit. Likewise, credulous people lack reason and lack mindfulness and wisdom. Consequently, they always believe hearsay.

2. Do not believe merely because of tradition or lineage. This is the same idea. The traditions that we all follow in the present are considered old traditions that have been followed since ancient times. Our grandparents and parents have passed on these traditions. We

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<sup>36</sup> In the Daddabha Jātaka, a rabbit is unduly frightened by a fruit falling where it was sleeping and runs off screaming, “The earth is crumbling!” Other animals see the rabbit running, believe what they are told without considering it with reason, and take off running as well.

all follow them in present times and will continue to follow them into the distant future. Whatever has been done before, that is what we continue to do. This is because we consider them to be ancient traditions and don't dare to change them.

Even people who have read the Buddha's history, about how the Buddha taught the Buddhist community (*buddha-parisā*) during that era and many people who followed his teachings attained levels of enlightenment, still persist in practicing according to the old ways that existed even before the advent of the Buddhist religion. That is, practicing like the hermits (*tāpasa*) and ascetics (*isi*). Those methods had been practiced prior to Buddhism. Back then, even our Buddha went and practiced with the hermits and ascetics. That is, the methods of meditating such that the mind is in a state of calm in absorptions (*jhāna*), as told in scriptures. The Buddha discerned that meditating until the mind is calm in that manner did not lead to the path and fruit of enlightenment (*magga-phala-nibbāna*) at all. That is why he bid farewell to the hermits and left to seek out a new way to practice of his own, without having anyone as his teacher (*ācariya*). Eventually, the Buddha discovered the universal truths (*sacca-dhamma*) on his own, which we call becoming enlightened as the Buddha.

If the Buddha had practiced the old ways, according to the hermits and ascetics, the Buddhist religion never would have arisen in the world. All of us would be in the dark, blind for eternity. We are considered lucky to have been born and encountered the Buddhist religion. The teachings that the Buddha taught to the fourfold Buddhist company consisted of two main principles, namely tranquility concentration (*samatha-kammaṭṭhāna*) and insight concentration (*vipassanā-kammaṭṭhāna*). As for the path of practice, the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya-magga*) was the core method of practice. During

the Buddha's time, those who attained the path and fruit of enlightenment practiced with sammā-ditṭhi, or wisdom of right view, as the core principle. As for methods of meditation, those methods of practice were merely techniques to supplement wisdom, that's all.

In this era, most practitioners have lost the point, or perhaps they have misinterpreted the Buddha's teachings. They tend to practice mental cultivation (bhāvanā) the old way, taking after the hermits and ascetics. The teachings of the Buddha are new and always up-to-date, but only a small number of people are interested in them. Most people are interested in practicing mental cultivation the old way, according to those hermits and ascetics.

3. Do not believe merely because of hearsay or rumor. This is another point that we all should consider. Hearsay can be either true or untrue, believable or unbelievable. Whether it is news that is true or untrue, use wisdom to contemplate it first. Does what you've heard contain reason that can be believed or not? Don't just hear something and decide to believe the entirety of it. You must train yourself to be one who is steadfast. Contemplate with reason in order to understand first, then decide afterward. For example, you hear that sacred items have arisen someplace and believe that it must be true. Don't train yourself to be credulous and believe things in an ignorant and irrational manner. There are many other rumors that will continue to arise in this world into the far future. There will be both news that is good and news that is not good. Whatever the nature of the news may be, it must be verified so that you truly know and truly see it first, and then believe it afterward. You must train your mindfulness and wisdom when it comes to your beliefs. Don't have others point out or tell you things and then believe according to what they've said. Whether you believe or don't believe, you must have your own reasons. Then you

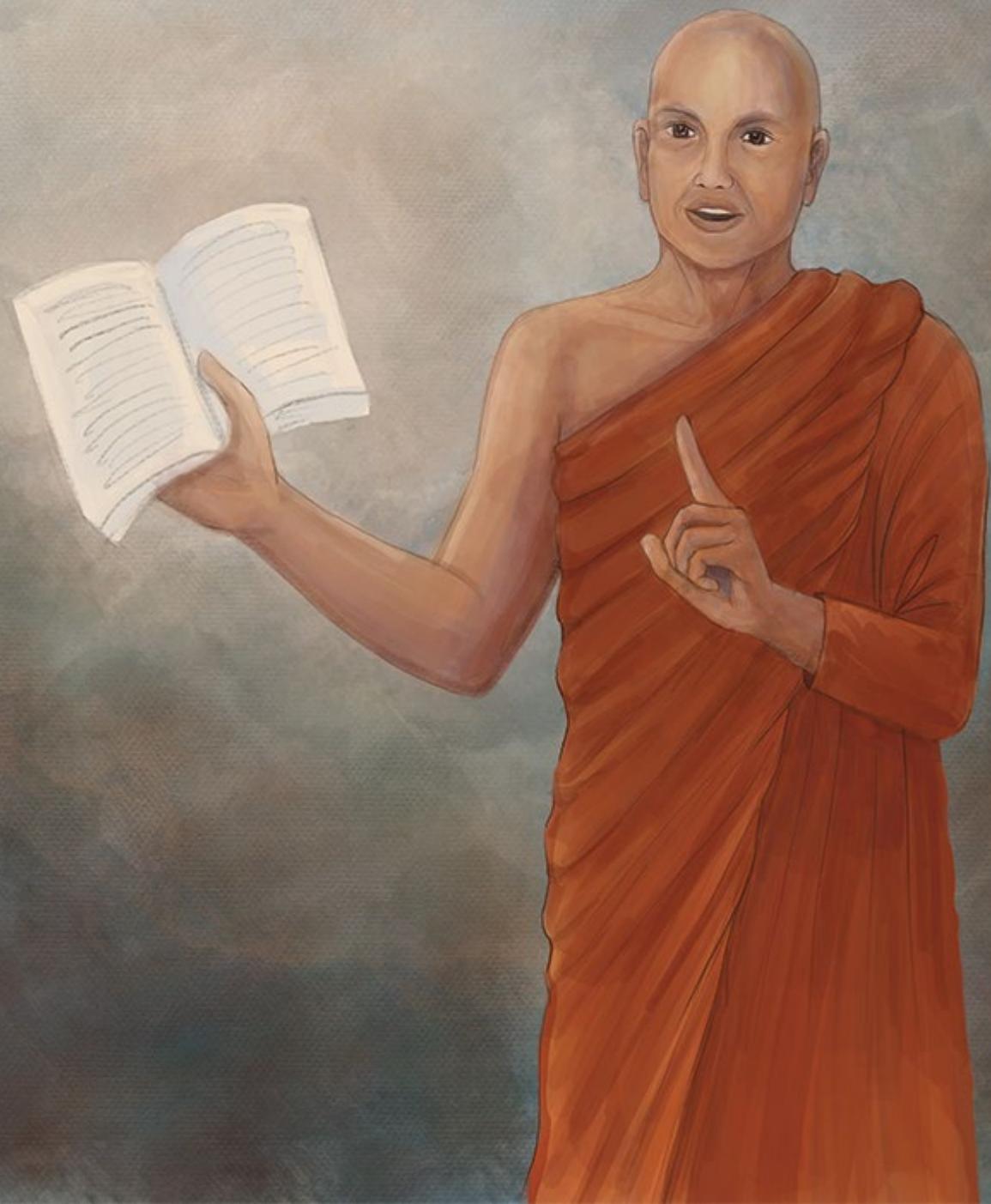
will be your own refuge. There is also another type of belief, about merit (puñña) and moral goodness (kusala). For example, you hear that a particular way of practice is a shortcut and the direct path that can enable you to easily attain release, so you believe the hearsay without reflecting or considering the rationale at all.

Another form of hearsay is when there is news about how there is a monk somewhere who possesses great virtue, and the masses rush there to pay respects and venerate him in order to cultivate merit and moral goodness for themselves. Sometimes it is an arahant monk, sometimes an arahant novice monk (*sāmañera*). Everyone desires merit and moral goodness. They believe that after having paid homage to an arahant on one occasion, incredibly immense merit and moral goodness will result. They bring many items to offer as alms. This kind of hearsay doesn't cause any damage. If you have respect for a particular teacher (ācariya), that will be your own merit and moral goodness. Mostly, the arahant monks are student-elevated arahants. They are declared and advertised with the intent of garnering benefit for their own teacher and their own community of followers. Any teacher who has the respect of their followers will easily become an arahant in this day and age. In other words, they are arahant monks conceived by their students. Some of these monks are the real deal while some are not. If a teacher does not have your respect or faith, even if that teacher is a true arahant, you will not believe it. What's worse, you will exhibit disparaging and offensive behavior and criticize and slander them. Thus, whatever rumors you hear, don't decide to believe that it must be true as said quite yet. Whenever the unexpected occurs, there will be regret afterward. Be sensible and discern your own reasons.

4. Do not believe merely because of what is in texts or scriptures.

This is yet another one. There is confidence that whatever is stated in manuals or scriptures is entirely true. Whatever the manuals and scriptures say, that is what people believe. Texts in this day and age are mostly written from the author's own perspective. After you read the text, you must consider the rationale once more to determine whether or not that scripture is the Buddha's teaching, and if practiced, what kind of results it will yield. Discretion must be used in carefully scrutinizing with reason which topics in the texts can sufficiently be believed or cannot sufficiently be believed. You must study, analyze, reflect, and deliberate until you know and see the causes and effects. This is because in this age, there are a great number of people who have authored manuals and scriptures. There are both ancient texts and contemporary texts, and there are texts written by monks as well as written by laypeople all over the place. Each book claims to be the Buddha's teachings. There are books written by noble ones (ariya-puggala) and books written by commoners (puthujjana). Some phrases and meanings are similar while other phrases and meanings are not. Actually, you all should study the Buddha's history and understand what the Buddha had already practiced and proclaimed not to be the path of practice that will purify the mind and bring about release to enlightenment (vimutti-nibbāna). Then, you will know how to practice in line with the path and fruit of enlightenment.

The Buddha possessed insight (*ñāṇa*) to know that those who will bring disaster upon the Buddha's teachings would be none other than the Buddhist community (buddha-parisā) itself. In the distant future, there will be many people who will alter and twist the teachings of the Buddha, making it difficult for the virtuous sons (kula-putta)



and later generations to understand. It will be difficult for those who are to attain a level of enlightenment because the paths of practice will not be aligned with the original path that the Buddha had taught. They will change the teachings of the Buddha to fit their own views. In the age that follows, those who write manuals will claim the teachings are entirely the Buddha's. This will cause confusion for the virtuous sons (kula-putta) and later generations. People will interpret the Dhamma in a way that is inconsistent with what the Buddha originally taught. People will not understand the correct methods of practice. However someone interprets or perceives the Dhamma, that is how they will write manuals and scriptures. The Buddha possessed insight (*ñāṇa*) to see the distant future. That is why he warned the virtuous sons (kula-putta) and future generations not to go by what is written in texts and scriptures, but rather to use mindfulness and wisdom to consider and understand things with proper reason.

I wish to provide my observation that the many texts that contemporary scholars have written include points that are greatly at odds with the original teachings of the Buddha. For instance, there are teachers who teach and write manuals and scriptures that mostly exhort methods of meditation. They have written in the texts, "Go ahead and meditate. Once the mind becomes calm in meditation, wisdom will arise." To whom did the Buddha teach this? During the Buddha's era, who was there whose wisdom arose after their mind attained meditative calm? There were a great many ariya-puggalas from the Buddha's era—ariya-puggalas which included monks, sāmañeras, female monastics (bhikkhunī), male laypeople (upāsaka), and female laypeople (upāsikā). There were many tens of thousands of people who attained enlightenment as ariya-puggalas. Which of

them experienced wisdom arising from serene meditation? There must be human proof to speak of. Speaking only of documental proof in a vague manner just will not do. It will be within the scope of going by the texts or scriptures written by contemporary authors. That is why there isn't adequate reason.

Thus, human testaments from the Buddha's era must be referred to when deciding. I have personally studied nearly all of the accounts of both ordained and non-ordained ariya-puggalas in the scriptures in order to discover which ariya-puggalas practiced meditation to a state of calm and experienced wisdom arising. After having read all of the texts, there was no one who attained meditative calm and experienced wisdom arising. Why, then, do manuals in this age say that it will? If someone is to talk to me about the texts, talk to me about those texts face-to-face. Don't talk behind my back. Where did those texts come from and who wrote them? Are the authors ariya-puggalas? Provide the human proof.

Once, an elder monk (thera) asked me, "Venerable Thoon, why are you teaching laypeople about wisdom? Wisdom is high level Dhamma. It is Dhamma of a refined level. How will the laypeople understand it? You have to teach them about the Five Precepts (*pañcasīla*) and Eight Precepts (*aṭṭha-sīla*) and teach them how to meditate, and that is enough. Once they meditate and their minds are sufficiently calm, wisdom will arise on its own. There is no need to teach them about wisdom. You are wrong to teach them in this way. Mostly everyone teaches morality (*sīla*) and meditation (*saṃādhi*). This is because morality is the first level, meditation is the second level, and wisdom is the third level. Commoners don't understand the wisdom level because it is too advanced. What have you to say about this?"

Taking the opportunity, I said to him, “With permission, Luang Pu. In teaching laypeople, I do not teach wisdom (paññā) that is advanced.”

Luang Pu immediately interjected, “How is wisdom not advanced?! Have you ever read the Threefold Training (sikkhāttaya)? Wisdom must be at the last level.”

I said, “With permission, Luang Pu. Allow me to finish explaining what wisdom of a beginner level is, first. After I have explained it, you will understand.”

He said, “Go on and tell me what your wisdom of a beginner level is.”

I brought up the three types of wisdom: 1. sutta-maya-paññā, 2. cintā-maya-paññā, and 3. bhāvanā-maya-paññā, as a basis. “With permission, Luang Pu. When I teach laypeople about wisdom, I use wisdom of an elementary level to teach them, so that they use their own thoughts effectively and so that they develop an understanding of cause and effect. This is because sutta-maya-paññā is wisdom from studying the various groupings of theoretical doctrine (pariyatti). Theoretical doctrine is an umbrella term for all of the Buddha’s teachings, whether they relate to morality (sīla), concentration (samādhi), or any other Dhamma grouping. All of them combined are called theoretical doctrine. Thus, I teach them to understand the methods of upholding morality (sīla), such as the steps to upholding the Five Precepts so that their morality is pure. I train them to understand each precept and the different methods of upholding each of those precepts.

