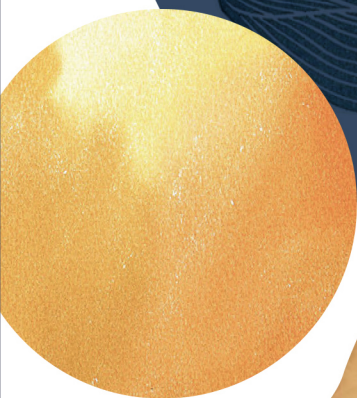
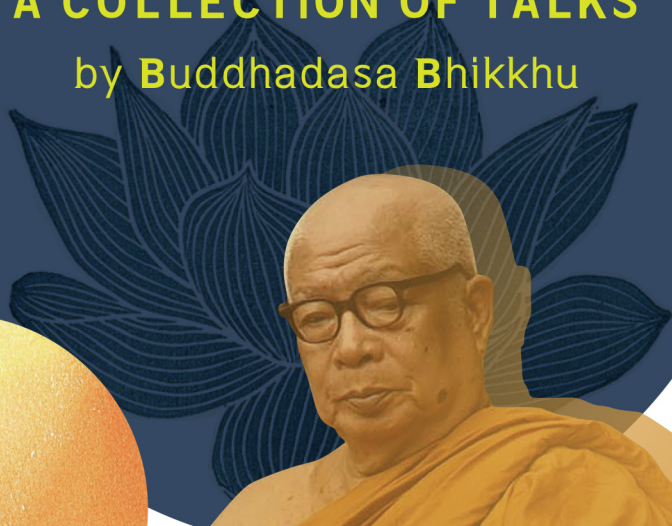


# DHAMMA FOR SOCIAL RENEWAL: A COLLECTION OF TALKS

by **Buddhadasa Bhikkhu**



*Buddhadasa Bhikkhu*

Translated by Donald K. Swearer  
Foreword by Sulak Sivaraksa





Dhamma for Social Renewal:  
A Collection of Talks  
by Buddhadasa Bhikkhu



International Network  
of Engaged Buddhists



The Corporate Body of  
the Buddha Education Foundation

**Dhamma for Social Renewal:  
A Collection of Talks by Buddhadasa Bhikkhu**

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu

Translated from the Thai by Donald K Swearer

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## Foreword

Don Swearer was never ordained at Suan Mokkh, but he is a brilliant scholar of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's life and works. He had even recommended the revered monk to divide his sermons into series, keep an audio recording of each and every one of them, and compile and transform them into book form later. Since Buddhadasa took up Ajarn Don's suggestion, we now have a sizeable collection of his works—a real treasure.

A young American who took the ordained name Santikaro then often served as Buddhadasa's interpreter. After leaving the monkhood, Santikaro has become the leading translator of Buddhadasa's works, especially for readers in the United States. By comparison, some Western scholars who claim to be Buddhadasa experts possess only superficial understanding of him.

Buddhadasa's works have been translated into many different languages, including Chinese and Japanese. He is also the subject of numerous books. To my knowledge, Louis Gabaude of the Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient has compiled the most complete bibliography of works on or citing Buddhadasa in various languages.

After retiring from Swarthmore College and the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard Divinity School, Ajarn Don still regularly translates and writes on Buddhadasa for the Western audience—an admirable feat. Some of his pieces can be found in our *Seeds of Peace* magazine.

In this book, Ajarn Don shows us the links between Buddhadasa's and Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings. The latter is a progenitor of socially engaged Buddhism. In fact, Buddhadasa admired Nhat Hanh's writings, even insisting that they are more poetic and eloquent than his own.

When we first established the International Network of Engaged

Buddhists (INEB) in 1989, both of these monks agreed to be our patrons; and so too did His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

The publication of this book in Taiwan is made possible by the goodwill of the local Buddhists. Of course, it will be translated into Chinese, too.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Ajarn Don Sweater not only for compiling and translating this book, but also for the years of friendship and support. I became well-known in the United States primarily because of his contribution in *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, ed. Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King (State University of New York Press, 1996). He was also the main reason why I became Distinguished Visiting Professor for Social Change at Swarthmore College and Senior Fellow in Residence at the Harvard-Yenching Institute.

In this book, Ajarn Don has selected and translated a number of pieces by Buddhadasa. In the Introduction, he has already provided an explanation and commentary on them. I have nothing more to add. I would like to thank him as well as Thai and Taiwanese *kalyanamitta* for publishing this book which commemorates Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's birthday on 27 May 2019.

**Sulak Sivaraksa**

# Introduction: The Challenging Vision of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu

**Donald K. Swearer**

Dhamma is acting as we should act in order to be fully human throughout all the stages of our lives. Dhamma means to realize our fullest potential as individual human beings. What is most important is to realize that Dhamma is not simply “knowing,” but also “acting” in the truest sense of what it means to be human.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu,  
*Kankratham Thī Thudong Kae Quam Pen Manut*  
*[The Right Action To Be Human]*

Phra Dhammakosacarya (Nguam Indapañño), better known as Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (May 27, 1906 – May 25, 1993), was one of the most creative 20th century thinkers in Thai Theravada Buddhism. Only a small portion of the extensive Buddhadasa corpus has been translated from Thai into English and other European languages, hence, the importance of this volume of essays that elucidate one of the major foundational themes in Buddhadasa’s thought, namely, “That nothing whatsoever should be clung to as ‘I’ and ‘Mine’;” or, as Buddhadasa reiterates in one of his favorite Pali phrases, “*Sabbe dhamma nalam abhinivesaya*” (“Nothing whatsoever should be clung to”). The concept which epitomizes non-clinging for Buddhadasa is *suññatā*, translated in this

volume as “voidness,” but it is equally true that for Buddhadasa the essential meaning of the Four Noble Truths, *anattā*, *paṭicca-samuppāda*, *Nibbāna*, and even *Buddha* embody non-clinging. The heart of Buddhism is the quenching of suffering (*dukkha*), a condition that cannot be achieved without overcoming blind attachment and ignorance.

The core of Buddhadasa’s teaching might be summarized as follows:

The individual is not-self (*anattā*). As such s/he is part of an on-going, conditioning process (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) devoid of self-nature (*suññatā*), a process to which words can only point (*bhāsa-dhamma*). This process functions according to universal principles we call nature (*dhammajāti*). It is the true (*saccadhamma*), normative (*pakati*), moral (*sīladhamma*) condition of things. To be not-self (*anattā*), therefore, is to be void (*suññatā*) of self, and, hence, to be part of the interdependent co-arising matrix (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) of all things, and to live according to the natural moral order (*sīladhamma*) in a community voluntarily restrained (*dhammika sangama-niyama*) by other-regarding concerns.

A dynamic, critical thinker who eschewed the Buddhist Sangha mainstream, Buddhadasa rejected all absolutisms in a manner consistent with his foundational principle of non-clinging. He was especially critical of ideological absolutism and religious idolatry, and was an advocate for environmental preservation and social justice.

## The Challenge of Ideological Absolutism

Buddhadasa's theory of two languages or two levels of language (Thai. *phasa khon/phasa tham*)—an outer, physical, literal, conventional dimension and an inner, spiritual, symbolic dimension—challenges textual and doctrinal literalism, and simplistic, doctrinaire ideologies.

In his essay, *Phāsā Khon/Phāsā Tham (Everyday Language/Dhamma Language)*, Buddhadasa analyzes the meaning of many terms, some specifically religious, such as God, Buddha, Dhamma, *Nibbāna*; but also ordinary words as well, such as “person.” In everyday language, “person” refers to the outer form as in the sentence, “We see a person walking down the street.” However, in Buddhadasa's view, to limit our understand of “person” to the superficial, outer form ignores the profundity of the Dhamma level meaning of the word. At this level, “person” refers specifically to special qualities implied by the word, “human;” in particular, the mental qualities of a lofty mind or high mindedness.

Buddhadasa's teaching about *phāsā khon/phāsā tham* resonates with Thich Nhat Hanh, one of the founders of Socially Engaged Buddhism during the Vietnam war. During that time, Nhat Hanh organized the Tiep Hien Order (“being-in-touch/present time”) or Order of Interbeing. The first of the fourteen precepts of the Order of Interbeing is the following: “Do not be idolatrous about or bound to any doctrine, theory, or ideology, even Buddhist ones. All systems of thought are only guiding means; they are not absolute truth.” In explaining the precept, Nhat Hanh points to the well-known metaphor that the Buddha's teaching is a raft to cross the river of *samsāra* to the farther shore; the raft is not the shore, and if we cling to the raft we miss everything. He continues, “The Order of Interbeing was born in Vietnam during the war, which was a conflict between two world ideologies. In the name of ideologies and doctrines, people kill and are being killed. If you have a gun, you can shoot one, two, three, five people; but if you have an



ideology and stick to it, thinking it is the absolute truth, you can kill millions.” (*Being Peace*) Nhat Hanh and Buddhadasa Bhikkhu are constructive critics of ideological absolutism and scriptural literalism.

## The Challenge of Religious Idolatry

Buddhadasa holds the view that the world’s great religions, while different historically, share a common ground. In his provocative Dhamma talk *Mai Mī Sasana (No Religion!)*, Buddhadasa startled his Thai Buddhist audience by saying:

The ordinary, ignorant worldling is under the impression that there are many religions and that they are all different to the extent of being hostile and opposed. Thus one considers Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism as incompatible and even bitter enemies. Such is the conception of the worldly person who speaks according to ordinary impressions. Precisely because of such characterizations, there exist different religions hostile to one another. If, however, people penetrate to the fundamental nature (*dhamma*) of religion, they will regard all religions as essentially similar. Although they may say there is Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and so on, they will also say that essentially they are the same. If they should go on to a deeper understanding of *dhamma* until finally they realize the absolute truth, they shall discover that there is no such thing called religion—that there is no Buddhism, Christianity, or Islam. Therefore, how can they be the same or conflicting?

Buddhadasa made a similar claim in his Sinclair Thompson lectures delivered at McGilvary Theological Seminary, Chiang Mai, Thailand, in 1967 (B. E. 2510):

Christianity and Buddhism are both universal religions; they exist wherever truly religious people practice their religion in the most perfect way. If religious persons show respect for each religion's founder and for the Dhamma-truth at the core of each religion, they will understand this interpretation. Devotion to a religion results in the cessation of self-interest and self-importance and therefore leads to a realization of *the universality and unity of all religions*.

Buddhadasa's inclusive universalism is an expression of his conviction that nonattachment lies at the heart of Buddhism and all religions. Preoccupation with the external trappings of religious institutions and their ritual ceremonies represents a particular form of attachment and, consequently, obscures the true meaning of religion, which is to *transform egoism into altruism*. In the case of conventional Thai Buddhist practice, Buddhadasa directs especially sharp criticism at the practice of merit-making rituals: "The perception of most adherents of Buddhism is limited to what they can do to get a reward. The heart of Buddhism is not getting things but getting rid of them. It is, in other words, nonattachment." For Buddhadasa, when we cling to external, outer, physical forms, we see everything in dualistic terms—good or evil, merit or sin, happiness or unhappiness, gain or loss, is or is not, my religion versus their religion. Such dualistic thinking is at the heart of religious conflict. Buddhadasa's universalism counters such a view.

## The Challenge of Environmental Destruction

Buddhadasa's concept of nature (Thai. *thammachat*) as Dhamma (Thai. *thamma pen thammachat*) challenges conventional attitudes and actions regarding the care of the earth. It was Buddhadasa's perception of the liberating power of nature-as-Dhamma that inspired him to found the Garden of Empowering Liberation (Wat Suan Mokkh) as a center of teaching and practice in Chaiya, southern Thailand. For Buddhadasa the natural surroundings of his forest monastery were nothing less than a medium for personal transformation:

Trees, rocks, sand, even dirt and insects can speak. This doesn't mean, as some people believe that they are spirits (*phi*) or gods (*thewada*). Rather, if we reside in nature, near trees and rocks, we'll discover feelings and thoughts arising that are truly out of the ordinary. At first we'll feel a sense of peace and quiet, which may eventually move beyond that feeling to a transcendence of self. The deep sense of calm that nature provides through separation from the troubles and anxieties which plague us in the day-to-day world serves to protect heart and mind. Indeed, the lessons nature teaches us lead to a new birth beyond the suffering (*dukkha*) that results from attachment to self. Trees and rocks, then, can talk to us. They help us understand what it means to cool down from the heat of our confusion, despair, anxiety, and suffering.

For Buddhadasa, it is only by being in nature that the trees, rocks, earth, sand, animals, birds, and insects can teach us the lesson of self-forgetting—being at one with Dhamma. The destruction of nature, then, implies the destruction of Dhamma, and the destruction of Dhamma is the destruction of our humanity.

## The Challenge of Social Justice

Time and again in his writings Buddhadasa challenges conventional, literal, narrow understandings of Buddhism and all religions in favor of universal principles of human development, not just identifying oneself as a Thai Buddhist, an American Christian, or an Iranian Muslim but as a human being. His interpretation of the Four Noble Truths—as nature (*thammachat*), the laws of nature, the duty of humankind to live according to the laws of nature, and the consequences of following the laws of nature—reflects his view that all human beings share a common natural environment and are part of communities imbedded in the natural order of things. This interconnected universe we inhabit is the natural condition of things (*pakati*). To act contrary to this law of nature is to suffer (*dukkha*), because such actions contradict reality. Consequently, the good of the individual parts is predicated on the good of the whole and vice versa.

The ethical principle of the good of the whole is based on the truth of interdependent co-arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*). Nothing exists in isolation; everything co-exists interdependently as part of a larger whole whether human, social, cosmic, or molecular: “The entire universe is a Dhammic community (*dhammika sangkhom*). Countless numbers of stars in the sky exist together in a *dhammika sangkhom*. Because they follow the principles of a *dhammika sangkhom*, they survive. Our small universe with its sun and planets including the earth is a *dhammika sangkhom*.”

Buddhadasa’s view of a *dhammika sangkhom* reflects his persistent

emphasis on overcoming attachment to self, to “me-and-mine” (Thai. *tua ku khong ku*). Fundamentally, both personal and social well-being result from transforming self-attachment and self-love to empathy toward others and sympathetic action on their behalf. A *dhammika sangkhom*, then, is a community based on the fundamental equality of all beings that both affirms but transcends all distinctions be they gender, ethnicity, or class. Such a view does not deny the existence of differences among individuals or groups; however, all people, regardless of position and status, should understand that their own personal well-being depends on the well-being of all.



*Buddhism  
and  
Humanity*







# The Right Action to be Truly Fully Human

The term Dhamma is of great value and has been widely debated. Everyone has the sense that Dhamma is something superlative. If Dhamma were not so regarded--something excellent, precious, and valuable--then it would not be so widely discussed.

I assume that all of you here are acquainted with the subject of Dhamma. I am not going to consider that some of you know Dhamma and others do not, or that some of you know a lot about Dhamma and others very little. Therefore, I will summarize Dhamma so that it will be relevant for all of you [regardless of your previous knowledge.]

Consider my remarks as a New Year gift since in two or three days, it will be the New Year. I am taking this opportunity to impart knowledge about Dhamma as a New Year gift to all of you. Make Dhamma more important in your lives in the New Year, not in the sense of repeatedly going around in circles [about Dhamma] but, rather, systematically going forward. The years pass by and we mark the time without truly understanding Dhamma. Therefore, I am going to address the topic of Dhamma so that you

can more clearly understand it and progress in your knowledge of Dhamma rather than simply going around in the same old circles.

I have often spoken about the meaning of Dhamma but some have not listened; others have forgotten what I have said; some may remember about half or perhaps a bit more. Be that as it may, however, I fear that you have not really grasped the meaning I have tried to convey: *Dhamma is being human in the fullest sense. Dhamma is acting in accord with the highest norm of what it means to be human.*

“What is Dhamma?” may be a question some of you are asking yourselves at this very moment and thinking in terms of what you have heard before or believed. For example, that Dhamma means the words taught by the Buddha or what monks preach from the pulpit. Such an understanding is inadequate; it is Dhamma as truth [or in principle.] If each of you gathered together here today can help one another to remember the principles of Dhamma, then Dhamma will become increasingly a part of your lives. [In my remarks today I shall be discussing the fundamental norms or principles of Dhamma.]

Dhamma is acting as we should act in order to be fully human throughout all the stages of our lives; Dhamma means to realize our fullest potential as individual human beings. This way of understanding Dhamma may sound odd in comparison with what you have previously heard or believed, e.g., that Dhamma means the words taught by the Buddha. What is most important is to realize that Dhamma is not simply “knowing,” but also “acting” in the truest sense of what it means to be human. It means integrating knowing and acting. It requires study to be able to act correctly in order to maximize our fullest humanity in every stage of our development. We continuously develop from the time of our birth to the present moment and so on until we enter the next life.

We can divide our present existence into stages: childhood, adulthood, old age. We should be and act in each stage so as to realize our fullest human

capacity. This is the answer to the question, “What is Dhamma?” The main principle is that we should strive to become fully human at every stage of our development. When you review your life, consider whether at each stage you have progressed on the path of becoming fully human, or in an even more detailed way when you were one, two, or three until you reach fifteen or sixteen, twenty, thirty, fifty, or sixty. If you often cause someone to weep, or make things difficult for your parents or neighbors, then you are not acting according to the highest norm of humanity.

You should test yourself honestly and with a pure mind. Being self-centered and selfish is not Dhamma. You must understand Dhamma as it is as a fundamental principle of life [rather than as speculation, hearsay, or mere words]. There is an endless debate about the “correct” understanding of Dhamma. The debate should conclude with the rule that “correct” should be *that which is useful* (Thai. *prayot*) *to both oneself and others* [italics added]. If Dhamma does not have such an inclusive relevance, then Dhamma is not correctly understood. “Useful,” in this sense, means *that which brings happiness, resolves the problematic of suffering (dukkha), and promotes peace* [italics added].

Our personal existence is inherently linked to the utility of others. Our own happiness and well-being is bound up with the happiness and well-being of those around us. Our own peace and happiness and the peace and happiness of the world are interdependent. We conjointly share in the fundamental quest of *magga-phala-nibbāna*.<sup>1</sup> Consider for a moment, the

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<sup>1</sup> For Buddhadasa, being fully human includes the existential affirmation that all sentient beings share a universal human condition and the same aspirations characterized in Buddhist terms by the four paths called magga (stream-enterer, once-returner, never-returner, *arahant*), their fruits (phala), and the summum bonum of human aspiration, *Nibbāna*.

meaning of happiness. Is it a state of being characterized by equanimity (coolness) or heated agitation (fire)? In terms of the Thai language, is our happiness spelled with a “kh” (Thai. *sukh*, rest, peace, well-being, happiness) or with a “k” (Thai. *suk*, cooked, ripe).<sup>2</sup> Is our happiness the result of being satisfied with enough (Thai. *pho cai*) or bloated and overstuffed (Thai. *uet-at*). Is it the fire of passion, hatred, fear, jealousy, and foolish stupidity that cannot be quenched or restrained? Is it *suk* with a k, to be enflamed? One must scrutinize oneself to determine whether one’s happiness is with a “k” or a “kh,” based on satisfaction associated with bloated, enflamed desires or the cool of equanimity, enoughness, and sufficiency.

Our world today is stressed out (Thai. *khried*) in virtually all aspects—health, economy, community, politics, competition among individuals and groups, destructive envy, jealousy, and hatred. Our world lacks the beauty that brings joy. The daily newspapers are full of stories about wars rampant throughout the world, conflict, poverty, chaos. On the individual level these conditions are a result of a sickness of the spirit (*viññāna*), mind and heart (Thai. *cit-cai*)<sup>3</sup> that lack purity, illumination, calm, and equanimity; that

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<sup>2</sup>Buddhadasa is an agent provocateur, par excellence. His skill in provoking his audiences to think more deeply about the spiritual truths he is trying to convey is seen in his use of irony, metaphor, and word play. In this case he is using a word in Thai that is pronounced the same but spelled differently and with very different meanings: refreshing cool vs. fire hot, equanimity vs. inflamed passion.

<sup>3</sup>In Thai, the compound *cit-cai* conveys the intimate connection between mind and heart, thought and sentiment/affection. I have chosen to translate the term as “mind and heart,” rather than “heart-mind,” or simply “mind,” or “heart.”

bring about anxiety and fear; that cause chronic, untreatable mental and physical illness. This unrest of the heart and mind leads to mental illness that, for example, affects the body's ability to assimilate sugar and leads to diabetes and other serious, chronic illnesses such as cancer and tuberculosis.

We tend to be oblivious to the connection between bodily illness and the imbalances in the mind and heart. Imbalances in the blood weaken our ability to fight disease because mind and heart have been crippled by anxiety, mental stress, and a hunger and thirst that leave one with a feeling of emptiness. The disease of the mind and spirit is the primary cause of bodily illness. At its foundation is the absence of Dhamma. Dhamma dispels anxiety, fear, mental stress, and the affliction of mind and heart. The correct alignment of the mind and heart helps eliminate these conditions.

It is important to keep in mind that Dhamma is not only a matter of mind and spirit, but includes all aspects of life: mind and spirit, the physical body, and contact with everything around us—home, wealth and property, animals, rice fields, and so on. In essence, *Dhamma means the correct way of relating to everything*—one's total lifestyle—how we live, eat, dress, and so forth. Body, mind, and spirit are inherently connected so that when a person is properly balanced according to insight-wisdom (*sati-paññā*) all aspects of one's life—personal, physical place, home and family—are in proper alignment. But how can we know and live Dhammically or in Dhamma?

In case you have forgotten let me repeat: Dhamma means to act according to the highest norm (Thai. *quam thuk dong*) of what it means to be human in all respects of every stage of our development—body, speech, heart and mind, spirit. But how can we know what this norm or principle is? It is not simply a matter of accepting what we have heard. Rather, we must test Dhamma for ourselves before committing ourselves to it.

I shall now elaborate for your consideration five practical principles of living Dhammically: 1) understanding oneself; 2) having confidence in

oneself; 3) being able to restrain and control oneself; 4) being content (Thai. *pho cai*) with oneself and living according to the principle of enoughness and sufficiency; and 5) having self-respect.

First, understanding oneself. Do we really understand ourselves [at different stages of life]? Do the elderly who are approaching the end of their lives know who they are; what their lives amount to? Without insight-knowledge (*sati-paññā*) even those who have reached the age of eighty do not really have a deep self-understanding. At whatever age, we should look back over our lives to consider our condition. Do we see our past as full of frustrations? As a battle between right and wrong? Are we able to look ahead and contemplate the meaning and direction of our lives?

Do not make such contemplations overly complex. Take the simple [yet profound] questions, “Who Am I?” and “Do I understand what it means to be fully human?” These are the basic questions we need to consider, whether we are male or female, a child or an adult. Whoever we are we have the responsibility to realize our fullest humanity. We should not squander the opportunity to be fully human and to live in Dhamma.<sup>4</sup> To realize Dhamma in this sense, however, demands an elevated heart and mind. [By that I mean that one has achieved and lives with the insight-wisdom regarding the true nature of things.] To achieve this state of being is not an insignificant matter. It is difficult to explain, but from this perspective we can say that being

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<sup>4</sup> I am translating Buddhadasa’s expression, *phop buddhasasana*, not in the literal sense of “discovering or entering Buddhism,” but as “living in Dhamma.” Although Buddhadasa uses the term, *buddhasasana*, in several different senses, at the level of principle or norm I understand him to mean Dhamma in the encompassing sense of the way things are in their true or natural state (*pakati* as *idapaccayatā*).

human in the fullest sense is having an elevated heart and mind (*cit cai sung*). This means one has transcended suffering (*dukkha*). One who has not achieved this condition of heart and mind is subject to suffering, but one who has realized this state of heart and mind is like the Buddha. For us as Buddhists, this means that we take the Buddha's essential teaching as the fundamental principle of our lives. (For those of another religion it means that they take the essential teaching of their tradition as the fundamental principle of their lives.)

“Buddha” means simply, “one who knows;” “one who has awakened;” “one filled with boundless joy” (Thai. *buekban*). The basic meaning is “one who has awakened;” not in the sense of being jolted awake by fear or a loud bang, but awakening from sleep, opening eyes that were closed. When we are awake; when our eyes are opened we are “Buddha.” In ordinary language, being asleep or with closed eyes, being awake or with open eyes is understood in a literal sense. However, in the language of Dhamma or truth, being asleep or with eyes closed means the affliction (*kilesa*) of ignorance (Thai. *quam ngo*; Pāli. *avijjā*). To dispel the affliction of ignorance is to wake up; to become “Buddha.” Being awake in this sense leads to peace and boundless joy.

If we are not asleep in a Dhammic sense and have a deep self-understanding and correct knowledge, we overcome suffering and attain a state of boundless happiness and equanimity-satisfaction (Thai. *pho cai*). This is what it means to be Buddha: one who knows, who has awakened, who is suffused with boundless happiness. This is the meaning of having an elevated heart and mind (Thai. *cai sung*). May all of us achieve this depth of understanding whether we are a child, an adult, or an elderly person. This is what it means to be truly human (Thai. *pen manut*).

Living in Dhamma requires self-understanding, wisdom (*paññā*), and right knowledge (*sammādiṭṭhi*). This is what it means to be truly human. First and foremost, being fully human depends on self-understanding.

Second, we must have self-confidence or faith in ourselves (Thai. *chua tua eng*). The meaning of “having faith in oneself” is problematic. In a Dhammic sense informed by wisdom (*paññā*) it means being fully human or realizing our full human potential. “Confidence” or “faith” as used in Buddhism often refers to belief in *kamma* (karma), the consequences of *kamma*, and the Buddha’s awakening. But this is insufficient, and must include belief or confidence in oneself. Without confidence in oneself there can be no confidence in *kamma*, or in the Buddha’s awakening. Faith in oneself is fundamental to being fully human. Do we truly believe in our humanity or are we confused and uncertain? The cultivation of our humanity requires self-confidence; the confidence that we can become fully human. Confidence that overcomes ambiguity, uncertainty, and confusion is at the very basis of human flourishing.

Third, we must exercise self-control. Confidence in oneself without acting is insufficient. Not to act is an affliction (*kilesa*). In acting to realize one’s highest potential as a human being the *kilesa* of the mind (*citta*) is transformed by bodhi. This is what is meant by self-discipline: controlling the negative poisons that prevent one from being fully human by means of awareness and wisdom (*sati-paññā*). Dhamma means the self-control by which the *kilesa* of the mind is transformed by *bodhi* that enables one to realize one’s fullest human potential. Dhamma means to tame, train, or command; to tame the negative poisons so that we may achieve our true humanity. The Buddha taught human beings the way to Dhamma, and he, himself, exemplified the self-control necessary to realize Dhamma. He was a “tamer of human beings,” but [we cannot simply rely on the Buddha to tame us]. We must tame ourselves.

All of us should tame ourselves every moment of every day. Unless we do, we inevitably make mistakes, are inattentive, walk in the wrong direction, and fall over the brink. Rather than thinking self-discipline is no



fun (Thai. *sanuk*),<sup>5</sup> we should be content [knowing that self-control is required to realize our fullest potential as human beings]. If we do not exercise self-control, we smoke, drink, and act in various other kinds of detrimental ways that destroy our ability to support ourselves. If we exercise self-discipline and self-control, however, we will have enough to live on, improve our lives, and walk in the right direction.

It is not unusual to think that taming ourselves is difficult or painful. Deciding to exercise self-discipline and self-control, and not just to go out and have fun, requires endurance and patience. Many people come here [to Suan Mokkh] to stop smoking. Without self-discipline, however, one cannot give up smoking. When the craving to smoke arises, one must persist in resisting the craving. Before long, the urge to smoke will cease and one will be freed from the craving. To overcome addictive smoking, drunkenness, carousing and gambling, laziness, not falling in with friends who lead us astray, requires self-discipline. Disciplined self-control is required to change the negative habits that prevent us from realizing our potential and becoming fully human. We must be firm in the belief that we can achieve this realization and act on that faith.

Therefore, we must follow the advice of our ancestors who said, “A tilapia fish must be opened and scaled before it is dried. Keep at it. Keep at it.” Becoming fully human can be difficult and requires effort. Do not give up or lose heart. Find a way to keep at it. If an elephant falls into a pond it gets out with tremendous self-effort. Similarly, extracting the mind from defilements (*kilesa*) is difficult and requires great effort if one is not to be defeated. We can, however, discipline the mind and tame ourselves.

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<sup>5</sup> The Thai term, “*sanuk*,” generally translated as “fun,” had a particular salience for the young people in Buddhadasa’s audience.

Self-knowledge, self-confidence, and self-discipline lead to self-contentment (Thai. *pho cai*).<sup>6</sup> A contented state of being in the sense of a mind suffused with equanimity is the *sine qua non* of our birth as a human being rather than that of a dog or cat or chicken. To realize our potential as a human being requires the wisdom of insight-understanding (*sati-paññā*).

Let us consider the nature of our sense of contentedness or enoughness and what it is that makes us so. Is it a result of self-love even though there is nothing admirable about us and perhaps even loathsome? Contentment that comes from such self-love is a form of *kilesa*. True contentment and satisfaction results from self-discipline and self-purification.

If we examine ourselves carefully, a sense of contentment arises from being without flaw or blemish that may lead to happiness; however, it is a happiness that results from dint of effort that produces contentment and satisfaction. Without a sense of contentment happiness will be illusive. Even if we have millions of baht, it will not produce happiness. Lacking a sense of satisfaction, contentment, or enoughness, we shall always want more and more. Whether in regard to ourselves, children, husband, wife, wealth or whatever it is, without a sense of satisfaction and contentment we will not be happy. To look for happiness elsewhere is a form of *kilesa* and will lead us to wrong action. It is crazy to think that drunkenness and gambling will make us happy, mistaking being on fire with desire and passion as happiness. Happiness that comes from satisfaction and equanimity is what it means to be fully human. Happiness results automatically from such contentment. We do not need to debate or deliberate about whether or not we are happy. When

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<sup>6</sup> *Pho* (sufficient) + *cai* (heart-mind) translated here as “contentment,” resonates with the Pāli term, *upekkhā* (equanimity). It does not mean smug self-satisfaction or indifference but a calm, unruffled state of being.

we act out of contentedness and satisfaction, happiness arises automatically.

In the case of money, if we are content with the amount of money we have, we are happy. But Dhamma is an entirely different matter. In Dhammic language, happiness means the satisfaction that comes from realizing our full humanity. This is true happiness—the happiness of the spirit (*viññāṇa*). Whatever we do—whether sweeping streets, rowing a boat, even cleaning dirty sewer pipes—a sense of happiness in the here and now is possible when we act from a sense of contentment.<sup>7</sup> It is this sense of contentment, of heartfelt satisfaction that is the fundamental norm<sup>8</sup> of our humanity. When we act according to this norm, we are being fully human.