“Thus, I teach them to use sutta-maya-paññā to study how to uphold morality, first. Then after they understand morality and how

to uphold the precepts, upholding the precepts will be easier. The precepts will not be broken or tarnished because they are already upholding the precepts with wisdom. That is why it is called wisdom of the morality (*sīla*) grouping that is comprehensive. The Eight Precepts are the same way. This is because the Eight Precepts are also theoretical doctrine, so wisdom of an elementary level must similarly be used to study and understand the methods of upholding the Eight Precepts.

“Practicing concentration (*samādhi*) also requires using wisdom of this level to study the methods of concentration and the steps involved in concentration in order for it to be right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*). This is because concentration comes in many forms. For example, momentary concentration (*khaṇika-samādhi*), access concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*), fixed concentration (*appanā-samādhi*), right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*), wrong concentration (*micchā-samādhi*), steadfastly focused concentration, or serene meditation. How do each of them differ? If wrong concentration arises, how do you fix it? This must be studied so that you understand those groupings of concentration. This is how to have wisdom of concentration that is comprehensive. This refers to *suta-maya-paññā*, which is wisdom from studying the morality (*sīla*) grouping, wisdom from studying the concentration (*samādhi*) grouping, and wisdom from studying various other Dhamma groupings in the manuals. I don’t use high level, refined wisdom to teach the laypeople at all. The grouping of the three types of wisdom exists. You know that, Luang Pu.”

After I explained how there were three levels of wisdom, Luang Pu understood. However, he refused to back down. He said, “All of what you have said is right, but it isn’t like what the majority of monks

teach. You must teach in the same way as the majority of monks so that there is unity." This is a Kālāma Sutta monk—one who goes by texts and scriptures.

5. Do not believe merely because of takka, or logical reasoning (thinking and calculating in a random manner and following self-serving rationale). This "at random" method comes with a high risk of making mistakes. It is like traveling. Traveling without a compass entails a high chance of becoming lost. When it comes to worldly tasks, if a country is mismanaged, that country may be adversely affected. If in a business, the costs and profits are miscalculated, that business may incur losses. If randomly correct, then there may be profits.

Likewise, practicing Dhamma at random may lead to problems, because practicing Dhamma is a matter that directly involves the mind. Physical practice and verbal practice are both done in order to lead to the mind. Thus, all Dhamma topics converge in the mind. That is why it is said that the mind is king. It is the chief of all Dhamma topics. When practicing Dhamma, the Dhamma topic must be studied and understood. Which Dhamma topics should be cast off and which Dhamma topics should be practiced continuously must be discerned rationally. Don't practice mental cultivation randomly. If practicing at random turns out wrong, it will immediately become wrong practice (*micchā-paṭipatti*). For instance, when Dhamma that should have been cast off is fervently practiced while Dhamma groupings that should be fervently practiced are cast off. Thus, practicing at random comes with the great likelihood of practicing wrongly.

This is because when it comes to the path that leads directly to the path and fruit of enlightenment, people have not experienced the

path and fruit of enlightenment. Though the Buddha has laid forth the path that directly leads to the path and fruit of enlightenment, if those of us who are in the process of walking along the path misinterpret the path—for instance, what kind of practice is right view (*sammā-ditṭhi*) and correct and righteous, what kind of practice is wrong view (*micchā-ditṭhi*), or wrong practice of the path and fruit of enlightenment—and randomly land on wrong practice (*micchā-paṭipatti*), the chances of experiencing the path and fruit of enlightenment in this lifetime are over. It is like contracting the construction of a building. If the costs of materials are miscalculated, the foundation that will bear the weight is miscalculated, or the price is miscalculated, that building will encounter problems and the contractor will suffer losses. Likewise, when it comes to practicing Dhamma, if the methods of practice are selected at random, the Dhamma grouping to be practiced will not be compatible with your temperament (*carita*) and character at all. The Buddha taught investigation of the truth (*dhamma-vicaya*). Selecting which Dhamma method to practice is of the utmost importance. Thus, train your mind to have sharp mindfulness and wisdom. Those with sharp mindfulness and wisdom will find a way to seek out a Dhamma method to practice that is aligned with their temperament and character. They will not practice at random, as before. Practicing mental cultivation will not be a wasted effort and practicing Dhamma will result in the attainment of the path and fruit of enlightenment in not too long a time.

6. Do not believe merely because of inferential reasoning. This is another criterion. Practitioners should properly judge how much inferential reasoning can be believed. It is merely a theoretical inference that something must be a certain way, or something is bound to be a certain way. You cannot set your mind on the belief

that something is true because that which is inferred is still subject to impermanence (*anicca*). You cannot assume that something will transpire as you have imagined. It is like assuming that something will remain with you forever. That is uncertain. Or, assuming that selling this item will result in a certain profit. Ultimately, there may be a loss. Or, assuming that after getting married, you will live together in eternal happiness. That is uncertain. You may get divorced or experience mental suffering. Or, assuming that your children will turn out to be upstanding and well-educated, and assuming that you will be able to rely on your children. Ultimately, you experience disappointment over that which you assumed. Or, assuming that there will be happiness in your life. It is possible that suffering will occur. You think you will live a long life. You could die at a young age. Thus, inference is bound to lead to significant disappointment.

The same applies to practicing mental cultivation. You may expect that your practice of mental cultivation must transpire according to what you have assumed, but ultimately it doesn't turn out as you assumed it would. Many laypeople see their friends practicing mental cultivation well and think that they will similarly be able to do the same. Then, when they are unable to do so, they feel dejected and disengage. The same goes for monks. Initially, they are determined to seriously practice mental cultivation. Then, after a few days or months of practicing and not attaining the fruits of practice, they think that they lack perfections of character (*pāramī*) and probably cannot reach the path and fruit of enlightenment in this lifetime. Consequently, they disengage, lose motivation, and stop practicing mental cultivation.

Therefore, in regard to inferring, not everything will turn out how you want it to. It depends on the cause. You have cultivated a

bad cause but think that it will give rise to a good result. This is impossible. Inference has to do with desire (*taṇhā*). In other words, you infer that which you desire. Inference is bound to follow perception. You have wrong views and practice according to those wrong views without realizing it, and then infer that it will result in the path and fruit of enlightenment. It is impossible. When inferring something, there must be sufficient reason to support it. Without good mindfulness and wisdom, those inferences will at once be wrong.

7. Do not believe merely because of reflecting on symptoms.<sup>37</sup> Reflecting refers to having thought of something. Considering refers to having considered the situation that was brought to mind. Another way of saying it is, “think and consider.” These two words differ in meaning. For instance, “having thought of something” is one phrase, while “contemplating and considering” is another. The meaning of “reflecting on symptoms” is having thought of something because of the symptoms. After having thought of something, do not set your mind on believing that it must be the way you thought it to be, because reflecting or thinking of something still follows desires. Desires stem from perception. If perception is wrong, then reflection will be wrong. If perception is right, then reflection will be right.

Thus, consider and contemplate whether your reflection is right perception (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) or wrong perception (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) because reflection stems from perceptions that exist in the depths of the mind. Wrong perception results in wrong reflection and right perception results in right reflection. In order to know whether that reflection is wrong or right, there must be consideration of what is being reflected on and whether those reflections are of a worldly way

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<sup>37</sup> This criterion is also referred to as “reasoned contemplation,” “reasoned cogitation,” and “specious reasoning.”

or Dhamma way. Those reflections must be considered such that there is understanding of what kind of reflection can be trusted and what kind of reflection cannot be trusted. Are those reflections of something good or are those reflections of something bad? If you perceive that you are reflecting on something that is not good, then cease doing so.

One meaning of reflection is to have recollected something. For instance, recollecting the symptoms of the mind (*citta*) that has preoccupations of mental formations (*saṅkhāra*) concealed within it. This is called the conditioned mind (*saṅkhāra-citta*). It is this *saṅkhāra-citta* that directs the reflections on various constructs (*sammuti*). These reflections are reflections on sensual pleasures (*kāma-guṇa*), or what is called reflections along the stream of the world. In other words, *micchā-sati*, wrong recollection of the Dhamma. People are innately equipped with recollection (*sati*). However, this recollection (*sati*) is always used to recollect along the course of defilements and desires. Fools (*bāla*) tend to use recollection (*sati*) to recollect along the course of that which violates morality (*sīla*) and violates righteousness (*dhamma*), and recollect along the course of evil (*pāpa*) and unwholesomeness (*akusala*).

The term *sati* is merely the function of recollecting. As for recollecting wrongly or recollecting rightly, wisdom must be employed to understand the causes and effects of that recollecting. What kind of recollection is wrong recollection (*micchā-sati*) and what kind of recollection is right recollection (*sammā-sati*)? There must be comprehensive wisdom (*paññā*) of that which is being recollected at all times. Thus, the Buddha warned not to believe merely because of the reflection of symptoms, because those symptoms refer to the symptoms of the mind (*citta*), or what is called *vedanā*, *saññā*,

saṅkhāra, and viññāṇa. These four mental components (nāma-citta) generally harbor defilements (kilesa), desires (taṇhā), and mental intoxications (āsava). Consequently, each reflection turns out to be a reflection that is wrong (micchā) in nature.

There is one type of reflection that tends to arise in those who practice meditation (samādhi). After the mind is calm often or calm for long periods, they may reflect that, “*These characteristics indicate attainment of a particular absorption (jhāna)*.” They may reflect that, “*This is paṭhama-jhāna*,” “*This is dutiya-jhāna*,” or “*This is tatiya-jhāna*.” They might reflect even further, that, “*This is rūpa-jhāna*” or “*This is arūpa-jhāna*.” This is what is called reflecting on the symptoms of meditative calm. This will unwittingly give rise to micchā-samādhi. If you practice meditation often, you will become used to it and turn into someone who cannot exercise wisdom thoughts. You will make yourself still and your mind will be empty at all times. The defilements and desires that exist within your mind will not show themselves at all because the power of meditation and the power of absorptions have shrouded them. Greed (lobha), anger (dosa), delusion (moha), lust (rāga) for love, and passion for sensual pleasures (kāma-guṇa) do not flare up. The mind is empty and indifferent at all times. It is these characteristics that may give rise to wrong understanding and the reflection that, “*This is the Dhamma stage of the sotāpanna*,” or “*This is the Dhamma stage of the sakadāgāmī*,” or “*This is the Dhamma stage of the anāgāmī*,” or “*I am already an arahant*.” This is possible. That is why this kind of reflection turns into wrong view (micchā-ditṭhi) and wrong reflection.

One example from the Buddha’s time was the thirty monks who were practicing the virtues of a Buddhist monk (samaṇa-dhamma) in a continuous manner someplace. These thirty monks were habitual



meditators and did not make use of their wisdom at all. After having trained in meditation for so long, they became calm. After their minds became calm, their minds became happy and peaceful. So, they continued to practice meditative calm until they attained immaterial absorptions (arūpa-jhāna). The power of those absorptions suppressed all of their defilements and desires. Their minds were always in a state of indifference (upekkhā). These thirty monks then wrongly reflected that, *"We have eradicated all mental intoxications (āsava) from our minds."* They all reflected that they had become arahants and proposed to one another, "Let us go to receive the Buddha's declaration (vyākaraṇa) that we are all arahants."

When they were on their way, the Buddha already knew that this group of monks had overestimated themselves. He sent Venerable Ānanda to instruct the monks to spend the night in the cemetery first and then come to see the Buddha the following day. The group of monks received Venerable Ānanda's orders and then went to rest in the cemetery. They saw a young woman lying dead in the cemetery without a single cloth covering her body. She had the appearance of someone who was asleep. The lust within the monks flared up and the power of meditative absorptions could not contain their defilements. This is an example of wrong reflection, which can also lead to misunderstanding.

8. Do not believe merely because of being pleased with getting along. Being pleased with getting along comes from two causes. The first cause is a relationship in a past life. This refers to having been a father, mother, relative, friend, or having some kind of relationship before. Once you are reborn together in this lifetime, you find each other's personality pleasing and you get along. The second cause is this current lifetime. Having supported and aided one another, you

become close and sympathetic toward one another. Consequently, you like one another.

Another point is having compatible personalities and having thoughts and views that are similarly aligned. This can also lead to being pleased with getting along. Being pleased with one another pertains to two groups: 1. The group of the wise (*pandita*) are pleased with their peers within their group, and 2. The group of fools (*bāla*) share similar personalities because they belong to the same group of fools. If these two groups were to live together as a single group, they could manage to coexist. However, deep down in their hearts, they would be unable to get along. They would merely get along in terms of outward actions (*kiriyā*). As for that which is kept inside (*akiriyā*), they would not get along at all.

What the Buddha meant by being pleased relates to practice (*paṭipatti*). Practice is divided into two groups. The first group is those who practice rightly (*sammā-paṭipatti*). This group is aligned in their views and they get along. In other words, their views (*ditṭhi*) are aligned in the same direction. Their methods of practice are the same and their results of practice are the same. That is why they get along. However, this is not the group that the Buddha implied, because this group already practices correctly. The second group—the one that the Buddha implied—is those who practice wrongly, in a manner misaligned with the path and fruit of enlightenment. In other words, *micchā-ditṭhi*, knowledge and realization that doesn't align with release in any way.

One example is a group of people similarly afflicted with defilements of insight (*vipassanūpakilesa*). Upon speaking with one another, they get along handsomely. They are the same way and share

the same characteristics. That is why they find each other so pleasing and get along. If this were to happen to you, would you be aware of it? No, you wouldn't have any idea that you were practicing wrongly. If someone were to tell you, "This is wrong practice," it would be considered offensive and cause the dissolution of your relationship. Another example is when people's political ideologies are compatible and they get on well. If someone is truly practicing to reach the path and fruit of enlightenment, they should not believe things so easily. Do not go by being pleased or not being pleased. Use mindfulness, wisdom, and reason in making the decision.