Everyone is defined by *kamma* in unique and particular ways. From the perspective of *kamma*, there are a variety of ways of being and acting in the world. One may be a farmer, gardener, merchant, banker, lawyer, and so on. Regardless of one's position in the world, however, Dhammically one acts justly and righteously with the good of all in mind. For example, a merchant or a banker should not seek an exorbitant profit but a fair profit that will benefit all. To act in this way is meritorious (*puññā*) because it promotes mutual well-being. To exploit others is demeritorious (*pāpa*). A lawyer who follows Dhammic norms of fairness and justice, and who does not exploit the

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<sup>7</sup> This statement resonates with Thich Nhat Hanh's view of Zen Buddhism as being fully in the present.

<sup>8</sup> Buddhadasa often uses the Thai term *nāthī* in different senses depending on the context. Hence, it is difficult to translate. The customary translation of *nāthī* is “duty,” but a superficial understanding of duty or obligation fails to capture the depth of Buddhadasa's use of the term. Here I render *nāthī* as “norm.”

less fortunate, is acting meritoriously. A lawyer or a banker who exploits others is a hellish creature (Thai. *sat-narok*), but those who help the world become more comfortable and prosperous achieve great merit. In other words, those who are not greedy, who do not exploit others--whether a lawyer, banker, civil servant, or teacher--are acting Dhammically. They achieve merit and make the world a more just place, especially for those who are less privileged and disadvantaged. Those who are greedy, who deceive and exploit others, end up in hell.

I understand that there are many students and teachers here today. Teaching is a vocation of great honor (*ariya-puggala*), worthy of respect and meritorious value (*puññā*) because teachers “build” (Thai. *sang*) the world. The future of the world—whether it becomes better or worse—depends on teachers who instruct children to be good [honest, just, righteous, not greedy] who, in turn, become good adults and make the world a better, happier place. The opposite is just as true.

To be true to oneself, whether a street sweeper or a king, is to be content with oneself, and is the essence of what it means to be truly human. To act according to this norm is meritorious and contributes to the well-being of the world. To be continuously dissatisfied, to always want more, leads to unhappiness, mental dis-ease, serious physical illness, and even death.

There is a fifth and final principle of living Dhammically. This is *self-respect*. Everyone sitting here, please, *wai* yourself in a gesture of respect.<sup>9</sup> Excuse me for asking, but do you have a high enough self-regard to *wai* yourself? If you doubt that you are good and suspect that you cannot *wai*

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<sup>9</sup> To *wai* is to place the palms of the hands together before one's face, often with a slight bow, as a greeting or gesture of respect.

yourself, you cannot flourish as a human being. But now pay closer attention; look more carefully and reconsider, and you will see—automatically without getting bogged down in a lot of thought--that you really are worthy of a *wai* of self-respect. This gesture of self-respect signals the contentment that leads to happiness and human flourishing (Thai. *pen manut*).

Let me review the five principles of what it means to be truly human so you will not forget them: 1) self-knowledge, 2) faith in oneself, 3) self-control, 4) self-contentment, 5) self-respect. These are five fundamental principles of the Buddha-Dhamma. They can be expressed in Pāli, but I have chosen not to do so because they would have been more confusing and difficult to remember such as the Pāli word, *paññā*, for knowledge instead of the Thai, *quamru*; or the Pāli, *santosa*, for contentment instead of the Thai, *pho cai*. The words for “respect,” in Pāli, *gravatā*, or in Thai, *khawrop*, *naph̄u*, convey the same meaning, namely, that one respects the good and the beautiful in oneself.

Everyone should maximize the value of education.<sup>10</sup> I urge the many teachers and students in the audience not simply to see education as a matter of vocational training but of studying Dhamma in order that all many flourish as human beings (Thai. *manut*; Pāli. *manussa*). You may have a lot of book knowledge, get a good job, and even become wealthy but still fail to realize your deepest nature as a human being. You are then like a dog with its tail cut off. The more profound, Dhammic value of education instills the five principles I have discussed with you today: self-knowledge, self-confidence,

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<sup>10</sup> In addition to the use of metaphor and analogy, Buddhadasa often employs colloquial expressions. In this sentence he refers to education which lacks the Dhammic value of become fully human as "a dog with the tail cut off," or "a chedi without a spire."

self-control, self-contentment, and self-respect. Teachers who develop these values in their students are truly meritorious. They are being like the Buddha. The Buddha taught Dhamma in order that all might realize their full humanity. In helping their students to do so, teachers are repaying the Buddha.

The five principles are the means by which we embody Dhamma. At the beginning of my talk I asked you, “What is Dhamma?” Now we can answer that question. Dhamma is following these five principles and in doing so we realize our true humanity; in doing so we become Buddha.

The Buddha said, “Whoever sees Dhamma sees me; whoever sees me sees Dhamma; whoever sees Dhamma sees the Tathāgata; whoever sees the Tathāgata sees Dhamma.” Today we have Dhamma and the Buddha. Regardless of whether we are someone very important or not, if we realize Dhamma we are the Buddha, and to achieve our fullest potential as human beings is to become Buddha.

*Kankratham Thi Thudong Kae Quam Pen Manut*  
Thammasapa, Bangkok, no date.





# The Foundation of What It Means to Be Human

The notion of “being firm” has many dimensions. For example, it might refer to the military, supervisors, the economy, development, education, training, and so on. I know that all of you have considered this term before. I, myself, have not previously considered the term, so initially I would like to address the notion of inner firmness or firmness of the heart-mind (*cit-cai*) as the very foundation of other aspects of this concept.

## The Strength and Firmness of Being Human

The strength and stability in our humanity extends to everything. Now I am speaking to you sitting in a chair. If I were sitting on a rock, it would be firmer than a chair and sitting on sand would be even more stable. The earth is the foundation of stability. It is analogous to being firm in regard to our ideals. The Buddha was born and reached enlightenment while sitting on the ground under shade of a tree. Likewise, his hut (*kuṭi*), where he taught his disciples, and even his *parinibbāna* were all similarly grounded. In other words, his life was “in the midst of.” Simply put, the Blessed One was born, reached

enlightenment, and died in such circumstances because of the stability afforded by the earth itself, namely, nature. To be near nature is to be firm and stable. Most people have an expectation of going to heaven. This is what motivates them to make merit. The Buddha, however, attained enlightenment in the midst of the earth.

## Dhamma: The Ground of Stability

Now I wish to speak about Dhamma. Dhamma means that which is most firm and stable, the very ground of our humanity. After the Buddha attained enlightenment, he taught Dhamma as the way to be freed from *dukkha*. We have Dhamma as the firm ground of our humanity. It is imperative that we understand the meaning of the term.

## The Meaning of the Term “Dhamma”

Dhamma includes both *rūpadhamma* and *nāmadhamma* [namely, that which is both “form” and “beyond form”], and refers to everything in nature (*dhammajāti*), more specifically, the law that encompasses nature. Dhamma in both instances refers to the principle that controls nature. We must understand this truth. The law of nature encompasses material things, the world broadly speaking. The term also encompasses the duty all living things have to adhere correctly to the law of nature. Thirdly, the term refers to caring for our inner peace. The word, “duty” (*nāthi*), is an important term. Its meaning is imbedded in Dhamma relative to what it means to be a human being just as, for example, a tree embodies tree-ness. Being human entails duty. Fourthly, Dhamma also encompasses the *results* of doing our duty which can include material things—money, possessions, happiness—as well as the three pillars: the path, the consequences of following the path, and *Nibbāna*; or, in other words, the consequences of doing our duty as Buddhists.



## The Dhammic Principle that Builds Firm Stability

We must incorporate these four principles into a course of action that constitutes what it means to be human. We must understand nature, the principles of nature, our responsibility that follows from nature, and the consequences that we hope for—peace and calm for ourselves, for the world, and for the universe. These four principles are, in sum, Dhamma, the appropriate actions for realizing our fullest humanity.

## The Path to Reach *Nibbāna*

Human evolution is a given—from childhood to adulthood and then on to old age—and at each stage there is a Dhammic or appropriate mode of both mental and physical activity regarding both the individual and society. If done correctly and well, according to the norms of nature, then it is done Dhammically until one achieves *Nibbāna*.

## Proceeding with One's Life According to Dhamma

Whether our actions in the world and their consequences are correct or not is adjudicated according to the norms of Dhamma. If humankind collectively were to embody Dhamma the problems we face today would not arise. There would be mutual understanding because of a shared view of the nature of things. The perpetual conflict we see in the world today—as a result of contravening the norms of Dhamma or the law of God—would be eliminated.

## Building Peace According to the Law of Nature

Today no one believes in God or Dhamma, but only what one finds useful for oneself. This contradicts the Law of Nature. What then is peace? Peace comes as a result of correctly following the Law of Nature. In the world today everyone seems to be devoted primarily to material things rather than matters of the heart and spirit or Dhamma. Hence, selfishness darkens one's

vision and one has little concern for others. This contradicts Buddhist principles and the principles of all religions. All life shares the fundamental conditions of birth, aging, illness, and death. If a religion is truly authentic, it teaches the destruction of selfishness and how to be altruistic. If everyone in the world adheres to the teaching of his or her religion, then the world's serious problems such as murder would be eliminated.

## Dhamma Leads to Peace and Happiness

I sincerely believe that when Dhamma and religion flourish, happiness and peace will prosper. Peace and happiness will not flourish until religion and Dhamma are truly restored. The natural state of happiness is peaceful and is a consequence of Dhamma serving as the foundation. To be truly human requires Dhamma.

## Dhamma: Humankind's Secure Foundation

If we do not reach the very heart of Dhamma, then we are scattered and unstable, without a firm foundation, oppressed by *kilesa* (depravity). When that is the case, our humanity is undermined. However, when Dhamma is our foundation then our humanity is firm and stable. When this is the case, we understand that all are friends in the cycle of birth, old age, sickness, and death. We are happy to help one another, and there are no problems among people or between the government and the people or among countries. When everyone embodies Dhamma, humankind is one.

## Dhamma: The Way to Correct the Problems of Instability

Please pay attention to what we call Dhamma. Dhamma is the means for correcting the problems associated with instability, namely, to be stable in regard to what it means to be human. I do not mean to be sarcastic or insult anyone, but only to speak directly. We must have Dhamma in order to be

fully human. When that is the case, our problems are eliminated.

## Everyone in the World Must Live Together

Everyone has the responsibility to work for the stability of the nation. We should not refer to all of us as “the people,” but, rather, as friends in the shared experience of birth, old age, sickness, and death. Therefore, we should love one another. We should not persecute one another or take another’s life; we should regard the life of others as highly as we regard our own. Loving others promotes mutual understanding and the utility of working together. The sense of human solidarity should extend to loving kindness toward animals, as well. Trees have life, as well. Trees experience love, fear, sorrow, and suffering as do animals but of a lower order.

## Barriers to Building Stability

Many people do not follow a virtuous path but, rather, one that is ruinous. Rather than being a person of firm heart and mind, they fall under the power of Māra. They venerate a ruinous path; follow destructive ways such as drinking, partying all night and gambling; are dominated by evil friends; are too lazy to work.

The term *abāya* means to degrade or worsen. The Buddha said that *abāyamukh* was the beginning of degeneration. Our fellow citizens still consort with *abāyamukh*: they smoke and drink all kinds of liquor until they become drunk and their minds are clouded. They lose control over their feelings; go out for pleasure at night and cannot control their feelings. They are slaves of *kilesa* (depravity/lust). They spend their time frivolously. Therefore, their health and business suffer. They steal from the poor, gamble, play the lottery, and drink. Their attention and understanding suffers. They are unstable, prejudiced and unbalanced, dominated by depravity and lust.

It seems odd but with the increase in material development there is

an increase in the number of criminals who harm themselves and others. Unfortunately, this is quite true even though it seems crazy. This is a result of the lack of commitment to Dhamma. The lazy engage in gainful employment, not because of good motivation, but only because they need money in order to buy food to eat.

There is a third meaning of Dhamma, namely, the duty of living things in regard to the norms of nature. This is referred to as “doing Dhamma” for itself, not for money or any other reason but simply because it is the right thing to do. When people today speak about that which is right thing it might bring a laugh. According to the principles of religion, one does the right thing simply because it is right thing for human beings to do, not for personal benefit.

### To Do One’s Duty is to Conduct Oneself According to Dhamma

The Buddha and the Arahants worked continuously without compensation; they did not work in order that they might eat. They did so simply because it is the duty of humankind according to one’s position. This is referred to as *doing Dhamma*. It is acting out of respect for oneself that brings the greatest happiness, not for the compensation one might receive, to be liked, or in exchange for something else. Rather, it is doing our duty in regard to Dhamma. Please write down this sentence: work is *doing Dhamma*.

The third meaning of the term is performing our duty as human beings in regard to the nature of things. Happiness does not come from having money, but from our ability as human beings to respect others which brings us happiness and contentment. We experience joy because we carry out our responsibilities regarding Dhamma.

## The World is Stable Because of Those Who Practice Dhamma

True happiness results from having a firm heart and mind and adhering to Dhamma, not from being attached to kilesa which disturbs the heart and mind. However, if our happiness derives from practicing Dhamma, firmness of mind, and care for our humanity, then our foundation will be firm and lasting. If both mind and body are stable then everything we do—the community, the nation indeed, the world—will be firm and stable because the people adhere to Dhamma.

## Achieving Stability through Contentment

We can achieve stability in all respects, especially economically, if we give up vices such as drinking, partying at night, gambling, and associating with evil or lazy people. Then we shall be stable and find our happiness in practicing Dhamma. Do not seek out entertainments such as movies and plays, and above all do not worship money.

## Money: The Wild Tiger of Stability

Today the economy is bankrupt because everyone worships money. We live excessively, overeat, overdress, overmedicate, and because we live in excess, kilesa arises. If we live moderately, the economy prospers. Why do we drink liquor or smoke? We should stop. Then families and lower paid civil servants will have a sufficient monthly income. The same is true for how we dress. It is not necessary to buy expensive clothes. We consume without let up. And we acquire all kinds of unnecessary home goods. Do we really need a TV, a refrigerator, or an expensive house? Today some people have houses that cost a million baht. And some people own as many as twenty-five cars. Is this crazy or not?!

Be careful of excess whatever it might be—food, dress, housing—

and the economy will be stable. The Thai saying, “Eat well; live well” is crazy. We should not eat beyond that which is sufficient. The same applies to our dress and living circumstances. The Buddha clearly taught that we should not consume in excess but only that which is sufficient, and whatever is left over we should share with others for our mutual well-being. This is the very height of goodness and merit (*puñña*).

The Mind: The Foundation of What It Means to be Human  
May all of you gathered here consider what it means to have a firm heart and mind. The foundation of what it means to be human lies in the human spirit (*viññāṇa*) where the principles of religion reside. It can be summarized as the proper actions in regard to the development of what it means to be human in every respect—body, mind, and spirit. As human beings we have a superior mind that enables us to overcome all the problems we face.

*Rākthān Thī Mankhong Haeng Quām Pen Manut*

The Center for Buddhist Books, Bangkok, no date.





# The Goal of Life

We should review the meaning of the term Dhamma in order to be as clear as possible about its meaning. The term Dhamma is a subject very relevant to our lives. The term *chiwit-dhamma*, a Dhamma-life, means that from the beginning to the end we conduct our lives correctly according to Dhamma. We must first speak about the purpose and end of our life.

## What Is Life?

One perspective is to consider this question from a material point of view, namely, the body; another perspective is the mind or consciousness; and another is as a vegetable entity with life. Animals obviously have life as do human beings, and both evolve until they die. Life evolves from a single cell to plant life, then to animals and to human beings finally ending in death. We do not know about life after death. Before death our lives exist in various conditions. If we consider our lives from the perspective of consciousness (*viññāṇa*), not simply the mind (*citta*), we must look to our intelligence (*satipaññā*). Our minds continue to adjust and develop toward excellence. We have insufficient knowledge to escape from suffering. To do so requires

*satipaṇṇā*. To act correctly requires that our consciousness be illuminated by knowledge and understanding so that suffering may be expelled. This is the state of *Nibbāna*. The aim of our life, pursuing the path of awareness, is *Nibbāna*, namely, to be “utterly cool.” The opposite is the consequence of defilement (*kilesa*), a result of ignorance.

Some teach, incorrectly, that *Nibbāna* is a state achieved after the death of an *arahant* or a Buddha. *Nibbāna*, rather, is the condition of mind and consciousness of being completely cool, of *kilesa* being eliminated. The Buddha’s *Nibbāna* was the realization of a condition of coolness, the death of *kilesa*, the overcoming of *dukkha*. This is the highest goal of life.

Do not be stuck on Pāli terminology, which is difficult to understand. Simply realize that *Nibbāna* means to be cool to the point of realizing that end. One should consider the condition of impatience that affects the wealthy, a condition that results from lust, anger, and stupidity; and the problems that one identifies with the self. To understand Dhamma one must understand oneself. It is not an understanding that anyone like myself can give to you or that you can get from books.

Suffering results from stupidity, from desire, anger, and ignorance. Consider thoughtfully—*kilesa* is a general term that includes greed, anger, confusion, hatred, and delusion. There is not a specific *kilesa* for children, adults, husbands, wives, Thais, or foreigners. *Kilesa* is the same for all human beings. Therefore, suffering is the same for everyone; namely, *suffering is the result of depravity rooted in the ignorance that there is a self*.

According to Buddhist principles. Desire is the cause of the origin of suffering. Desire is the cause of a sense of a self and the self’s attachment to one’s home and wealth. The problems continue to increase making one continually hot and bothered. Therefore, one should strive to quench the fires of desire and not wait until one dies. One eliminates *kilesa* when one attains *Nibbāna*.



## The End of One's Life

Now we are all gathered here. It is not the end of our lives. We all have problems that will end along with suffering when we die, and in the here and now we all experience *kilesa*. The true purpose of our lives is not simply to achieve a state of coolness for ourselves but for everyone. The person who realizes the coolness of *Nibbāna* is helpful to everyone. According to Buddhism this is the goal of an abundant life, of our heart, mind, and body. If our hearts and minds are truly cool, we do not need to be concerned about money, fame, or power. We are able to attain *Nibbāna*. An *arahant*, for example, who has only one robe and a begging bowl can attain his life's goal, namely, *Nibbāna*.

It is very troublesome and disturbing if we believe that we must be wealthy. It promotes sensuality and lust (*kilesa*). Therefore, we should have only a sufficient amount of wealth, likewise in regard to fame and power, and the number of our friends. The term, "sufficient," means that we are not troubled [by an overabundance]; have only that which is sufficient; and are cool [rather than hot and bothered].

If you have a household, a wife and children, how is it possible to be cool? Keep in mind that there are degrees of coolness. Embody the amount that is possible for you. The maximum degree of coolness is *Nibbāna*, the ultimate goal of an abundant life. It is still laudable, however, if you achieve only a partial degree of coolness. There are three stages that are possible even for laity: stream enterer (*sotāpanna*), once-returner (*sakadāgāmi*), never-returner (*anāgami*). The last stage, arahant, is the stage of utter coolness, namely, *Nibbāna*.

All of you are observant lay persons. You are inclined toward a good life and, hence, are stream-enterers. That is, you have the proper understanding, faith, intentionality, speech, and action. You are steadfast, diligent, mindful, and focused. Hence, you can be characterized as stream-enterers. You have entered the path that culminates in *Nibbāna*, and to the degree that you become cool, you will attain this goal.

It is important that all of you are studying to understand your goal in life and to eliminate the various problems that cause you to suffer. You will then be cool, calm, and free. When the Buddha addressed the most basic principles, it was about the elimination of suffering, becoming cool, calm, and free that resulted from the elimination of suffering. He did not speak about happiness because that condition is part of suffering. The elimination of suffering was sufficient. Whenever he referred to happiness, it was to encourage an interest in his teaching because everyone is interested in happiness. When suffering is extinguished, problems will disappear. Analogously, when fire burns it is hot, but it is cool when extinguished. One should feel satisfied when there is no more suffering; however, one is still habitually addicted to the taste of delicious food, to sex, and so forth. One may apply these feelings to *Nibbāna*, but they are total opposites.

If we use the term “delicious,” we must transform the meaning of the term to mean something like “true happiness,” cool in the highest sense; or associate the term, “delicious,” with a bland taste not with a particular flavor such as tea, coffee, sugar, etc. If we think that *Nibbāna* should have a delicious flavor, we will never find our way to that goal. Our desire for deliciousness leads to *kilesa*. If we can transcend the polarity of like and dislike and embrace the middle way, we will be cool and experience freedom, the coolness of *Nibbāna*, the goal of our lives. However, if we are bound by expectation we cannot be free of suffering. This is the teaching of Buddhism.

Let me therefore, assert, that *Nibbāna* is the highest goal, the *paramdhamma*, the end of depravity (*kilesa*) and suffering (*dukkha*) There is nothing higher. This is Buddhism’s supreme teaching.

*Bawmai Khong Chīwit*

Supapjai, Bangkok, July 30, B.E. 2523/C.E. 1980.





# The Best Way To Proceed With Our Lives

The *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*  
The Most Important Sutta Regarding  
The Path To Enlightenment

This Sutta was taught by the Blessed One to his five disciples immediately following his enlightenment. We do not know if the Buddha referred to this teaching as the *Dhammacakkappavattana* [Turning the Wheel of the Law], or if it was given this title subsequently by his followers. In any event, it represents the enunciation of Dhamma.

Initially, the Buddha was not going to proclaim the Dhamma but, subsequently, left out of his compassion and for our good fortune, he was persuaded to do so even though he thought his teaching might not be fully understood. So, he taught his five former followers the *Dhammacakkappavattana* who then realized enlightenment.

## The Way One Should Proceed

One should follow the Noble Eightfold Path veering neither to the left nor to the right, namely, the Noble Eightfold Path, enunciated by the Buddha at his enlightenment, the path that leads to the elimination of suffering, the attainment of *Nibbāna*, and the cessation of rebirth.

## One Who Does Not Know Suffering Does Not Fear It

For the most part, people do not understand the nature of suffering which is at the very heart of the Buddha's teaching: namely, birth and old age are suffering, or, in brief, the five aggregates are at the very heart of attachment. Those who are lacking insight and wisdom have so much dust in their eyes that they misunderstand the nature of suffering. They fear things they should not, and do not fear things that they should fear. For example, they do not fear birth; however, they should fear birth. In short, they do not understand the nature of suffering and, therefore, do not fear it.

## Teaching The Noble Eightfold Path

So, how should you proceed with your lives? The Buddha said, "O, bhikkhus, follow the Middle Way as I have taught you according to the wisdom of the Tathagatha." The Buddha further elaborated the qualities of the Middle Way in terms of right speech and right action based on right understanding. In this way, one correctly maintains one's life and progresses diligently into the future. One is mindful about everything and is able to endure all obstacles. In Pali this is referred to as *sammā-dit̥ṭhi* (right view) *sammā-saṅkappa* (right thought) proceeding to *sammā-samādhi* (right focused attention).

The Eightfold Path is referred to as Buddha's teaching regarding the Middle Way. The Middle Way must include these eight facets otherwise it is not the *ariya-magga* (Noble Path), the Middle Way as taught by the Buddha, or, in other terms it is not Buddhism. Together with mindful attention, it

encompasses the basic principles of Buddhism that lead to the overcoming of suffering and the attainment of *Nibbāna* as taught by the Buddha. We should constantly prepare ourselves in every way to follow the Eightfold Path all the time to make sure that it has our full attention. It is the Noble Path, the Middle Way as taught by the fully enlightened Buddha.

### How Should One Live?

How should one live everyday? Do we give enough attention to this question? We must attend to the way the Buddha addressed this question based on the insight he gleaned from his enlightenment. That is the Eightfold Noble Path beginning with right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). Taken together it represents the way we should live, a progressive path toward *Nibbāna*. We do not need a vehicle to get there. *Nibbāna* is here and now. With every breath it resides in our heart and mind. It should be part of our life journey beginning and ending with right view. Therefore, we must study and practice the Eightfold Noble Path continuously as long as we are part of this samsaric world until we realize the goal of *Nibbāna*; the path and goal that the Buddha taught his five original disciples in the Pali language.

### The Eightfold Noble Path

This is not an easy subject, and requires a special interest, daily effort, focused attention, right effort, and right speech. Even with such an effort, one still might not succeed. The Buddha likened the Noble Eightfold Path to a rope of eight strands. Let us consider eight strands. How are they linked together? They must be twisted together equally, of equal weight, strength, and length. If the strands are separated they will not be of sufficient strength to be useful. Similarly, the eight facets of Dhamma must be linked together.

## *Kilesa* [Lust] Is More Fearful Than Poverty

Desire for things may be exacerbated by poverty, but right understanding of the nature of things counters this desire. There is a verse about right view attributed to the Buddha that describes the nature of suffering through old age, suffering and death, as a result of attachment grounded in the five aggregates. In and of itself, poverty does not necessarily mean that one suffers; rather, suffering is a matter of *kilesa* (lust) and *taṇhā* (craving). Controlling one's desire affects the way we deal with the physical aspects of poverty. Moreover, wealth is no guarantee of happiness. Suffering arises from lust and craving, not from having an insufficient amount to eat. Controlling lust and craving is directly connected to a sense of physical poverty. When they overwhelm us we do things we should not do, but even wealth does not guarantee happiness. We should remember that suffering arises from lust and craving, not from the mere sense we might have of not having enough.

## Steps On The Noble Eightfold Path

Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) is the understanding that everything is characterized by impermanence, suffering, and non-essentiality [not-self], hence, problematizing attachment, and understanding that *kamma* (karma) leads us to make distinctions between good and evil. However, if we destroy *kamma* completely and realize *Nibbāna* then *kilesa* is destroyed.

Conventionally we divide *kamma* into two types—evil or bad and good. The first leads to evil, suffering, distress, and ruin. The second leads to heaven but does not lead to *Nibbāna*. The third, *ariyamagga*, puts an end to rebirth. This is the right way to think about the monkhood, *kamma*, and *ariyasacca* and is one way of thinking about right view.

Right Thought (*sammā-saṅkappa*) equals Right View in its importance. It has equal potency but has a different responsibility. It counters an infatuation with *kamma*, laziness, and exploitation.

Right Speech (*sammā-vaca*) refers not only to verbal speech, but also the intentionality to speak. Therefore, if right view and right thought occupy one's mind then one will speak appropriately and pleasantly, not hatefully unlike one who does not embody right view and right speech, who speaks thoughtlessly, crudely, and annoyingly. One should not be loquacious. A talkative person does not embody right speech. Be careful about speaking unnecessarily. One who does so embodies right speech that is one aspect of the Noble Eightfold Path, and is one way of curtailing *kilesa*. Therefore, right speech is not an insignificant matter, but is a means of rooting out *kilesa* which causes one to be a liar and to be overly loquacious. Therefore, one should embody *sammā-vacca* by being thoughtful and insightful, monitoring and limiting one's speech.

Right Action (*sammā-kammanto*). Some people are obviously more conscientious than others; however, in any event, right view is the foundation of right action. Right action does not simply mean that one does not kill or steal. Rather, we must be imbued with loving-kindness; be considerate and helpful to others. Right action is the opposite of *kilesa*, that is to say, doing the correct things that we should do; acting honorably, not selfishly or merely from our own selfish interests. If our behavior is selfishly motivated, we shall never reach *Nibbāna*. Right action is morally correct, with the hope of transcending *dukkha*, and realizing *Nibbāna*, not in order to gain heaven. Extinguishing *dukkha* is more precious than fame and wealth. Fame and wealth do not obviate *kilesa* that blocks our way to *Nibbāna*.

Whatever we do, including observing the precepts, we hope will serve to eliminate suffering entirely—that is *Nibbāna*. It is not something that we should do for a good reputation or to gain heaven but to transcend suffering, which is more important than fame or wealth. Right action is not simply not killing or stealing but includes following the right occupation, namely, that which is more than simply fulfilling our own self interest; but,

rather, overcoming mere self-interest. Merely not killing or stealing does not exhaust the meaning of right action; rather, it is those actions that eliminate selfishness. The Buddha did not maintain that seeking wealth and fame constituted the good, but, rather, that the good was the elimination of *kilesa*.

Right vocation (*sammā-ājīvo*) refers to what we do with our lives. Beyond mere physical wellbeing we should be righteous and, ultimately, realizing calm in our lives; not being blinded by preoccupation with mere physical things, but, rather, seeking to overcome *dukkha* and attaining *Nibbāna*. In the most profound sense that constitutes right vocation grounded in right view.

Right effort (*sammā-vāyāmo*). The middle path journey to *Nibbāna* may require multiple starts before one progresses along the path, not unlike planting a tree what we must care for before it flowers and bears fruit. The same is true in regard to observing Dhamma. We must take great care and make a great effort before the fullest flowering of the Eightfold Noble Path.

Right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) requires considerable control, care, and reflection from beginning to end in order to overcome a blind, infatuated attachment to material things and falling continuously into the web of rebirth. We must awake from the danger of that kind of sleep in order to perceive and practice mindfulness.

Right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*) refers to strengthening the mind in order to have the power to eliminate *kilesa*. Just as it takes a considerable amount of water to put out a fire, so a mind that has acquired much strength is required to extinguish the fire of depravity and lust. One must practice by following the *Satipatthana Sutta*.



One Must Be Sufficiently Attentive  
For the Eightfold Path To Be Effective

To walk the path to *Nibbāna* we must have knowledge and understanding, and must practice diligently. This requires a considerable amount of strength. It demands developing our ability to be attentive and to concentrate in order to be able to follow the Noble Eightfold Path.

*Honthang An Prasert Samrap Damnern Chiwit*  
Bangkok, B.E. 2503/ C.E. 1960.







# Dhamma for the Mature<sup>1</sup>

First, I want to express my pleasure that all of you want to study Dhamma, and came to this place [Wat Suan Mokkh] for that purpose.

We are sitting here in the very heart of nature,<sup>2</sup> not in a building that cost hundreds of thousands or millions [of baht]. As we sit here together in the very heart of nature may we have the right kind of heart (*cai*) so that we may benefit fully from this experience.

Some of you may be thinking that sitting here in the midst of nature is beneath your dignity and, consequently, you may experience anger or feel foolish. You forget that the Buddha attained enlightenment while being in

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<sup>1</sup> A more literal translation of “phu sung ayu” might be “elderly.” However, as I interpret Buddhadasa’s essay, I find “mature” a more apt translation.