Another point is that you should study the Buddha's history well and study the histories of the noble ones (ariya-puggala) from the Buddha's time so that you understand what the Buddha taught back then. Before the many disciples (sāvaka) attained enlightenment as ariya-puggalas, how did they practice? You should study the histories of the ariya-puggalas. There are many stories about the ariya-puggalas in the discourses (sutta). There are stories about both monastics and laypeople, and they contain sufficient rationale to be reasonably trusted.

In this era, do not decide to believe something too quickly. It will not do to believe someone simply because you like them. You must use righteousness as your cornerstone. If you find someone pleasing, you shouldn't just believe everything. If that happens, being right or being wrong will be a great gamble. For example, suppose that you have studied something. When someone speaks the Dhamma in a way that corresponds to what you have studied, you find it pleasing. Or, you have experienced meditative calm and when someone teaches Dhamma that corresponds with what you have experienced, you find it pleasing. Or, you have read in the texts that once meditative

calm is reached, wisdom will arise. If a monk speaks in a way that corresponds to what you have read, you find it pleasing and wholeheartedly decide to believe that it is already correct. Therefore, in listening to the Dhamma, do not merely go by being pleased. You must listen for the content and listen for the meaning that is rational and righteous.

If the Dhamma corresponds to the Three Common Characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*) of impermanence (*aniccam*), suffering (*dukkham*), and not-self (*anattā*), or if the Dhamma corresponds to the noble path (*ariya-magga*) in which right view (*sammā-ditṭhi*) is the path of practice that leads to the cessation of suffering, then it is Dhamma that can be reasonably believed. If the Dhamma doesn't correspond to this, then you should not wholeheartedly believe it, even if you are pleased with the teacher.

Practitioners in this era should train their mindfulness and wisdom well and train themselves to have reason handy because in this era, there are many people who have written the Dhamma and claim those teachings are the Buddha's teachings. Readers who lack education and find their teachers pleasing will believe the entirety of whatever information is given to them without discerning the reasons why it is wrong or right at all. They do not know what teachings are genuinely the Buddha's teachings. They study the ways of the hermits (*tāpasa*) and ascetics (*isi*) and mix too much of it into the Buddha's teachings. When they read the Dhamma texts, they read the Buddha's teachings and repeat some of the Buddha's teachings, but when they practice mental cultivation, they practice the ways of the hermits and ascetics. This is not understanding.

9. Do not believe merely because the speaker seems credible. This criterion is something that you should contemplate. It serves as

a constant reminder that although the speaker seems credible, you should not immediately believe what the speaker says. Consider what the speaker has said so that you know and see the reason in it, first. Does what was said contain enough reason to be believed? Use wisdom to study, analyze, and interpret the meaning of what was said. If there is enough reason to believe it, then decide to believe it afterward. If you believe too quickly, credulity will follow. Everything must be contemplated with wisdom to the point of comprehensive clarity. Deconstruct what the speaker has said so that you understand it. Do not believe simply because the speaker seems credible.

There was an example of this during the Buddha's time. Back then, a group of monks ventured out to practice mental cultivation away from home. They went to the Buddha in order to obtain a Dhamma metaphor to practice. After having listened to the Dhamma from the Buddha, they left to practice mental cultivation at various locations. They happened to cross paths with Venerable Sāriputta. At that time, those monks had relayed the Dhamma that they had heard from the Buddha to Venerable Sāriputta. They asked Venerable Sāriputta, "Do you believe all of this Dhamma that we have explained to you, Venerable Sāriputta?"

Venerable Sāriputta replied, "I do not believe it yet."

Venerable Sāriputta's response displeased the group of monks, and they returned to tell the Buddha about what had happened. "We related to Venerable Sāriputta the Dhamma that we heard from you, Lord Buddha, but Venerable Sāriputta said that he did not believe it."

The Buddha ordered Venerable Sāriputta to come see him. The Buddha asked Venerable Sāriputta, "This group of monks relayed to you the Dhamma that I had explained to them, and you said that you did not believe it. Is this true?"

Venerable Sāriputta replied, “I did say that, Lord Buddha.”

The Buddha then asked, “The Dhamma that I, the Tathāgata,<sup>38</sup> have stated is true in all aspects. Why, then, do you not believe it, Venerable Sāriputta?”

Venerable Sāriputta said, “The Dhamma that you stated was Dhamma that I had not yet contemplated such that I knew and saw how it was true according to the Dhamma topic. That is why I did not believe that Dhamma yet, Lord Buddha.”

The Buddha said, “Venerable Sāriputta is truly the Tathāgata’s son. He is one who possesses wisdom. He is one who is smart. He does not readily believe things. You all should follow his example. Do not readily believe things without having contemplated them first.”

10. Do not believe merely because “that monk has been my teacher (ācariya).” This tenth criterion is extremely important. It appears to be an accurate representation of how people in this era believe. If we go by this era’s conventions (sammuti), the phrase, “That Luang Por or Luang Pu is my teacher,” would be more relatable and isn’t a distortion of the original convention. You, the reader, must read this carefully and use reason to support your consideration of whether or not it is as I have said in this era. The Buddha had prophesied that during the tail end of Buddhism, some groups of devotees will zealously believe their teachers. For what reason they believe is for you to seek out on your own. I will only provide some thinking points. Believing in teachers is a double-edged sword, as it can be beneficial and it can be detrimental. If you have a good teacher who has methods of teaching Dhamma that, once practiced, can help you fix your own problems, or teaches high-level Dhamma that leads

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<sup>38</sup> The Buddha often refers to himself as the Tathāgata, or one who has truly gone.

to the path and fruit of enlightenment, then consider yourself fortunate. It is ācariya-vicaya, being one with sharp wisdom who is capable of selecting a teacher who can lead the way.

Mostly, people have faith in their teachers but do not have wisdom to support that faith. Believing in this manner may lead to problems. For instance, you find a teacher handsome, find a teacher skilled in speaking, find a teacher appeases his students, or observe something else—come up with your own reasons. Believing in teachers who lack wisdom will give rise to many problems in Buddhist society. Once those teachers brainwash their students into believing them, those students will effectively protect their teachers. If something happens, the students will band together to protect and defend their teacher. They are even willing to sacrifice their lives for their teacher. When there is this much devotion to their teacher, whatever the teacher says, that is what they must believe. If the teacher praises a certain student as one who practices well, or calls them “a diamond of the first water” or “gold wrapped in a rag,”<sup>39</sup> they will believe it all. Or if the teacher criticizes someone as bad in some way, they will wholeheartedly believe it. This kind of student will not bow or pay respects to a monk whom their teacher has criticized. The students of the teacher who has been criticized are displeased by this, and ultimately the teachers end up at odds and the students end up at odds as well.

Another very important reason is the practice protocol that you all are interested in right now. May you all observe how in this era, each school or each society teaches different methods of mental

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<sup>39</sup> Whenever Luang Ta Mahā Boowa Nāgasampanno (a renowned Thai arahant monk of our era) referred to someone as “a diamond of the first water,” it was understood to be a confirmation of that person’s arahant attainment. Luang Ta Mahā Boowa often referred to fellow arahant Luang Pu Jia Cundo as “gold wrapped in a rag” because of his crude outward manner and refined inner virtues.

cultivation. Owing to the differences in each teacher's education, there are different modes of practice. If everyone had similarly read the Buddha's history and the histories of the noble ones (ariyapuggala), the methods of practice would not differ at all. Thus, understand that during the era of Buddhism's decline, those who study the Buddha's teachings (dhamma) may interpret them differently. Therefore, interpreting the Dhamma is extremely important because laypeople must rely on monks to lead them. It is just like a car. If the front wheels are turned in some direction, the rear wheels must turn that way as well.

This is like a herd of oxen in search of a leader. If the herd of oxen selects a leader who has crossed the stream before, there will not be any problems. The leader will surely bring the herd of oxen down its old path that safely leads to the shore. If the herd selects a leader that has never crossed the stream before, there will definitely be obstacles in crossing the stream. It might lead the herd to float along the stream's currents, pass through a school of sharks, pass through a group of crocodiles, or enter a whirlpool. It will be difficult for both the leader and the herd of oxen to reach the shore. Thus, believing in teachers is a double-edged sword, as I have already explained.

As practitioners, supremacy of the rule of dhamma (dhammā-dhipateyya) must be your basis. Use what is right according to dhamma as what insures your practice. If you follow the supremacy of the rule of dhamma (dhammā-dhipateyya) of your teacher, it will be risky. Thus, practitioners must train their mindfulness and wisdom well. Train yourself to be one who has reason. Whatever Dhamma your teacher teaches, you should consider whether that Dhamma should be believed or not. That way, you will contemplate with reason. For

instance, upon hearing, “Go ahead and meditate. Once the mind becomes calm in meditation, wisdom will arise,” you should discern the rationale behind it. You must determine how wisdom is supposed to arise from meditation. During the Buddha’s time, did the Buddha teach this? Whom did he teach? Where did he teach it? There must be human testaments to serve as evidence. The Buddhist religion is based on teachings that contain reason. Buddhism doesn’t teach to believe in the way that other religions do. The Buddha’s teachings center on methods to use your own mindfulness and wisdom to train yourself to develop mindfulness and wisdom that is comprehensive and in accordance with the reality of universal truths (sacca-dhamma).

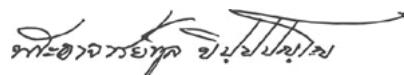
This autobiography that you have read may contain some points that may cause you to wonder how they are possible. You should not pay attention to the points that are unimportant. I have explained the points that are important along with their Dhamma groupings in this autobiography. You should pay attention to that. The same applies to the Dhamma that I have written. Just as beauty is in the eye of the beholder, it is probably impossible for all Dhamma groupings to be pleasing to you. So, use dhamma-vicaya, select the Dhamma that is compatible with your personality and mindset, and pay attention to that Dhamma grouping. The Dhamma that the Buddha taught is plentiful. Since people’s personalities are not the same, some people might favor different Dhamma methods or metaphors (*upāya*). If you have misgivings about any Dhamma grouping, you should ask me directly. If you ask someone else, it may not correspond with the meaning of that which I have written.

As for the phrasing and literary style of this autobiography, it is likely not too impressive. However, I ask that you observe the meaning and substance, and it would be good if you were to discern

the writer's intentions because I am not a professional writer. I am voluntarily writing this for future generations to have for light reading, is all. Correspondingly, I apologize to the readers of this book.

The purpose of this book is to serve as a testament to the mental cultivation and fruits of practice of a monk who was born during the decline of Buddhism. I have written about it according to how it actually happened. Consider it my own personal (paccattam) matter.

Lastly, may you have happiness and thrive in the Dhamma. In this lifetime, may you have the mindfulness and wisdom to clearly know and truly see the universal truths (sacca-dhamma) that the Buddha has taught, and may the behavioral tendencies (vāsanā) and perfections of character (pāramī) that you have cultivated in past lives and this current life become full. May the path and fruit of enlightenment be yours, through your mindfulness and wisdom and your individual ability, in this lifetime.



Phra Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño





## **Luang Por Thoon's Legacy**

Luang Por Thoon Khippapañño followed in the Buddha's footsteps, as a disciple (*sāvaka*) who attained full awakening and as one who worked tirelessly toward the benefit of the Buddhist people. The following is a compilation of Luang Por's work to propagate the Buddhist religion.

### **Dhamma Media**

Luang Por Thoon took many measures to preserve the Dhamma for future generations in various forms of media. Throughout his 48 years as a monk, Luang Por benevolently expounded the Dhamma to devotees around the world, leaving us with a treasure trove of recordings of over 520 sermons and Q&A sessions. He composed over 100 poems for the "Dhamma Poems: Isan Legacy" series, which are divided into three sets—Grandpa's Advice to Grandchildren, The Ten Lives of the Buddha (*dasa-jāti-jātaka*), and The Buddha's History. Luang Por Thoon also wrote, produced, and directed performances of Grandpa's Advice to Grandchildren, Maxims to Live By, Phra Vessantara, Phra Revata and Leelavadee, and Luang Por Thoon's Life Story. These stories were told in the traditional Northeastern-style of intoned recitation (*sarabhañña*), which is a very effective way of reaching the locals.



Jūjaka drags Jāli and Kanhajinā during a live performance of Phra Vessantara



Stories are told in sarabhañña with free-reed mouth organ accompaniment



The Phra Revata and Leelavadee cast with Luang Por Thoon



Cassette tapes, CDs, and VCDs of the performances

Luang Por Thoon authored over 20 books on Dhamma practice that are well-known in Thailand and abroad. He received the Sao Sema Dhammadakkha award and a certificate exalting his achievements from Thai Royal Princess Phra Thep Ratanarachasuda in 1990. Luang Por's students have carried on his work propagating correct Dhamma principles and teachings to people throughout the world by publishing transcriptions of his Dhamma sermons, translating his work into languages like English and German, and recording audiobooks. Today, Luang Por's many teachings can be found on various media platforms, including YouTube channels like Watsanfran and Wat Pa Ban Koh. Luang Por Thoon's eBooks are available for free download at [luangporthoon.net](http://luangporthoon.net).