<sup>2</sup> Literally, “the center of the earth” (*klāng din*).

the very heart of nature. He was a mighty king, but he attained enlightenment in nature under the shade of a tree. He taught in nature; encountered others in nature; held meetings in nature. His “Dhamma hall” was in nature; his dwelling was in nature; he died in the midst of nature, not in a monk’s dwelling (*kuṭi*), a monastery hall (*vihāra*), or a hospital.

Think about this. How does the earth connect with the Buddha or with Dhamma, both of which arose in the midst of nature? The Buddha taught in the midst of nature; the Buddhist scriptures (*Tipiṭaka*) came into being in the midst of nature; we speak of the Sangha, *kuṭi* [monastic dwellings] and *vihāra* [meeting hall] as the “ground.” In the Buddhist era, the earth came to have a great deal of meaning as the place that gave birth to everything, including Dhamma.

We come [to this place] and sit here on the ground. Touch the earth with your hands; experience contentment; feel the [presence of the] Buddha, and [come to] awareness, knowledge, understanding, and *Nibbāna*. Make this [experience] as fully useful [in your lives] as you can. When you are at home it may be difficult to be centered because you are surrounded by beautiful things. The sala in this wat is a centering place where distinguished guests, like Mr. Krathamontri,<sup>3</sup> are sitting. Let us concentrate on the Buddha while we are sitting here.

## The Mature—Those in the Autumn of Their Lives—and Stages of Aging

True maturity has reference to the heart-mind (*cit-cai*), not to the body. Maturity of heart and mind means that one has a broad knowledge. In Pāli

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<sup>3</sup> Presumably the principal sponsor or patron of the event.

the term is *rattaññū*. Young people are preoccupied with eating, playing, and sex; and, as they age, with home, family, and acquiring wealth. When one progresses beyond these interests, one seeks a quiet and calm heart and mind, merit (*puññā*) and goodness (*kusala*), concentration (*samādhi*) and meditation (*bhāvanā*). One may be content with being in a state of calmness and give away one's wealth to one's children and relatives. Beyond that, one may spend more time at the temple (*wat*) and teach others. The elderly often have a fund of knowledge and are able to teach and advise others. But even beyond that, an elder may achieve a nibbānic-like state of mind. To be sure, one may regress with age far from *Nibbāna* and simply age, and grow more distant from a calm heart and mind.

### The Mature Should Study the Four Stages (*bhūmi*) of the Mind-Heart

I would like to explore the topic of the four stages of the heart-mind. The first is *kāmaavāca*, the love of another—satisfaction, taste, joy, beauty—and applies to children and young people, in particular. The level of *bhūmivāca* applies to the satisfaction of the heart and mind at the level of the senses/desire (*kāma*). Beyond that is *rūpavācāra*, that is to say, *rūpadhamma* that does not accrue *kamma*. For example, one donates to the monastery and even though it is something material it does not accrue *kamma*. However, as a matter of the mind (*citta*) it connects with form consciousness (*rūpañāṇa*); that is happiness that arises from concentration (*samādhi*) in the form of *āramaṇa* (disposition).

Beyond that is the formless (*arūpa*) level. In ordinary language this is beyond the distinctions of merit and goodness, honor and fame, and so on. One has no attachment to material things and wealth, but is attracted to the non-material, to merit (*puññā*), goodness (*kusala*), honor, and fame. Regarding the heart-mind, however, one affirms happiness that arises from

*samādhī* and the *rūpa-ñāṇa* (form-knowledge). This happiness arises from things that do not have *āramaṇa*, such as the atmosphere, consciousness (*viññāṇā*), nothingness, and neither - perception – nor - non-perception (*saññāṇā-saññāyatana*). The fourth level is the transmudane level (*lokkutara-bhūmi*).

## The Dimming of the Heart and Mind in the Mature

By way of summary—we usually like material things that are delicious, beautiful, delightful, and healing that we classify as *kāmāramaṇa*. Both men and women are homeowners and want money and wealth, material things such as cattle and rice fields. However, one tires of these materials things and moves beyond them to an appreciation of merit and good. One progresses to a higher level and teaches others how to make the heart and mind firm (*pakati*).<sup>4</sup>

What should be the proper frame of mind for the mature? Fundamentally, the mature person does not commit an act that results in suffering. Such an act is *pāpa* (evil). Rather, one acts virtuously (*puñṇā*) in a way that produces happiness. Beyond that is *Nibbāna*, a condition where one is free from the throes of evil. One overcomes suffering (*dukkha*), embodies virtue, goodness and happiness, and attains the freedom that is *Nibbāna*.

## Freedom: True Peace and Happiness

Pay close attention: from evil to good, from good to liberation; from demerit to merit, from merit to freedom; from suffering to happiness, from happiness

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<sup>4</sup> *Pakati* is an important term in Buddhadasa's lexicon making translation a challenge depending on the circumstance. In this instance I have chosen, "firm."

to freedom. The foolish do not understand freedom, but go round and round in circles. They like the delicious, the enjoyable, playing around, dancing and so on. They do not know what brings true happiness. The *devatā* in heaven are mired in sense desire (*kāmāramaṇa*). They must move beyond to the Brahma realm, and to be truly free they must reach *Nibbāna*.

The mature must understand freedom beyond conflict, happiness, sorrow, and torment. Happiness is not simply being calm and peaceful. It is a state beyond happiness and sorrow that might be called a state of separation (*viveka*) where one is truly untroubled, not hot and bothered by anything from the outside or inside; free from passion and prejudice (*kilesa*). *Nibbāna* is right before us: from evil to good, from good to the freedom which is *Nibbāna*.

## Look and See What Is What

When you think about your trip to the Garden of Liberation [Suan Mokkh], do you think of it as difficult or as enjoyable? If you came here to have fun, play, and eat delicious food, or even to experience nature, you are acting like a child rather than a mature adult. A mature person comes here to understand *what's what*. The immature, however, come here only to have fun or to experience something different, unusual, or exciting.

I am speaking in a very straightforward way that may anger you. However, if you leave here and do not see this truth, you are not realizing what you should be by being here. Rather, you are like young people who come to Suan Mokkh to have fun rather than to realize a state of calm and quiet. Whoever understands this teaching attains the highest truth (Dhamma), and is called a *tathāgata*. *Tatha* means “like that;” *gata* means “to have attained suchness;” to become an *arahant*. A *tathāgata* is one who transcends love, anger, hatred, fear, agitation worry, envy, egoism, argumentativeness; a state where one sees things as they are, not as odd or strange. If one does not reach

this state, one is blinded by attachment or sees this condition as unusual rather than ordinary; one is stuck in oppositions—love and hate, fear and anxiety. Because one does not see things as they are, one is attached to one side or the other. One gets excited about first this and then that. Such a person is foolish and lacks a real understanding of things as they are. One who does not see things as they are is always confused.

## To See Things as They Are Is to Attain the Highest Summit

To see things as they are is simply to acknowledge birth, old age, and suffering without affection, anger, hatred, or fear. If one achieves such an understanding one has no problem regarding the conditions of birth, old age, suffering, and death. One is foolish to consider old age, suffering, and death as something odd or out of the ordinary. To do so is because of limited understanding, to be fearful, and to suffer. If one is old, one should accept old age for what it is; the same for suffering and death. In Buddhism, we recognize that everything is subject to impermanence, suffering, and voidness; that there is no self that endures; that all things are subject to the conditions of interdependent co-arising (*paṭicca samuppāda*). To realize this truth is to be an *arahant*; to be a *tathāgata*.

If one is an elder in the Buddhist sense of the term, one perceives the deeper meaning of the fundamental teachings of the Buddha: impermanence, suffering, not-self, emptiness, the conditioned nature of things (*idappaccayatā*), *tathagāta*. One attains a state of non-agitation beyond the conflicting feeling of happiness or sadness.

## Test Whether or Not You Are an Adult

Most of you here today are several decades old. You should take stock of the state of things from the time you were an infant to a young person to



adulthood and now on to old age. Why did you have feelings of love, hatred, anger, fear or excitement? This is a way of taking stock of yourself; whether or not you are an adult or whether your feelings are as volatile as a child's. This is a way of checking to see whether or not you are no longer childlike, governed by conflicting feelings of love, hatred, fear, excitement, and worry produced by ignorance.

A child does not understand the real meaning of impermanence and not-self. A child is infatuated with this and that, with things that are to their liking—pretty, funny, pleasant, and delicious. But when one becomes an adult, one is more apt to see things as they really are. An adult's feelings, as I am using the term, is not determined by extremes, but by a sense of moderation as a result of seeing things contextually rather than exaggerating their singular importance. An elder, in this sense, is tranquil, calm, untroubled, and undivided, similar to the unconditioned, uncompounded state of *Nibbāna*, the further shore--unlike this shore which is compounded and fraught with suffering.

We need to understand these deeper realities that we do not ordinarily see or feel. Unlike children fascinated by the present, young people preoccupied with sex, homeowners worried about their possessions, we should seek the enjoyment of calmness and quiet, avoiding the extremes of elation and depression. I do not hesitate to speak very directly to you. To be a mature person is to be like what I have just described. The Thai term for "adult" is *sung* which means high, tall, elevated as, for example, a tall mountain that cannot be submerged because of its height. A mature person is one who cannot be inundated by *dukkha* (suffering), passions or prejudice (*kilesa*).

One's Mind is Lofty Because One Knows What is Right  
One is a lofty person because one knows the truth—what is what—and, therefore, one is not governed by attachment or excitement; is not angry,

hateful, or fearful. One who is lofty cannot be overcome by passion or prejudice, desire (*lobha*) or anger. Suffering does not arise because one is not overcome by attachment, anger, or hatred. Suffering arises because of passion (*kilesa*), and passion arises because one does not know the truth. The foolish are bound by love and hate, profit and loss, defeat and victory, the duality of beauty and ugliness, cause and effect, by sense objects that govern the way of the world. One so conditioned sees things as good or evil, possible/not possible, meritorious/demeritorious, happiness/suffering, defeat/victory, rich/poor. That is the way things are. One is bound by cause and effect. To overcome poverty, we pursue the way of non-poverty; to achieve the good, we adopt the good. To hold firm to one thing whether meritorious, or good, or whatever, we become that very thing.

## To Have or To Be Something Is Problematic Because of Attachment

If we are attached to something we think it is ours or that we are what we possess; then we are bound to have a heavy heart and are unable to sleep. Therefore, avoid attachment that produces a false sense of self. Rather, we should follow the law of cause and effect. We should not identify ourselves with the things we use or with which we associate. Wealth, cattle, rice fields, and so on are things we eat and use but we should not identify ourselves with them or be attached to them as our possessions. Rather, they are part of nature, [just as we are part of nature]. If we identify with our cattle and fields we will not be able to sleep. The same is true with money and with our children. Put money in the bank. Our children are not us and to think they are leads to suffering. To be free according to nature is not problematic but, rather, the way things are.

## Attachment Leads to Suffering

Selfishness gives rise to passion and prejudice, desire, and anger. Their arising produces suffering which undermines our ability to love others or to be interested in Dhamma or what is right. Today the world is filled with selfish people who exploit one another. Selfishness is increasing in the pursuit of beauty and wealth. It is at the heart of conflict between the rich and the poor. Wealth creates selfish capitalists; the poor become selfish laborers or selfish communists who continually fight with one another. This is a matter of *kilesa* which is at the heart of selfishness.

## Today Selfishness Is on the Increase

In the past there was less that encouraged selfishness than today. People ate more simply, lived more modestly, and demanded less when compared to today. People today want more beautiful, larger houses and automobiles worth thousands and millions of baht. They act in such foolish ways all of their lives. Such people never really become adults, but remain immature children infatuated with superficial things like desiring the finest food, clothes, the best houses and appliances.

In the past, people got along fine without electric lights or ice and they were less troubled and anxious than folks today. They had no electric lights, but their hearts radiated light, because they were less attached to things than folks today. They did not drink ice water but their hearts were cooler than folks today who drink ice water all the time because of *kilesa* (desire). Think about how we use electricity. Is it not primarily for pleasure and convenience? The same is true for all kinds of appliances that serve to increase *kilesa*. We become increasingly enslaved to the delicious and convenient.

Today we do not know what is right or understand what is sufficient and what brings calmness. We promote the superficial and artificial rather than what is authentic and sufficient. When we get what we think we want,

then we want more and more. We never reach adulthood in the sense I am using the term. If we can reduce *kilesa*, thirst, and desire, attain the wisdom of maturity, manage our mind, thought, and speech—that is Dhamma, what is correct and right.

## Dhamma Is Duty in Regard to that which is Right

To do one's duty (Thai. *nāthī*)<sup>5</sup> will bring happiness which is tantamount to respecting the Buddha. What did the Buddhas revere? It was Dhamma. Dhamma was their duty. At the Buddha's enlightenment he asked himself, "What should I honor in the future? I am Buddha. I should honor Dhamma and announce, 'Every Buddha—past, future, and present—has honored Dhamma.' To honor Dhamma is the duty of every Buddha." Similarly, everyone has a duty—a child, a young person, a young adult, an adult, an elderly person. It is important that each of us fulfill our duty as best we can. To rise above suffering (*dukkha*) we much fulfill our duty to the best our ability.

## Happiness Comes When We Do Our Duty Correctly

The elderly in the audience have had to fulfill their responsibilities for a long time, and doing so has brought satisfaction and happiness. You did not have to waste money traveling here to southern Thailand to wash dishes and sweep the house. To do your best at whatever you are doing brings satisfaction and happiness even if it is washing dishes and cleaning the house. When you think about it, happiness does not really depend on spending money but on fulfilling our obligations to the best of our ability. You might not believe me

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<sup>5</sup> *Nāthī* is most often translated as "duty," although in these passages sometimes "responsibility" seems a better fit.

but doing your best produces a sense of wellbeing and satisfaction, even if it is just washing the dishes and cleaning the house.<sup>6</sup> True happiness does not cost a cent (*satang*) but acting according to the very best of our ability brings satisfaction and happiness. To be engrossed in spending money plays tricks on us. The more we spend the more we become absorbed in spending but that does not lead to happiness. Happiness does not require spending money but doing what is correct (*thuk tong*). This sort of satisfaction is true happiness.

Be aware (*samādhi*) when you wake up in the morning and while you are brushing your teeth. This leads to a sense of satisfaction. You will be happy the entire time you are washing your face. Foolish people, however, do not know where their minds are and are unable to be attentive. Their minds wander from one conflicting feeling to another so even as they are washing their face awareness, happiness and understanding become impossible. They are deceived into thinking that playing around will bring them happiness, not realizing that performing their daily duties is satisfying. Let me give you a simple example. Wherever you go, even when you go to the bathroom, be aware (*sati-sampajañña*) of a feeling of satisfaction (Thai, *pho cai*). Such

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<sup>6</sup> Buddhadasa's reference here is reminiscent of Thich Nhat Hanh's *Miracle of Mindfulness*: "If while washing dishes, we think only of the cup of tea that awaits us, thus hurrying to get the dishes out of the way as if they were a nuisance, then we are not 'washing the dishes to wash the dishes.' What's more, we are not alive during the time we are washing the dishes. In fact, we are completely incapable of realizing the miracle of life while standing at the sink. If we can't wash the dishes, the chances are we won't be able to drink our tea either. While drinking the cup of tea, we will only be thinking of other things, barely aware of the cup in our hands. Thus we are sucked away into the future -and we are incapable of actually living one minute of life."

awareness escapes the foolish because their minds are wandering all over the place.

Let us consider eating a meal. When you enter a dining room and put rice into your bowl and then eat and swallow it, be aware to the very best of your ability of the satisfaction that you feel while you are eating, whether the morsel you put in your mouth is delicious or not; if it is fruit whether it is sour, and if we eat something sour do we feel anger, or if we eat watermelon and it is too tasteless do we get angry rather than appreciating its nourishment? Eating mindfully with concentration and awareness will produce satisfaction and happiness, and it does not cost a cent (*satang*).

Now we come to washing cups and bowls, and cleaning the house. We should do all of these activities mindfully. It is satisfying to wash the dishes and clean the house. However, the minds of the foolish are elsewhere; hence, they lack the awareness to wash the dishes with concentration and proper understanding. When sweeping the house the mind should be focused on the broom. See the dust being swept up as a means to develop mindfulness. Sweeping the house mindfully leads to happiness. Moving a damp cloth back and forth to clean the house is analogous to developing mindfulness. The foolish cannot understand this. They are deluded, thinking that everything, including happiness, can be acquired with money.

## True Happiness Must Follow the Path of Dhamma

True happiness must follow the path of Dhamma. To follow Dhamma to the best of our ability is to be one with the Buddha. It leads to happiness, satisfaction, and true joy, not a deceptive kind of delight. Therefore, be aware of feelings of delight based on deception (*louk luang*). Searching for mere enjoyment is not worthwhile and does not increase wisdom, which is seeing things as they truly are wherever one goes—home, town, and so on. Wherever one happens to be one realizes the true nature of things and, therefore, is not

attached. The mind is not compounded and confused, and because it is not obsessed with things one is happy, tranquil, and at rest. One does not have to spend even a *satang* to realize that condition. All of you should ponder this truth.

## Proper Duty Brings Contentment [and] Is True Happiness

Farmers, gardeners, government servants, and manual laborers who perform their jobs to the best of their abilities are fulfilled, and the harder they work at their jobs the more they realize this truth. Even if one is unfortunate and must beg, one should be the best at begging. One should strive to be the best at one's occupation and be content (*pho cai*). One should take care of one's physical being in all things—eating, bathing, even going to the bathroom. One should encourage friends, relatives, and associates to act in the best ways they are able and to be satisfied for that very reason.

Today I would like us to consider what we can do regarding various actions ranging from something as simple as raising our hands together in an act of paying respect. I expect that none of you have heard an explanation of the act of placing the palms of our hands together and paying respects to another person as a holy or divine act. We do not need to go in search of heaven. Simply placing the palms of our hands together and raising them in respect is a heavenly act; likewise, acting in anger or in hatred (Thai. *rangkiet*) is a hellish act.

## The Buddha Spoke of Heaven and Hell as Here and Now

Thinking of heaven as a post-death place in the sky and hell as a post-death place under the earth removes heaven and hell far from us, unattainable, and beyond our ability to realize. However, heaven is attainable in the here and

now when we carry out our responsibilities correctly. Prior to the Buddha, people thought of heaven and hell as places; heaven above and hell below the earth. The Buddha did not object or argue about this [misunderstanding] but simply said, “If you want be in heaven, you should do good acts; doing bad acts leads to hell. Heaven and hell are in our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and heart. When we act improperly and incorrectly we find ourselves in hell; likewise we find heaven in our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and heart when we act properly.” This is what the Buddha taught regarding heaven and hell. We must be very careful in regard to all of our thoughts, actions, and daily activities, for heaven or hell is realized through them in the here and now.

*Dhamma Samrup Phū-sūng Āyu*

Thammasapa, Bangkok, no date.







# The Reason Buddhists Misunderstand the Principles of Buddhism

Most Buddhists have an erroneous understanding of Buddhism because they fail to comprehend the meaning of the term “birth” (*jāti*) according to Buddhist teachings. If they understand the term only as physical birth, life, and death, they miss the meaning as intended by the Buddha. According to Buddhist teachings, “birth,” refers not simply to the physical individual but to one’s mental state that arises from the senses—the feelings of love, anger, hatred and fear, that produce the sense of self, e.g. “I love,” “I am angry,” and so on.

The Buddha taught that attachment (*upādāna*) is at the heart of birth (in the spiritual sense), and, hence the sense of self that leads to suffering (*dukkha*). Human suffering is not rooted in the body, but in the feeling of attachment to things, to the sense of “me and mine.” To clarify--mere birth is not suffering because the feeling of attachment, which is the cause of *kilesa* that produces a sense of self, has not yet developed. Suffering and the sense of

self are directly linked. This teaching is the very heart of Buddhism. Freedom (*khwām wāng*) means to be liberated from the feeling that there is a self.

Take the example of a child who plays without a sense of purpose. Even though the words he sings may refer to pleasure, he is unaware of their meaning because he lacks a sense of self. However, if he sings with a sense of the pleasure intended by the song, his heart-mind (*cit-cai*) will be aroused because of a sense of self.

A person may ask for something. If he is freed from a sense of self, and should what he asks for not be forthcoming, he is not distressed because of the absence of a sense of self. However, if he is bound by a sense of self then the *cit-cai* is not liberated, and he will be imbued with suffering. Understanding the term, *jāti* (birth), in this way coincides with the teaching of the Buddha regarding suffering and its extinction.

The sense of *jāti* arises from ignorance (*avijjā*), thirst (*tanhā*), and attachment (*upādāna*) [which are] the causes of rebirth. This understanding is achieved through profound awareness (*sati-paññā*), and has nothing to do with ignorance, thirst, and attachment, the conditions of birth/rebirth. When one is liberated from a sense of self, the mind is one with Dhamma (= *dhammajāti*) [which is] the true nature of things. It is a condition of the utmost delight because one has transcended suffering and is suffused with purity, clarity, and peace, and is one with nature

The Buddha said, *dukkha* arises everywhere all the time without exception simply because one exists in the matrix of attachment to one's self. When one is freed from attachment to the concept of self, one transcends suffering because selfishness is negated. Attachment to the concept of self—even a “good” self—produces suffering. To understand this truth is to understand Buddhism.

Consider this: whenever we think of “my self,” our awareness (*sati-paññā*) from this self-centered perspective immediately causes a sense of

heavy-heartedness whether our reflections are good or evil. This is simply the nature of things. However, when we think about ourselves selflessly without a sense of attachment or possession, our minds are untroubled.

Selfishness drives away awareness but, when we consider ourselves with profound attention, then suffering is eliminated and we are freed from desire and craving (*kilesa-taṇhā*). When we reflect with complete attention devoid of self-centeredness for even an hour, there is no suffering because what we call the self (*atta-tua-ton*) does not arise. There is only the understanding that perceives everything in terms of the principle of cause and effect.

*Sati-paññā*, the knowledge that arises from attentiveness, is one and the same with Dhamma. Dhamma is freedom. The mind (*cit*) is calm and untroubled. One who has attained a liberated mind (*cit-wang*) has transcended suffering (*dukkha*). His mind (*cit-cai*) is one with the Buddha, Dhamma, and the saints (*ariya-sangha*). The fundamental principle of the Buddha's teaching is the focused understanding that there is no self underlying the bodily and mental activities of hearing, smelling, and tasting. That there is no me-and-mine. When our heart-mind (*cit-cai*) is liberated from the feeling that there is an individual self, there is no suffering and our attention (*sati-paññā*) flourishes.

Selfishness is an instinct that must be countered by the recovery of awareness to prevent the arising of kilesa, *taṇhā* and the feeling that there is a self. This is the way of those who are truly worthy (*ariya*). When the heart-mind (*cit-cai*) is freed from the feeling that there is a self, suffering is eliminated and an enabling awareness flourishes automatically whatever our activity or position.

The very heart of Buddhism is *paṭicca-samuppāda* (inter-dependent co-arising). When our eyes encounter an object, our ears hear a sound, our tongue senses a taste, etc., feeling (*vedanā*) arises. If the feeling is pleasurable

then desire arises; if unpleasurable then the opposite. Both are tied to a sense of self, and the sense of grasping this or that underlies rebirth and suffering according to Buddhist teachings. Birth in regard to the mind is associated with touch according to whether we have a feeling of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Desire and attachment give rise to the feeling of a “self” that desires this or that which leads to the cycle of rebirth and suffering.

Whoever is preoccupied with old age suffers because of old age; whoever is preoccupied with death suffers because of the preoccupation with death. One is attached (*upādāna*) to that condition. This is the dhammic meaning of the term, “death.” In this sense of the term we are continuously “dying” and being “reborn.” The condition decreases, however, when attachment decreases. For example, we see something that we like and have a desire for it; then we want to steal it; then we actually steal it, die, and are reborn as a prisoner in a jail. Every rebirth has a consequence for good or evil according to the law of *kamma*, not only from one life to another but within this present lifetime. This is the explanation of “rebirth.”

According to the teachings of the Buddha, becoming (*bhāva*) refers to the cycle of life and death, and the karmic connection between rebirths. Rebirth is part of the cycle of cause and effect as taught by the Buddha in order to ease the suffering associated with birth.

Do not misunderstand. The meaning of the word, “birth,” in physical terms is not the meaning as taught by the Buddha. When asked, the Buddha did not answer the question, “after one dies what is reborn,” because the questioner had a physical birth in mind. It was misleading because it diverted one away from the issue of suffering associated with attachment to the very notion of a self.

After the Buddha said, “Attachment to the self (*tua ton*) is suffering,” he further elaborated, “The feeling of a self (*tua ton-khong ton*) is delusion (*māyā*). It is not the truth that arises when we see bodily form, hear a sound,

smell an odor, experience a taste, and so on. It arises due to misunderstanding when we see a form, hear a sound, smell an odor, or experience a taste.

The Blessed One repeatedly taught this truth until those who listened understood it for themselves. Those who are truly wise, focused, and attentive understand that there is no self. Therefore, the question, “What is reborn after one dies?”, is absurd, and those who attempt to answer this question are idiots because there is no self who dies and is reborn. There is simply the feeling or disposition (*āramaṇa*) associated with attachment that leads to a sense that there is a self.

With true understanding, however, the perception of a self disappears. What remains is the liberated heart-mind (*cit-cai*) that comes from understanding the true nature of “me” and “mine,” and when we truly understand that Buddha’s teaching regarding old age, suffering, and death. We do not need to speak of past and future lives but, rather, of the present, the here and now. And with that understanding we eliminate suffering.

When we speak about “birth,” we should keep in mind that Buddhism thinks of the “world” not prior to the appearance of created things, but, rather, the things with which we become infatuated through our senses—sound, smell, touch—and the feelings they arouse in our minds. This is the basis of attachment, and the formation of the sense of self. It is in this sense of “being in the world” that is tantamount to suffering (*dukkha*).

The Buddha said, “This world is suffering,” and “Suffering is the world.” It is important, therefore, that we understand what the Buddha meant by the “world” in order to comprehend the Buddha’s teaching so that we may rise above the world, namely, to transcend *dukkha*. We should not be confused by the terms, *lokuttara* (other-worldly) or *Nibbāna*. They are [not negative] but are essential to our lives, to “me” and “mine.”

It is the responsibility of a Buddhist to see that his/her mind rises above the material world defined by birth and death and the ocean of rebirth.

Being freed from the notion of the self is to attain *Nibbāna*. This is a consequence of training the mind every day and is readily achieved when one follows the teachings of the Buddha.

*Haed Thī Tham Hai Chao Phut Mai Khao Chai Lak Pūtasāsanā*

The Organization for the Promotion of Buddhism,

Bangkok, B.E. 2518/C.E. 1975.





# The Best Way to Describe *Nibbāna* Is the End of Suffering

The Buddha referred to *Nibbāna* as the end of suffering, however, those who are blind to suffering fail to acknowledge this truth. They simply take what they need giving no attention to the elimination of suffering. *Nibbāna* is a state of being characterized by purity, freedom, happiness, joy, and a cool heart. In short, it is the condition of not-self (*anattā*).

*Kham Phud Thi Chai Sadaeng Quam-mai Khong Nibbāna Dai Di Thi  
Sut Kh'u Kham Wa Thi Sin Sut Haeng Quam Thuk  
in Buddhadasa Is Still With Us. He Has Not Passed Away  
(Buddhadasa Yang Yu. Pai Mai Mi Die), Vol. 3, p. 243.*

Bangkok, no date.









## Who's Suffering? Who's Happy?

The Buddha summarized his teaching as following: “The five aggregates of grasping (*upādāna*) constitute suffering.” This is even the case for the most accomplished people. There is another saying in Pāli, “Suffering exists; however, where are the individuals who are subject to suffering?” This refers to the fact that there is no “self” who suffers but, rather, suffering adheres to *nāma* (name) and *rūpa* (form). This leads to a further question, why should we try to do our very best (*puñña-kusala*) if suffering is inevitable?

In order that everyone may solve this problem, let me make a modest suggestion that has a broad significance. The body and mind together are referred to as *nāma-rūpa* (name and form) or by the term, *pañca-khandha* (five aggregates). Because of attachment (*upādāna*) they are identified as “mine” which leads to suffering from birth to death. However, when *upādāna* is eliminated from the heart and mind the “self” ceases to be important as do the feelings that “I have,” or “This belongs to me.” All aspects of suffering to which I have referred are eliminated from the mind when we do not identify the body and the mind as “ourselves” and possessions as “ours.” What we

identify as “ourself” arises from ignorance and when ignorance is eliminated the “self” no longer exists. There is no “self” who acts or who is the recipient of anything. Hence, there is no suffering. There is only the arising of name and form.

The body and mind together are referred to as *nāma-rūpa* (name and form) or by the term, *pañca-khandha* (five aggregates). Because of attachment (*upādāna*) they are identified as “mine” which leads to suffering from birth to death. To identify name and form as “I” is to suffer and is a consequence of our ignorance. *This is the very pinnacle of Buddhist teaching, namely, that there is no self.* The notion of a self is a result of ignorance. We must follow the teachings of the Buddha in order to eliminate ignorance, attachment, suffering, and realize that there is no self.

Suffering and happiness certainly exist; however, it is not the case that there is a “self” that experiences suffering and happiness. The realization of this supreme truth is the state of *Nibbāna*. In the realization of *Nibbāna* there is no self who knows this truth, who tastes its flavor. With the attainment of *parinibbāna* there is the extinction of name and form (*nāma-rūpa*).

*Khrai Thuk? Khrai Sukh?*

Saengsin, Chiang Mai, no date.





# Wisdom

Wisdom, often associated with education or learning, in Buddhism refers to knowledge grounded in the truth, namely, the nature of suffering and its elimination. It does not refer to book knowledge, logic, or philosophy. Wisdom is knowledge of the nature of things that may deceive us such as a windfall, fame, honor, and so on that catches us from behind. Those with only a conventional understanding fall err to the desire for honor, cleverness and so on.

The word, *paññā*, in the *Tipiṭaka* refers to knowledge of the highest truth including an understanding of the sense of fame that results from self-infatuation and an attachment to one's work. If one has the wisdom associated with Buddhist wisdom, however, one comprehends the nature of the cause of suffering and the means to overcome it; one understands the taste of suffering and the truth of *parinibbāna*. This is the very highest truth. One who has such knowledge is referred to as a *pandit* (wise person) who has salvific wisdom. The term, *pandit*, is borrowed from one who completes university studies and receives a degree. However, the true meaning refers to one who has overcome lust and depravity (*kilesa*), and has entered the path to *Nibbāna*.

*Pannā, in Buddhadasa Is Still With Us. He Has Not Passed Away  
(Buddhadasa Yang Yu. Pai Mai Mi Die), Vol. 3, pp. 337-338.  
Bangkok, no date.*





*Buddhism  
and  
Not-Self*





# The Crisis That Is Threatening the World

The obstacles to peace and development are very severe. Although challenging, we must find a solution; therefore, today we turn our attention to this topic. The underlying cause is *selfishness*. Secondary causes include poverty and lack of employment, but we [tend to] overlook the deeper cause. The matters of crime, corruption, and public health have an underlying cause to which we are blinded, namely, the lack of morality, stemming from *selfishness* that is at the heart of every crisis.

When we speak about salvation (*quam-rōt*) we ask, salvation from what? We can speak of three levels of salvation—the individual, society, and globally. At the heart of all three is selfishness. There is a continuous struggle on all three levels—between rich and poor, capitalism and communism, the ignorant and the intelligent driven by their respective self-interest which leads to a crisis.

Let us consider for a moment the case of a monastery with a problematic reputation in regard to education. This is a result of selfishness on all levels—monks, novices, and children who study at the monastery. This

happens all too often and is a consequence of selfishness. It creates a major consternation in regard to the monastery in the broader community.

If teachers are selfish it undermines education; families lacking morality leads to problems such as parents beating their children; if political parties are selfish then the government will be selfish. The same is true at the international level. Between, as well as within different religious groups there is competition regarding who is the best, [and] those who write about a religion often do so for their own benefit [rather than an objective assessment].

Selfishness can be found everywhere and where it is encountered one should consider it thoroughly, taking into account its cause and the problems it creates for humankind. Everywhere we are overwhelmed by greed (*lobha*). Greed has no boundaries. It is filled with envy, vengeance, sensuality, boasting, hatred. The world is overwhelmed by the fire of greed that has no boundary. The world is overflowing with envy, hatred, and dashed hopes, vengeance, sexual desire, boasting about one's prowess, and it succumbs to an extravagance without limits. How can there be happiness when one lives by the saying, "eat well, live well" (*kin-dī-yū-dī*) with no boundaries, and one is never satisfied? The desire for money and belief in good luck undermine Dhamma, and [preoccupation with] traditional rituals undercuts useful actions. We live under the shell of selfishness.

I now wish to speak briefly about the shell of selfishness that covers us. We are our own worst enemy. That which we call our "self", that which we love and carefully protect, can become our enemy if we lack self-knowledge. When we want something we have the feeling that we are the owner of that feeling. Education does not address such feelings but only promotes cleverness.

I want to caution all of you students—education is problematic in that it teaches you how to be clever regarding the subject matter of study, but not how to control yourself. Intelligence is put to the use of self-interest and



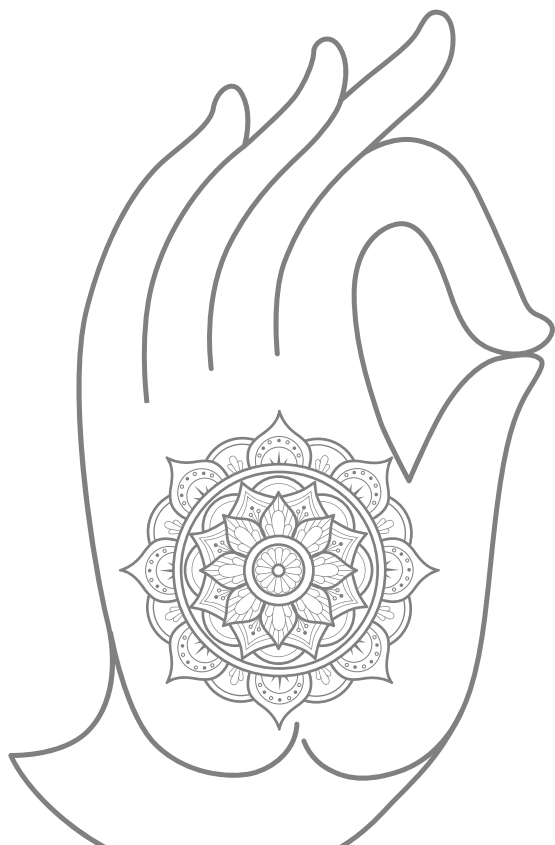
to compare one with others so that one appears superior. Education the world over teaches one to be clever *per se* rather than how to monitor this cleverness, and it has only become worse over time. There seems to be no one who promotes education in order to monitor mere cleverness.

In the past, religion played a role in education that served to monitor mere cleverness that promotes excessive self-centeredness. Today, however, that seems to have disappeared. In most countries education has been divorced from religion. To speak about expanding education is problematic, because it does not address the problem of education merely for the sake of cleverness. Rather, education must be reformed. Education must be for the purpose of addressing the condition of the heart and the mind (*cit-cai*), and the instincts that drive selfishness. Rather than promoting selfishness, [education] should develop compassion. The same holds true for [national] development. We must find a way out of our crisis in which we are currently mired. We are sunk in this crisis because selfishness continues to be promoted in our schools through the value placed on cleverness. What a pity! Selfishness arises from ignorance, [but] caring for oneself with mindful constraint is not selfishness. To respect and care for the self is not to be selfish.

Selfishness is a form of evil because it stems from ignorance (*avijjā*) from which one should immediately separate oneself. One must realize that selfishness is totally and completely wrong. Finally, everyone [here today] must realize that in today's world selfishness has created a crisis of gigantic proportions. Therefore, let us join together to dispel selfishness in order that happiness may prevail for all of us forever.

*Wikritagān Thī Kamlang Khukkham Lok*  
Thammapūja, Bangkok, B.E.2532/C.E. 1989.







## Not-Self: A Superior Way to Limit Selfishness

Not-self (*anattā*) is a superior way to limit selfishness. Because of the inevitability of selfishness, it is important to find a means to limit it. *Anattā*, however, is a deep and difficult subject and, therefore, is often not discussed or is thought to be too dangerous to teach, not useful, or not meritorious.

Let us consider the contemporary situation. Development people hate the concept of not-self. They consider *anattā* to be the enemy of development and want nothing to do with it. Rather, they talk about the self (*atta*) and ways to enhance it. They fear that the notion of not-self will undermine development, encourage laziness, promote lack of control, or even murder; and, that the concept will undermine love of nation and family, and actually encourage one to die. However, not-self is not like that at all. Rather, the concept corrects the problems associated with suffering (*dukkha*), especially self-centeredness.

There are those who interpret *anattā* incorrectly. I refer to them as the “not-self bullies” who use the concept for their own purposes to evade responsibilities, to pursue their own interests, and to influence others

according to their selfish purposes. They ridicule and make fun of moral behavior (*sīla-dhamma*). I refer to them as “not-self bullies”! They should not be understood as even approximating ethical behavior, and it is certainly not the *anattā* concept of Buddhism! Rather, it is the not-self of bullies and gangsters.

Let me now speak to you about the correct understanding of *anattā*, knowing the highest truth, namely that there is no self, a truth that eliminates selfishness; or, in the broadest sense that there is nothing [i.e. no-thing]. Buddhism, however, teaches that there is something tangible (Thai. *mī tua*) that is [in reality] non-tangible (*thī mīchai tua*). We have an awareness of self that is not contingent on our sense of sight and hearing that ultimately is eternal. However, on the other hand there is nothing at all—no “I” and, hence, nothing that can belong to the I.

Buddhism is a Middle Way (*majjhima*). Our senses cannot help but feel there is an I; hence, that there is a self. However, that sense of being a self is a feeling that derives from ignorance (*avijjā*). Upon careful observation we see that there is no-self (*anattā*). It is a sense of self that is at the very root of *kilesa* (moral affliction). When we realize not-self we overcome *kilesa*. Knowing the truth of not-self is consistent with the Middle Way between the affirmation of a self and the rejection of a self. The highest truth is a paradox, namely, that there is a “self” that is a “not-self.”

How does a sense of self arise? A sense of self occurs [in the betwixt-and-between state] before we are born (*sañjātāñāna*), that is to say, knowledge that is not taught but arises from nature (*dhammajāti*). All living things are possessed of *sañjātāñāna*. It is from this heritage that a sense of self emerges. A baby in the womb has no sense of a self but after birth it develops many tactile sensibilities including a sense of taste, a sense of pain and pleasure, and also a sense of “I” (Thai. *kū*). An infant has eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and a body that touch things near and far and that cause the dual feelings of

attraction and repulsion, pain and pleasure, to emerge; hence, the development of a sense of self. This sensibility creates distinctions in taste, satisfaction and *sañjātañāṇa* that lead to a sense of self and the dual feelings of happiness and unhappiness. Lacking a sense of *sañjātañāṇa* there will be no human life. A sense of I-ness (*tua ku*) that arises from *sañjātañāṇa* is the means by which life is nurtured; however, at the same time it creates problems because it cannot be restrained. It grows and runs amok by the power of selfish ignorance resulting in an intensified egoism that creates such a plethora of problems that it nearly destroys the world.

It is rather humorous to look in some detail at yourself (*tua ton*) from the perspective of *sañjātañāṇa*. After an infant becomes a child and learns to walk, it may bump into a chair and hurt itself. The child then feels, “I am hurt.” It grows angry at the chair, personifies the chair, looks at it as an enemy, and breaks it. This feeling of “I” is a consequence of ignorance. The feeling of “like” and “dislike” readily becomes “I” like or “I” dislike, a sensibility that is the result of ignorance. If I stumble on a rock or a chair, I become angry, personify them, and in doing so injure what I have constructed as “myself,” the sense of self that results from ignorance.

We need to remember that the “self” does not exist. Rather, it is simply superimposed on an aggregate of factors as a result of ignorance. We fall in love and superimpose an “I” that loves, or we feel anger and superimpose an “I” that is angry; however, the sense of a self is a superimposed feeling that arises from a sense of love or anger. Perceiving not-self (*anattā*) limits greed (*lobha*). *Anattā* limits hatred (*dosa*) more than loving-kindness (*mettā*). When constrained by *anattā* hatred does not arise. Even suppression and forbearance cannot equal the sense of not-self which eradicates all levels of delusion (*moha*).

In summary, *anattā* eradicates suffering (*dukkha*) which is at the basis of our problems in the world. Limiting desire (*rāga*) is better than the

kind of meditation (*kammathāna*) taught to newly ordained monks, but *anattā* itself is still superior. Certainly, limiting greed is superior to mere generous giving (*dāna*) with the hope of gaining heaven. Truly perceiving *anattā* limits greed (*lobha*). Even more than loving-kindness (*mettā*), *anattā* limits hatred (*dosa*). Everything we do is tainted with *dukkha*. It is by achieving *anattā*, that hatred is eliminated. Suppression, forbearance, and refraining are not as effective as achieving *anattā*. *Anattā* eliminates all kinds of foolishness (*moha*) such as belief in spirits (*phī*) and fear of ghosts (*sāng*).

In summary, *anattā* eliminates suffering (*dukkha*) and a host of worldly problems associated with work, money and all other aspects of life. It is best to achieve a cool heart-mind, a condition of non-acquisition. Not-self is essential to achieving an integrated state of coolness, utility, and lack of selfishness.

Young people must understand the meaning of *anattā*. If not, then their selfishness will increase, much to the pain of their parents. Furthermore, failure on the part of the parents to comprehend *anattā* creates a living hell. If everyone understands *anattā*, suffering will be eliminated because its cause, namely selfishness, will be eliminated. Eliminating selfishness does not destroy the self. Taking one's life is, itself, a kind of selfishness. Rather, one must comprehend the not-self. Understanding the Dhammic meaning of not-self, is the very heart of Buddhism. Absent of that understanding there is no Buddhism, because not-self is the key to the elimination of suffering. Other religions may address the problem of suffering without eliminating the self but not so in the case of Buddhism based on the teaching of not-self. Even in a Buddhist country Thailand, there will be *dukkha* unless there is an understanding of not-self. Such an understanding is necessary if one is considered one who is awakened and who bears witness to that knowledge.

In contrast to today, in ancient times there were fewer crises and less selfishness. Consequently, *dukkha* was reduced. The ancients did not have electric lights, but their hearts were less darkened by *kilesa*; they did not have

ice to consume but their hearts were cooler than those of us today who can partake of ice-cooled drinks. Today we must attend to the elimination of *dukkha*. This is the task of true knowledge. The very essence of Buddhism is the teaching and practice of not-self. Lacking an understanding of not-self, there is no Buddhism and there are no Buddhists.

Let me assure you that *if there is no knowledge of anattā then there is no Buddhism* [italics added]. [Furthermore], before Buddhism appeared neither the teaching of not-self existed nor the means for the extinction of suffering [based on this teaching.] Other religions and worldviews that proposed ways to deal with suffering were not based in the teaching of *anattā*. Buddhism taught the worldview of not-self and, moreover, the means for achieving that end—the knowledge of not-self, being awakened by it, and bearing witness to it. Let us not lose sight of the destructive power of selfishness, and let us affirm the truth of the extinction of suffering. This is true knowledge.

Buddhism teaches the principle of *sammā* [in the right way, the way things ought to be] —*dāna*, *sīla*, *bhāvanā*—that constricts selfishness and leads to *Nibbāna*. Other teachings [outside of Buddhism] are tainted with selfishness. Suffering results from preoccupation with the self; from clinging to the five aggregates (*khandha*) as the self and from ignorance in regard to *anattā*.

Destructive actions result from selfishness; from the sense that there is a self. Liberation from the sense of self undermines the problems that arise from selfishness. In sum, *anattā* is a watchful guard against selfishness, and is the very heart of the means of extinguishing *dukkha*.

*Anattā: Yām Hā Wisaet Nai Kān Kamjat Quām Haenkae Tua*  
Thammapūja, Bangkok, B.E. 2532/C.E. 1988.









## The Scope of the Problems Regarding the Self

All of us are filled with a storehouse of passion (*kilesa*) that results from self-centeredness. In Pāli, we refer to this storehouse as *anusaya* (predisposition), the foremost stupidity that results in *lobha*, *dosa*, and *moha* (greed, hatred and delusion). They arise and are then stored up forever as innate characteristics known as “storehouse of passion” – (Thai. *klang-kilesa*). If there were no self, then there would be no storehouse of passion. However, the self provides the locus for passion, referred to in Pāli as *assāda* (enjoyment, satisfaction), and the underlying satisfaction results from ignorance (*avijjā*).

If one engages in merit-making in order to gain heaven is this selfish or is it a Dhammic act? Only when Dhamma serves to limit selfishness (*tua ku*) is it a Dhammic act. Let us consider the following: (1) selfishness is responsible for poverty; 2) selfishness jeopardizes one’s health; 3) selfishness disturbs one’s sleep; 4) selfishness becomes habitual; (5) selfishness produces negativity; 6) selfishness leads to cheating; (7) selfishness produces a lack of concern for order; (8) selfishness leads one to be concerned only about oneself; (9) selfishness produces a lack of appreciation for the good of others;

(10) selfishness leads one to turn away from others; (11) selfishness makes one cruel; (12) selfishness works against the general welfare; (13) selfishness undermines friendship; (14) selfishness makes one an enemy of the spirit of democracy.

We need a true democracy [in Thailand] today, but we cannot achieve this in the face of selfishness. Elected representatives who are selfish constitute a parliament that reflects a spirit of selfishness. Today we need a parliament of the people and by the people. If the general populace is selfish, they will think first of themselves rather than the nation, and it will be impossible to build a democracy. A true democracy is for the people and of the people, not for itself. Today, however, the very disposition of the people is selfish. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that a democratic government will emerge from these hidden depths given the fact that the electorate, the representatives, and the parliament are all selfish. What kind of democracy could it be, given the enmity against the very spirit of democracy so badly needed and desired across the globe? The enemy is selfishness.

Throughout the world selfishness has many evil consequences. In Dhammic terms, selfishness leads to *kilesa* (depravity), namely, *lobha*, *dosa*, *moha* which, in turn, leads to more depravity that closes the way to *Nibbāna*. Worldliness is an enemy. Selfishness is an enemy of Dhamma and of *lokuttara* (transcendent) concerns. *Lokuttara* concerns are in the very midst of this world transcending the power of worldly interests. Selfishness prevents us from being free from the power of *kilesa* bound up with bodily functions—form, sound, smell, taste, touch, sensation, and recollection—and we are not able to extract ourselves from it. This is the negative consequence of worldliness, hence, the tension between *lokīyadhamma* and *lokuttaradhamma*.

I have very little time remaining to address a serious problem in today's world, namely, the AIDS epidemic. I hesitate to speak about this subject, however, I want to point out that it is a consequence of selfishness

that produces abnormal desires contrary to nature. Selfish feelings permeate sex that leads to excessive sexual excitement which, with explosive power, is at the heart of today's AIDS epidemic. If we were able to control ourselves, such a dangerous disease would not arise. Even heaven is filled with people with this disease. Today, the disease [of AIDS] has become a very serious problem. It can, however, be addressed by greater self-discipline and control, and not being enslaved by selfishness. Everyone here must realize that much in this world, in this case the fearful, worldwide AIDS epidemic, is rooted in our inability to exercise self-control and being enslaved by our desires.

I hope that everyone in all the universes—the heavens, hells, human and Brahma worlds—will strive to understand this most important topic, namely, the [nature of] the self (*tua ton*), and will use this knowledge for self purification and control; and, that this cooling of the fires of the self will lead to *Nibbāna*.

*Panhā Thuk Ru'ang Kiewkap Tua Don*  
Thammapūja, Bangkok, B.E. 2532/C.E. 1988.







# Selfishness Is Very Frightening

When we speak about the crisis of our times, we should understand its causes. Think about it—in our world how many crises are rooted in selfishness? But is anyone afraid of that? On the contrary, self-centeredness is considered something useful or of value because focusing on one's self is thought of in terms of self-development. We make a modest degree of self progress and consider that to be a good thing. However, in the final analysis self-centeredness leads to crises.

Everything has a cause. There are many causes of selfishness—often complex, mysterious, charming, or attractive precisely because they appeal to our selfish interests. Selfishness is a common, universal characteristic of animals, which in human beings develops into lust and moral depravity—*lobha* (greed), *dosa* (anger), *moha* (delusion). Because of our ignorance, we see our selfishness in positive terms, namely, that it leads to happiness and satisfaction. Furthermore, education, rather than ameliorating selfishness, produces more ways to increase it.

Selfishness is rampant everywhere. It is so overwhelming that our very selfhood is blinded by selfishness. Selfishness leads to an every increasing

self-centeredness that blinds us to the correct path, a concern for others, and sensitivity to beauty. Selfishness leads to a chaotic state that undermines our sense of right and wrong and leads to lying, theft, and even murder. In this scientific age of ours, the most important precept is not to be selfish. If one is not selfish one will not take the life of another, lie, steal, or engage in sexual misconduct.

Let us now, however, consider the power of selfishness. If one is preoccupied with one's self, one cannot focus on Dhamma, be concerned for others, or about religion or God, or anything outside of oneself. Selfishness drives one crazy and prevents one from following the right path. Self-centeredness can lead to the taking of life—not only mother, father, children, or teachers, but even oneself. This is the disease of selfishness. Selfishness leads to excess that creates many kinds of problems including the pursuit of pleasure that encourages *kilesa-taṇhā* (lust) and abets more selfishness. Driven by selfishness, those who seek to rule the world use weapons of mass destruction to the utmost limits.

To summarize, selfishness is truly frightening, because it can lead to the destruction of the world at any time in the twinkling of an eye. Even a modest degree of anger is hateful and frightening. In the gamut of truly ugly things, nothing surpasses selfishness, which is the cause of *lobha*, *dosa*, and *moha*. Therefore, it is essential that we understand the significance of selfishness so we can limit it.

What are some dimensions of selfishness? First of all there is the selfishness of children that brings tears to the eyes of their parents. A mother may staunch her tears, because she believes that if she cries due to her child's behavior the child will go to hell. However, whenever a child behaves selfishly, the weeping of a mother and father is justified. When a mother and father act selfishly, they are more likely to injure their children than an injury caused by an enemy or a robber. Selfishness is at the heart of dislike between older and

younger siblings and may even lead to the elder taking the life of the younger sibling. A husband's constant selfishness creates a state of hell for his wife and, undoubtedly, a wife's selfishness drives a husband crazy. Selfishness undermines the relationship between friends. The friendship may gradually wane until it finally disappears. Selfish students undermine education. There was a story in the newspaper about a student whose initiation into a higher grade resulted in his death. This is nothing but selfish stupidity. What does such an incident tell us about how we evaluate education's emphasis on cleverness when such a lack of control leads to this kind of result? It attests to the fact that we value cleverness at the expense of self-control.

Now let us consider selfishness on the part of teachers. Selfishness leads teachers to be indifferent which results in students in the sixth grade not being able to read or understand what they read. Teachers do not have their heart in teaching students with the love and affection that should be their aim. Rather they are like someone who is simply hired to do a job.

What about the abbot of a monastery? When an abbot is selfish the monastery deteriorates. It is very cluttered and messy. Observe the temple boys (*luk wat*). If they behave selfishly, it drives the abbot crazy, and the monastery becomes a torment for him. If the abbot is selfish, however, it creates a hellish environment for the young monks. We see this kind of situation all the time. If a doctor is selfish, he is like a salesman who kills people and sells their blood. If a person who sells food is selfish it will be dangerous to eat his food and his restaurant will be closed. A stupid person who is also selfish may end up taking the life of his entire family and even his own life. If a writer is selfish, at some point he will end up turning his sarcasm on himself and his writing will be useless. If a worker is selfish, his work will be chaotic and amount to nothing. If a supervisor is selfish, his deceitfulness will result in poor quality results, and when the most powerful are selfish, it will lead to a dark age of mutual annihilation. If the citizens of any country

are selfish, the democracy of that country will be self-serving, competitive, and selfish regardless of its leadership. It is said that a democracy “for and by the people” will be empty if the people are selfish; it will eventually come to a violent end, because it will have been imploded by selfishness.

*Quam Hen Kae Tua Nā Klua Nak*

Thammapūja, Bangkok, B.E. 2532/C.E.1989.







# Spiritual Disease

The term, “spiritual disease,” relates to the sense of self and is a pervasive mental issue that expresses itself in terms of “I and mine.” It arises due to the power of selfishness rooted in greed and anger. Beguilement leads to a sense of worry regarding one’s self and others. This is a condition of one’s inner spirit or consciousness. It is easy to remember this condition in terms of “I and Mine,” a condition that arises whenever we perceive, hear, or smell associated with eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind.

We must recognize this condition as one that arises from attachment, or in Pali, *upādāna*, of which there are two types: the self and that which is associated with the self.

*Rok Thâng Viññāna in Buddhadasa Is Still With Us.  
He Has Not Passed Away  
(Buddhadasa Yang Yu. Pai Mai Mi Die), p. 104.  
Bangkok, no date.*







# Destroying Selfishness

We should remember that today is Dhamma day, namely, *Āsālaha Pūja*, which honors the Buddha's first Dhamma talk in which he taught the *Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta*. It teaches about the extinction of suffering (*dukkha*). Hence, the day is known everywhere as Dhamma day in the human realm, the realm of the gods, the worlds of Māra, Brahma, and the realm of all the animals. We know that the *Dhammacakka* is both profound and powerful. It has the power to defeat Māra, destroy the enemies of humankind, and to expel depravity (*kilesa*) and suffering (*dukkha*) from the world. So, this is Victory Day on behalf of humankind. The Buddha was a human being who acted on behalf of all of us and taught us the way to defeat our worst enemies, namely, *dukkha*, or in conventional terms, Māra.

## The Cause of Suffering

The Buddha's teaching is universal. It is a method for extinguishing suffering in every situation and circumstance. I am emboldened to say that the Buddha's teaching is universal regardless of one's religion. It is a practice for the extinction of suffering, whether one is a human being or a deity (*devatā*).

The Buddha's teaching can be summarized as follows: the self is composed of the five aggregates of grasping (*upādāna*), which is the cause of suffering. Wherever there is grasping, there is suffering. Even the slightest degree of grasping produces suffering in every universe and every age. It is, however, possible to reduce suffering by addressing its cause, namely, attachment.

Today we celebrate the proclamation of the *Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta*, the Buddha's victory over Māra not just for himself but for all humankind, gods, animals—all who experience suffering. Or as expressed more eloquently—all who are friends in suffering, who are born, grow old, suffer, and die.

## The Major Cause of Suffering

The most important term to consider is selfishness/self-centeredness. Some of you may think this is of minor importance, that ethics is merely a subject we teach to children. Too often this subject is taught at an elementary level that misses the depth of the meaning of selfishness. Selfishness does not simply mean bullying or ignoring someone, but also embracing excess. One has difficulty sleeping, is confused, frightened, startled, suspicious, worried, and finally one becomes crazy and may take one's own life.

## Selfishness Is Instinctual

The craziness in the world today is first of all a result of selfishness. There are several aspects of self-centeredness: that which is at the heart of love of self, of self-nurture, of the pursuit of sustenance, of the avoidance of danger, of combating enemies, of having children; all of which are aspects of suffering.

A sense of self increases from the time of our birth resulting in the appearance of “me and mine” (*tua ku khong ku*) that leads to lust and depravity (*kilesa*) rather than wisdom. The awareness of a self may lead to a

sense of its longevity as in the case of religions that hold the notion of everlasting life, a self that is beyond suffering.

## There Is No Self

Buddhism arose to teach that there is no self. There is an instinctual sense of self, namely, the sense of self that arises from *kilesa*, but there is also a sense of self associated with wisdom (*bodhi*), namely, the not-self. When there is no self there is no foundation of suffering. Regardless of your religious persuasion, if you are freed from attachment to the notion of a self, you automatically hold a belief that is essentially Buddhist. You are a person of knowledge; a person who is awakened; a person who has overcome ignorance, who is liberated from suffering. The Buddha declared this truth in the *Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta* on this day [i.e. *Āsālahā Pūja*].

## The World Will Come to Ruin Because of Selfishness

If selfishness overcomes knowledge then the world will come to ruin. Therefore, try to combat selfishness. All the world's religions should join together to combat selfishness according to their own unique strategy since religions differ.

## Selfishness Is the Enemy of Community

All religions, including Buddhism, have ways to combat selfishness because they see selfishness as the enemy of humankind. For Christians, it may be seen as an obstacle in their relationship to God; Buddhists may associate selfishness with the evil *Māra*. Every dimension of wisdom aims at doing away with selfishness, but selfishness is found everywhere, even in the United Nations as well as in all religions. Finding ways of undermining selfishness is the way to salvation.

## Overcoming Selfishness Saves the World

The United Nations must teach everyone to understand this truth, and inspire them to destroy selfishness so that the world might be saved. Mere admonition is insufficient to contain selfishness. One must recognize the nature of selfishness and be determined to combat it in order to walk the path to salvation.

## Sacrifice Produces Happiness

Buddhism teaches that the extinction of selfishness leads to the highest happiness, not a false, childish, sensory happiness but a true, authentic happiness. We take into consideration such happiness especially on a day of respect like this.

## The Salvation of the Self Is the Destruction of the “I” (*tua-ku*)

The “annihilation of the self” is a phrase of utmost significance in Buddhism. It is, indeed, a startling phrase. If there is no “I” selfishness cannot arise.

## One Who Knows the Truth, Knows that There Is No Self

The core of the Buddhist teaching of non-attachment is that there is no self. This is at the heart of Buddhist practice

*Kānthamlāi Quamhenkae Tua*

Buddhist Bookcenter, Bangkok, no date.





# The Way to Salvation Is the Elimination of Selfishness

The way to be saved from destroying nature itself is to eliminate selfishness. Destructive impulses arise from selfishness. Selfishness, rooted in ignorance, is like a prison that surrounds us. If we are wise, however, we can dismantle this prison or prevent it from arising. Study is not a sufficient means to eliminate selfishness; rather, we must anticipate the imprisoning power of material things.

The term, “we” [*rao*] in this context refers to the heart-mind (*cit*) or in a collective sense to [my] life (*chīwit*). The terms—*chīwit-man-rot*—include both the body and mind, in religious terminology the five aggregates (*khandha*), or in ordinary language *tua ku*. The term, “salvation” in regard to *tua ku* means being saved from “self,” or, in other words, from selfishness. In this regard, there are two levels of meaning. In an ordinary language sense *tua ku* refers to selfishness, but in a deeper, Dhammic sense salvation means not simply the elimination of *selfishness* but *the elimination of the sense of self*, namely the very basis of selfishness. Unfortunately, most people are interested in worldly getting and spending matters or, at most, in gaining heaven; however, this is not the highest goal of freedom.

Blind attachment makes salvation (*quam raud*) impossible. It is by means of knowledge and understanding that one overcomes attachment. The epitome of Buddhist teaching is the principle of *idappaccayatā* (conditionality). Although humankind distinguishes between “good” and “evil,” nature makes no such distinction. Rather, in nature things are simply as they are. If we were like nature we would not be attached to such a distinction.

Our education lacks a deep understanding of things as they are. Rather, it deals almost entirely with the activities of “getting and spending.” It is preoccupied with utility, the cost of material things, with good fortune rather than with promoting an understanding of that which blinds our minds. It is preoccupied with gain and loss rather than achieving a state of mind beyond gain and loss, beyond selfishness, beyond the danger of that which we call the “self.”

We must now consider the term, *vatta*, the round of rebirth, in which humans are embedded through desire, act, consequence—or in Pāli, *kilesa*, *kamma*, *vipāka*. It is *kilesa*, defilement, that is at the root of greed, hate, and delusion, which leads to karmic consequences and back again to imprisonment in the cycle of defilement. If our actions are merely karmically determined by clinging (*upādāna*) we cannot escape the imprisonment of the cycle of defilement.

Ignorance (*avijjā*), craving (*taṇhā*), clinging (*upādāna*), and karmic action determined by the power of intentionality (*cetāna*) lead to the inescapable creation of samsaric consequences. No one can escape the power of interdependent co-arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda-iddappaccayatā*), of cause and effect, of our previous *kamma*.