*Dhamma Books Authored by Luang Por Thoon*

1. *Line of Practice for Mental Development*, 1982
2. *Going Against the Stream*, 1984
3. *Cutting off the Stream*, 1985
4. *Crossing the Stream*, 1986
5. *A Manual for Buddhists*, 1987
6. *Beyond the Stream of the World*, 1988
7. *Encountering the Stream of Dhamma*, 1989
8. *Autobiography*, 1992 (complete edition published in 2005)
9. *Sammā-ditṭhi, Volume One*, 1994
10. *Sammā-ditṭhi, Volume Two*, 1995
11. *The Buddha's 16 Prophecies*, 1996
12. *Sammā-ditṭhi, Volume Three*, 1997
13. *The Cause of Suffering*, 1998
14. *Wisdom to Train the Mind*, 1998
15. *The Three Wisdoms*, 1999
16. *Buddho*, 2001
17. *Sammā-saddhā*, 2002
18. *Kālāma Sutta*, 2004
19. *Sappurisa-dhamma*, 2005
20. *Natural Disasters*, 2007
21. *Paradigm Shift*, 2007
22. *Spark: Igniting the Flame of Wisdom*, 2008



*Dhamma Books from Luang Por Thoon's Sermons*

1. *Wisdom Crafting*, 2009
2. *U-Turn*, 2009
3. *Cycling Through the Realms*, 2010
4. *Angry, Now What?*, 2010
5. *Manners/Disclaim*, 2011
6. *Charm Incantation*, 2011
7. *Treasure Trove*, 2011 (complete edition published 2020)
8. *The Path to Sotāpanna*, 2012
9. *Tailored Heart*, 2013
10. *Two of Hearts*, 2013
11. *Lucid Heart*, 2013
12. *Devoted Heart*, 2013
13. *Jubilant Heart*, 2013
14. *Sour Heart*, 2013
15. *Inseparable Heart*, 2013
16. *Mended Heart*, 2013
17. *Reflective Heart*, 2013
18. *Guarded Heart*, 2013



### *Dhamma Books That Have Been Translated to Other Languages*

1. *Line of Practice for Mental Development*, year unknown
2. *Going Against the Stream*, 2003
3. *Beyond the Stream of the World*, 2006
4. *Encountering the Stream of Dhamma*, 2006
5. *Cutting off the Stream*, 2006
6. *Buddho*, 2006
7. *The Buddha's 16 Prophecies*, 2008
8. *Paradigm Shift*, 2008
9. *Natural Disasters*, 2008
10. *Spark: Igniting the Flame of Wisdom*, 2008
11. *Ariya-puggala: The Liberated Ones*, 2011
12. *Wisdom Crafting*, 2011
13. *Tailored Heart*, 2013
14. *Two of Hearts*, 2013
15. *Lucid Heart*, 2013
16. *Devoted Heart*, 2013
17. *Die Weisheitserstellung* (German), 2014
18. *Inseparable Heart*, 2015
19. *U-Turn*, 2017
20. *Treasure Trove*, 2020
21. *The Autobiography of Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño*, 2022

### **Teaching the Dhamma**

Luang Por Thoon organized many different activities and events in order to propagate the Dhamma. Each year, there would be ordination events and training in Dhamma practice for students, scholars, government employees, and the general population.





### *Propagating the Dhamma in Thailand*

Luang Por Thoon benevolently taught Dhamma students throughout the regions of Thailand.

- 1987 The first Dhamma training courses are organized.
- 1998 There are events organized for training in Dhamma practice, watering the Buddha's relics, and preserving the local culture and heritage. It is a stratagem for the propagation of Dhamma that is widely effective.
- 1999 Monks, nuns, and lecturers teach Luang Por Thoon Khippapañño's style of Dhamma practice in a program called Khippapaññānusorn in the upper regions of Northern Thailand.
- 2002 There is Dhamma training organized for the youth in schools and juvenile detention centers in many provinces. Wat Pa Ban Koh and Wat Tad Nam Phu host Dhamma training for the youth on a regular basis. The training emphasizes teaching the youth to know their own worth and know how to use wisdom to solve their own problems.



### *Propagating the Dhamma Abroad*

- 1987 Luang Por starts to teach the Dhamma abroad. He benevolently travels to America to teach his students.
- 1998 Luang Por hosts his first Dhamma retreat in America at Wat Yarnna Rangsee in Sterling, Virginia, United States of America.
- 2000 A group of students based out of the San Francisco Bay Area dedicate 263 acres of land in Redwood Valley, California to Luang Por Thoon for use as a Dhamma retreat center. The group calls itself KPY (a play on Y2K and an acronym for the phonetic pronunciation of Luang Por's monastic pseudonym).
- 2002 New York Dhammaram Temple is established in Corona, New York, United States of America.  
San Fran Dhammaram Temple is established in San Francisco, California, United States of America.
- 2005 Hong Kong Dhammaram Temple is established Yuen Long, New Territories, Hong Kong.





## The Great Noble Relics Pagoda

In 1997, a group of monks from Ban Phue district, Nam Som district, and Na Yung district in Udon Thani province and elder (thera) monks in the surrounding area convened to ask Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño to design and construct a great noble relics pagoda (mahā-dhātu-cetiya) to enshrine the Buddha's relics (dhātu) brought over from Sri Lanka. This would be done to honor the King of Thailand on the sixth anniversary of his 12-year zodiac cycle on December 5, 1999. The King benevolently granted the pagoda the name "Phra Mahā Dhātu Chedi in Honor of Phra Navamindra."<sup>40</sup> The construction was completed in 15 months with costs totaling approximately 73 million Thai baht, or roughly 2.2 million US dollars.



Luang Por Thoon Khippapañño designed the pagoda himself and managed the construction closely to ensure that the pagoda would be part of the country's heritage and a Buddhist treasure for posterity.



The Sri Mahā Bodhi Tree<sup>41</sup> was brought over from Sri Lanka and planted as a symbol of the thriving Buddhist religion. It stands alongside the pagoda on its southeastern side.

<sup>40</sup> Phra Navamindra roughly translates to "The Ninth Great One," and refers to King Rama IX of Thailand, King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

<sup>41</sup> The Sri Mahā Bodhi Tree is believed to be propagated from the original Bodhi Tree under which the Buddha became enlightened.



An enlarged photo of the Buddha's relics that were brought over from Sri Lanka.

The Buddha's relics are kept in a gold pagoda adorned with precious gems.

### *Are the Buddha's Relics Real or Fake?*

On February 3, 2001, Luang Por Thoon Khippapañño answered questions during the "Searching for the Essence of Dhamma" program.

Question: How can we know whether the Buddha's relics (dhātu) that were brought over from Sri Lanka and enshrined in this pagoda (cetiya) are real? If they are fake, will it have an adverse effect on the Buddhist religion? In what way?

Answer: This is a good question. Many people have said, "Did they fool you?" Now, what is the background on these relics I have brought here? See, these people are quite clever and can easily fool Thai people. However, I can personally say that I, Luang Por Thoon, am difficult to fool. This is because I did not appraise the relics with my physical eye, but with my inner eye. So if they were going to fool us, they would be unable to do so.

Before bringing the relics here, Venerable Ācariya Phra Kru Somjit, the ecclesiastical chief of Ban Phue district, said that we would go and

see for ourselves whether the relics were real or fake. So we went to examine the history of these relics as well. Now, the relics have historically been cared for by an important individual who is recognized throughout Sri Lanka and is descended from ancient kings. The Sri Lankan monarchy no longer exists in present times, but they are still caring for the Buddha's relics. So, we have already looked into the matter. Whether they are real or fake is up to each individual's view. But I, Luang Por Thoon, accept that they are 100% the real deal. The term "real" is an individual matter. It is impossible to have everyone believe that they are entirely real.

**Question:** This is also an individual matter, right?

**Answer:** It is individual, as well. Now, let's suppose there are fake relics somewhere that are assumed (sammuti) to be real. Will it be detrimental to Buddhists? I would say, no. This is because once something is supposed (sammuti) to belong to the Buddha, even a single brick has value. A block of wood that is carved into a figure has value. When cement or whatever other materials are sculpted into the Buddha's likeness, it acquires value. It can be bowed to and we can reflect on the virtues of the Buddha. That statue is a symbol of the Buddha that we share. It is a simulation (sammuti). We are not bowing



On behalf of King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand, Princess Phra Thep Ratanarachasuda honors the arrival of the Buddha's relics from the Sri Lankan delegation.



Police General Pracha Promnok, the Director General of the Royal Thai Police, pays respects to the Buddha's relics.



Devotees are delighted and elated to admire the Buddha's relics up close. Over the course of cycling through rounds of rebirth (*vatta-samsāra*), it is rare to encounter this opportunity.

to the stone or cement, but we are bowing to the simulated form in the wood, cement, or stone.

Thus, in this manner of supposition (*sammuti*), real or fake is not important. What is important is whether or not we possess full faith (*saddhā*) and reverence. This is what can benefit everyone.

Question: When we pay homage by bowing to the Buddha's relics, regardless of whether they are real or fake, what should we do mentally?

Answer: I encourage you to think of the Buddha, who is the founder of the religion. Pay your respects by exhibiting profound humility through your actions, speech, and mind. We are the Buddhist community (*buddha-parisā*). This is what we must do.



### *The Reasons for Building the Pagoda*

This is an excerpt of a sermon from the day of the pagoda's celebration on February 8, 2001.

Many people have commented, "Why did Luang Por build such a large pagoda (cetiya)? It cost so much money?"

In regard to building this pagoda, if you think about it, it is a treasure of the Buddhist religion. For example, in India, Bodh Gaya is the core of everything. There is a great noble relics pagoda (mahā-dhātu-cetiya) that was built there. The generations that followed and virtuous sons (kula-putta) of this era are now regularly able to pay homage to and venerate the virtues of the Buddha. There are an incredible number of people who do so each year. If the great noble relics pagoda in Bodh Gaya did not exist, where would those people



go to pay homage to the Buddha? They would be without a refuge.

This is one point that I discerned. The Buddhist religion is not going to last forever throughout the ages. In a future era, it will disintegrate according to its time. In neighboring countries like Burma and Sri Lanka, great noble relics pagodas were built to serve as the essential core for the

Buddhist community (*buddha-parisā*) to go and pay homage and venerate. Back in those eras, the monks and novices seemed to be weak and very lax and remiss in their adherence to the monastic discipline (*vinaya*). The laypeople revere and have faith in the Buddha, so they go and pay homage to the Buddha at various pagodas and various Sri Mahā Bodhi trees. They place their trust in all of those things.

I considered these things and how the future of Thailand would unravel. Although there are many teachers (*ācariya*) in this day and age who possess virtue and are worthy of admiration, a couple hundred of years in the future, there will be a change within the monastic community, according to time. It is impermanent (*aniccam*). They will be lax and remiss in their adherence to the monastic discipline during that era. People will lose faith and lose their mental refuge, and they will have to turn to bowing and paying homage to great noble relics pagodas to strengthen their perfections of character (*pāramī*).

Now, when strengthening perfections of character by supposing these material elements (*vatthu-dhātu*) to be a great noble relics pagoda that safeguards the qualities we refer to as “the virtues of the Buddha,” wherever we believe the Buddha is, that is where we pay



homage and recollect his virtues. The Buddha's relics in this pagoda at Wat Pa Ban Koh have a very clear history. As such, fifty years in the future, one hundred years in the future, or five hundred years in the future, people will tell each other that the great noble relics pagoda at Wat Pa Ban Koh is where the Buddha's relics are enshrined. The future generations will all come to pay homage and worship here, and that will be their merit (*puñña*) and perfections of character (*pāramī*). My intent is for the future generations of virtuous sons (*kula-putta*) to carry on the Buddhist religion, or what is called recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*).



### **Charitable Work Benefiting the Public**

Luang Por Thoon looked after temples, monks, and novices by leading groups of devotees in holding annual robe ceremonies and forest robe offerings for temples and Dhamma centers in need within Udon Thani, Nong Khai, and Nong Bua Lam Phu provinces, as well as other surrounding provinces on a regular basis. He also provided support for the construction and repairing of buildings and support for other aspects of the four requisites to various monasteries in order to maintain and pass on the Buddhist religion.

As for supporting government agencies and private institutions, Luang Por established a “Community of Female Villagers Fund” to help raise money to build a hospital and distribute clothing and medical supplies to nearby villages so that those institutions would be able to continue their work efficiently and support the policies of government agencies. This was how he aided society as well as the government’s work.



On behalf of King Bhumibol Adulyadej, Prince Vajiralongkorn (presently King Vajiralongkorn) presents Luang Por Thoon with a ceremonial fan in honor of his new clerical title, Phra Paññāvisālathera.

Luang Por Thoon regularly supported the undertakings of the monastic community. He hosted ecclesiastical official (*sanghādhikāra*) meetings and Dhamma Scholar Primary Level Examinations at Wat Pa Ban Koh in Udon Thani province.

Owing to his benevolent contributions toward society as well his religious work and various charity work benefitting the country and religion, on occasion of the jubilee in honor of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit's birthday on August 12, 2004, the King of Thailand bestowed upon Luang Por Thoon the clerical title of Phra Paññāvisālathera. This was a special case, as it was a clerical title given to a commoner, or one who had not held any prior titles.



*Certificate Translation*

Phra Adhikāra<sup>42</sup> Thoon of Wat Pa Ban Koh, Udon Thani province is hereby granted the clerical title of Phra Paññāvisālathera. May his venerableness accept the responsibilities of the Buddhist religion and the burdens of teaching, settling matters, and assisting monks and novices within the monastery as necessary. May you prosper and thrive in the Buddhist religion.

Effective this 12<sup>th</sup> day of August, in the Buddhist year of 2549<sup>43</sup>, the 59<sup>th</sup> year of this monarchy's reign.

Signed King Bhumibol Adulyadej

Countersigned by Royal Command  
Police Lieutenant Colonel Thaksin Shinawatra  
Prime Minister

<sup>42</sup> A monk who holds a position of authority (such as abbot) but does not possess any other clerical titles.

<sup>43</sup> 2006 C.E.



## **Luang Por Thoon's Passing**

In the beginning of 2008, Luang Por began to experience bodily aches, aversion to food, weariness, and the inability to speak at a normal volume. A tumor was discovered in his right shoulder. It grew until it began to cause him pain. His right arm became weak. On September 3, 2008, Luang Por underwent examinations and treatment at Siriraj Hospital. The doctors concluded that he had a tumor in his lung and the cancer had spread into his bones. The doctors treated him with radiation in order to relieve the painful symptoms. Luang Por returned to Wat Pa Ban Koh to rest and he received treatment at Wattana Hospital in Udon Thani province. After his lungs became infected, he returned to Wat Pa Ban Koh to be cared for according to his wishes.

On the evening of November 10, 2008, Luang Por Thoon slept soundly, without any indication of pain. However, his blood pressure was unstable and continued to drop. His heartbeat slowed until 4:40 a.m. on November 11, 2008, when it completely stopped. Luang Por Thoon passed away in peace at the age of 73 years, 5 months. He had been ordained for 48 years (vassa).

During his 48 years in the Buddhist religion, he had faithfully followed through with the vow he had made when he had ordained, to dedicate his life to honoring the virtues of the Buddha, Dhamma,

and Saṅgha, to practice for his own benefit as well as that of others, and to not be heedless. After having successfully attained personal benefit, Luang Por purposefully followed in the Buddha's footsteps to benefit the people to the fullest. Namely, he disseminated the teachings of the Buddha (dhamma) to the people, in order for them to receive information and material about the Buddha that was true and authentic; in order for them to develop sammā-ditṭhi, or right view according to the teachings of the Buddha, so that their minds would be firmly established in Buddhism; and in order for them to preserve and pass on the Buddhist religion.

Luang Por accomplished everything that he had set out to do. He was a knower of the world (lokavidū) and one who has gone to a good destination (sugato). He left behind a legacy of the true teachings of the Buddha to serve as a map that leads to the path and fruit of enlightenment and to preserve the Buddhist religion far into the future. Luang Por had followed those teachings until he reached the end of suffering and no longer had to cycle through the Three Realms.

### ***The Royal Cremation Ceremony***



Ten senior monks of ecclesiastical rank chant auspicious blessings while holding ceremonial fans displaying Luang Por Thoon's clerical title "Phra Paññāvisālathera."



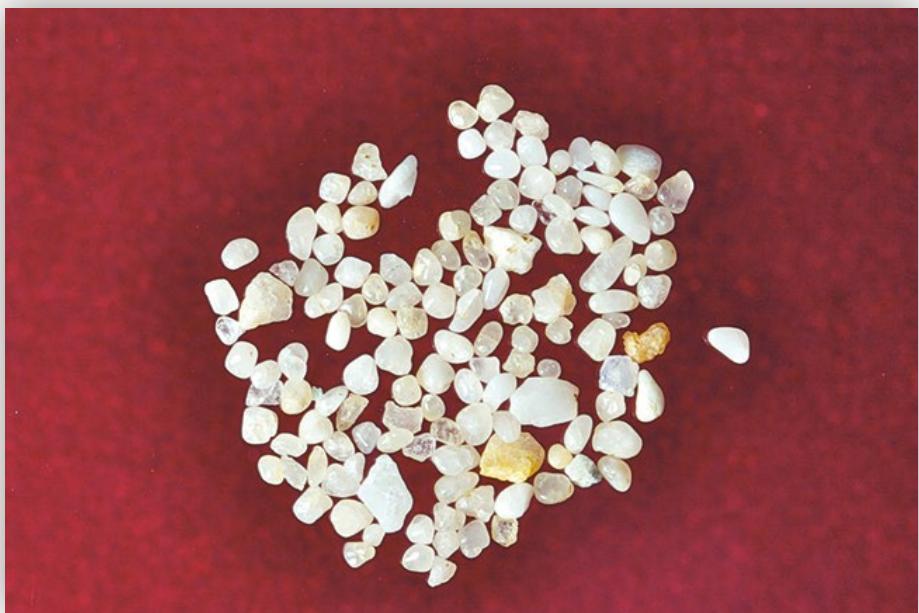
Thai Royal Princess Bajrakitiyabha Narendira Debyavati presides over the royal cremation ceremony.





### Luang Por Thoon's Relics





## Glossary

**Abhiññā** – knowledge; special knowledge; supernormal power; psychic power; intuitive powers that come from the practice of concentration; the six higher powers consist of five mundane powers through the utmost perfection in mental concentration (samādhi) and one supermundane power attainable through penetrating insight (vipassanā): magical powers like flying and walking on water (iddhividhā), clairaudience or divine ear (dibba-sota), telepathy or knowing others' thoughts (ceto-pariya-ñāṇa), recollecting one's former existences and past lives (pubbe-nivāsānussati), divine eye or knowing others' kammic destinations (dibba-cakkhu), certainty of the extinction of all cankers (āsavakkhaya).

**Ācariya** – teacher; regular instructor; senior monks of ten or more vassas.

**Ācariya-vatta** – duty to a teacher.

**Ācariya-vicaya** – searching for a teacher; selecting a teacher.

**Ādesanā-pāṭīhāriya** – marvel of mind-reading.

**Adhikāra** – superior; authority; refers to a monk who holds a position of authority but does not possess any other clerical titles.

**Adhikaraṇa** – settlement of issues; lawsuit; procedures for dealing with disputes, accusations, offenses, and duties.

**Adhiṭṭhāna** – resolution; resolute determination; determination; self-determination; will; decision; can refer to an asseveration of truth or an act of truth (sacca-kiriyā)—an utterance regarding a certain fact followed by a command or resolution.

**Aggi-bhaya** – *lit.* fire-danger; fire-based natural disasters.

**Ākāsānañcāyatana** – the absorption of infinite space; the fifth jhāna, the first level of arūpa-jhāna.

**Ākiñcaññāyatana** – the absorption of infinite nothingness; the seventh jhāna, the third level of arūpa-jhāna.

**Akiriyā** – non-action; non-deed; non-performance; that which is not displayed externally; that which is kept inside—personal and private.

**Akuppa-dhamma** – the unshakeable state; ‘unshakable’ is one who has attained full mastery over the absorptions (jhāna).

**Akusala** – unwholesome; unskillful; demerit; sin; bad action.

**Anāgāmī** – non-returner; the third level of enlightenment on the path to nibbāna; one who will attain final enlightenment in the Pure Abodes (suddhāvāsa).

**Anāgatamśa-ñāṇa** – insight into the future; knowledge of the future.

**Anattā** – non-self; not-self; not-ego; cessation of existence in a conventional or supposed form; substanceless.

**Anicca, aniccaṁ** – impermanence; change; transience; inconstancy.

**Aniṭṭhārammaṇa** – displeasing ārammaṇa; a displeasing preoccupation or object; a displeasing emotion.

**Antaravāsaka** – inner garment; refers to a monk's inner or intermediate garment, one of the three robes of a Buddhist monk; a lower garment tied at the waist with a girdle.

**Anumodanā** – rejoice; an expression of thanks, gratitude, or appreciation; sympathetic joy.

**Anusāsanī-pāṭihāriya** – marvel of teaching.

**Apāya-bhūmi** – state of deprivation; plane of misery; the four lower levels of existence into which one might be reborn as a result of past evil actions (kamma): hell (naraka), hungry ghost (peta), angry demon (asura), animal (tiracchāna).

**Appanā-samādhi** – absorption meditation; full meditative concentration; fixed concentration.

**Arahant** – *lit.* worthy one; perfected one; one who has reached ultimate enlightenment (nibbāna) and will not be reborn again; a fully enlightened one.

**Arahant-dhātu** – arahant relics.

**Arahatta-phala** – the fruit of enlightenment; the fruit of arahantship.

**Ārāmika-vatta** – *lit.* monastery attendant duty; a lay devotee who regularly takes care of a temple and its inhabitants.

**Ārammaṇa** – object; preoccupation, or focus of the mind at a given moment; in Thai, refers to mood, emotion, or temper; sense-object, of which there are six kinds: form or visible object, sound, scent, taste, touch or tactile sensation, mind or mental object; refers to that which occurs when the internal sense-bases (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body) interact with the external sense-bases (form, sound, scent, taste, touch). Once the interaction occurs, there are three types of ārammaṇa: pleasing (iṭṭhārammaṇa), displeasing (aniṭṭhārammaṇa), and neither pleasing nor displeasing (upekkhā-ārammaṇa). The residue of the three types of ārammaṇa are called dhammārammaṇa, or mind-objects.

**Ariya** – noble; distinguished; one who has attained higher knowledge.

**Ariya-magga** – noble path; refers to the Noble Eightfold Path; the sublime paths of the holy life; the sequential path leading to the end of suffering: 1. right view (sammā-diṭṭhi), 2. right thought (sammā-saṅkappa), 3. right speech (sammā-vācā), 4. right action (sammā-kammanta), 5. right livelihood (sammā-ājīva), 6. right effort

(sammā-vāyāma), 7. right mindfulness (sammā-sati), 8. right concentration (sammā-samādhi).

**Ariya-phala** – noble fruit; refers to fruition of following the Buddhist path.

**Ariya-puggala** – *lit.* a noble person; a holy individual; noble ones; one who has attained one or more levels of enlightenment: stream-enterer (sotāpanna), once-returner (sakadāgāmi), non-returner (anāgāmi), enlightened (arahant).

**Ariya-Saṅgha** – the community of individuals who have attained a stage of enlightenment (ariya-puggala).

**Ariya-sāvaka** – noble disciples.

**Arūpa-brahma** – a divine being of the Formless Sphere (arūpa-loka); inhabitant of the higher heavens.

**Arūpa-jhāna** – immaterial absorption; refers to four states of formless meditation: 1. infinite space (ākāsañcañcayatana), 2. infinite consciousness (viññānañcañcayatana), 3. infinite nothingness (ākiñcaññāyatana), 4. neither perception nor non-perception (nevasaññānāsaññāyatana).

**Āsana** – seat, throne; sitting, sitting down.

**Āsava** – *lit.* influxes, inflow, influence; canker; taint; corruption; intoxicant biases; ideas which intoxicate the mind, mental intoxication; mental bias or mental effluent, pollutant, or fermentation; in a practical sense, āsava is the impression or bias gained from the permanent view that arises when kilesa and taṇhā come together; refers to the four āsavas of: sense-desire (kāmāsava), existence (bhavāsava), views (diṭṭhāsava), and ignorance (avijjāsava).

**Āsavakkhayañāṇa** – the knowledge of the cessation of mental intoxication; the knowledge that mental intoxication will be extinguished.

**Asura, asurakāya** – demon, angry demon; titan; demi-god; lower-level deities known for their anger and supernormal powers.

**Atitāmsa-ñāṇa** – knowledge of the past.

**Attā** – self; identity; ego; conceit; pride; refers to the delusion of and clinging to the five aggregates (pañca-khandha) as ‘self’; there are two types of self (attā): 1. self in form (rūpa), 2. self in mental factors (nāma).

**Attaññū** – one who knows oneself.

**Attaññutā** – knowing oneself.

**Atṭha-jhāna-samāpatti** – eight meditative attainments; the Eight Meditative Attainments; refers to the four fine-material absorptions and four immaterial absorptions.

**Atthaññutā** – knowing the consequence; knowing the result; knowing the meaning or purpose.

**Attha-samāpatti** – eight attainments; refers to the eight absorptions of the Fine-Material and Immaterial Spheres, or attha-jhāna-samāpatti.

**Attha-sīla** – eight precepts; the Eight Precepts; the eight precepts customarily observed by devotees on holy days (uposatha-sīla); refers to eight training rules to abstain from: 1. taking life, 2. stealing, 3. sexual activity, 4. incorrect speech, 5. intoxicating liquors and drugs that lead to heedlessness, 6. eating after noon and before dawn, 7. dancing, singing, music, watching shows, wearing garlands, using perfumes and cosmetics, 8. high and luxurious seats and beds.

**Atṭhi** – a bone; a kernel or stone of a fruit; a seed.

**Avijjā** – ignorance; delusion; delusion about the nature of the mind; unawareness; lack of knowledge.

**Āyatana** – sense bases; there are six internal sense bases or cognitive faculties (five sense organs—eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body—and the mind) paired with six external sense bases which are their respective objects (visible form, sound, scent, taste, touch, mental objects).

**Bahussuta** – *lit.* one who has heard much; one who has great knowledge; a very learned man; a man of great learning; learned scholar; often refers to Venerable Ānanda who was foremost in ‘having heard much.’

**Bāla** – ignorant; foolish; a fool.

**Ban** – (*Thai*) home or house; town or village—i.e. Ban Pa Lan is Pa Lan Village.

**Bhaddavaggiya** – the auspicious group; a group of thirty young men converted by the Buddha; thirty young men who—while looking for a courtesan who ran away with their belongings—encountered the Buddha, heard a teaching, and attained arahantship.

**Bhadra-kappa** – auspicious aeon; Buddha era; a world period (kappa) in which Buddhas are to appear.

**Bhava** – becoming; existence; life; realm; birth; state of becoming.

**Bhava-jāti** – *lit.* becoming-arising; birth; rebirth.

**Bhāvanā** – contemplation; development; cultivating; producing; mental cultivation; mental development.

**Bhāvanā-maya-paññā** – experiential wisdom; wisdom based on mental development.

**Bhāvanā-paṭipatti** – mental cultivation practice; to practice mental cultivation.

**Bhava-tanhā** – desire for existence; desire for a feeling to remain the same; craving for becoming; craving to be; the desire to be something pleasing.

**Bhaya** – peril; fear; fright; danger; impending danger; can refer to disasters, as in ‘natural disasters.’

**Bhikkhu** – Buddhist monk; monk; a fully ordained monastic; a fully ordained disciple of the Buddha; a monk who abides by 227 precepts.

**Bhikkhunī** – Buddhist nun; nun; a fully ordained female monastic; a nun who abides by 311 precepts.

**Brahma** – a divine being of the Form Sphere or Formless Sphere; inhabitant of the higher heavens.

**Brahma-loka** – Brahma world; a heavenly realm comprised of the Fine-Material Realm (*rūpa-brahma*) and Immaterial Realm (*arūpa-brahma*); (see: Three Realms of Existence).

**Brahma-nibbāna** – attaining full enlightenment from a Brahma realm; refers to the attainment of arahantship of the non-returners (*anāgāmī*) in Suddhāvāsa.

**Buddha** – known; understood; perceived; one who has attained enlightenment; the Enlightened One; one who is awakened.

**Buddhānussati** – recollection of the Buddha; mindfulness of the Buddha’s virtues.

**Buddha-parisā** – the Buddhist community; the four assemblies of Buddhists; Buddhists (collectively); the fourfold Buddhist community (*saṅgha*): monks (*bhikkhu*), nuns (*bhikkhunī*), male devotees (*upāsaka*), and female devotees (*upāsikā*).

**Buddha-vacana** – the word of the Buddha; any saying or teachings of the Buddha.

**Bummattha-devatā** – ground dwelling devas; earth-bound deities; less powerful deities residing near the earth.

**Cakkhu-ñāṇa** – (see: dibba-cakkhu)

**Caṅkama** – walking meditation; meditation in the form of walking back and forth along a prescribed path.

**Carimaka-citta** – *lit.* the last citta; last thought moment; last conscious state; final mind, final consciousness; the split instant before becoming an arahant; an acute mental moment immediately preceding the attainment of enlightenment.