I must briefly mention the [often misunderstood] concept of God (*phracho*). Ordinary folk think about the concept of God in rather foolish terms. The concept of God should be equated with the underlying principle of reality, namely, interdependent co-arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda-*



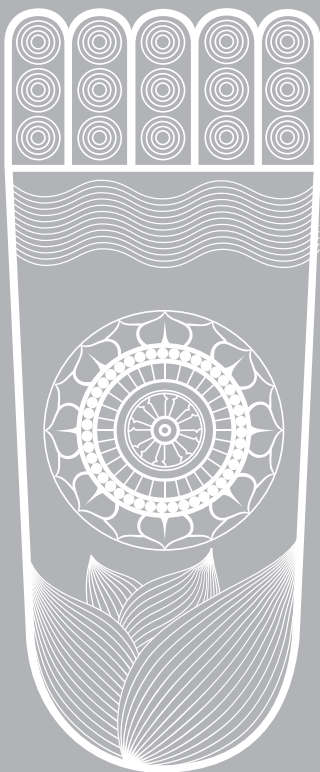
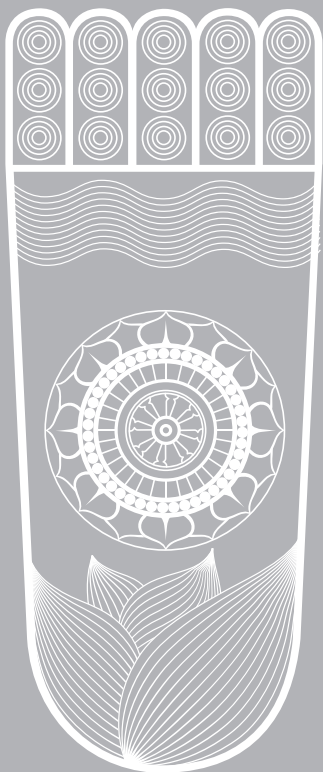
*iddappaccayatā*).

Another misconception is in regard to the concept of “purity.” People think of this concept in various ways, for example, to perform a particular action such as bathing in a river considered to be pure [e.g., the Ganges] or to enact a particular ritual [rather than as a condition of being]. Finally, there is the imprisoning power of the concept of the self (*attā*) that stems from ignorance. In reality there is no self (*anattā*). The concept [of self] arises from foolish ignorance. It is the prison of *samsāra*. The truly enlightened Buddhist realizes there is no self. Belief in a self arises from ignorance, leads to selfishness, and the inability of escape from suffering.

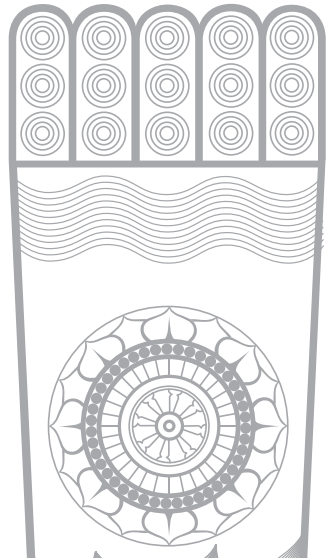
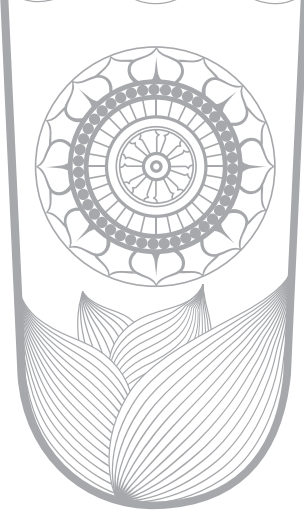
The epitome of Buddhist teaching is the elimination of the arising of suffering. The path to this end is the elimination of selfishness through the elimination of the concept of the self. The heart-mind (*cit-cai*), freed from any attachment, overcomes *kilesa*, is fully aware (*sati-paññā*), and realizes the state of *Nibbāna*.

*Honthāng Rōt K’u Kān Thamlāi Quām Hen Kae Tua*  
Thammapūja, Bangkok. B.E. 2532/ C.E. 1989.





*Buddhism  
and  
Religion*





# What Is Religion?

Those who take an interest in the Dhamma from the perspective of religion should begin their study with the least difficult and proceed to the most difficult. In this way they first construct a stable foundation before proceeding to a more complete understanding.

That which we label *sāsana* (religion) here at Wat Suan Mokkh might not agree exactly with what you have previously understood by the term. Generally speaking religion is understood as a teaching. I suggest, however, that *religion should be understood as a practice*, what one does to find release from suffering (*dukkha*) or unintentional danger. For further clarification let us consider several aspects of the term, *sāsana*.

At the most basic level *sāsana* is related to the instinct all beings have to escape from danger and suffering as quickly as possible. This does not require intentionality (*cetanā*). It arises naturally and involves both mental and physical aspects of all beings—not merely humans—that lead to salvation. This I define as *sāsana*.

Different beings perceive danger and ways of coping with it in different ways and to different degrees up to the level of human beings. And,

among human beings there are also differences. The Buddha perceived danger in terms of the mind, in particular, lust (*kilesa*). The wise understand the danger of lustful depravity to be an inner matter, and ways to correct this condition. This is the essence of religion as I understand and teach about it, namely, to transcend suffering. Every religion is similar in this regard. Even classes of lower beings seek release from suffering. Hence, the founders of religion promoted loving-kindness toward all beings regardless of their nature. This is the essence of religion.

We do not encounter the term, *sāsana*, in the Pāli scriptures, but other terms that challenge our understanding such as “brahmacharya,” a term used by the Buddha and his disciples. This term does not refer to a category or type but to a way of being, namely, transcendence of suffering. This way of life is represented by *bhikkhus* in all respects—body, speech, and mind—and is referred to by the term *brahmacharya* [celebate]. The Buddha sent out his disciples to proclaim the *sāsana* which he understood to be a way of acting—“do no evil of any kind, do only good. This is my religion (*sāsana*).”

Let us consider the word, religion (*sāsana*), a term that is used universally. In Thai, “religion” is translated as *sāsana*. What does it mean? It means “to act,” namely, to be liberated from the dangers everyone experiences; however, the term used by the Buddha was *brahmachariya*.

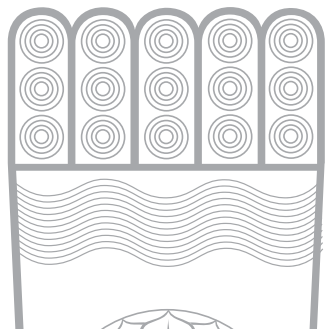
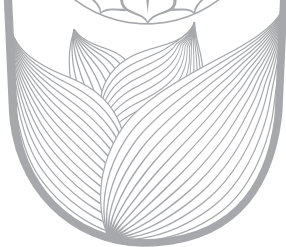
Some do not like to refer to Buddhism as a religion but, rather, as that which binds people to that which transcends human beings, namely, God or, in more general terms to a higher state of being beyond suffering. When humankind reaches the condition beyond suffering we refer to it as “religion,” a universal condition that we identify as salvation, a supreme state beyond all desire.

All beings seek a state of salvation beyond all kinds of danger. The most authentic, universal element of religion is that which leads to release from suffering in regard to one’s self and to others. In the broadest and purest

sense, all religions promote universal love (*mettā*) and are identical in that they point to the realization of salvation. In this regard there is just one religion in the world, namely, one that promotes release from suffering.

*Sāsana K'u Arai? in The Life and Work of Buddhadasa*  
(Chiwit Lae Ngan), pages 284-308.  
Kaesamaban, Bangkok, B.E. 2514/C.E. 1962.









## Religion Is the Hospital of the World

Religion should be thought of as a practice rather than a teaching, an instinctive practice to seek release from unintentional danger and suffering. In this sense we can say that religion is universal in the sentient world. Obviously, various levels of being up to the human level perceive suffering and the way to escape it differently. During the time of the Buddha, suffering was seen from the perspective of *kilesa* (desire and lust) as a mental condition. Subsequently, this was the teaching of all the buddhas; hence, this is the essence of the religion, namely, overcoming suffering, especially unintentional suffering on all levels of sentient life. The religion of the Buddha upholds *the principle of universal compassion and release from suffering. This is the essence of religion.*

In the Buddhist scriptures it is very difficult to find the word religion (*sāsana*). Although today we use the term all the time, it is difficult to find the word in the *Tipiṭaka*. We are more likely to find the word, *brahmachariya*, instead. When the Buddha sent forth his disciples to teach, he said, “*brahmachariyam pakasettha*,” namely, that they were to teach the way to

overcome suffering in body, speech, and mind. The Buddha was the first to proclaim this mission; however, he did not use the term *sāsana*. If we embrace the meaning of the term as used by the Buddha, it refers specifically to acting in a *brahmachariya* manner, namely, not to do evil, do what is right, and purify the heart and mind. That is the *sāsana* as taught by the Buddhas.

In ordinary parlance the term *sāsana* refers to the principles of Dhamma as handed down by the lineage of teachers until today. These can be divided into three parts: *pariyatti* (learning the doctrine), *patipatti* (practice), and *pativedha* (realization). Of these three, practice is the most important for overcoming suffering and is coincident with *brahmachariya*. The three together constitute the middle way and is the very substance of Buddhism.

The term, “religion,” which in Thai is translated as *sāsana*, is universal. To what does it refer? In its most basic meaning, it refers to actions that lead to the transcendence of the overriding sense of danger or evil experienced by human beings. This is what the Buddha meant by the term *brahmachariya*.

Some people hold the biased view that Buddhism is not a religion. Scholars trace the origin of the term, “religion,” to the Latin, *Lig*, from the time of Cicero where the word meant “to observe,” namely, to observe instructions from heaven. Subsequently, during the time of Servius, the term was linked to the Latin, *Leg*, meaning “to bind,” and expanded to mean to bind people together in relationship to a greater being, namely, God. During St. Augustine the Great’s time, the term was codified by the co-joining of *Lig* and *Leg* into the word, “religion,” meaning to act according to instructions from heaven in order to maintain a relationship between human beings and God. In a more universal sense, however, religion can be defined as acting according to the norms of nature in order to maintain the relationship between human beings and the highest condition of things, namely, the transcendence of suffering.

When referring to the state of non-suffering, that condition is referred to as “religion.” All forms of life have religion in the sense of a desire for continued existence, i.e., salvation. In Buddhism, this is referred to as liberation (*vimutti*), the extinction of suffering in regard to oneself and others. Since all religions share this common intentionality, in essence there is only one religion in the world, namely, the shared desire to eliminate suffering. In this regard, neither Buddhism nor any other religion is superior to another.

Even though there are many who call themselves Buddhists, for the most part they have not penetrated to the very heart of the religion. They may claim to understand the Buddhist teachings, but they do not truly comprehend the nature of *kilesa* (lustful depravity), and are overwhelmed by ignorance. They are stuck in a problematic way of being likened to lower types of animals.

The term “Buddhism” refers to the activity that eliminates attachment to the notion that there is a self. Such a notion promotes the greatest danger among human beings—comparisons that I am better, the same as, or worse than another. This leads to depravity (*kilesa*), craving (*taṇhā*), and evil non-Dhammic activity; and, consequently, was rejected by the Buddha who instructed his disciples to be freed from desire.

The term “Buddha” refers to more than simply the founder of a religion that we call “Buddhism” but to one who realized the truth regarding the nature of things. Hence, the term “Buddhism” connotes the same meaning. However, in a broader sense Buddhism refers to the teachings of the Tathagatha, one who achieved an understanding of and taught the true nature of things.

In a more prescriptive sense, Buddhism refers to the singular teachings of Siddhattha Gotama, namely, that there is no such thing as an “essence;” that there is no-self—*sabbe dhamma anattā*—that everything is

impermanent and subject to change and suffering. The teaching of cause and effect—that good leads to good and evil to evil—is not original with the Buddha, nor were the teachings regarding *sīla* and *samādhī*; however, they were uniquely framed and integrated in the Buddhist tradition around the very essence of the Buddha’s teaching, namely, not-self (*anattā*). Buddhism, in this deepest and truest sense, represents the very healing of the world, and *Nibbāna* is the greatest happiness.

*Kilesa* (lust) is a form of universal depravity that infects everyone’s heart and mind as pervasively as breathing. It is a disease of lust, anger and ignorance, and undermines our very humanity. To be truly human we must transcend these three poisons. Physical illness affects only our body, but *kilesa* is so fierce that it affects our inner being. It cannot be treated in a hospital, but by what we refer to as religion.

Religion is not limited to one language or confined to a particular nationality but is universal. It is able to address all kinds individual and collective human illnesses rooted in *kilesa*. Religion, in this sense, is universal and can be thought of as the hospital of the world.

All of us are subject to suffering as a result of attachment. However, when we understand our composite, changing nature [i.e. our not-self nature], *kilesa* is overcome. In our embodied, ever-changing existence there is no “self.”

Let us now consider the nature of the Buddhist monastic order (*sangha*). The true *sangha* is the world’s doctor and hospital. It has the responsibility of treating the illnesses of the Buddhist community and of the world, especially those illnesses of the heart and mind. The Buddha’s teaching has tremendous value in promoting Dhamma, cooling down the world, preventing it from being ruined and protecting it from *kilesa*. We should work together to make sure that Dhamma is an umbrella that protects us all from *kilesa*, and that the *bhikkhu-sangha* continues to perpetuate the *sāsana*.

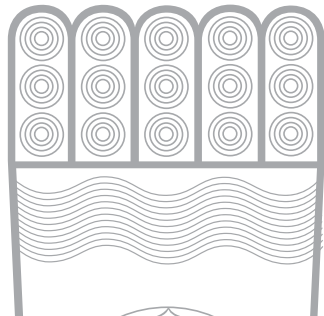
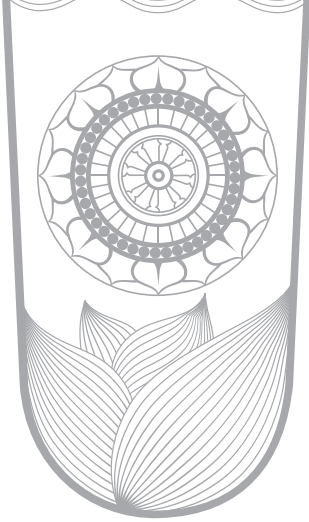
Therefore, all of you should support the *bhikkhu-sangha* to the extent that you are able to ensure that it endures and bears fruit throughout the world forever.

The universal power of Dhamma is not confined to the human world. Because supporting the *sangha* benefits all living beings in the world, it is a cause of great joy. To do such good is meritorious.

The very heart of every religion is release from suffering (*dukkha*), to promote love and compassion, and to create a universal environment of health and healing that will dispel the disease of *kilesa* (depravity).

*Sāsana Kh'u Rongphyābān Lok*  
Sukhaphapcai, Bangkok, B.E. 2496/C.E. 1953.







# Nurturing Religion

Ordinarily nurturing religion [i.e. Buddhism] refers to offering food to monks and novices, and establishing and supporting monasteries. Few people, however, are really committed to enquiring about and practicing the Dhamma. They are indifferent to nurturing their religion; they are only interested in making merit. But more is required. Supporting Buddhism might be compared to raising chickens to feed to dogs. How useful is that?! One raises chickens in order to support one's life. Similarly, Buddhism should be supported not simply because it is the customary thing [for us] to do.

Consider a hospital. It is not simply a building. There must be doctors who work there, medicines, and the equipment necessary to care for people and treat disease. Assume for a moment that there is a hospital with no doctors (comparable to monks) and no medicine (comparable to Dhamma). It would serve no purpose. Similarly regarding monasteries. There must be monks and novices, but above all there must be Dhamma.

Dhamma refers to correct knowledge, practice, and the results of correct practice. This is Dhamma. If there are only monastery buildings,

Dhamma is not truly there. It is like a hospital with medicine but no doctors. It serves no useful purpose. We need good monasteries, good monks and novices, and study and practice in order for there to be good consequences. This is Buddhism in a more complete sense. [However], Buddhism [the *sāsana*] in the truest sense is Dhamma. It is not the monastery building or the monks and novices. *Sāsana* means teaching (*pariyati*), practice (*patipati*), and realization (*pativedi*), the path and the realization of *Nibbāna*. These together constitute Buddhism. The monastery buildings and the monks and novices are merely the outer appearance of Buddhism, but not its essence. Our material support is similar to feeding chickens that are eaten by dogs with no benefit to humans. What does truly nurturing Buddhism mean? In simple terms, it means practicing Dhamma and the transcendence of suffering. This is not merely the outer appearance of our religion. The essential truth of Buddhism is the extinction of suffering.

Whenever one realizes the extinction of suffering, that is the Buddhist religion—in the forest, in a cave, on a mountain, in the home—not necessarily in a beautiful monastery with monks and novices. Religion is in the heart of one who has extinguished suffering or who practices with that goal in mind. If one truly nurtures Buddhism, one does so to halt the arising of suffering as proclaimed by the Buddha in his final teaching when he admonished his disciples to be attentive, not to be foolish, dreamy, or negligent in doing one's duty. If we are thoughtful and conscientious we will succeed in our activities and ultimately realize the goal of our religion.

Today many of us are careless, foolish, and selfish, thinking only of our own benefit, driven by anger, greed, and desire. All that we do produces suffering. However, one who has the *sāsana* or Dhamma in his or her heart—infused with purity, clarity, and peace, whose heart and mind is not attached—that person is liberated from suffering, and lives victoriously in the world. Such a person nurtures Buddhism—whether one supports monks and



novices, is at home, in town, or in a forest—because one is focused and attentive.

The term *bhikkhu* means one who recognizes the danger of rebirth, and hastens to practice religion in order to find release from the suffering of rebirth. He does not engage in conventional modes of livelihood, but “begs” for only enough food to sustain himself for a day. It is meritorious to provide for monks and novices. Monks practice Dhamma in order to liberate themselves and others from suffering. They do not have the time to produce their own food, and therefore, depend on others to provide for them. They are referred to as *paradattūpajīvī* (living on what is given by others). Therefore, monks should act appropriately in regard to alms food offered by donors whose support does not recognize them as “beggars.”

Supporting Buddhism, such as offering food to monks, should not be done thoughtlessly. The Buddha taught that one should not be careless in supporting one’s religion, but should do so diligently, with consideration, conscientiously, and with a clear understanding of what is what. To elaborate, we might think that we have garnered sufficient merit because we have urged others to do so, so that when we die we will not go to hell but enter a heavenly mansion. This is false, and later it will be apparent that such a belief produces no benefit.

The belief that rebirth in heaven is sufficient is a bankrupt belief. Such a “heaven” is counterfeit, just like counterfeit money. If there were such a heaven, it would lead to an increase in desire, hatred, confusion, bewilderment, and foolishness. Consider carefully that divine beings (*devatā*) are even more careless than humans. The heavens are filled with those who engage in frivolous activities but are treated as though they were divine (*devatā*).

*Devatā* refers to a place with people who only play, are filled with desire (*kilesa*), and are exceptionally careless and lazy. The Buddha was not

born in such a *devatā* world, because it was full of deceitful wastrels who took no interest in the serious matters of birth, old age, sickness and death, and were only interested in frivolous things. Our world is subject to the conditions of birth, old age, suffering, and death. The Buddha was born into the human world in order to lead others to the extinction of blind carelessness, and to teach Dhamma.

Allow me to try to explain the subject of heaven, the path and its fruits, and *Nibbāna*. They are not the same. The path, its fruit, and *Nibbāna* come about as a result of the extinction of attachment and suffering. Belief in heaven, however, arises because of a preoccupation with suffering. A layperson should support the monastery not in order to be reborn in heaven, but to support Dhamma. One should support the Sangha with the expectation of its integrity, wisdom and purity, because the monks embody what they recite everyday, “*supaṭipanno*, The Sangha of the Blessed One embodies Dhamma.” This is the authentic Sangha. It does not necessarily reside in the monastery but can reside in the home. Whoever truly practices Dhamma, nurtures the Sangha, the path and its consequences may reach *Nibbāna*. One does not have to be a monk or novice, but can be a layman or laywoman. The Buddha said that one who embodies Dhamma as the basis of one’s decisions is the Sangha. One does not have to be a monk or a novice. In this regard the Sangha is one who embodies the path, its results, and *Nibbāna*. The Sangha, therefore, is embodied by the laity—the stages of *sotāpanna* (stream-enterer), *sakdāgāmi* (once-returner), *anāgāmi* (non-returner), and finally *arahant*.

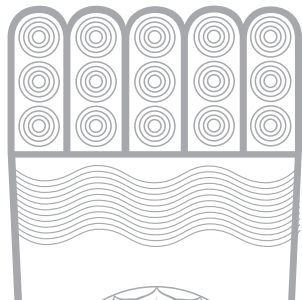
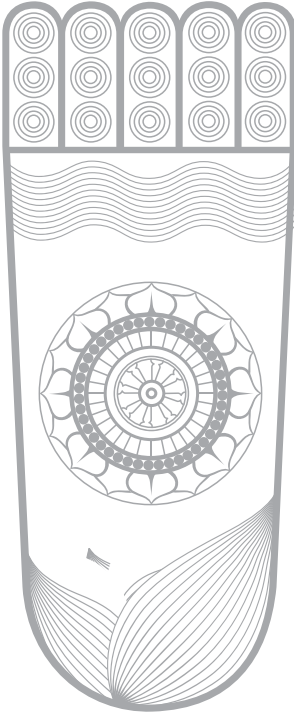
Do not promote mere ordinary needs, but promote Dhamma. When that is the case the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha will be complete, and the *sāsana* will be stable and flourish. The Buddha said, “Whoever sees me, sees Dhamma and the Tathagata; whoever does not see Dhamma does not see the Tathagata.” In this saying, the term *sāsana* does not refer to outer forms, but to that which eliminates suffering; not simply to rituals and

ceremonies, books or scriptures, but to all aspects of his or her life whether it might be at home, the temple, the town, or the forest.

I hope that all of you will recall that the Buddha did not say that one should merely support the religion and care for the monks. But that one should practice Dhamma and seek release from suffering, and where that pertains, one encounters the Buddha, Dhamma, and the Sangha.

*Kān Bumrung Phra-sāsanā*  
Bangkok, B.E. 2513/C.E. 1970.







## Promoting Understanding Among Religions

It is the nature of things that there are many religions because people throughout the world have different backgrounds and in different ages are diverse. Because there are many religions there must be a way to address the problems and unfortunate circumstances that might arise. All religions share the intentionality of eliminating selfishness, which is a profound danger to humankind, causing many problems in societies and among peoples.

All religions have the intention of bringing people together. This makes them socialistic in nature or, if you will, communistic. This is not in the political sense, but, rather, in terms of the norm of mutual concern, a socialism grounded in Dhamma, i.e. a democratic socialism. Its aim is to promote the well-being of all, a mutual friendship rather than destructive animosity. All religions should join together to work for global peace, the protection of society, and the elimination of adversarial forces. All religions have such a responsibility. All religions share a common core, namely, to promote peace even though outwardly they appear to be different.

Today, many people profess to be an adherent of a religion, but their hearts are still clouded by *kilesa* [worldly depravity]. This is true for Buddhists as well as followers of other religions, e.g. Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism—all are subject to anger, desire, and suffering. Therefore, everyone should seek ways to eliminate suffering, both of the body and spirit.

We must consider the truth of all religions, namely, that the founders of the world's religions were not cruel but promoted religion out of love, compassion, and sympathy for everyone, and that they taught in order to address the problems they encountered. Gradually, however, problems developed after the death of the founders, causing their religions to decline and to be transformed, including our beloved Buddhism.

Religions change continuously because they become overwhelmed by the power of politics. We should not be deceived that this is the way it should be. We should work to destroy selfishness among the peoples of the world. All religions should join hands to eliminate selfishness, promote universal happiness, and identify this understanding with the true meaning of God. The true god has the intention to promote happiness in the world for individuals and society.

If today's powerful democracies truly resonate with the very core of religion, democracy will become imbued in the heart, thereby promoting world peace. I truly believe that one day this will occur because we have the medicine to heal the illness that afflicts humankind, namely, *kilesa*, *taṇhā*, *dukkha*. Therefore, we should cleanse our hearts, minds, and bodies as embodied in the repetition of “Buddho”—one who is awake, who is filled with knowledge and happiness, and who has eliminated suffering. This is what being a Buddhist means in the fullest sense.

## *Dāna* (Giving)<sup>1</sup>

*Dāna* can be considered from a sequential or a hierarchical perspective beginning with the giving of material things, and then onto forgiveness, not oppressing others, giving alms, giving knowledge that leads others on the path to enlightenment, the elimination of preoccupation with oneself, and when one achieves the state of not being attached to the self as “mine,” i.e. the realization of a state of freedom. Ultimately, this is the condition of emptiness (*suññatā-dāna*). What is true *dāna*? A wise person will realize that not being attached to oneself is *dāna* in the truest sense. There is nothing mysterious about it. It involves continuous practice. The meaning of *dāna* is giving, giving for the well-being of others not ourselves. A *bodhisattva* aims to give for the well-being of others rather than to achieve heaven.

## *Lokuttara* (Otherworldly)<sup>2</sup>

“Otherworldly” refers to non-attachment to worldly things in the sense of the heart and mind (Thai. *cit-cai*). In this regard, “the world” refers to *dukkha* (suffering) as *kilesa* (sensuality), not the world in a material sense. The Buddha said, “The world in regard to *dukkha* refers to the heart and mind.” The norm of practice in regard to *lokuttara* is not otherworldly but in the here and now. It should be translated as the condition of the heart and mind not subjugated to the world.

## *A Buddha Image Hides The Buddha* <sup>3</sup>

One who only knows a Buddha image and takes the image to be the Buddha has the understanding of a child. One has a true comprehension, understands

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<sup>1</sup> Buddhadasa Is Still With Us, Vol. 3, p. 209

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 227-228.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 116.

that the person who was a human being who worked in India many years ago was also not the true Buddha. Rather, Dhamma in the heart of the Buddha was the true Buddha.

Consider this: the physical being was not the true Buddha, so how could a buddha image be the Buddha? If one is stuck on the image of the Buddha, one is blinded to the real Buddha.

### *The Buddhist Scriptures Hide the Dhamma* <sup>4</sup>

People usually refer to the scriptures as the Dhamma. That is, they think of manuscripts themselves as Dhamma. However, when scriptures are so understood they hide Dhamma. Some think that if they memorize a lot of scripture they have a deep understanding of Dhamma. However, from such a perspective the scriptures hide Dhamma. The true Dhamma is not scripture. The true Dhamma is known by practice.

Consider carefully: scripture and Dhamma are not the same thing. If you are overly attached to the scriptures, you may be blinded to Dhamma.

### *Children Hide the Sangha* <sup>5</sup>

Children who ordain as novices or monks hide the Sangha. The true Sangha is the *ariyasangha*, the quality in the heart and mind of those who practice Dhamma, who follow the path and achieve the results of once-returner, non-returner, and *arahant*. Lacking such an understanding, children who ordain as novices obscure the true Sangha.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 116-117.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 117.



## *Selfishness* <sup>6</sup>

Selfishness is *kilesa* (depravity). It does not mean loving oneself, sustaining oneself, or acting for one's well-being. Selfishness transforms the good of others into the good for oneself. Selfishness is the root of the human problematic. It makes us slaves to materialism—*lobha* (desire), *dosa* (hatred), *moha* (ignorance)—and increases suffering. Selfishness blinds our understanding.

## *Mindfulness (sati) Is Necessary in all Circumstances* <sup>7</sup>

The Buddha said that mindful attention is necessary in all situations. Why did he say this? He did so because *sati* stops suffering (*dukkha*). It is an instrument of wisdom. Mere understanding devoid of mindful attention cannot make anything aright. It is even more so the case that wisdom always contains an awareness component. To practice mindfulness and focus on the breath involves wisdom in the broadest sense.

The Buddha said, *sati sabbattha patthiya*—mindful awareness recalls intention in all circumstances and is necessary to eliminate the cause of suffering.

## *Pāpa (Sin/Demeritorious)* <sup>8</sup>

Pāpa refers to things that are hateful, base, obscene, or dirty, namely things that cause suffering (*dukkha*). When they are especially powerful nothing appears to be satisfactory or appealing but, rather, only troubling and disturbing. This is *pāpa*. Today we are living in an age when everyone seems

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 120-121.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 195.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 114.

to take material things as the norm rather than that which is spiritual, and believe that the material is better than the meritorious (*puñña*). Merit and demerit, however, have to do with matters of the mind and consciousness, namely, thinking, speaking, acting. Today, however, people consider only those things as demeritorious that are publicly incriminating; that take the physical or material dimensions of our lives as normative. However, these ideas are not in accord with the norms of merit and demerit that refer to heart and mind. If the heart and mind are filled with hatred, it is *pāpa*.

### *Dhamma*<sup>9</sup>

Dhamma is a principle of nature and, therefore, may be referred to as the way things are. If we understand the nature of things (*dhammajāti*), we can comprehend the causes of suffering and of happiness, and the basis of what it means to be human. This is the basic principle of Buddhism and differs from other religions in this regard.

When we understand and follow the fundamental principles of nature, we avoid both external and internal modes of suffering. The Buddha's enlightenment was a comprehension of the nature of things. Hence, the Buddha taught us to understand things in this way so that we would be able to act in order to avoid suffering.

### *Ordinary Language-Dhamma Language*

There are two types of language: conventional or ordinary language, and the language of Dhamma [i.e. the true nature of things]. Ordinary language is based on and determined by material things and conventional sensibilities. Ordinary speech, therefore, is based on what we can see with our eyes. It is

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

the language of ordinary people. Dhamma language, however, is grounded in what cannot be seen with the eyes.

*Suññatā (Emptiness)*<sup>10</sup>

The most profound meaning of Dhamma is *suññatā*. All others are superficial. In the *Samyutta Nikāya*, we read, “The Dhamma most useful to the laity is the teaching of emptiness.” It goes on to say that *suññatā* is *Nibbāna*. The two are identical—freed from *kilesa* and suffering. Therefore, *Nibbāna* is a subject for the laity.

*Nibbāna*<sup>11</sup>

The words that best characterize *Nibbāna* are, “The end of suffering (*dukkha*).”

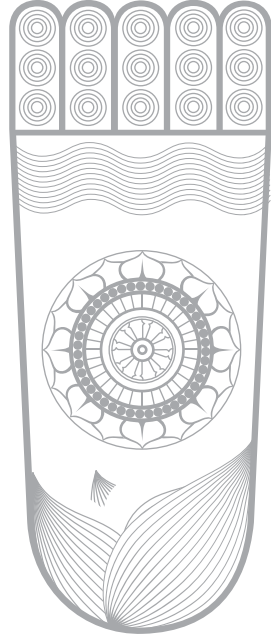
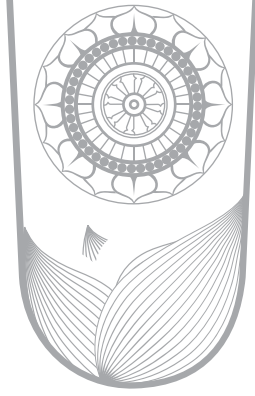
*Kanthamlai Quamkhawjai Rawang,*  
taken from *Buddhadasa Yang Yu. Pai Mai Mi Die,*  
in *Buddhadasa Is Still With Us,*  
Vol. 3, pages 162-165.  
Bangkok, no date.



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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 238.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 243.