**Carita** – temperament; behavior; nature; character.

**Catu-dhātu** – four elements; the four physical elements or properties: earth (solidity), water (liquidity), wind (motion), fire (heat).

**Cātummahārājikā** – the realm of the four great kings; the first and lowest of the six heavenly realms.

**Catuttha-jhāna** – the fourth absorption; the fourth successive level of fine-material meditative absorption (rūpa-jhāna); complete equanimity with neither pleasure nor pain and utter serenity of awareness in the unification of the mind.

**Cetasika** – *lit.* belonging to the mind; mental factors that coexist with the citta or co-arise with the citta and fall away with the citta.

**Cetiya** – a person or place or object worthy of worship; reminder; a sepulchral monument, pagoda, shrine, dagoba, bell-shaped stupa (with a slender spire), or spired stupa; called ‘chedi’ in Thai.

**Ceto-pariya-ñāṇa** – telepathy; penetration of the minds of others.

**Ceto-vimutti** – deliverance of mind; freedom of mind; awareness release; those with the concentration-oriented personality type.

**Chao Khun** – (see: guṇassāmī)

**Cintā-maya-paññā** – understanding through reasoning; wisdom resulting from reflection.

**Citta** – mind; consciousness; state of mind; a state of consciousness; as one of the Four Bases of Mental Power (iddhipāda), concentration.

**Cittassa-tthiti** – basis of consciousness; stability of the mind, steadiness of mind; permanent mind; the essential form of the citta.

**Civara** – monastic robe; any of the three monk garments; the upper or inner robe.

**Dāna** – generosity; giving; gift; charity; offering; alms, almsgiving.

**Dasa-jāti-jātaka** – the ten lives of the Buddha; the ten final lifetimes of the Bodhisatta before being born as Siddhattha Gotama and becoming the Gotama Buddha; also called mahānipāta jātaka.

**Dassana** – *lit.* seeing; sight; realizing; intuition; insight experience; view.

**Dassana-ñāṇa** – seeing and knowing; experience followed by knowledge.

**Deva, devatā** – *lit.* radiant one; deity; heavenly or celestial being; divine beings.

**Devadhītā** – a female deva; female deity.

**Deva-pañāma** – *lit.* celestial being salutation; the manner in which celestial beings show adoration or bow down; refers to sitting upright with legs folded to one side and palms pressed together in a budding lotus position at the chest.

**Devaputta** – young deva; young celestial being; young deity; male deity.

**Dhamma** – 1. the Dhamma; the Doctrine; the Teachings (of the Buddha), 2. the Law; nature 3. the Truth; Ultimate Reality, 4. the Supramundane, especially nibbāna, 5. quality; righteousness; virtue; morality; good conduct; right behavior, 6. tradition; practice; principle; norm; rule; duty, 7. justice; impartiality, 8. thing; phenomenon,

9. a cognizable object; mind-object; idea, 10. mental state; mental factor; mental activities, 11. condition; cause; causal antecedent.

**Dhammā-dhipateyya** – supremacy of the rule of dhamma; righteousness.

**Dhamma-kathika** – *lit.* dhamma speaker; a preacher, speaker, or expounder of the Dhamma.

**Dhammaññutā** – knowing the cause; knowing the Dhamma; knowing the law.

**Dhammārammaṇa** – an object of ideation, mind-object; cognizable object; mental-objects are the residue of the three types of ārammaṇa (iṭṭhārammaṇa, aniṭṭhārammaṇa, upekkhā-ārammaṇa) that you hold onto; also relates to perception of sense-objects (saññā-ārammaṇa) and perception of ideas (dhamma-saññā).

**Dhamma-vicaya** – investigation of the Truth; research on the Doctrine; search for the truth.

**Dhammayut** – *lit.* teachings of the Buddha in accordance with group; a branch of modern Buddhism in Thailand, Cambodia, and Burma; the smaller and stricter denomination of Theravada Buddhism in Thailand; the reform movement that led to the development of the Thai forest tradition (kammaṭṭhāna).

**Dhātu** – element; primary elements, the ultimate constituents of a whole; natural condition, property, disposition; a relic, remains of the body after cremation; (see: catu-dhātu).

**Dhātu-khandha** – *lit.* element-aggregate; body and mind.

**Dhutaṅga** – *lit.* shaking off; renunciation; a group of thirteen austerities or ascetic practices: using only abandoned robes, wearing only three robes, all food must be collected on alms round, not skipping houses or showing favoritism on alms round, taking one single meal per day, only eating from your own alms bowl, refusing all further food, to remain secluded (forest dwelling), to remain beneath a tree without a shelter or roof, to remain in the open air without shelter, to reside among graveyard or cremation grounds, to be satisfied with any dwelling, to live in the three postures (walking, standing, sitting) and never lie down.

**Dibba** – divine; celestial; heavenly.

**Dibba-cakkhu** – divine eye; clairvoyance; supernatural sight; ability to know the kammic destinations of others; ability to see beings in other realms; ability to see the future.

**Dibba-sota** – divine ear; clairaudience; supernatural hearing; ability to hear sounds—human or otherwise, near or far.

**Ditṭhi** – view; perspective; position; vision of things; theory; belief; dogma.

**Dosa** – 1. harmful consequences; blemish; defect; disadvantage, 2. anger; hatred; ill-will; aversion.

**Dukkha, dukkham** – suffering; misery; anxiety; discomfort; bodily pain; mental pain; unpleasant or undesired feeling; the first of the Four Noble Truths: suffering. **Dutiya-jhāna** – the second absorption; the second successive level of fine-material meditative absorption (rūpa-jhāna); internal assurance, rapture and pleasure in unification of the mind.

**Eight Precepts** – (see: aṭṭha-sīla)

**Five Precepts** – (see: pañca-sīla)

**Geha-devatā** – house deities; celestial beings that reside in houses.

**Ghana** – solid; compact; massive; dense; thick; a clump of something.

**Guṇassāmī** – a title unofficially used in speaking to or of a monk of a higher rank; ‘Chao Khun’ or ‘Jao Khun’ in Thai.

**Iddhi** – power; refers to magical power, psychical power.

**Iddhi-pāṭihāriya** – marvel of psychic power.

**Iddhividhi** – supernormal powers; psychic powers; magical powers such as: replicating and projecting bodily-images of oneself, invisibility, passing through solid objects, diving into and rising from the solid earth, walking on water, floating or flying through the air, touching the sun and moon, ascending to the Brahma world in the highest heavens; the magical powers constitute one of the six kinds of higher spiritual powers (abhiññā). One distinguishes many kinds of magical powers: the power of determination (adhiṭṭhāna-iddhi), i.e. the power of becoming oneself manifold; the power of transformation (vikubbana-iddhi), i.e. the power of adopting another form; the power of spiritual creation (manomaya-iddhi), i.e. the power of letting issue from this body another mentally produced body; the power of penetrating knowledge (ñāṇa-vipphara-iddhi), i.e. the power of inherent insight to remain unhurt in danger; the power of penetrating concentration (samādhivippharā-iddhi) producing the same result.

**Indra** – aka Sakka; ruler of the Tāvatimsā heaven; lord of the devas; the king of heavenly beings, who is characterized by green skin.

**Indriya** – controlling principal; faculty; sense; the sense-faculties; spiritual-faculties; the Five Spiritual Faculties: faith (saddhā), concentration (samādhi), effort (viriya), mindfulness (sati), wisdom (paññā).

**Iriyāpatha** – lit. ways of movement; posture; bodily postures: going or walking, standing, sitting, lying down.

**Isi** – ascetic; sage; seer.

**Itṭhārammaṇa** – a pleasing ārammaṇa, a pleasing preoccupation or object; a pleasing emotion.

**Jāti** – birth; rebirth; arising or coming up.

**Jaṭila** – matted hair ascetics; ascetics with clotted or entangled hair; the three brothers (tebhātika-jaṭilas): Uruvelā Kassapa, Gayā Kassapa, Nadī Kassapa.

**Jhāna** – meditation; absorption; meditative absorption; a state of serene meditation; deep meditation; trance; there are two types of jhāna: 1. fine-material absorptions (rūpa-jhāna), 2. immaterial absorptions (arūpa-jhāna).

**Jhāna-samāpatti** – meditative attainments; worldly meditative absorptions (jhāna); refers to the Eight Meditative Attainments (aṭṭha-jhāna-samāpatti).

**Kālāma Sutta** – The Buddha's instruction to the Kālāmas; the teaching discourages fanaticism, bigotry, dogmatism, and intolerance, and encourages using wisdom and reason to analyze and form correct understandings.

**Kālāmas** – the clan in the village of Kesaputta that the Buddha instructed in the Kālāma Sutta.

**Kālaññū** – one who knows the proper time; the quality of one who knows the proper time.

**Kālaññutā** – knowing how to choose and keep time.

**Kaliyuga** – dark age; age of vice and misery; one of the four ages of the world; the last of the four ages.

**Kalyāṇamitta** – noble friend; admirable friend; honest friend; good companion; a mentor or teacher of Dhamma.

**Kāma-guṇa** – *lit.* strings of sensuality; sensual pleasures; objects of sensual enjoyment; objects of the five physical senses: form or visible objects, sounds, scents, taste or flavors, touch or tactile sensation.

**Kāmesu-micchācārā** – sexual misconduct; adultery.

**Kamma** – deed; action; volitional action; universal principle of cause and effect.

**Kammaṭṭhāna** – *lit.* basis of work, place of work; where the mind goes to work on spiritual development; there are two types of kammaṭṭhāna: 1. calm concentration (samatha-kammaṭṭhāna), 2. insight concentration (vipassanā-kammaṭṭhāna); refers to forest tradition monks.

**Kappa** – a ‘world period’; an aeon; an inconceivably long space of time; an incalculable period.

**Kathina** – the annual robe-presentation ceremony in the month following the end of the rains retreat; post-retreat robe-offering.

**Khandha** – aggregate; category; (see: pañca-khandha).

- Khaṇīka-samādhi** – momentary concentration; a steadfastly focused concentration.
- Kilesa** – *lit.* torment of the mind; defilements; mental impurities; mental pollution; stain; depravity; poison; passion; impairment; the object or embodiment of desire.
- Kiriyā** – action; deed; performance; function; operation.
- Koti** – ten million; top; summit; point; the end.
- Kula-putta** – virtuous son; young man of a good family; refers to a virtuous person, a good person.
- Kusala** – wholesome, wholesomeness; clever, skillful, expert; moral goodness or technical skill; refers to wisdom (paññā), as in having the wisdom to seek and recognize opportunities to make merit in a way that leads to heaven or enlightenment.
- Kuti** – hut; single room monk hut; typical abode of forest dwelling monks.
- Lobha** – greed, covetousness.
- Lokavidū** – knower of the world, knower of the cosmos; an epithet for the Buddha.
- Luang** – (*Thai*) venerable; honorable.
- Mae, Mae Chee** – (*Thai*) *lit.* mother, honorable mother; Thai Buddhist nun; a female renunciant who is not a bhikkhunī; a nun who abides by the Eight Precepts or Ten Precepts; a female devotee or pious laywoman.
- Magga** – *lit.* path; the Path; the way; the Noble Path; the path leading to enlightenment; the fourth of the Four Noble Truths: the path leading to the cessation of suffering; the four transcendent (lokuttara) paths: the path to stream entry, the path to once-returning, the path to non-returning, the path to arahantship.
- Magga-phala-nibbāna** – the path and fruit of enlightenment.
- Magga-samañgī** – the path in harmony; the unification of the Noble Eightfold Path in the mind. The experience of magga-samañgī precedes realization of the stages of enlightenment.
- Mahā** – great; superior; a monk who has passed Pāli Scholar Level 3 of the Royal Pāli Examination.
- Mahā-dhātu-cetiya** – great noble relics pagoda; a pagoda that enshrines the Buddha's relics or arahant relics.
- Mahā-thera** – *lit.* great elder; an elder monk who has been ordained for twenty or more years.
- Māna** – conceit; pride; arrogance; refers to the phenomenon of comparing, whether comparing oneself with others or comparing oneself with oneself.
- Manomaya-iddhi** – the magic power of the mind; mind-made magical power; assuming another form; shape shifting.

**Manussa-devo** – *lit.* human-heavenly being; one who has the body of a human and the mind of a heavenly being.

**Manussa-peto** – *lit.* human-hungry ghost; one who has the body of a human and the mind of a hungry ghost.

**Manussa-tiracchāno** – *lit.* human-animal; one who has the body of a human and the mind of an animal.

**Mattaññutā** – knowing moderation; knowing how to be temperate; knowing the measure or limit; sense of proportion.

**Mettā** – benevolence; loving-kindness; goodwill.

**Micchā** – wrong.

**Micchā-diṭṭhi** – wrong view; false view; a perception misaligned with the truth; a view converse to the truth of reality.

**Micchā-paṭipatti** – wrong practice.

**Micchā-samādhi** – wrong concentration.

**Micchā-sati** – wrong mindfulness; wrong recollection.

**Moha** – delusion; ignorance; stupidity; dullness; (see: avijjā).

**Moha-samādhi** – delusional concentration.

**Nāga** – a serpent demi-god; an inhabitant of the lowest deva world (cātummahārājikā); an applicant or candidate for ordination. In the Theravāda tradition, a man is called a nāga when he goes to the temple with the intent to ordain and wears white. Later, he shaves his head and customarily goes through the ritual of circumambulating the prayer hall three times before requesting ordination as a 10-precept sāmañera, then as a 227-precept monk.

**Nāma** – mind; mental factors; mentality; intangible, mental components or aggregates; generally used to refer to four mental phenomena: feeling (vedanā), memory (saññā), volitional thought (saṅkhāra), consciousness (viññāṇa).

**Nāma-citta** – mental factors; mental components.

**Nāma-khandha** – mental factors; mental aggregates; intangible aggregates: vedanā, saññā, saṅkhāra, viññāṇa.

**Ñāṇa** – knowledge; real knowledge; comprehension; wisdom; insight.

**Ñāṇa-dassana** – knowing and seeing; knowledge followed by experience.

**Ñāṇa-dassana-visuddhi** – purification of knowledge and vision; the last of the seven purifications and a name for path-knowledge (magga-ñāṇa).