## A Good Buddhist is Likely to be a Good Christian

Today, I'll address the subject of the confusion about the term, "communist." I've been widely accused of being a communist along with Phra Pañña. Many kinds of people have come to Wat Suan Mokkh and made this accusation or refer to me as a future communist along with others. Listen carefully. How can I be a communist when I always say that we kill communism when we love others, and point out communism's evil, poisonous nature. Those who call me a communist are jealous publicity hounds, or have some other self-serving motive. They hope to be successful in their accusations if 80-90% of the Thais believe it. Since 80% of the Thai people hate communism and the population of Thailand is 40 million, about 30 million would hate me as a communist!!

One doesn't need to be a communist to help restrain evil in the world. No one believes those who accuse me of being a communist. It's those who envy me who make such malicious accusations, and spread the rumor that I'm a communist. I can't do anything about that, but if I were a communist,

I'd be a better communist than my accuser says. Such a communist is unusual in that he intends to make the world a happier, peaceful place. Consider the fact that the communist philosophy aims to make the world a more peaceful and happy place; however, communists' purpose and method differs from us Buddhists. Both Buddhists and communists want the world to be peaceful, but their methods differ. Communists kill others to create peace. They teach that the world will be peaceful when the distinction between self and other results in mutual love. The best communists continuously help the world and strive to achieve this goal non-violently. I'm not a communist; however, there are communists who hold the highest ideals.

Everyone should have his or her own religion (*sāsana khong ton*). With a strong faith, one can confront communists. Don't foolishly think that communism is anything like Buddhism. Buddhism is not weak and fragile. Rather, Buddhism is like a mountain. Communists will perish trying to take its summit. Buddhists have the very heart of the best of religion. It's important that we confront and get rid of communism. Communism is like an enemy. It's a poison that kills people.

We should love others, even communists. We feel sorry for them. We would like for them to have a change of heart and understand the importance of understanding others. If everyone lived together as friends, the thinking that capitalists should be killed would disappear and everyone would act appropriately.

Now we've arrived at a very important subject, namely, that my teaching about interdependent co-arising (*paṭicca samuppāda*) is incorrect; that I transpose it into an ethic in order to engender a fear of papa (sin) and karmic consequences. That has always been part of the teaching of *paṭicca samuppāda*, but it is much more than that. *Paṭicca samuppāda* teaches that in one lifetime or even one day, interdependent co-arising is operating; that it is connected to *dukkha*, and that we try to prevent it from arising or, if it arises,

to stop it so that we may rise above *dukkha*. If we're able to do so and act correctly, then we'll not continuously be subject to rebirth and the *kilesa* (depravity) that comes with *paṭicca samuppāda*.

The Buddha clearly explained that from grasping (*upādāna*) arises contact and rebirth. One hundred moments of clinging (*taṇhā*) produces on hundred rebirths before we die—10,000, 100,000 and so on. *Paṭicca samuppāda* is clearly explained in the Pāli that whenever there is *taṇhā* there will be grasping, contact, and rebirth. This cause and effect doesn't occur only at death. It's already begun. So it is the case that whenever there is *taṇhā*, there follows *kilesa*, rebirth, *dukkha*. Whatever we do in this life will have consequences in future lives. We cannot escape the consequences of rebirth; however, we can try to correct our actions every time *dukkha* arises.

It is not difficult to understand rebirth. At birth we emerge from our mother's womb; at death our bodies disintegrate. This is the physical rebirth from the mother's womb, the ordinary natural process when *dukkha* arises—birth, old age, sickness, and death. This is the conventional meaning. However, a rebirth devoid of grasping is not a life in the physical sense of birth, old age, and death. It is a birth without a 'self' (*tua ku khong ku*). When *taṇhā* arises *upādāna* arises in the heart-mind (*cai*), and the self (*tua ku*) arises. Birth, old age, sickness and death together constitute the arising of the self. This is the birth that is constituted by craving (*taṇhā*) and grasping (*upādāna*). It is birth in interdependent co-arising. This is what the Lord Buddha meant by birth, namely, birth characterized by craving and grasping.

The arising of *upādāna* is a problem for the heart-mind. Suffering arises with the appearance of the sense of the self—birth, old age, sickness and death—a suffering that is difficult to endure; and, sorrow, suffering, grief, and unrest arise. We encounter those things for which we have no affection, and which lead us astray and create a sense of self. If the feeling of self (*tua ku*) does not arise, then there is no locus for a sense of the self to emerge. This

is the meaning of “birth” (*jāti*) in the dhammic sense. Birth in the conventional sense is birth from a mother’s womb. Dhammically, birth arises from craving and grasping. Birth in a dhammic sense rises first, followed by birth in the conventional sense which is suffering.

My brief comments follow the Buddha’s explanation of interdependent co-arising. I have been interested in *paṭicca samuppāda* from the time of my ordination, and my explanations have sometimes been correct and other have been incorrect over the past fifty years. It took about twenty years for me to arrive at a correct understanding. At first *paṭicca samuppāda* seems very enigmatic, but I gradually came to a certainty about its meaning. However, my explanations were opposed, and criticized by those who had only begun to study the subject while I’ve been studying *paṭicca samuppāda* for years before they were born.

Everyone should understand that *paṭicca samuppāda* has two meanings. There is the traditional meaning that is always asserted by those who accuse me of wrong-view, of holding a new, idiosyncratic interpretation that overlooks the traditional meaning taught by the Buddha; and that I’m incorrect. However, I teach the principle of *paṭicca samuppāda* from a dhammic perspective. *Paṭicca samuppāda* is not confined to death and rebirth, but occurs the first moment that *tanhā* and *upādāna* arise. When this is understood, rebirth can be controlled by sufficient awareness (*sati*) and insight (*vipassanā*). Awareness will generate the protective power of *paṭicca samuppāda*. We should train ourselves to attain awareness from the first moment of contact (*phassa*) and feeling (*vedanā*). Then *tanhā* cannot arise and there will be no rebirth. This is the result of exercising control. If you are not sufficiently aware, you should practice awareness by means of meditation (*kammaṭṭāna*).

We now come to the subject of *kamma* or karma. It is better to speak about *kammakan* than *kamma*. In ordinary language we say, “to do *kamma*,”



or to receive the consequences of the fruit of *kamma*, and that there's no way of escaping the consequences of *kamma*. Indeed, the Buddha spoke in this way. However, he also said that there is *kamma* that is neither black nor white that eliminates the self; that we do not have to be governed by *kamma*. This is the deeper meaning of *kamma* in Buddhism, and is beyond the conventional understanding, "to do good is to receive good; to do evil is to receive evil." Other religions hold such a view and accuse the Buddha of such a teaching. The Buddha, however, taught that there is another kind of *kamma*. Buddhism teaches that it is possible to be beyond *kamma*. This is to act in the knowledge that there is no "I" who acts kammically; no "I" that is born or dies.

Buddhism teaches there is another kind of *kamma* that ends *kamma*; that one is beyond *kamma*. This *kamma* is acting in the clear knowledge that there is no actor, no "self" that is born and dies. This teaching angers those who say that the fruits of acting in this lifetime will be realized in a future lifetime. This view relies on the notion of a self. They are disturbed with our teaching that there is no self that is born and dies, and they accuse me of a false teaching.

I do not abandon the teaching of *kamma*. Rather, I teach its deepest meaning. There are various types of *kamma* ranging from white to black, but there is another type of *kamma* that is neither black nor white which ends *kamma*. This is the Noble Way (*ariyakamma*). It transcends all dualities—black/white/good/evil, merit/demerit, happiness/suffering. This is the *kamma* taught by Buddhism.

Can *kamma* be avoided? It cannot be escaped, can it? We must reach the point where *kamma* is transcended by following the teachings of the Buddha. He explained the meaning of in the most surprising way. As the person most knowledgeable about *kamma* he spoke about its ending. He explained *kamma* in order to instill the fear of evil (*papa*) and the

transcendence of *kamma*—no birth, death.

There is no mutual understanding between those who speak conventionally about *kamma*, and those who explain it dhammically. I am reviled for saying such things as there is no *kamma* or the transcending of *kamma*; there is neither birth nor death. We must eliminate, transcend, end *kamma* in order to reach and realize the path and its fruit.

Let me remind you that we cannot escape our *kamma*; however, there is also a Buddhist saying that speaks about the end of *kamma* and the attainment of *Nibbāna*. *Nibbāna* transcends *kamma*; it is the end of *kamma*. Those who say that the Buddha did not speak about the end of *kamma*—birth, old age, death—and the path to its cessation, are foolish.

Let me clarify. To say, “to do good is to receive good; to do evil is to receive evil,” is incomplete. We should say: the good and evil one does is just that; one doesn’t need to wait for the result. The moment the mind is filled with *kilesa*, the next moment the mind will express *kilesa* and thinking will be governed by *kilesa*. One does not need to wait an hour, a day, a month, or a lifetime. The kammic consequences of good and evil are immediate. If the mind is filled with *kilesa* it will result in evil mental, physical, and verbal acts, and there will be necessary consequences (*vipaka*).

In sum, I do not explain *kamma* conventionally, but in a clearer and fuller way and the way to end *kamma* which is *Nibbāna*. *Kamma* will disappear when we arrive at *ariyamaggañāṇa*, knowledge of the worthy path, namely, that there is no self. This is the elimination of clinging. With the elimination of the self, *kamma* is exhausted. We must realize Dhamma to the point of eliminating the self. I do not teach only part of Dhamma, but rather it’s pinnacle, namely, the end of *kamma*.

In the cycle of *paṭicca samuppāda*, *kilesa* is the cause of *kamma*. *Paṭicca samuppāda* begins with contact that leads to feeling, craving (*taṇhā*), desire (*kilesa*), and grasping (*upādāna*). This leads to birth and the *kamma* of

birth, rebirth and *vipāka*, which is the fruition connected with rebirth that leads to suffering, old age, and death latent in fruition. In the sutta passage of 100,000 cycles there is *kilesa*, *kamma*, and the fruit of *kamma* that occurs continuously. We should know this truth and act accordingly in order to benefit from this knowledge, and not waste the opportunity of being reborn as a human being and encountering Buddhism.

I now want to address the topic of *vaṭṭasamsāra* (rebirth) and *Nibbāna*. These two are always connected. *Nibbāna* is the cessation of rebirth. Some say that my explanation of rebirth is not orthodox because it is not in terms of the three rebirths: this kammic existence, the next existence as the result of *kamma*, and the desire that produces future *kamma*. *Kamma* straddles existences. That which is coming into existence is called that which revolves in death and rebirth in the cycles of *samsāra*. There are three *vaṭṭas* [*kamma*, *kilesa*, *vipāka*] in one *vaṭṭasamsāra*. When *kilesa* occurs it leads to *kamma* which, in turn, leads directly to *vipāka* or result. The instant when *citta* first makes contact it produces, *kilesa*, and the next instant it leads to *kamma* and to consequences (*vipāka*). If we have a developed awareness we can stop the cycle of rebirth, *kilesa* ceases, and there is no *kamma*. That is to say, we are able to control the evolution of *samsāra*. Our mindful wisdom (*satipaṇṇā*) exhausts its power. We do not need to wait until we die, or wait for three lifetimes to pass. During one day, *vaṭṭasamsāra* revolves several times.

I am accused of misinterpreting rebirth and advocating a new meaning. My intention is to show that *vaṭṭasamsāra* is not something in a far distant future lifetime, but in the present. We can understand rebirth and protect ourselves from its arising now. The rebirth that I am talking about from a dhammic perspective occurs within the moment. It is not confined to birth and death but links past, present, and future. Within one day, the cycle of rebirth revolves several times interconnecting causality. *Kilesa* leads to

*kamma*, the result of *kamma*, and then to the *kamma-kilesa* cycle.

Now we come to a very important subject characterized as “*vaṭṭsamsāra* is *Nibbāna*” or we encounter *Nibbāna* in *vaṭṭsamsāra*. We must quench the fire at the fire; extinguish *dukkha* at *dukkha*. In the fire itself there is the extinguishment of fire; in *dukkha* itself there is the extinguishment of *dukkha*. Within one thing we can find its opposite, hence, we can find *Nibbāna* in *samsāra*.

As a comparative illustration, contemplate an extraordinary coconut tree in a grove of coconut trees. That tree can be likened to *Nibbāna* in the midst of *vaṭṭsamsāra*. It must be sought out in the midst of all the other trees. It cannot be found elsewhere. Similarly, *dukkha* must be extinguished in the midst of *dukkha*, just as fire is extinguished in the midst of fire.

I am attacked as crazy for saying that *Nibbāna* is in *samsāra* because usually they are considered opposites. Consider, however, where and how can we extinguish *dukkha* except in the midst of *dukkha*; likewise we discover *Nibbāna* in *samsāra*, not elsewhere. The Buddha spoke what appears to be a contradiction, “Suffering is good, the cause of suffering is good, the end of suffering is good; the means of ending suffering is good. In this fathom [body] there is *citta* (heart-mind), *saññā* (perception). In this body there is *dukkha*, the cause of *dukkha*, the cessation of *dukkha*, the path to the end of *dukkha*. *Dukkha* is *dukkha*; the cessation of *dukkha* is *nirodha*, and this is *Nibbāna*. All this is in the body—both suffering and its cessation. This is the nature of our lives.

Suffering and the cessation of suffering co-exist; hence, *Nibbāna* and *vaṭṭsamsāra* exist together in the heart-mind (*citta*) in the body. The body is the outer covering; the *citta* is the essence. The Four Noble Truths concern the *citta*; is known via the *citta*; is attained by the *citta*. *Dukkha* is extinguished by the *citta*. The *citta* is like the body’s main office. It is there that both *Nibbāna* and *vaṭṭsamsāra* are encountered. When the *citta* is

released (Thai. *lut phon*) *Nibbāna* is realized, and we are no longer bound by the cycles of rebirth.

Consider carefully—in conventional language *Nibbāna* and *vaṭṭsamsāra* are entirely different. However, if that is the case, how can we extinguish suffering? However, in dhammic language *Nibbāna* and *vaṭṭsamsāra* occupy the same space so to extinguish *samsāra* is to realize *Nibbāna*. When I speak in this manner, I am accused of heterodoxy, of abandoning Buddhism and the teachings of the Buddha and merely presenting my own views. No matter. It is a sacrifice I am willing to make. That which is easy and convenient, without pain and forbearance brings only little wisdom; but, if one endures a great deal one gains much merit.

Finally, I am accused of being out of my mind for saying, “The more one studies the *Tipiṭaka* the more one misunderstands Buddhism.” People curse me, saying that I demean the *Tipiṭaka*, but in their preoccupation with studying the texts, they do not practice. The more they study the *Tipiṭaka* the less they know about Buddhism. They have only book knowledge and fail to understand the truth that must be known by the heart (Thai. *cai*). They ask what one must study to know Buddhism. The more they study the texts the less they understand *Dhamma*. To understand Buddhism is to understand the nature of life. To say that excessive study of the *Tipiṭaka* detracts from really understanding Buddhism is a dhammic language claim, not a conventional statement. In the scriptures the Buddha says, “One who studies the *Tipiṭaka* with an empty mind does not understand *Dhamma*.” One does not have to read all the *Tipiṭaka* to understand *Dhamma*. There is another kind of *Tipiṭaka*, the essence of the text in one’s heart-mind (Thai. *cit-cai*). It knows no ending. The written text can, in fact, conceal the *Dhamma*. To read the *Tipiṭaka* as literature is not to understand its dhammic nature (*dhammajāti*).

By studying nature (*dhammajāti*), one quietly discovers *Dhamma*.

You cannot really understand Buddhism by listening to my lectures or reading my writings. To really understand Dhamma you must truly understand yourself, your own fundamental nature. It is all right to stop reading dhammic texts but not the text of yourself—your body, feelings, heart-mind (*cit-cai*). There you will discover the Four Noble Truths. This knowledge surpasses all the books in your library. Study the *Tipiṭaka* in order to understand Dhamma in nature—the elements, the five aggregates and so forth. In nature, one discovers Dhamma.

*Phut Thi Di Yom Ben Khrit Thai Di*  
Bangkok, B.E. 2523/ C.E. 1980.



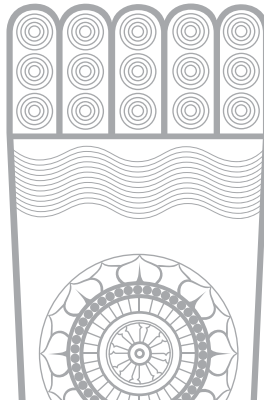


## *Nibbāna* Means Being Freed from Bondage

The foolish misunderstand what it means to be freed from attachment when it is construed simply as greed, love, anger, jealousy, or fear. Attachment is rooted fundamentally in the notion of a self. One associates satisfaction, happiness, dissatisfaction, and suffering with a self. To be liberated from bondage to the erroneous belief in a self is to overcome *kilesa* (depravity), and to realize *Nibbāna*.

*Nibbāna Blae Wā Brāsajāk Khro'ng Phukphan Royrattaken*  
*in Buddhadasa Is Still With Us*, p. 242.  
Bangkok, no date.









## *Nibbāna:* The Salvation of Humankind

The first problem we must consider today is the crisis encompassing the world, namely, the fearful power of selfishness. The way to salvation is the rooting out of selfishness, namely, what we call “the self” (Thai. *tua ton*). All kinds of problems arise from what we call the self. *Anattā* (not-self) is a special medicine to limit selfishness. It is the salvation of humankind. First, however, I want to consider *Nibbāna* in some detail before we turn to other topics, in particular the misunderstandings associated with this subject. *Nibbāna* has been much reviled by those who think that it undermines or is the enemy of development (*kānpātana*) when, in fact, *Nibbāna*, promotes life. When we are no longer troubled by *kilesa* (passions), this condition is called *Nibbāna*. If we are overwhelmed by *kilesa* twenty-four hours a day, we shall go crazy or die within two to three days. *Nibbāna* is the condition when we are freed from being consumed by *kilesa*.

*Nibbāna* does not mean “death” [as some have misinterpreted the term] but “to be cool”; cool because fire does not arise. “Death” in this instance means that *kilesa* is absent for twenty-four hours a day. Free from

kilesa, we are able to rest happily and live feeling refreshed. This is the grace of what is referred to as *Nibbāna*.

Those who have no interest in *Nibbāna* or negative feelings toward *Nibbāna*, or who have no hope for *Nibbāna* because they are mired in *kilesa*, see *Nibbāna* as an obstacle to their progress. It would be similar to a Christian who blames God for his condition. We must endure the stubbornness, insults, condemnation, and pig-headedness of such people. The developers in Thailand hate *Nibbāna* and do not want anyone to speak about it. They see *Nibbāna* as an enemy to the development of a “Dhamma-Land of Gold.”<sup>1</sup> But the heart of *Nibbāna* is being cool and does not apply to development in any way.

Many are told that *Nibbāna* can be attained only after thousands and millions of lifetimes, because they do not understand the meaning of *Nibbāna*, namely, that *Nibbāna* is with us continuously [*italics mine*]; that our life is immersed in *Nibbāna*. Or they say that *Nibbāna* only concerns those who go to the temple (*wat*), or who dwell in the forest or a cave, not ordinary householders. This understanding is utterly wrong! *Nibbāna* is having a cool heart. Wherever there is suffering (*dukkha*), *Nibbāna* must be found to extinguish suffering. Most people do not understand that they are on the path to *Nibbāna* at every moment, and that if they were not immersed in *Nibbāna* they would die, just like a tree without water would die.

The truth that all of you gathered here should understand is that we human beings are already “saved;” and that, furthermore, we are in the process of being saved at every moment—past, present, and future—namely,

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<sup>1</sup> See Donald K. Swearer, “Fundamentalistic Movements in Theravada Buddhism,” in *Fundamentalisms Observed*, eds. Martin Marty and Scott Appleby. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991, pp. 628-690.

*free from the fire of kilesa* (depravity). We are not saved simply by nourishing our bodies, but by having a cool heart. We are not saved by our bodies but by our hearts and minds, by Dhamma; or from a Christian perspective, we are saved by the word of God. Our lives are not sustained by food alone but by following Dhamma, the teachings of the Buddha. This truth is universal. It is the truth of nature, i.e. *dhamma-jāti*.

We should stop being afraid of *Nibbāna*. It is not the enemy of development. Rather, it is the highest kind of development made possible by a cool heart in all circumstances and at all times. This is the meaning of the term, “salvation,” of a life forever *nibbāna-ized* in all respects. The intense coolness of *Nibbāna* is something each of us can experience in the present and forever. Understanding *Nibbāna* in this way is what it means to be a Buddhist, not simply performing Buddhist ceremonies, or wearing a Buddhist amulet around one’s neck. *Nibbāna* is not an after-death reality. Rather, it means to be thoroughly immersed in life; to be completely cool; to be an *arahant*.

The worldviews of the various religions in India during the Buddhist era included the concept of *Nibbāna*. Even though conceptually different, it was referred to as *Nibbāna*. The concept preceded the arrival of Buddhism. It never meant “death.” If one died, it would not be possible to seek *Nibbāna*. No one would seek to eliminate *kilesa* if *Nibbāna* meant death. Rather, it means to eliminate thirst, to be cool.

Prior to the Buddhist era, some groups understood *Nibbāna* to mean sexual desire. Later, other groups identified *Nibbāna* as a formless trance state beyond death, a state understood and taught by Prince Siddhartha when he was a *bodhisattva* but then rejected. He then left his teacher, and realized the state of *Nibbāna* as we Buddhists understand it. If there were no *Nibbāna*, there would be no Buddhism. *Nibbāna* as taught by the Buddha means that the ultimate condition is not death but a cool heart-mind (Thai.

*cit-cai*). Sadly, however, *Nibbāna* has come to be misunderstood as an obstacle to progress and development.

In Thailand not so long ago, it was taught in the schools that *Nibbāna* referred to an *arahant* who was dead. In fact, however, an *arahant* is beyond death. The physical body dies, but not the state of being an *arahant*. What is the heart of Buddhism? If *Nibbāna* refers to death then death would be the very heart of Buddhism but this is impossible. Buddhism teaches the end of *kilesa*, but people seem to be more interested in heaven than in the coolness that is *Nibbāna*. That confuses *Nibbāna* with sense pleasure (*kammagūṇa*) and encourages a negative attitude toward *Nibbāna*. *Nibbāna* in the most compelling sense refers to a never-ending condition of coolness above the turmoil of heated confusion. This is the heart of Buddhism. *Nibbāna* is Buddhism and vice versa. The fundamental meaning of *Nibbāna* is to be cool. It does not mean to die. Rather, the fire of passion is extinguished just as molten bronze is cooled by water, or a wild animal loses its fierceness when tamed. Some, however, confuse *Nibbāna* with pleasure (*kāma*), wealth, or trance states rather than the extinction of *kilesa*, to be cool, to overcome *dukkha*.

When I speak to groups from other countries what is the best way in that context to translate *Nibbāna*? I propose that “quench” works best—to quench the thirst arising from the heat of thirst, namely, to cool the elements of *kilesa*. That cooling down is *Nibbāna*. It should not be translated as “death,” nor should the Thai term “*dap*” (extinguish) be used by itself in describing *Nibbāna*, but, rather, to “extinguish the heat of thirst.”

When the feeling of “I” arises accompanied by a sense of suffering we want release. This sensibility prompts a quest for the quiet coolness of *Nibbāna*, purity, and lasting freedom from the heat of *kilesa*. The meaning of *Nibbāna* is “voidness” (*sañjatanāṇa*) which is the end of *dukkha* (suffering). For example, it is in the nature of children to drink milk just as it is in the

nature of mosquitoes to drink blood. It is similar with voidness. People go about looking for ways to avoid things that trouble their hearts and minds. In doing so, they are seeking voidness. Ultimately, however, because of ignorance, the fires of desire lead them astray (*kāmāramaṇa*). To the degree that we fail to recognize *Nibbāna*, to the same degree we experience *dukkha*. *Nibbāna* is not a condition achieved after death but is realized during a lifetime when *kilesa* has been overcome.

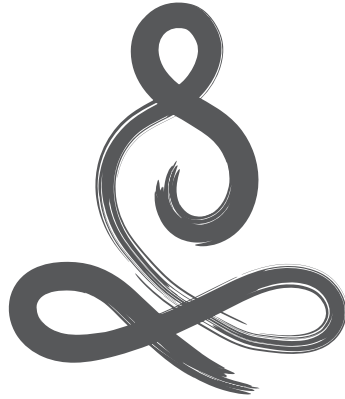
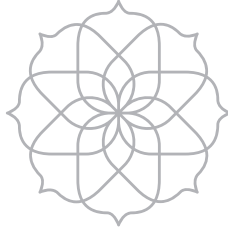
Nibbāna is an attainable state (*āyatana*) that the heart and mind (*citta*) can experience, and is the highest condition that human beings can achieve. It is a state where the fires of blind passion have been extinguished that will prevent us from losing our minds.

*Nibbāna Khü Qwāmyū Rœet Khong Manutsaya Chāt*  
Thammapūja, Bangkok, B.E.2532/C.E. 1988.





*Buddhist  
Practice*







# Mindfulness

Today we are meeting here at Wat Suan Mokkh in Suratthani under the trees in the midst of nature. It is our intention that everyone should be familiar with the way the Buddha lived, wandering outdoors and under trees. He lived, realized enlightenment, and taught in such an environment. Being so aware we should do likewise. It has a different effect than sitting in comfortable chairs in a costly building where meetings are held. Today we hold meetings in multi-storied hotels and do not even consider the possibility of meeting outdoors, even if the topics deal with the earth, fields, and crops—ridiculous!

Today I want to address the subject of the Buddha's teaching (*dhamma*). We are gathered here in the kind of place where Dhamma originated. Some of you are unfamiliar with this history. The Buddha's teachings are referred to as the Three Baskets (*Tipiṭaka*). Whatever the Buddha's teachings might be called, they were given in the outdoors, not in a large building. What was it like? The environment was similar to our own here at Suan Mokkh—in the midst of nature. If anyone is uncomfortable sitting here on the ground, we should remember that this was the very kind

of environment where the Buddha realized his enlightenment. The Buddha did not teach Dhamma in a university classroom. How did the Buddha's teachings differ from other worldviews of his time, and what was its nature? We must now turn to these topics.

Let us consider why we are sitting here on the ground. If you find it uncomfortable, remember that the Buddha sat, slept, and realized enlightenment in such an environment. This is one of the reasons for the rural nature of Suan Mokkh. When you come here and sit in the midst of the forest, what do you feel and think? Are your anxieties and passions not assuaged by the natural environment? Your material concerns fade and your spiritual (*citta-viññāṇa*) interests increase. Sitting and sleeping here on the ground is totally different than sleeping in your bed. Probably none of you would choose to sit and sleep on the ground instead of a bed.

However, let me continue. I do not intend to revile or criticize you but, rather, I am speaking only as a matter of providing information. When ordinary folk hear the phrase, "to study and practice Dhamma," they probably divide it into two parts, namely, that they must first study Dhamma before they practice it. From the perspective of religious or Dhamma language, however, study does not mean reading books, but to practice, as for example, the practice of ethics (*sīla-dhamma/citta-sikkhā*), or, in the case of meditation, not simply reading books about meditation (*samādhi*) but practicing meditation. The same applies to terms like *sati-paññā* which means practicing wisdom (*paññā*); *sīla-sikkhā* (ethics education) which means practicing ethics (*paṭipatisīla*); educating the mind (*citta-sikkhā*) which means practicing meditation (*samādhi*); and education in wisdom (*paññā*) which means practicing wisdom. Rather than "study," we use the term, "practicing" Dhamma which also refers to study via nature. These are aids or the very beginning of practice. If one practices, then one's understanding is rooted in one's practice, hence, the term, *sikkhā* which refers to *paṭipati* (practice), not

study from books. The term *paṭipati* originated several hundred years following the appearance and use of books, writing, and memorization. Memorization and practice went together. Knowledge was based on the truth one realized through practice. True knowledge emerges from practice.

The term *pariyati* (study of Dhamma texts) arose several hundred years subsequent to *paṭipati* and after the appearance of writing and scriptural texts. Prior to that, texts were transmitted orally, memorized, and then put into practice. The knowledge that emerged from practice was identified as Dhamma. Today our knowledge tends to come from many different kinds of printed books we can memorize; however, that hardly counts as the insight-knowledge of cause and effect that can dispel suffering (*dukkha*).

Here at Suan Mokkh, we join in a practice aimed at extinguishing suffering, a knowledge of the truth following the teachings (*dhamma*) of Buddhism; not a knowledge that comes only from books about Buddhism of which there are an overabundance, and which are used for purposes of argument rather than true knowledge of Buddhism. This knowledge emerges from practice.

The common term for study (Thai. *kan-rian*) does not necessarily mean knowledge. The term *sikkhā* (study) includes the notion of practice (*paṭipati*) that leads to right action (*sīla*), a focused mind (*samādhi*), and finally knowledge (*paññā*). This is not a knowledge derived from books but from the heart and mind (Thai. *cit-cai*); a knowledge that comes from practicing Dhamma. I do not say this to criticize but to urge that there should be more emphasis on practice. Practice leads to understanding. Study leads to results when there is practice so it is critical that there be a firm interest in practice. Practice leads progressively to greater certainty, to the very core of Dhamma. So I want to praise the “Dhamma Study and Practice” group. You help support the religion with your practice.

It makes little difference that the Buddhist scriptures (*Tiṭṭaka*) are printed throughout the world, and that Buddhism is studied at the world's universities as a philosophy. This puts people to sleep. There must be practice that we refer to as *santiṭṭhiko*, that is, something that is established in the heart. This term is of interest to us because we chant it when we perform the morning service at the temple: “*svakkhato bhagavato dhammo santiṭṭhiko akāliko*.” The Blessed One referred to Dhamma as *santiṭṭhiko*, something that we experience in our hearts, not something merely written on paper but, rather something that when we put into practice leads to immediate results. We do not have to die and be reborn or to wait for future rebirths. That is not *santiṭṭhiko*, nor is it *akāliko* (timeless) which has nothing to do with seasonal time but, rather, is experienced in the heart-mind and is referred to as *ehi-passiko* (come and see Dhamma for yourself). If it is not truly heartfelt, then it is tantamount to a lie. This is the nature of Dhamma in Buddhism—*santiṭṭhiko* (established in the heart), *akāliko* (timeless), *ehi-passiko* (open to all), *obanayiko* (leading to *Nibbāna*), and *paccattan veditappo viññūhi* (one must be intelligent, not foolish).

Buddhism has nothing to do with black magic (*saiyasāt*) nor with idiots. Black magic has nothing to do with cause and effect. One must be very careful in regard to black magic. Those who try to integrate Buddhism and black magic are blind to the principle of cause and effect and try to appeal for help outside of themselves.

Now let me speak directly about Dhamma. If we truly know mindfulness (*sati*), that is sufficient. With mindfulness, we extinguish *dukkha*. However, if we only *speak about* [italics added] mindfulness or affirm it in a conventional or ritualistic way, we do not truly understand mindfulness. Without true mindfulness we are dead.

I would like everyone to ponder what we refer to as *sañjatañāna*, knowledge or feeling that arises from things that we listen to in nature that

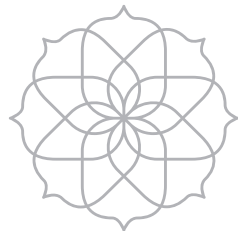
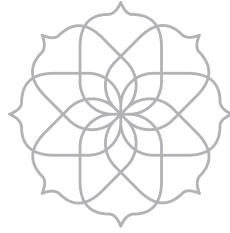
are necessary for our very survival. This is the awareness that arises from *sati*. Lacking this awareness, our eyes are closed and we are incapable of doing anything. If we want to understand the significance of *sati*, try closing your eyes while walking, eating, or doing anything. It becomes impossible. *Sati* is the Dhammic instrumental means by which we are enabled to walk with awakened eyes. If you want to understand *sati*, try closing your eyes and covering your ears, then we are not able to do anything. Walking requires awareness in order not to stumble, fall down, or bump into a tree. We need awareness to do anything. Even lower species, such as horses, cats, and dogs, are endowed with awareness. Without awareness—*sati* in Pāli, *sampradī* in Thai—it is as though we are asleep, drunk, or dead. Those who are mentally ill lack awareness and, occasionally, all of us are without awareness; however, awareness is the very foundation of what it means to be alive for both animals and human beings. Without awareness, it is as though we are drunk, crazy, or blind.

We must now address the question, “What is the nature of *sati*?” We cannot live without awareness (*sati*). It is the very foundation of our lives. Lacking awareness is like being asleep. We must develop a sufficient degree of awareness in order to be fully human, otherwise we are just like other animals. If we are lacking in awareness, it is as though we are doing everything with our eyes closed. However, if we clearly recognize the fundamental nature of *sati* and develop it, then *sati* becomes a life necessity and a basic instinct for the very salvation of humankind.

*Sati*

Klumṣuksā, Bangkok, B.E. 2527/C .E. 1983.





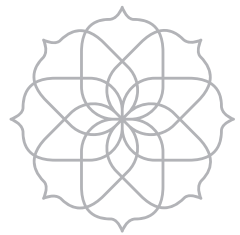


# Mindfulness Is Necessary Continuously

The Buddha said that mindfulness is necessary continuously. Why did he not say that wisdom (*paññā*) is necessary all the time? After all, wisdom extinguishes suffering. He said it, because *mindfulness is the path to wisdom*. If that is not the case then wisdom is unable to deal with the human problematic. Beyond that, moreover, wisdom is grounded in mindfulness. Practicing being aware and mindfulness of breathing incorporates practicing wisdom. The Buddha said, “We must be aware everywhere all the time.”

*Sati Pen Sing Thī Jamben Nai Thuk Karanī.*  
*In Buddhadasa Is Still With Us*  
(*Buddhadasa Yang Yu. Pai Mai Mi Die*), Vol. 3, p. 195.  
Bangkok, no date.









# Separation

There are three kinds of separation: physical, mental, and place. Monks who practice breathing meditation seek out a quiet place such as a forest or even a cool room, wherever one is able to focus the senses without interruption. Controlling one's reactive, affective responses is referred to as genuine physical separation, even if one is in the midst of a noisy place such as a movie theater. When one is able to eliminate such hindrances, one is able to achieve a state of separation, a dissolution of "I and mine." That is true "separation" in the most complete sense, both physical and mental.

Viveka. In *Buddhadasa Is Still With Us*  
(*Buddhadasa Yang Yu. Pai Mai Mi Die*), p. 200.  
Bangkok, no date.







## Giving That Does Not Require Money But Attains *Nibbāna*

The various kinds of *dāna* (giving) can be divided into two types, namely, giving that requires a recipient and another that does not. *Dāna* within the cycle of *sāmsara* necessarily involves a recipient; the other does not require the expenditure of money and does not require a recipient. There are three types of *dāna* involving a recipient: 1) *vatthu-dāna*, the giving of material things, 2) *abhaya-dāna*, the giving of forgiveness, and 3) the giving of Dhamma. The kind of *dāna* that does not involve money does not require a recipient. It can be referred to as *suññatā-dāna*, which negates further rebirth.

There are four reasons for giving material things, namely: because of rebirth, because one believes in the inherent value of such practice, because one wants to pay respect to a worthy person, or simply as an expression of one's own inherent goodness. *Dāna* should not be given to someone who is unworthy. Rather, *dāna* should be given with pure intention and not for one's political benefit. If one makes merit with the hope of gaining heaven, this is a form of *kilesa* (depravity) and greatly increases selfishness and attachment, and leads to increased suffering.

*Dāna* that does not increase depravity is that which destroys

attachment and stinginess, and eliminates selfishness; for example, giving for the benefit of others from whom we expect no return. This leads to the elimination of *kilesa* and the attainment of *Nibbāna*.

*Abhayadāna* means to “give forgiveness.” In this context, *abhaya* means that one does not hesitate to forgive another nor offend another either bodily or mentally, and consistently extends loving-kindness to others. *Abhayadāna* does not mean giving in a monetary sense, but leads to a more beneficial result and is more difficult than giving material things. It is a matter of enhancing the heart and mind. If human beings forgive one another, they will not attack one other, nor go to war against one another.

*Dhamma-dāna* means to give the gift of Dhamma, namely, the knowledge that leads to the transcendence of suffering, and has nothing to do with *kilesa*, boasting about giving or hoping for an indirect benefit. *Dhamma-dāna* may be done in a specific sense as, for example, if one publishes a Dhamma book, or it may be done indirectly, but in either case it is a meritorious act. If one publishes one of my books, one accrues an indirect, but equal benefit, because one is promoting Dhamma.

Encouraging others to be good and to embody Dhamma, to eliminate greed, anger, indolence, and selfishness can also be considered *dhamma-dāna*. As the Buddha said, “Words such as these are a hidden treasure and have a value beyond measure as an instance of *dhamma-dāna*.” If we do not embody *dhamma-dāna* in this way, we are unable to mitigate the evil people in the community.

Now I would like to speak about another kind of *dāna*, namely the giving of *Nibbāna*. Many people say that Buddhadasa does not speak about the truth as embodied in the scriptures. Let me affirm that I am not simply representing my own ideas, but what I am saying is scripturally grounded. When I say that *Nibbāna* is *dāna*, I am speaking about the foretaste of *Nibbāna*, namely, the qualities of a calm heart and mind. When people

come to Wat Suan Mokkh, they experience coolness of heart and mind because they forget the “I” and the “Mine.” This is a kind of foretaste of *Nibbāna*, but not *Nibbāna* itself. The Buddha said, “Of the all the types of *dāna*, Dhamma is supreme. The Buddha praised *dhamma-dāna* as Dhamma in the truest sense.

*Dāna* that does not involve a recipient nor require that one expend money requires special study. *Dāna* is most often translated as “giving” without expectation of a return. This approximates the meaning of *suññatā-dāna* (the giving of emptiness). I coined the term, *suññatā-dāna*. One does not encounter it in the *Tiṭṭaka*, but in ordinary parlance it means to give up one’s self or to transcend selfishness. Such “giving” does not require a recipient or even a “self” that gives since, ultimately, there is no “self” that gives. If one asks, “Well then, what is it that gives up?” My answer is “*tua ku*,” namely, the giving up of attachment. What remains is emptiness, namely, a mind suffused with purity; a mind that the Buddha said does not give rise to suffering and that realizes the state of *Nibbāna*.

To explore the above discussion more fully, let me observe that everything is a part of nature (*dhammajāti*). The “self” does not exist separately but is simply a part of nature as is everything else—dirt, a stone, a tree, blood, flesh, the body—although in our foolish ignorance we see ourselves as separate selves and, hence, cling to the “self.” That which we refer to as the self (*attā*) is at the very heart of depravity (*kilesa*). If we are able to jettison the self (*attā*), that is *Nibbāna*, because *Nibbāna* is being free of self and, hence, *kilesa*, suffering, rebirth, desire, and attachment—and is the attainment of peace, happiness, and a state of coolness. This is the condition of *Nibbāna*, of *suññatā-dāna*. Finally, *Nibbāna* itself must be given up. *The “self” does not attain Nibbāna. Rather, Nibbāna is the condition of emptiness* [italics added].

That which is called the self is at the very core of *kilesa*, of a false

sensibility. To transcend a sense of self is *Nibbāna*, because *Nibbāna* is to be freed of *tua ku*, of *kilesa*, of suffering, aimlessness, desire, and attachment, and the attainment of a state of cool, lofty happiness. To realize a state of non-attachment is to attain *Nibbāna*. This is *suññatā-dāna*. Finally, we must jettison *Nibbāna* itself to realize the state of absolute freedom. One who realizes this condition has transcended the nomenclature of *sīla*, *samādhi*, *paññā*, and as a result of one's practice one achieves *Nibbāna*, the state of emptiness.

That which we refer to as “merit,” lures and entices people to be mired in craving or a desire to be reborn in a state of utter satisfaction. Ordinary folks customarily divide everything into two parts: the good or meritorious and the evil or sinful, heaven or hell, happiness or suffering and so on. This kind of thinking is all right for them, but not for those who are determined to eliminate suffering, because that which we refer to as meritorious or divine is constantly changing. Therefore, the Buddha said, “If one wants to eliminate suffering, one must get rid of the sense of permanence.”

A mind that is truly freed is not attached to anything—heaven, merit or demerit, happiness or suffering—but has achieved a state of calm beyond suffering. Those who are stuck in merit-making suffer. Desire, whatever the object, is suffering. To transcend suffering one must not desire merit or heaven but must be loving and merciful. When one transcends desire and attachment, one realizes a state of peace and quiet, namely, *Nibbāna*. One who is preoccupied with merit-making is, as it were, merit-crazy, which leads to even greater suffering. Such people do not really understand the meaning of the term “merit” but are world-weary.

If one claims, “Heaven is one kind of hell,” not one person would agree. However, there is an aspect of heaven that gives birth to suffering even more than hell does, that is a blind carelessness that most ordinary people do not comprehend. We are cautioned regarding our behavior to avoid doing

wrong things and limit our desires, so we hasten to make merit in order to reach heaven. When we have transcended desire and attachment, we attain a state of quietude, namely, *Nibbāna*.

According to my observation, those who are crazy about merit-making continue to experience more suffering than those who are rather indifferent to it, because they really do not understand the meaning of “merit” (*puñña*). Any desire, including that for merit-making, leads to suffering, inflames the mind, and is subject to desire’s power.

That which we call *Nibbāna* is a condition devoid of suffering of any kind, as is a person who has curtailed all desires, an *arahant* for whom time has effectively stopped. This is likewise when we overcome attachment and are no longer subject to desire and delusion. Suffering caused by craving and delusion is replaced by awareness and comprehension. That which we refer to as *Nibbāna* is a condition of being devoid of desire, namely, the state of *arahant*-ship. The Buddha taught about the elimination of desire and the achievement of a state of ultimate calm and quietude, which is a condition attainable by either monk or layperson.

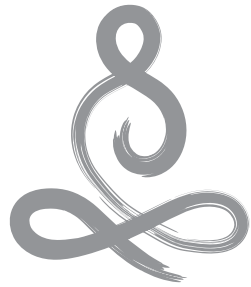
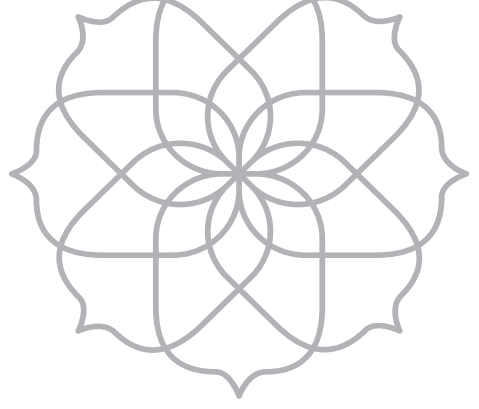
The essence of Buddhist teaching is about overcoming depravity (*kilesa*), lust (*taṇhā*), bias (*upādāna*) and, finally, the transcendence of further rebirth. More so than other religions, Buddhism teaches that when we eliminate desire, our past karma has no consequence, and rebirth is ended; we are not conquered by time, but, rather, we conquer time. Whenever we are overcome by desire, we fall into hell; when our minds are at peace we achieve heaven.

*Kān Hai Thān Thī Mai Sīa Ngun*

*Leow Yang Dai Nibbāna*, pp. 5-18.

Akasarasamai, Bangkok, B.E. 2517/C.E. 1974.









# Good Friends

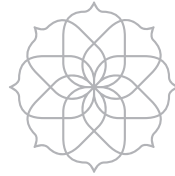
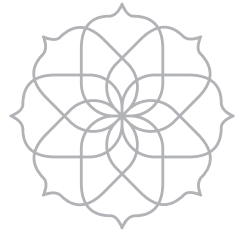
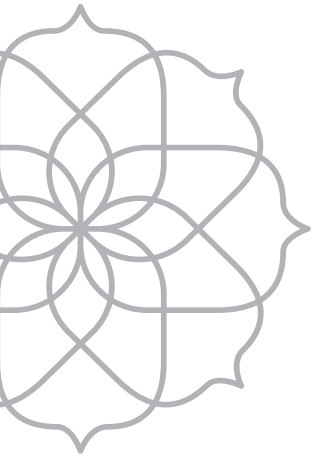
Students should remember that in the past, as we discover in texts like the *Visuddhimagga* (*The Path of Purification*), those who instructed in meditation were referred to not as *acharn* (professor) or *khru* (teacher), but as *kalyāṇamitta* (good friends). We should return to that tradition and take the Tathagata as our good friend, one who has transcended old age, suffering, and death. Here in Chaiya in southern Thailand, we refer to the teacher of meditation as a *kalyāṇamitta*. When we engage in meditation (*samādhi*) we should have a “good friend,” one who guides us with his knowledge. Such was the tradition during the time of the Buddha, who taught meditation in the most profound manner.

Today, when one engages in intense meditation (*samādhi*), strange experiences may be encountered. One should not be afraid, but transform these feelings into a state of concentration. It is not necessary to have a *kalyāṇamitta* overseeing our practice, but we should see one out as a consultant.

*Kalyāṇamitta in Buddhadasa Is Still With Us*  
(*Buddhadasa Yang Yu. Pai Mai Mi Die*), Vol. 3, pp. 206-207.

Bangkok, no date.







# The Technique For Being Human

I am delighted to be with you today to deliver a Dhamma lecture on a topic of great relevance and interest to this audience. The title “technical college,” and in particular the word “technical” is very interesting. I want to explain the term from the perspective of Dhamma, the principles of Buddhism. Some of you might not understand the word from this perspective. Therefore, my lecture today is on “technic” as Dhamma and Dhamma as “technic.”

It is true that we have a limited comprehension of the word “technic” (technical), or we are interested in only a particular aspect of the word. Technic, however, can be interpreted in many different ways. Here at the Technical College, it is usually thought of as vocational training. However, technic has a deeper meaning, namely, the technic of being fully human. Let me give you a couple of examples. We have technics for succeeding in our work, but we do not have a technic for our work not becoming a source of suffering. We have technics for earning money, but we do not have a technic for preventing money from harming us.

The very things we strive after—money, fame, pleasure, what we consider the necessities of life—cause suffering. The world today has

developed materially, however, we suffer spiritually. War epitomizes out-of-balance materialism. We have developed technics for the exploitation and building of all kinds of material things, but we have not developed technics for controlling and supervising them. These technics do not promote human flourishing, because they lack the technic to control and supervise. If you understand this meaning, you will then understand the meaning of Dhamma or how Dhamma is technic.

Young people today are not interested in Dhamma, because they believe that it has nothing to do with them and is only about meaningless stories, rituals, and magical ceremonies with no relevance to their daily lives. Whoever understands Dhamma in this way is utterly foolish and fails to realize that Dhamma is a technic for controlling all that we do, seek, and make that leads to suffering. If we perceive Dhamma in this way, we shall love and respect the Buddha, but if we fail to grasp this truth, then the Buddha and Dhamma are not necessary for our lives.

Technic is Dhamma and Dhamma is technic, even when we consider technic in regard to material development or vocation. But now I must correct the meaning of the term, “technic.” We should think of two words: one where the letter “c” comes at the end, “technic,” which means a subject or body of knowledge as in technical studies; and a second that ends in “que,” “technique,” which refers to a method. Expertise in a subject calls for expertise in method. The integration of the two is the perfection of “technical”: the fullest and most complete sense of technic and technique. When the subject (*what* we know) and the method (how we act or put into practice what we know) follows the law of nature (Thai. *kot thammachat*), we have realized nothing less than Dhamma itself.

In sum, we must excel in “technics” and “technique,” the *subject matter and the method or practice* of the subject matter. Internalizing the principle that must be integrated is not only the most comprehensive,

accurate, and practical understanding of the meaning of “technical,” but of the Buddha.

One of the Buddha’s qualities is that he is endowed with wisdom (*vijjācarana-sampanno*). When the *itipiso* is recited, you hear, “*itipiso bhagava araham sammāsambuddho vijjācarana sampanno*. *Vijjācarana-sampanno* in the truest sense means to be perfected (*sampanno*) in wisdom (*vijjā*) = technics and acting (*carana*) = technique. Consequently, the Buddha is one who is endowed with both “technics” and “technique.” If you will, the Buddha is the supreme technician. Technical knowledge or the knowledge of technics alone without technique, the ability to apply that knowledge, is insufficient and vice-versa. Human flourishing requires both knowledge and action, technics and technique. The basic principle of technic and Buddhism is the same; it is the essence of the Buddha.

*Tekhnik Haeng Quam Pen Manut*

Lecture at Technical College, B.E. 11 February 2510/C.E. 1967.







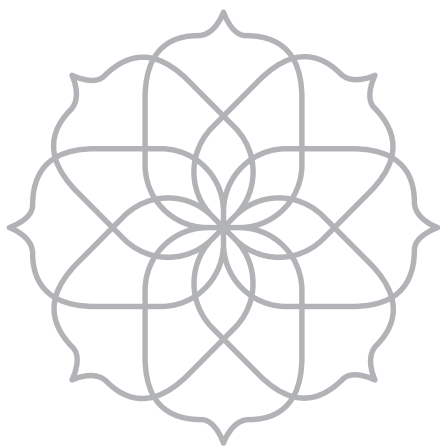
# Buddhist Culture

By Buddhist culture I am referring to the fundamental principles at the basis of lay life: first of all, industriousness, courage, and the acceptance of the inevitability of death; beyond that would be included the following:

- 🌸 a modest, conscientious demeanor
- 🌸 gratitude
- 🌸 moral rectitude
- 🌸 contentment
- 🌸 loving-kindness and broadmindedness
- 🌸 self-denial
- 🌸 forgiveness
- 🌸 not being enslaved to the senses but following Dhamma or God
- 🌸 being the best Buddhist one can be in all circumstances

*Wattanadhamma Khong Chāw Phut*  
in *Buddhadasa Is Still With Us*  
(*Buddhadasa Yang Yu. Pai Mai Mi Die*), Vol. 3, page 154.  
Bangkok, no date.









# A Buddhist Perspective on Education and Receiving a Diploma

Buddhism addresses the subject of education and diplomas. The Buddha said there are three dimensions to education: the quenching of lust (*raga*), anger (*dosa*), and ignorance (*avijjā*). This is true discernment and applies to monks as well.

## The Meaning of The Term *Sikkhā* (Education)

I'll now address this subject topically. The Thai term “study” (*süksā*) refers to education (*sikkhā*) adopted from the Sanskrit through Pāli. At a deeper level it refers to understanding by oneself or understanding oneself. Those who are truly intelligent understand that although there is not-self, study, nonetheless, has an important utility.

Study can be divided into three parts: the study of ethics (*sīla*), the mind or consciousness (*citta*), and wisdom (*paññā*). One cannot understand everything. What is important, however, is to understand the nature of suffering (*dukkha*). The Buddha was fully enlightened, but the very essence of his knowledge was the extinction of suffering.

## The Foundational Principle Regarding the Body and Speech

The fundamental principle of Buddhism is the extinction of suffering whether in regard to ourselves or others; how to speak and act in such a way that suffering does not arise. The fundamental norms are the five *sīla* and their various expanded permutations. The first is not to take the life of another by any means. This can be expanded in various ways beyond the taking of life, e.g. not insulting, hitting, or harming anyone. The second is not stealing from anyone; the third is not to commit a sexual offense. The fourth is not to lie, especially in regard to the moral precepts (*sīla*). To do so undermines Dhamma. The fifth precept is not to cloud one's mental attentiveness by drinking alcohol. Liquor causes carelessness and the loss of discernment. A drunk and a crazy person are alike, although the latter state is permanent and the former is only temporary. These five moral precepts apply to everyone, while 227 apply specifically to monks.

## The Correct Principles Regarding the Mind (*Citta*)

What is the mind in regard to its nature and how should the mind be nurtured? We should study the nature of consciousness. We know that instinctually consciousness is subject to desire and lacks the awareness to control itself. It might be compared to a fish that flops out of the water onto the land and struggles to return to the water. Similarly, our consciousness struggles to return to *kāmāramaṇa* (sexual desire). Therefore, there must be a means to guard the consciousness from falling back into desire. If that happens, immoral behavior abounds and creates endless troubles. You must find a way to understand consciousness in order to guide it in the right direction. Hence, the importance of the practice of awareness (*samādhi*), first by focusing on one's breathing. A mind that is not trained is crazy and does nothing worthwhile.

Now we turn our attention to the best method for developing the

mind (*citta*). In its natural state, the mind has limited utility, while the mind that has been well trained and developed has an unbelievably great utility. Without proper training the mind lacks this utility: *ajinataiya Buddhavisaya ñānvisaya kammavisaya lokajintānī ñānavisaya*.

What are the capabilities of the mind that is trained by meditation? This cannot be answered in any comprehensive sense and, thus, is unknowable. However, today our scientific knowledge has become so advanced that we can travel from the earth to the moon, and subsequently even beyond that so who knows what more the mind can achieve?

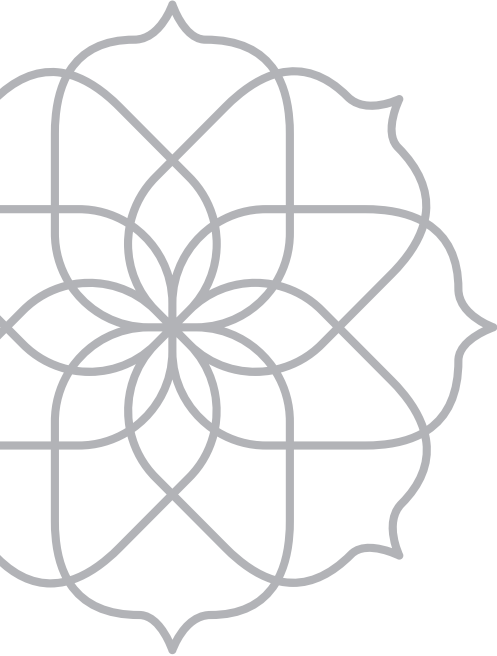
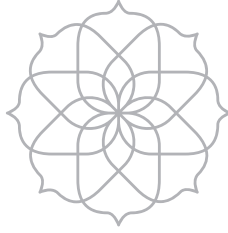
We have principles for developing the mind, but what more do we need to discover to eliminate suffering (*dukkha*)? Training the mind requires more than simply a natural ability; to eliminate suffering is even more demanding. When we are able to concentrate the mind (*samādhi*), we achieve a unique sense of happiness. The mind so trained understands the true nature of things and transcends the feelings of love, anger, hatred, fear, etc.

Everyone should study the mind.

*Kānsu'ksā Lae Kān-rap Priññā Nai Phraphutasāsa*

Thammayo, Bangkok, B.E. 2527/C.E. 1984.







## Authentic Ordination, Study, and Practice Produce Authentic Results

Today each of you has declared your respect for and indebtedness to Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha, and that you intend to be ordained as a novice. This intention is represented by the words you repeated three times, “With loving kindness, I take Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha as my refuge, and this robe as my protector.” You then requested that you receive your ordination robe out of loving kindness (*mettā*) and compassion (*karuṇā*). These words have an ancient meaning that should be spoken not only verbally but with the heart.

You must understand the meaning of the word, “ordination.” *Pabbajā* is a Pāli term. Its meaning in an ordinary language sense means to be extinguished or exhausted in the sense of “used up” or gone. But to be “extinguished” from what? One is “gone from” or has departed from lay life the moment one dons the yellow robe or ordination. However, it means more than simply that one has left the householder life. One takes on an entirely new life that affects what one eats, speaks, thinks, fancies, and requires. For example, one restrains one’s appetite when hungry and restrains

one's pleasures. Otherwise, one does not take the robe; one is not a *brahmachariya*. Hence, the meaning of *pabbajā* and *brahmachariya* as taught by the Buddha.

Entering the monastic order (*pabbajā*) requires constant discipline—training patience, endurance, sacrifice, and a degree of pain; not unlike the treatment and healing of an old wound that needs to be reopened in order to apply medicine. This is an ancient practice. Lacking these qualities, it is not a *pabbajā*, and one is not *brahmachariya* no matter how often one might perform the ceremony.

Although the ceremony itself is brief, *pabbajā* is more than a mere ceremony. It is realization of the truth. In short, *pabbajā* is a giving up of one's status as a lay person in order to become a Buddhist *brahmachariya* as a means of perfecting one's life. You do not need to ask your mother for permission to be ordained but, rather, you become a monk on your own volition. If that is not the case then you should return home.

You should understand the following: What is the benefit of *pabbajā*? What do you like about it? Is ordination at all useful? Let me repeat—the merit (*ānisamsa*) of ordination is overwhelming. Learned scholars have said, “Make the entire firmament into a sheet of paper, Mt. Sumeru into a pen, the water in the oceans into ink. Were one then to write over the sky and the earth until all the ink is gone, it would still not exhaust the merit of *pabbajā* that can be summarized as follows: 1) the merit accrued by the ordained, 2) by his mother and father, and 3) by all sentient beings.

Please listen well—there are three kinds of merit about which I have spoken for the one who becomes a *pabbajā*, one who hopes to become one, and all the relatives and friends gathered here for this occasion. Sometimes the ignorance of the mother and father stands in the way of their son's ordination to the detriment of his education and his practice.

When seriously entered into, ordination changes one's heart and

mind (Thai. *cit-cai*). One achieves a new taste for life, develops a firm heart and mind, an increased awareness of a wide variety of things, and a deeper understanding of Dhamma which leads to a transcendence of suffering (*dukkha*). A son's ordination, study, and practice accrues merit for his relatives, especially his mother and father, and benefits those whom he teaches. His parents' faith deepens. They take an increased joy and satisfaction in the Buddha-Dhamma and become more engaged in the work of the Sangha. Ordination is the responsibility of the parents as well as their son. With their son's ordination, study, and practice, the parents become increasingly engaged with Buddhism (*sāsana*), and he, in turn, feels a deep gratitude to his mother and father.

Everyone should recognize that the gratitude experienced by the mother and father is extremely important. Why is that? Everyone should hold the gratitude felt by the mother and father in the highest regard. This is the case because our mothers and fathers give us life. Today children are not taught with sufficient clarity that they come from their mothers and fathers. We should respect and provide for our mothers and fathers, as was taught in times past: "Fathers and mothers are their children's *arahantā* (worthy ones), Brahmas, and teachers." They point their children in the right direction. We should not oppose our parents, and we should care for them. To think that we are totally independent is foolish and against the teachings of the Buddha. It is utter foolishness to think that we do not come 100% from our parents. Everyone should recall the words of the Buddha, "Our fathers and mothers are our *arahantā*, the most respected Brahmas. No one exceeds their loving kindness (*mettā-karuṇā*) toward us.

Our mother is our first teacher beginning with nursing and teaching us how to sit up. We are one hundred percent of our mother and father. They do not have us do anything that we should not do. Therefore, we should trust our parents and not order them around. We should also know that according

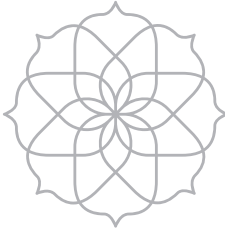
to ancient customs in India, children have the duty to free their parents from rebirth in hell (*nāraka*). Parents who do not have children have troubled hearts and this is a kind of hell. Children should be their very best, which will not only make their parents happy but will keep them from falling into hell. So, with the very best intent, you should ordain, study, and practice, which will release your fathers and mothers from troubled hearts and from hell (*nāraka*). In the Vinaya, this is referred to as the blessing (*ānisamsa*) granted to relatives and friends, especially mothers and fathers.

The third blessing accrues to all living beings—humans, deities (*devatā*)—everyone in the universe. As long as religion (*sāsana*) exists in the world, everyone, without exception, will be benefitted. Your ordination and all that it entails in study and practice will ensure the continuation of Buddhism. Therefore, do nothing to undermine our religion. No matter how long you remain ordained, your study and practice will contribute to its longevity.

*Buadjing, Rianjing, Patipatjing, Dai Phonjing*  
Chaiya, B.E.2513/C.E.1970.









*Buddhism  
and  
Society*





# A Socialism that Can Help the World

There are many kinds of socialism in the world. Some are like a dangerous disease. In Buddhism, however, there is a special kind of socialism. Because socialism is creating problems in Thailand, a Buddhist country, we must reconsider the meaning of socialism.

Worldly socialism is like a child's play thing. If we consider socialism from the perspective of the natural order of things (*dhammajāti*), however, its ideals have a restorative power. The socialism that is spreading throughout the world today, however, is problematic.

The form of organization of the Buddhist Sangha is socialistic. We might say that Dhamma embodies socialistic ideas, or that the Buddha acted in the highest socialistic manner toward human beings and animals. We should not be surprised that humans pursue foolish forms of socialism rather than the true form of socialism found in nature.

We need to consider new forms of socialism. If we look back more than two thousand years, we will find an unsurpassed form of socialism that has been part of the Buddhist tradition since that time. Thus, Buddhists have socialism in their blood and body. Buddhists see the commonality of

humankind in the universal condition of birth, old age, suffering and death. We have been taught by our grandparents, aunts, and uncles to consider everyone as friends in the common condition of birth, old age, suffering, and death. Buddhists, therefore, should realize that Buddhism, in this sense, is basically socialistic. All Buddhist teachings (*sīla-dhamma*) embody the spirit (*viññāna*) of socialism. Because Buddhists already have such a true and valuable form of socialism, we should not be seduced by inferior forms. The true Dhamma (*dhammasacca*) is the essence of nature (*dhammajāti*), and the essence of nature is socialistic (*sanghama-niyama*). That is nothing exists autonomously. Everything lives together in reciprocal interdependence.