**Naraka** – hell; hell realm; purgatory; abyss.

**Navaka** – newcomer; a young person; refers to the newly ordained, or those with 1-5 vassas.

**Nevasaññānāsaññāyatana** – the absorption of neither perception nor non-perception; the eighth jhāna, the fourth level of arūpa-jhāna.

**Nibbāna** – *lit.* extinguished; the fires of greed, hatred, and ignorance extinguished for lack of fuel; the extinction of all defilements and suffering; the supreme goal of Buddhism; enlightenment; one who has reached nibbāna has extinguished rebirth.

**Nibbidā** – disenchantment; dispassion; disinterest; results from truly knowing and seeing the repetitiveness and pointlessness of seeking significance within the Three Realms.

**Nimitta** – *lit.* sign; vision; omen; mark; object; meaning; symbol; portent; mental sign; mental image; mental reflex image obtained in meditation.

**Nimmānarati** – the realm of heavenly beings who rejoice in their own creations; the fifth of the six heavenly realms.

**Niraya-pāla** – guardian of hell; hell-guardian; protector of hell; warden of hell.

**Nirodha** – the third of the Four Noble Truths: cessation of suffering; cessation; extinguishing; extinction; cessation of suffering and the cause of suffering.

**Nirodha-samāpatti** – attainment of extinction; the temporary suspension of all consciousness and mental activity, following immediately upon the eighth jhāna of neither perception nor non-perception (nevasaññānāsaññāyatana); also called saññā-vedayita-nirodha.

**Niyata-puggala** – a person with a fixed destiny; may be either one who has committed one of the five heinous deeds with immediate result (ānantarika-kamma), one who follows wrong views with fixed destiny (niyata-micchā-ditṭhi), or one who has reached one of the four stages of holiness (ariya-puggala); one who has entered the stream has forever escaped the states of woe (apāya) and is assured final enlightenment (nibbāna), and thus has a fixed destiny.

**Noble Eightfold Path** – (see: ariya-magga)

**Opanayiko** – draw inward; referring inwardly; internalize; refers to drawing a parallel from something external and reflecting inwardly, or seeing yourself in the actions or words of others.

**Ovāda** – advice; instruction; exhortation.

**Ovāda-pātimokkha** – exhortation of monastic discipline; statement of the rules and conduct of training, made by a qualified bhikkhu.

**Paccattam** – personal; individual; separate.

**Paccaya** – condition; aiding condition; factor; contributing factor; requisites (see: catu-paccaya).

**Pacceka**buddha**** – a private Buddha; a silent Buddha; a Buddha who has won enlightenment by himself, but does not teach others; one who gains liberation for himself alone.

**Pāli** – ancient variant of Sanskrit; literary language of early Buddhists; language the Theravāda Buddhist Canon is written in.

**Pañsukūla** – a dust heap; offering of cloth; a funeral ritual in which cloth is offered to monks on behalf of the dead.

**Pañca-khandha** – five groups of existence; the five aggregates: form (rūpa), feeling (vedanā), memory (saññā), mental formations or volitional thought (saṅkhāra), consciousness (viññāna).

**Pañca-sīla** – five precepts; the Five Precepts; refers to five training rules to abstain from: 1. taking life, 2. stealing, 3. sexual misconduct, 4. incorrect speech, 5. intoxicating liquors and drugs that lead to heedlessness.

**Pañcavaggiya** – *lit.* belonging to the group of five; the Five Bhikkhus; the Five Ascetics; the first five monks to whom the Buddha preached his first sermon at Isipatana Deer Forest: Aññā-Kondañña, Vappa, Bhaddiya, Mahānāma, and Assaji; the first five bhikkhus of the Buddha's Saṅgha.

**Pañdita** – wise; wise man.

**Pañidhāna** – aspiration; determination.

**Paññā** – wisdom; insight; intuitive insight; thought; intelligence; knowledge; examination; analysis; discernment; wisdom is the mind's eye or the mind's bright light; there are three stages or levels of wisdom: 1. wisdom based on study (suta-maya-paññā), 2. wisdom based on reflection (cintā-maya-paññā), 3. wisdom based on mental development (bhāvanā-maya-paññā).

**Paññā-pāramī** – the wisdom perfection of character; the perfection of wisdom.

**Paññā-vimutti** – deliverance through wisdom; freedom through understanding; discernment release; those with the wisdom-oriented personality type.

**Pāpa** – evil; wicked; wrong action; demerit, the opposite of merit (puñña).

**Paramattha-dhamma** – ultimate reality; reality in the highest sense; truth in the ultimate sense.

**Pāramī** – cultivated virtues; meritorious acts; perfections of character; qualities developed over many lifetimes; the ten perfections: generosity (dāna), morality (sīla), renunciation (nekkhamma), wisdom (paññā), effort (viriya), patience or forbearance (khanti), truthfulness (sacca), determination (adhiṭṭhāna), benevolence (mettā), equanimity (upekkhā).

**Paranimmita-vasavattī** – realm of heavenly beings who lord over the creation of others; the sixth and highest of the six heavenly realms.

**Parikamma** – preparatory; preliminary; in preliminary concentration (parikamma-samādhi), it can be a meditative word or phrase that is repeated to establish concentration.

**Parikkhāra** – requisites; accessory; equipment; utensil; apparatus; set of four necessities of a Buddhist monk: robes, alms bowl, seat & bed, medicine; eight requisites (atṭha-parikkhāra): the three robes, bowl, razor, needle, girdle, water-strainer.

**Parisaññū** – one who knows the assembly.

**Parisaññutā** – knowing the assembly; knowing the society.

**Pārisuddhi** – purity; purification; pure.

**Pārisuddhi-dhamma** – purity of Dhamma.

**Pārisuddhi-ñāṇa** – purity of knowledge; knowledge that is pure.

**Pariyatti** – learning of theory; theoretical knowledge; knowledge obtained through reading, study, and learning; theoretical teachings of the Buddha; the Scriptures; study of the Scriptures; the Teachings to be studied.

**Pathama-jhāna** – the first absorption; the first level of fine-material meditative absorption (rūpa-jhāna); directed thought and evaluation, rapture and pleasure in the unification of the mind.

**Pātimokkha** – a collection of precepts contained in the monastic code of discipline (vinaya); the monk's code of discipline, the 227 rules monks must observe; the code of monk's rules that is recited on all full moon and new moon days (uposatha) before the assembled community of fully ordained monks. At the end of the recital, the reciter asks the members of the Order who are present if any of them has infringed any of the rules.

**Patipatti** – practice; applied practice of the Buddha's teachings.

**Paṭivedha** – penetration; attainment; comprehension.

**Peta** – a departed being; ghost; hungry ghost.

**Phala** – fruit; the Fruit; fruit of one's actions; fruition of results of actions; result; effect; the fruit of enlightenment (ariya-phala); having attained a level of enlightenment from following the Buddhist path (magga); the four transendent (lokuttara) fruits: the fruit of stream entry, the fruit of once-returning, the fruit of non-returning, the fruit of arahantship.

**Phra** – (*Thai*) honorable, venerable; monk; used as a prefix to the name of a monk; (see: bhikkhu).

**Piṇḍapāta** – *lit.* food being offered to the monks (piṇḍa), bowl (pāta); a collection of alms; alms round.

**Prayog** – (*Thai*) a level of Pāli Scholarship of the Royal Pāli Examination.

**Puggalaññutā** – knowing the individual, knowing the different individuals.

**Puñña** – merit; meritorious action; virtue; righteousness; worth; a beneficial and protective force which accumulates as the result of good deeds or thoughts; the opposite of demerit (pāpa).

**Puñña-kusala** – *lit.* merit-wholesomeness; virtue; goodness, good deeds, kammically good deeds.

**Puthujjana** – *lit.* one of the many folk; worldling; commoner; one who has not realized any of the four stages of awakening, one who still possesses all of the ten fetters (saṃyojana); ordinary persons.

**Rāga** – lust; passion; sensuality; desire.

**Roga-bhaya** – the peril of disease; the peril of illness.

**Rukkha-devaputta** – tree dwelling young devas; young tree deities; male tree deities.

**Rukkha-devatā** – tree dwelling devas; tree deities; celestial beings that reside in trees.

**Rūpa** – tangible form; matter; form; physical components; corporeality; the body and physical phenomenon in general; object of the eye; visible object.

**Rūpa-bhava** – material existence; fine-material existence; the Fine-Material Realm; the Brahma world.

**Rūpa-brahma** – a divine being of the Fine-Material Sphere (rūpa-loka); an inhabitant of the higher heavens.

**Rūpa-jhāna** – fine-material absorption; refers to four form-based higher meditative absorptions: 1. first absorption (paṭhama-jhāna), 2. second absorption (dutiya-jhāna), 3. third absorption (tatiya-jhāna), 4. fourth absorption (catuttha-jhāna).

**Rūpa-khandha** – tangible aggregate, form; form aggregate; physical aggregate.

**Rūpa-nāma** – body and mind; corporeality and mentality; matter and mind; form and name.

**Sabhāva** – nature; condition; disposition; reality; individual essence.

**Sabhāva-dhamma** – condition of nature; principle of nature; natural condition; natural phenomenon; any phenomenon, event, property, or quality as experienced in and of itself.

**Sabhāva-dukkha** – natural suffering; intrinsic or innate suffering; condition of suffering.

**Sacca** – truth; truthfulness; true; real; vow; promise; commitment; integrity; refers to being true to one's word.

**Sacca-adhitthāna** – asseveration of truth; a declaration on oath; solemn asseveration; an utterance regarding a certain fact, followed by a command or resolution; can also refer to sacca-kiriyā.

**Sacca-dhamma** – the truth; Truth; the ultimate truth; the indisputable truth; the universal truth.

**Sacca-pāramī** – the truthfulness perfection of character; the perfection of truthfulness.

**Sacca-vācā** – *lit.* true speech; verbal promise; one who speaks the truth.

**Saddhā** – faith; devotion; conviction; confidence; belief.

**Sad-dhamma** – the true Dhamma; the true doctrine; the doctrine of good.

**Saddhā-ñāṇa-sampayutta** – *lit.* faith-insight-connected; rational belief; faith grounded in reason; contemplating with wisdom and reason before believing.

**Saddhā-ñāṇa-vippayutta** – *lit.* faith-insight-separated; senseless, irrational belief; belief without reason.

**Sādhū** – *lit.* it is well; an expression of appreciation, assent, or approval; good, virtuous, pious.

**Sagga** – heaven; heavenly realm; a place of happiness.

**Sakadāgāmī** – once-returner; the second level of enlightenment on the path to nibbāna; one who will be reborn in the human world only once before attaining final enlightenment.

**Sakkāya-diṭṭhi** – self-illusion; the delusion of self; belief in a personal self; egoistic view.

**Samādhi** – concentration; meditation; one-pointedness of mind; mental discipline; two types of concentration: 1. steadfastly focused concentration, 2. serene, tranquil concentration.

**Samaṇa-dhamma** – duties of a monk; virtues of a Buddhist monk; refers to practicing serene concentration (samatha) and insight concentration (vipassanā) for the purpose of eradicating defilements (kilesa).

**Sāmanera** – novice monastic; novice; one who is ordained by taking the Three Refuges and observes the Ten Precepts.

**Sāmaññalakkhaṇa-dhātu** – characteristics common to the elements; refers to the Three Common Characteristics (tilakkhaṇa).

**Samatha** – calm; tranquility; tranquility of the mind; meditative calm; quietude of the heart.

**Samatha-kammaṭṭhāna** – calm meditation; tranquility concentration; refers to focusing on calming the mind.

**Sammā** – right.

**Sammā-ājīva** – right livelihood; right living; right means of livelihood; right pursuits.

**Sammā-ditṭhi** – right view; right understanding; a perception aligned with the truth; wisdom of the truth of reality; wisdom of right view.

**Sammā-kammanta** – right action; right conduct; right behavior.

**Sammā-paṭipatti** – right practice; right mental disposition.

**Sammā-samādhi** – right concentration.

**Sammā-saṅkappa** – right thought; right intention.

**Sammā-sati** – right mindfulness; right attentiveness.

**Sammā-vācā** – right speech.

**Sammā-vāyāma** – right effort; right exertion; right striving.

**Sammuti** – construct; social constructs; convention; conventional reality; general opinion; consent; pretend, assume; appointment; supposition; election; anything that is conjured into being by the mind; there are two types of sammuti: 1. the world in which nothing truly exists, 2. sammuti-paññatti, or that which is given labels so that they can be referred to for the sake of communication.

**Sammuti-paññatti** – conventional supposition; conventional names or concepts.

**Saṅgha** – community; assemblage; company; a chapter of four or more Buddhist monks; the Order; the Buddhist clergy; the Buddhist community of monks, nuns, novices, and laity; in the Triple Gem, Saṅgha refers to the Ariya-Saṅgha, or community of noble ones who have attained a level of enlightenment.

**Saṅghādhikāra** – an ecclesiastical official; ecclesiastical administrative officer.

**Saṅghāṭi** – the outer robe of a Buddhist monk; monk robe used as an overgarment and worn for various occasions.

**Saṅkhāra** – mental formations; volitional thought; fabrications; imagination; all forces that form or condition; conditioned things; conditioned phenomena.

**Saṅkhāra-citta** – the conditioned mind; a mind that is directed by compounded thoughts or conditions.

**Santati** – continuity (especially of consciousness); duration; lineage; a series of moments; refers to the rapid arising and ceasing of phenomena in succession that creates the illusion of continuity.

**Saññā** – perception; idea; ideation; memory; recognition; remembrance;

association; interpretation; as an aggregate: recognizes the known and gives meaning to one's perception.

**Saññā-anicca** – impermanent memory; refers to the inability to remember, or no longer remembering.

**Saññā-vedayita-nirodha** – cessation of consciousness and sensation; cessation of perception and sensation; extinction of feeling and perception; the suppression (nirodha) of perception (saññā) and sensation (vedayita); also called nirodha-samāpatti.

**Saññā-vipallāsa** – distortion of perception; derangement, corruption, or perversion of perception.

**Sappāya** – beneficial; suitable; wholesome.

**Sappurisa-dhamma** – virtue of the righteous; the Seven Qualities of a Good Man; the Seven Virtues of the Righteous: 1. knowing the cause, knowing the law (dhammaññutā); 2. knowing the consequence, knowing the meaning or purpose (atthaññutā); 3. knowing oneself (attaññutā); 4. moderation, knowing how to be temperate, sense of proportion (mattaññutā); 5. knowing the proper time, knowing how to choose and keep time (kālaññutā); 6. knowing the assembly, knowing the society (parisaññutā); 7. knowing the individual, knowing different individuals (puggalaññutā).

**Sarabhañña** – intoning; a particular mode of recitation; intoned recitation; a melodious lengthened chanting style performed in a high-pitch.

**Sati** – mindfulness; attentiveness; awareness; recollection.

**Sāvaka** – hearer; disciple; distinguished disciples of the Buddha.

**Sāvaka-saṅgho** – *lit.* disciple community; a community of disciples.

**Senāsana** – lodging; sleeping place; dwelling.

**Siddhattha** – *lit.* one who has accomplished his task; the personal name of the Gotama Buddha, son of King Suddhodana of the Sakya clan and Queen Māyādevī.

**Sikkhāttaya** – the Threecold Training; the Threecold Learning; the Three Studies: morality (adhisilasikkhā), concentration (adhicittasikkhā), and wisdom (adhipaññāsikkhā).

**Sīla** – morality; moral practice; moral conduct; virtuous conduct; virtue; ethics; code of morality; precepts; right conduct; behavioral discipline; Buddhist ethics.

**Silabbata-parāmāsa** – adherence or clinging to rules, rituals, or ceremonies; clinging to rituals and vows; overestimation regarding the efficacy of rules and observances; believing wrong practices to be right; dependence on superstitious rites.

**Sīla-dhamma** – *lit.* morality righteousness; morality; code of moral conduct.

**Sota-ñāṇa** – (see: dibba-sota)

**Sotāpanna** – stream enterer; stream winner; the first level of enlightenment on the path to nibbāna; one who will achieve final enlightenment after 1, 3, or 7 rebirths.

**Suddhāvāsa** – the Pure Abodes (in Brahma heaven); a name given to a group of Brahma worlds—the five highest Fine-Material Realms—consisting of Avīha, Atappa, Sudassa, Sudassī, and Akaniṭṭha, where only non-returners (anāgāmī) are reborn and attain nibbāna.

**Sugato** – gone to a good destination; an epithet for the Buddha.

**Sukha** – pleasant, happy; happiness, pleasure, joy, bliss.

**Suñña-kappa** – era devoid of Buddhism; a world in which no Buddha is born.

**Supina-nimitta** – dream.

**Suta-maya-paññā** – knowledge based on learning; understanding acquired by learning; wisdom resulting from study.

**Sutta** – *lit.* thread; dialogue; discourse; a discourse or sermon by the Buddha or his contemporary disciples.

**Takka** – thought; reasoning; logic.

**Taṇhā** – craving; desire; want; thirst; there are three types of craving (taṇhā):

1. craving for sensual pleasures (kāma-taṇhā), 2. craving for existence (bhava-taṇhā), 3. craving for non-existence (vibhava-taṇhā).

**Tāpasa** – a hermit; ascetic; ascetic practices; austere spiritual practices; the self-mortification the Buddha practiced before encountering the Middle Way.

**Tathāgata** – *lit.* one who has truly gone; the accomplished one; the thus-come; the thus-gone; the truth-winner; an epithet of the Buddha.

**Tatiya-jhāna** – the third absorption; the third successive level of fine-material meditative absorption (rūpa-jhāna); equanimity-pleasure in the unification of the mind.

**Tāvatimsā** – the heavenly realm of the Thirty-three; the second of six heavenly realms; the heavenly abode of which Sakka is the king.

**Thera** – *lit.* elder; an elder or senior monk; a monk who has been ordained for ten or more years.

**Theravāda** – *lit.* doctrine of the elders; the oldest form of the Buddha's teachings; an orthodox branch of Buddhism based on the Pāli Canon; the dominant form of Buddhism in Thailand, Sri Lanka, Burma, and Cambodia.

**Three Common Characteristics** – (see: tilakkhaṇa)

**Three Realms of Existence, Three Realms, Three Worlds** – the Three Spheres; the three planes that together comprise the entire universe of sentient existence; the Three Realms: the Sensual Realm (*kāma-loka*), the Form Realm (*rūpa-loka*), and the Formless Realm (*arūpa-loka*).

**Tilakkhaṇa** – three characteristics; the Three Common Characteristics: suffering (*dukkha*), impermanence (*anicca*), not-self (*anattā*); the Three Signs of Being.

**Tipiṭaka** – *lit.* three baskets; the Pāli Canon comprised of discourses (*sutta-piṭaka*), monastic rules (*vinaya-piṭaka*), and abstract philosophical treatises (*abhidhamma-piṭaka*).

**Tiracchāna** – *lit.* facing down, going horizontally; an animal.

**Tusitā** – the realm of satisfied heavenly beings; the fourth of six heavenly realms.

**Udaka-bhaya** – *lit.* water danger; water-based natural disasters.

**Upacāra-samādhi** – access concentration; concentration approaching but not yet attaining the first absorption (*jhāna*); a steadfastly focused concentration.

**Upajjhāya** – preceptor; spiritual teacher; a monk of more than ten vassas who has the authority to confer full monastic ordination.

**Upāsaka** – *lit.* one who comes or sits near; lay devotee; devout or faithful layman; lay Buddhist.

**Upasampadā** – *lit.* approaching or nearing the ascetic tradition; refers to taking higher ordination as a monk.

**Upāsikā** – female devotee; female lay follower.

**Upāya** – means; method; example; Dhamma metaphor; model; resource; expedient.

**Upekkhā** – equanimity; neither positive nor negative; neutrality; indifference.

**Upekkhā-ārammaṇa** – indifferent or neutral preoccupation; neither pleasing nor displeasing preoccupation; a neutral emotion.

**Uposatha** – *lit.* fasting, i.e. ‘fasting day’ is the full moon day, new moon day, and the two days of the first and last moon-quarters; observance; observance day; holy day; Sabbath day; on full moon and new moon days, monks recite the monastic code of discipline (*pāṭimokkha*), and on the four moon-days many devotees observe the Eight Precepts (*aṭṭha-sīla*); ordination hall; consecrated assembly hall.

**Uttama-maṅgala** – highest blessing.

**Uttarāsaṅga** – upper robe; refers to a monk’s upper garment, one of the three robes of a Buddhist monk; known as the prominent robe, it is used to wrap the entire left shoulder and leave the right arm and shoulder open.

**Vandana** – to salute with joined palms; to venerate; to pay homage; to pay respect; called ‘wai’ in Thai, it is a gesture made by pressing the palms together in the

position of a budding lotus at chest level, elbows down, and bowing slightly to show respect.

**Vāsanā** – subconscious inclination; behavioral tendency; habitual disposition, or kammic imprint that influences present behavior; that which remains in the mind, tendencies of the past, former impressions.

**Vassa** – rainy season; rains retreat; rains-residence; rains; Buddhist Lent; the three-month rainy season from the first day of the waning moon of the eighth lunar month to the full moon of the eleventh month, usually July through October, in which monks are required to reside in a single place and not wander freely about; a year of monastic life.

**Vāta-bhaya** – *lit.* wind danger, air danger; wind-based natural disasters.

**Vatta** – duty; service; function.

**Vatṭa-cakka** – *lit.* cycle of rebirth-wheel; cycling through births in the Three Realms.

**Vatṭa-saṁsāra** – round of rebirth.

**Vatthu** – material.

**Vatthu-dhātu** – material elements.

**Vedanā** – feeling; sensation; there are three types of vedanā: pleasant, unpleasant, neither pleasant nor unpleasant.

**Vibhava-taṇhā** – desire for non-existence; desire for an end to a feeling; craving for non-becoming; craving not to be; the desire not to be something displeasing.

**Vicikicchā** – doubt; perplexity; skepticism; indecision; uncertainty.

**Vihāra** – an abode; a dwelling place; mode of life; passing the time; a sanctuary; a monastery; temple.

**Vihāra-dhamma** – the mind's residence; refers to where the mind frequently resides or dwells—whether it is in the Dhamma or in detrimental worldly obsessions like jealousy or vengeance.

**Vimutti-nibbāna** – liberation; the release to nibbāna; release to enlightenment.

**Vinaya** – discipline; monastic code; monastic regulations; the code of monastic discipline; rules.

**Viññāṇa** – consciousness; act of consciousness; cognizance; taking note of sense data and ideas as they occur; sensing and acknowledging stimuli that come into contact with us through our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind; life force.

**Viññāṇañcāyatana** – the absorption of infinite consciousness; the sixth jhāna, the second level of arūpa-jhāna.

**Vipassanā** – insight; insight development; clear intuitive insight; insight into the true nature of reality as a product of wisdom development.

**Vipassanā-kammaṭṭhāna** – insight meditation; insight concentration.

**Vipassanā-ñāṇa** – insight-knowledge; insight that arises from vipassanā.

**Vipassanūpakilesa** – imperfections or defilements of insight; insight that deceives a meditation practitioner into believing that enlightenment has been attained and hampers any legitimate insight-knowledge from developing; the Ten Imperfections of Insight: 1. illumination, luminous aura (obhāsa), 2. knowledge (ñāṇa), 3. rapture, unprecedented joy (pīti), 4. tranquility (passaddhi), 5. bliss, pleasure (sukha), 6. fervor, assurance, resolution (adhimokkha), 7. exertion, well-exerted energy (paggāha), 8. established mindfulness (upatthāna), 9. equanimity (upekkhā), 10. delight (nikanti).

**Virāga-dhamma** – dispassionateness; destroying desire; sobering up from intoxication; refers to nibbāna.

**Visaṅkhāra** – divestment of all material things.

**Visuddhi-dhamma** – purification Dhamma; Dhamma that purifies; purity of Dhamma.

**Vyākaraṇa** – explanation; answer; declaration; refers to an affirmative declaration by the Buddha of one's attainment of enlightenment; a prediction or prophecy by a Buddha that one will achieve enlightenment and be a future Buddha.

**Wat** – (*Thai*) temple; monastery.

**Wat Ban** – (*Thai*) house temple.

**Wat Pa** – (*Thai*) forest temple.

**Yāmā** – the realm of the Yāmā heavenly beings; the third of six heavenly realms.

**Yonisomanasikāra** – thorough attention; systematic attention; wise consideration; analytical reflection; critical reflection; having thorough method in one's thought; contemplating causality until comprehensive clarity is reached and the truth is profoundly understood and truly realized; in actual practice, it is reflecting on an issue in a thorough manner by analyzing it in terms of the Three Common Characteristics, both internal and external elements, zooming in and out of yourself, coarse and refined themes, and both subjects with and without consciousness in order to clearly know and see the causes and contributing factors.

Definitions sourced from Scriptures, Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño, Mae Chee Yo Saranya Thian-Ngern, Access to Insight's online glossary, Bhikkhu P.A. Payutto's *Dictionary of Buddhism*, the Dhammayut Order's *A Chanting Guide*, Ven. Nyanatiloka's *Buddhist Dictionary*, Wisdom Library, and various online dictionaries and websites.

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Mae Chee Neecha Thian-Ngern

## About the Author

Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño (Thoon Nonruecha) was born May 20, 1935 at Nong Kho village, Bua Kho sub-district, Mueang district, Maha Sarakham province, Thailand. He was the fifth of Uddha and Chan Nonruecha's ten children.

At the age of twenty-seven, he left his family to ordain as a monk in the Dhammayut Order. On July 27, 1961, he took ordination at Wat Photisomporn in Udon Thani, with Phra Dhammadchedi (Joom Bandhulo) serving as his preceptor.

In his early years, Venerable Ācariya Thoon set out on dhutaṅga in various forest destinations and practiced the Dhamma until he profoundly realized and understood according to the truth. He studied under Venerable Ācariya Khao Anālayo of Wat Tham Klong Phen in what is now Nong Bua Lam Phu province. After having been ordained for eight vassas, Venerable Ācariya Thoon attained arahantship in Pa Lun village, Doi Luang district, Chiang Rai province.

Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño dedicated his life to the proliferation of the Buddha's original teachings, both in Thailand and abroad. Venerable Ācariya Thoon's teachings are distinctive in that he emphasizes the importance of starting Dhamma practice with right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*). His style of Dhamma practice is unique in that it enables laypeople to effectively practice in everyday settings and achieve a level of enlightenment, as he himself had attained the first level (*sotāpanna*) as a layperson. Venerable Ācariya Thoon also stressed the importance of developing both a comprehensive understanding and a true realization of the suffering, harmful consequences, and perils associated with each issue.

In 1975, Venerable Ācariya Thoon established Wat Pa Ban Koh in Ban Phue district, Udon Thani province. Today, the temple serves as a Buddhist landmark for devotees to honor and venerate the Buddha's teachings and holy relics housed in the majestic pagoda. The temples founded in Venerable Ācariya Thoon's name in the metropolitan cities of San Francisco, New York, Hong Kong, as well as the countless Dhamma retreat centers in America and throughout Thailand that train in Venerable Ācariya Thoon's style of cultivating wisdom continue to grow, to this day.

Over the course of his lifetime, Venerable Ācariya Thoon authored over twenty books, including his own autobiography, and produced various forms of media (mp3, VCD, DVD, etc.) so that Dhamma practitioners from any walk of life could easily access the Dhamma. In 1990, Thai Royal Princess Phra Thep Ratanarachasuda honored Venerable Ācariya Thoon with the Sao Sema Dhammadakkha award for his outstanding literary contributions to the Buddhist religion. In 2006, King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand conferred upon Venerable Ācariya Thoon the clerical title of Venerable Paññāvisalathera.

On November 11, 2008, Venerable Ācariya Thoon passed away at the age of seventy-three due to pneumonia and lung tumor complications. Unique to only the greatest arahants, Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño's relics formed the day of his cremation ceremony.

## **About the Translator**

Born and raised in San Francisco, California, Neecha Thian-Ngern has been a devoted student of Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño since the age of sixteen. She earned a Bachelor's of Science in Electrical Engineering from UCSD and a Master's of Science in Business Administration from SFSU. Neecha ordained as a Buddhist nun at San Fran Dhammaram Temple in 2017.

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