For humankind to be happy there must be more than one element. Nature is a combination of many elements, a balance among them. A socialist society follows this model—many parts working together. If one dominates, human beings cannot survive. The ancients taught, “Act in such a way that all can live together.” Exhibit loving kindness (*mettā*) and compassion (*karuṇā*) according to the law of nature. Cooperation is one of the skills of nature. Not to exist cooperatively is not to exist at all. Respect for all living beings is one of the principles of socialism.

In Buddhism, indeed, in all religions, there is the ideal of mutual freedom and compassion for all things. This is the ideal that underlies the Buddhist Sangha. Literally, “sangha” means group. When there is a group there must be something that holds it together, one principle of truth (*lak dhammasacca*). As in nature there is harmony, so in the Buddhist Sangha there is a balance between individualism and mutuality. In the Sangha there cannot be excess in terms of dress, living quarters, and meals. When more is taken than is needed, the Sangha cannot progress. In society, if everyone does not take more than is needed, there will be an excess that can be shared with others and poverty will be eliminated.

One of the basic principles of socialism is the monastic ideal of non-

excess. In addition, furthermore, there are the principles of discipline (*vinaya*) and mutual assistance. There is the ideal of the *bodhisattva*—to help others from a concern for the larger society. If the Buddhist moral norms (*sīla*) are followed, there will be neither the poor nor the excessive wealthy. It is the abandonment of pure socialism that has created the present class structure. This promotes a socialism that persecutes and destroys by force. Therefore, we must seek for the highest truth (*dharmasacca*) in which the norms of morality and mutual compassion (*mettā-karuṇā*) are grounded.

True socialism is not merely a human construction. It is rooted in the very nature of things. Humanity is part but not all of the most authentic form of socialism grounded in nature—the fundamental constituent elements of existence—*dhātu*, *khandha*, *āyatana*. In sum, true socialism reflects the genuine interrelatedness of all things after the model of nature and the interrelationship of all component parts.

*Sanghkhom Niyom Chanit Thī Chu'ay Lōk Dai*  
Thammapūja, Bangkok, B.E. 2519/C.E. 1966.









# Buddhists and the Care of Nature

I am delighted and honored to have been invited by the Komon Khimthong Foundation to deliver the fourth *Pācārayasān* lecture. Before Mr. Komon Kimthong passed away he often visited me at Suan Mokkh on behalf of the Foundation.

Meeting in the early morning is a particularly meaningful time for us to come together. Our minds are less cluttered and more able to think deeply, when, as the saying goes, “tea is not overflowing our cup.” So, I am delighted to be with you at this time before sunrise. There is a saying in Pāli, “The mind that is open and flexible is better able to contemplate (*vipassanā*).” In the early morning, the mind is more flexible and better able to grasp the task at hand.

Sunrise is the time when flowers begin to open, and should also be the time of the opening of our consciousness (Thai. *cit cai*). It is the time nature is replenished, and also the time that the Buddha realized his enlightenment. Therefore, consider carefully the importance of sunrise, a time to awaken, to meet together, and to realize that this time is better than sleeping.

We come now to the topic of today’s discussion, namely, “Buddhists

and the Care of Nature.” There are two kinds of Buddhists: those who *merely know about* Dhamma and the Buddha, and those who *actually live their lives* in terms of this knowledge. The latter are the true, authentic Buddhists. There are others, however, who are labeled Buddhists but who lack respect for nature. True Buddhists deeply care for nature and consider it to be Dhamma.

I will speak about those true Buddhists who care for nature in the name of Dhamma. Those who care for nature dhammically look beyond mere outer appearance to its inner significance; hence, the term for nature, “*dhammadhātu*,” that is, elements of Dhamma. The term *dhammadhātu* refers to the inner essence of nature (*dhammajāti*). When we truly care for nature in its outer form, we are caring for its inner essence, and in this caring we overcome selfishness (Thai. *mai hen kae tua*) and realize the state of not-self (Thai. *mai mī tua*). To care for the inner essence of nature is to realize Dhamma (*dhammadhātu*).

Let us consider the meaning of the Thai term “care” (*anurak*) from two different perspectives. We can look at nature either externally and superficially or from the perspective of a deeper level of understanding (*paññā*); similarly regarding the terms “power” and “strength.” Externally they can mean to be forced to act in a particular way, but from an inner perspective they refer to the power of understanding. During the time of King Ashoka, he ordered villagers to plant trees that bore flowers and trees that bore fruit, in particular, mango trees. Areas were covered with gardens and parks planted by the king and the wealthy to serve as an example for others to do the same. Before this, in the time of the Buddha, orchards were often donated to monasteries, and when the Buddha realized his final *Nibbāna*, he was residing in a king’s garden.

It was recognized that caring for nature had an affect on the inner being; that there is a direct relationship between caring for nature and overcoming selfishness. The Buddha’s life was a model for his followers: he

was born under a tree, realized enlightenment under a tree, taught under trees, lived under trees, and attained *Nibbāna* under a tree. Being a part of and caring for nature is, indeed, what it means to be a Buddhist.

We must now consider the word nature (Thai. *thammachāt*, Pali. *dhammajāti*). The term has at least two meanings: an inner meaning that refers to the heart and mind (Thai. *cit-cai*, Pali. *citta*) and an outer meaning that refers to external objects. Regarding inner nature, the Buddha specifically referred to nature as *dhammadhātu* or *dhātu*, an aspect or foundation of *dhamma*, namely, *idappaccayatā* (conditionality): everything is part of the process of cause and effect. The Buddha said, “Whether a Buddha/Tathagāta appears or not, *dhammadhātu* exists according to the laws of nature and, consequently, demands our attention.”

If we take care of our inner nature (*dhammadhātu*), namely *idappaccayatā*, selfishness will not arise in our heart and mind; and, devoid of selfishness, we shall not destroy nature. In short, when we care for our inner nature, we shall automatically respect and care for the pristine character and beauty of the natural world. If we are not selfish, then selfishness will not exist in the world, and the world will be pure and beautiful according to the laws of nature. However, if selfishness arises and remains, then nature will be destroyed. In the Pāli scriptures, we read, “When a person enters a forest of fruit trees, rather than climbing a tree to pick some of the fruit, because of greed he is likely to cut down the tree to get all the fruit.” Fifty years ago, I came here to find a place where I could build Wat Suan Mokkh. Behind the temple (*wat*) were legume (*sado*) trees. Rather than picking the legumes from the tree, we took only those that had ripened and fallen on the ground.

Caring for inner nature is caring for our heart and mind. At the same time, we are caring for nature that surrounds us. When we violate our own nature, at the same time we are violating our natural surroundings. The two are interconnected, and such violation leads to the death of both. So, my

friends, from beginning to the end take good care of your inner nature, your *dhammadhātu*.

For a moment let us consider briefly the case of India. When the Pāli scriptures were written, India had deep rivers and was covered with forests and other vegetation. Yet, when I visited India thirty years ago, all the forests had been replaced by fields, and the Nerañjāra River where the Buddha attained enlightenment and the mythical serpent Phya Naga lived had been so filled up with earth and sand that one could walk across it.

At the beginning of the Buddhist era, India was already being covered by agricultural fields, an on-going transformation that is causing many problems today, such as deadly temperatures and floods because of the loss of natural surroundings. India is so changed that there remain only two mountain chains, the Himalayas in the north and the Vindhya mountains in the south. Otherwise, all the land is under cultivation that previously had been forested. Selfishness, both intentional and unintentional, has changed the forested land throughout India to pasture land. Even though India is a country of many religions, including Buddhism, this has not protected forested land from being lost to cultivation. This is a result of the people thinking that eating rice is better than consuming forest products. Although Thailand still has more forests than India, we are on the verge of not being able to protect them as they face ever-mounting destruction, especially in the northeast.

As we increasingly become slaves to commerce, industry, and material things, we become increasingly selfish and the hope of preserving green forests becomes increasingly slim. But, let me now turn to another example, namely, here at Wat Suan Mokkh. On the northern border the remains of a deep stream flows, and to the south is a brook with a lot of water fed by a waterfall. Previously, water was plentiful at Suan Mokkh. Now, however, we must drill wells. Fifty years ago when I first came here, the gully

to the south of Suan Mokkh had water so deep it would reach up to an elephant's belly, but now some stretches have no water at all. The arrival of industry has been destructive to the environment, and the development of towns to the south has destroyed the forests. In the past, forests were like the gardens of cities. From afar, they looked like the waves of the sea. However, it is impossible to stop the advance of cities and to protect the natural environment. Jungles are transformed into cities, and it is impossible to protect nature (*thammachāt*).

Even though cultivated rubber trees grow very large, they are not like the trees that grow in the jungle. Rubber tree plantations are not able to protect the headwaters of streams and rivers. Consequently, as a result of planting rubber trees, the water dries up as we see along the borders of Suan Mokkh, where the villagers lack the water that previously was available for their use. Even the well water in the town of Chaiya is low. In short, the beautiful forests that the people of Chaiya once enjoyed have disappeared with the coming of the plantation era and the admiration of industry. What will the future look like? As the forests continue to be destroyed and the water in streams and rivers reduced, will the peace and quiet that they brought be lost? Although the forests in India have been compromised, the country still has the rainy climate of the Himalayas, which gives its farmers the moisture need for their crops. Thailand, however, does not have the Himalaya mountains that helps produce moisture.

We now have come to the point where we must consider two kinds of "nature:" deep, inner nature, *dhammadhātu*, which is not visible to us, and external nature outside of us, *dhammajāti*. Which are we to care for? It is difficult to translate *dhammajāti* into English. We use the term "nature" although it fails to convey its full meaning. Hence, it is preferable not to translate the term and use *dhammajāti*, which has four levels of meaning: 1) nature, 2) the laws of nature, 3) the duty of human beings in regard to

nature, and 4) and the results or consequences of acting according to the laws of nature. Let me first, however, explain these terms not from a technical perspective but in ordinary language in regard to four perspectives: 1) the body or substance of nature; 2) the law according to nature/natural law; 3) our duty (Thai. *nāthī*) in regard to nature; and 4) the results or consequences of following the laws of nature. This four-fold analysis applies to the nature of individuals as well as nature.

The inner structural meaning of the law of nature is interdependent co-arising (*paticcasamuppāda*) or conditionality (*idappaccayatā*). When we realize this truth, selfishness is eliminated; we transcend the ego; and we are able to achieve *dhammajāti* both internally and externally. Today, people throughout the world lack the insight of interdependent co-arising (*paticcasamuppāda*) and, as a consequence, are bound by a cycle of increasing selfishness and materialism. Ignorance of Dhamma and the lack of understanding and of respect for the natural law of interdependent co-arising affects all beings including the Thai royalty, the heads of the world's religions, the poor as well as the rich, and even divine beings (*devatā*). Those who are selfish destroy nature and replace it with dangerous substitutes. The consequences of selfishness are, simply, that the world has gone crazy. Although animals are selfish, human beings are increasingly so, and human selfishness impacts negatively on nature.

How can Buddhists care for nature? The brief answer is by being true Buddhists, which means eliminating selfishness and actively caring for nature in every way possible. If all religions promoted this teaching, selfishness would be eliminated from the world.

*Phutasāsanik Kān Anurakthammachāt*

Komon Khimthong Foundation, Bangkok, B.E. 2533/C.E.1990.





# Work Is Practicing Dhamma

According to the Vinaya, monks recite the monastic rules (*pāṭimokkha*) twice monthly, however, in regard to Dhamma, the monastic rules are a daily matter. We fail to recognize the principle that “work equals practicing Dhamma,” a matter that is especially important here at the Garden of Liberation (Wat Suan Mokkh). Elsewhere, work and practicing Dhamma might be separated. The *Visuddhimagga* (*The Path of Purification*) and the commentaries agree that work is a burdensome worldly concern or at the very least a preoccupation that sidetracks us from practicing Dhamma. However, let me repeat, “*work is practicing Dhamma.*” It is important that you understand this statement.

What is the meaning of the identification of work and Dhamma here at Wat Suan Mokkh? In the commentaries, work and Dhamma are not identified but are adversarial. However, I contend that from the outset here at Wat Suan Mokkh, work and Dhamma are identified. Others may contend that meditating with closed eyes by itself is sufficient; that study is unnecessary. From the very outset to the present, here at Suan Mokkh work has not been seen as adversarial or problematic but viewed in terms of the ability of the

individual. After all, even speaking or lecturing can be seen as a kind of work. Others may make a sharp distinction between meditation and work, whereas we affirm the principle that practicing Dhamma is work and, conversely, work is practicing Dhamma.

In the commentaries, there is a story of a monk who wanted to practice meditation, but his preoccupation with the many construction projects at the monastery stood in the way of doing so. In such a case, the work itself could become the very practice of meditation. To devote all of one's time seated in meditation with one's eyes closed would be a waste of time. In short, work is practicing Dhamma. This is the truest and most appropriate principle in regard to both worldly and dhammic activity.

But what is meant by the term “work?” Work means different things to different people because people, themselves, are. Monastic practice, for example, differs between Tibet and Thailand. In Tibet, some monks have the responsibility of cutting firewood or cleaning up excrement, while at the same time observing highly regarded activities in the monastery such as receiving guests and pursuing monastic studies. If one is required to perform a lowly task, one should not be criticized for it is a reflection of one's broad capabilities.

Whenever *kilesa* (evil desires) arises, it must be countered by the practice of Dhamma. Work is a valuable dimension of our very nature, especially regarding the practice of Dhamma. Our Dhammic ideals should not be abandoned but developed to the greatest extent possible.

*Kānthamngān K'u Kānṣaṭṭipadhamma*

Thammasaphā, Bangkok, B.E. 2510/C.E. 1967.







# Work for the Sake of Work

## The Utility of Acting for the Sake of the Act Itself

Why is it important to address the question of the importance of working for the sake of the work itself? The first level is ethical (*siladhamma*). To work merely for one's own benefit leads to corruption. Furthermore, there is a problem when the government promotes the principle of "Work is money, and money is work," a principle with which I heartily disagree. When I spoke to the Association of Teachers, I promoted what I consider to be a Buddhist principle, namely, to work for the sake of the work itself, rather than for the money that one might gain from that work. This leads to corruption. To work for the sake of the work itself dispels boredom, impatience, and suffering (*dukkha*), and produces happiness. One is basically satisfied and enjoys all kinds of work and activities. Even when one is tired, one does not feel exhausted. If the heart and mind (Thai. *cit-cai*) has achieved the stage of "working for the sake of the work itself," the sense of *dukkha* (suffering) is negated.

If, on the other hand, working *for* this and that, whatever it might be, such as working for money, worrying about profit or loss, or whether the

work will succeed or not leads to dissatisfaction and many other kinds of problems. Such work puts us in darkness rather than the light. If one's hope is based either on success or necessity, this differs from working for the sake of the work itself with a liberated heart and mind. The first consideration is to act according to ethical norms; the second is to circumvent suffering in one's actions; and, the third is to terminate the self and thereby attain *Nibbāna*. One does not need to meditate (*vipassanā*) but rather to act mindfully for the sake of the act itself. This will dissolve the self (*attā*)—a Dhammic act that leads to *Nibbāna*.

### To Act for the Act Itself Embodies the Norm of Non-Expectation

This place, Wat Suan Mokkh, is a forest monastery where one meditates on death and dying, which is germane to the norm of working for the sake of the work itself. It is less significant to focus on something in particular or a group of particular things even if they are religious in nature. In acting for the act itself, the heart and mind are able to focus fully on the act unobstructed by like or dislike, whether we are rewarded for the act, or whether others approve of it. If one comes to study at this forest monastery, it should be for the act itself not whether someone would express approval of it, praise you, or thank you for your activity; but, rather, to transcend the self (Thai. *tua ku khong ku*).

### To Act for the Sake of the Act is Happiness

To expand on what I have said thus far, to act for the sake of pure wisdom is to act according to the truth of nature. One follows a straight path without exhaustion or suffering, progressing in the practice of Dhamma toward achieving the goal of *Nibbāna*. Whoever one may be—a monk, a government official, a businessman—if one works for the sake of the work itself nothing can be stolen from them. One acts in a disciplined manner according to proper procedures.

## Working for the Sake of the Work Itself Is a Means to Circumvent Suffering

You might consider what we have been discussing to be irrelevant to religion but simply an ethical matter. However, as I have been addressing the topic it is, indeed, relevant to Buddha-Dhamma. The very heart of Buddhist practice is to overcome suffering through an understanding of the principle of cause and effect. Does one have sufficient intelligence and insight to grasp the intricacies of Dhamma and of life? If we understand the meaning of death before we die, then we understand the meaning of me-and-mine (*tua ku khong ku*) and are able to work for the sake of the work itself and transcend suffering.

## Understanding the Four Meanings of Dhamma in Terms of Practice

1. Dhamma is duty
2. Dhamma is *dhammajāti*—the way things are
3. The consequences of doing one's duty
4. One's duty is Dhamma

## Doing One's Duty is Doing Dhamma

What is duty (*nāthī*)? It is not a general kind of weight that accumulates on one's chest, heart, or head. Rather, if one is a layperson, one's duty is that of a layperson; if a monk, that of a monk; and so on. To be sure, the term can be used collectively as, for example, "The duty to extinguish suffering." However, even in this case distinctions can be made, e.g. to extinguish the suffering of lay persons, of a novice monk, or, regarding duty, the duty of a layperson, of a monk, and so on.

To do one's duty for the sake of the duty itself is, in more general terms, to perform an activity or work for the sake of the activity or the work itself. It is a duty for a husband to care for his wife and children, which he does without feeling troubled or distressed. His wife and children are

treasures. They are not a burden on the heart. This, then, is referred to as a duty for the sake of duty.

## To Work for the Sake of the Work Itself Frees and Quiets Heart and Mind

To work for the sake of the work itself, or to do one's duty for the sake of the duty itself shares the condition of not-self (*anattā*). To be in a state of agitation when one works is like falling into hell. But to work for the sake of the work itself leads to a sense of satisfaction and happiness from the work's very onset, even if the work is difficult and time-consuming. If one works only for money, one feels exhausted and the heart and mind cannot realize peace and quiet.

## To Work Because It Is One's Duty Is a General Moral Principle

This principle is affirmed in ethical treatises everywhere. For example, look in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* under the categories of "moral," "morality," or "ethics," and you will encounter the principle of "duty for duty's sake." This principle is endorsed by scholars everywhere. Sila-dhamma prompts us to act for the good of humankind. This is true for religions (*sāsana*); ethics and moral philosophy stand for and urge us to act on this principle. The admirable moral consequences of *sila-dhamma* are humankind's greatest goods:

- 1) true *happiness* is religious in nature
- 2) the state of being a human being is the supreme condition (perfection)
- 3) doing one's *duty* for its own sake
- 4) universal love is the highest moral principle.

If done in truth, love is selfless; selflessness leads to happiness, which is to be fully human; to work for the sake of the work itself is to embody universal love.

If you have not thought in these terms, it is difficult to understand, namely, that we are all one. We tend, rather, to think individualistically and in terms of separation. Suffice it to say that because there is no self we are free to act for the sake of the act itself. This principle is fundamental to Buddhism and is sufficient to address all of the problems we face.

## To Be Attentive to Me and Mine Is to Become Cool

To deepen our understanding of not-self is to realize a condition of coolness and to overcome suffering. When we act in this way we achieve happiness. It is a dhammic condition that is nothing less than *Nibbāna*.

How can it be, you may be thinking, that there is no “me” and “mine?” You probably find the idea quite abhorrent. However, to overcome suffering (*dukkha*), it is imperative that we realize the truth of not-self. It does not mean that nothing exists but, rather, that there is no attachment to me and mine, e.g. my house, my children, my wealth, my honor, my fame. *This is the very heart of Buddhism* [italics added]. When one achieves this condition, one is called a person who is truly worthy (*ariya*); one who has eliminated suffering for the rest of one’s life.

## One Who Truly Understands Me-and-Mine Eliminates Suffering

To understand that there is no me-and-mine is “dying” before one’s physical death. It is the very heart of Buddhism and related to all other aspects of its teachings. To lay audiences, the Buddha taught about not-self (*anattā*), emptiness (*suññatā*), and transcendence (*lokuttara*). Even though one may have a spouse, children, and a home, one should still strive to embrace emptiness and thereby overcome suffering.

## One's Afflictions Increase Because One Is Enslaved by Me-and-Mine

Why is it that today more so than in past times there is such an increase in mental afflictions? We might answer that it is because we do not rely on Dhamma to help us; but rather we are conditioned by greed and anxiety that stem from selfishness (i.e. me-and-mine). Today there are more mental problems than in times past when people lived closer to nature and lived with fewer provocations to selfishness. Today, because of our constant, pervasive selfishness, true peacefulness is virtually impossible to achieve.

Let us now consider, however, whether or not such a state is inevitable. If that were the case, then studying the Buddha-Dhamma and ordaining as a monk would be an utter waste of time. In fact, however, one ordains as a monk and studies the Buddha's teaching in order to gain victory over selfishness. Dhamma is empowering in that way. In this scientific age, however, foolish people believe that Dhamma is for those who are trying to escape from the world and live in the forest.

## Religion Helps People Live in the World Victoriously

Religion is not a way for people to escape from the world. Rather, it is a means for being successful in the world in terms of work, family, children, wife, husband, and living responsibly in the world. Such is the intention of Dhamma. What must you do to live successfully? It is to have the kind of heart and mind (Thai. *cit-cai*) to which I have been referring. If such is not the case, you cannot be successful. Ignorant people do not realize this truth. It is like holding a gun to their heads and taking their own lives. To truly possess Dhamma is to rise above life's problematic, to successfully confront life's problems as you encounter them.

## Dhamma Is for Everyone in the World

It is not the case that Buddhism (*sāsana*) is only for those who are no longer householders, or saints (*arahant*) who have gone to dwell in the forest. The goal of Buddhism is the extinction of suffering for everyone on the world, gods (*devatā*) as well as human beings, for both are subject to suffering. Dhamma conquers the suffering of all. The custom of ordaining as a forest monk is a minor tradition followed by some because they see it as more convenient, less onerous, and providing greater freedom. However, the great majority—perhaps 80%—remain in the world.

Teaching Regarding the Extinction of Suffering for the Laity  
The enduring, pervasive teaching of the Buddha is *suññatā* (emptiness) even for the laity. *Suññatā* is an extraordinary weapon to address all kinds of problems, whether one is a monk or a layperson. It is unnecessary to get bogged down in the terminology of saintliness, e.g. *arahant*, *sotāpanna*, etc. To the degree that we eliminate selfishness (Thai. *tua ku khong ku*), we eliminate suffering.

To Act for the Sake of the Act Itself Is to Live Victoriously  
The main principle of practice is simply, “to act for the sake of the act itself.” That is sufficient. It is not necessary to study more than that, such as *why* we are doing that, or *what* is the truth value of what we are doing, or what others may say we *should* be doing. We suffer when we think that we should always be acting *for* something or someone—money, children, wife. When we remember that we are acting because it is simply our duty as human beings, we avoid suffering.

When all beings awake in the morning—even animals like birds and snakes—they set about various tasks such as finding food to eat. Lay people get ready to go to their jobs, and after monks return to their

monasteries from their morning alms rounds, they engage in various work activities. If they do not have the right intentionality, are harried and impatient, they will experience varying degrees of suffering (*dukkha*). Then they must change and become *kalayāṇaputhujjana* (morally admirable individuals) who are able to endure suffering; and *ariyasāvaka* who understand the true nature of things, sustain their concentration, and are not overcome by foolish ignorance on all levels—contact (*phassa*), feeling (*vedanā*), desire (*taṇhā*), grasping (*upādāna*).

### One Must Achieve a Life of Awareness and Wisdom (*Sati-Paññā*)

If one is dominated by ignorant desires, likewise so will one's activities. However, if one is imbued with the wisdom of the Buddha, about which we have spoken, then that wisdom will naturally inform one's activities. Wisdom (*satipaññā*) will so infuse and govern one's work that it will be done for its own sake, not out of ignorance rooted in *taṇhā* (desire). Wisdom is like a leavening agent or a directional arrow that points us toward the kind of unhurried action informed by insight (*ñāṇa-dasana*), synonymous with doing what we should be doing for the sake of the act itself, rather than acting foolishly out of craving (*taṇhā*). Our lives should be informed by knowledge based on awareness (*sati-paññā*), an appropriate middle way between too much and too little. This is action informed by wisdom or, in Dhammic language, "One is a wise person (*pandit*) who goes forth through life according to the dictates of wisdom."

Sermons that were preached 20-30 years ago emphasized the importance of leading wise and useful lives. Today, this theme has been replaced by others; however, I have chosen to emphasize its constant importance in our daily lives—to be wise and constantly to conduct one's daily life according to the dictates of wisdom (*paññā*). The universities in



today's world do not study ways to control one's life so as to overcome suffering. They focus on how to prepare for getting a job, instead of addressing such basic questions as what is the purpose of our lives and how to be a wise person (*pandit*).

Another path to becoming a wise person is the forest monastery tradition founded by the Buddha. At the completion of one's training, one becomes a *pandit*, who understands one's entire being and the nature of suffering, its arising, cessation, and the path to its cessation. The term has two meanings: in one sense, it refers to how we live our lives, but in a deeper sense, it refers to controlling the heart and mind and, hence, the overcoming of suffering. Taken together the term refers to a discerning, enlightened, victorious life.

## To Carry On with One's Life Is to Act for the Sake of the Act Itself

Please remember this principle as an on-going standard for carrying out your lives. It is referred to as *ovāda navaka*, advice for novice monks, or for those who ordain for one rains retreat. To act for the sake of the act itself leads to happiness and a sense of fulfillment. We love our friends, our nation, and the world, because we have overcome selfishness, the first step toward attaining *Nibbāna*.

The essence of what I have been saying today is simply to act for the sake of the action itself, or, in other terms, "duty" (*nāthī*) to act for the sake of the duty itself. This is a fundamental principle in philosophy and all religions and, thus, is universal.

*Kanthamngan Ph'ua Ngan*  
Sukhaphapcai, Bangkok, no date.







## Working for Society with a Liberated Mind

Correct action is acting for the sake of the action itself, is following Dhamma, is acting for society—not acting for ourselves. To act with a non-attached mind is Dhamma or acting on behalf of society. It also means the successful result of action with *dukkha* (suffering). To act selfishly is to act in a confused manner, which produces suffering and only incomplete results. Therefore, we need to find a way of acting that insures complete results and does not produce suffering. This is the purpose of the Buddha’s teaching.

The subject of the “liberated mind” (Thai. *cit wang*) is the pinnacle of Buddhist teaching. It demands understanding, not mere belief. In Buddhism, understanding precedes belief. Something becomes an article of faith after one understands it. To rely on the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha means to embrace their mind (*citta*), which means to depend on oneself. The Buddha said that we are not to rely on his merit and virtue, but to be independent in our thinking and investigation.

The liberated mind means to be to be free from sensual desire (*kilesa*), from the grasping (*upādāna*) of me and mine. The liberated mind does not mean empty of mind or no-mind, or that the mind has no feeling.

The mind has feeling. That is nature. But if the feeling of the mind is one of no-thinking about the self, namely, unselfishness, that is a “freed heart-mind” (cit wang).

When we are selfish, absorbed in sensual desire (*kilesa*, *taṇhā*, *upādāna*), we are preoccupied with gain and loss, love and anger, hatred and fear, and our heart and mind are not free. When the mind is not preoccupied with the self, the most appropriate characterization of the mind is “freed mind,” and this freedom is the condition of emptiness (*suññatā*).

All Dhammas are not-self (*anattā*). Nothing in nature should be attached to as I and mine, even the idea of non-attachment or freedom. This is the true nature of things that we need to understand. The only way to eliminate suffering is to understand that everything is devoid of me and mine. We will relate to things the way we should when we understand their true nature, that they are devoid of own-being. In this way, we conquer all things rather than being conquered by them through the understanding of non-attachment or emptiness.

Originally our mind is free from sensuality (*kilesa*). *Kilesa* develops later and seizes us. Cit wang is our normal, original state, which is one of awareness (*sati-paññā*). The original condition of citta is non-attachment. This is the state of Buddhahood.

The subject of non-attachment is feared by many, because they interpret it to mean “no feelings.” Such is not the case. The state of non-attachment has feelings but is devoid of a sense of me and mine. In this regard, it is a state of emptiness or freedom. Many think that such a teaching has no relevance for the common person. Such is not the case at all. They are more harried than the monk in the forest. Those who are hot and bothered need to cool off. For this reason, the Buddha used the teaching of emptiness as the basis for practice by ordinary folk. The teaching of non-attachment is not, as many think, for saints (*arahant*) and not for ordinary people who are

too caught up in grasping (*upādāna*). Grasping is not a permanent condition. A person is more often free of grasping than bound by it. To be non-attached (a liberated heart-mind, *cit wang*) means to be in one's true, original condition—at peace, quiet, freed from *dukkha*, completely aware. Zen states that our original consciousness is free and vice-versa. This state of freedom is non-attachment, the condition of Buddhahood.

To act for the good of others is to act for the sake of the act itself, an act of non-attachment. To develop non-attachment is the basis of being able to act unselfishly, without concern for one's self, to act for the sake of the work itself. Whatever one does, one should act with an attitude of no-attachment. Most Thai Buddhists think that the highest teaching (*lokuttaradhamma*) means to separate oneself from the world. This is a misunderstanding. The principles of *Nibbāna* are for everyone, because all share the same condition of being. *Suññatā* (emptiness), namely non-attachment, is a teaching for everyone. It is incorrect to divide the Buddha's teaching into two: for the monk, on the one hand, and laity, on the other; those who seek *Nibbāna* and those who work in the world.

The seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅgā*) are applicable to all kinds of activity both on the level of the world and Dhamma. When acting in a non-attached way for the good of others, the seven factors of enlightenment inform both modes of action:

- 1) *Sati*. Complete awareness of everything about oneself.
- 2) *Vicaya* (investigation). In order to choose those things that are appropriate to our knowledge and abilities, and suitable for others, and to decide on use and practice.
- 3) *Vīriya* (strength). Using bravery, energy, endurance, and persistence in doing those things we chose through awareness and investigation.
- 4) *Pīti*. Satisfaction, acceptance, and happiness in doing what we

have chosen to continue to do. Work done for its own sake, for community, not for oneself or out of covetousness.

- 5) *Passadhi* (calmness) To be able to adjust to all things so that they work for good and for progress rather than regress.
- 6) *Samādhi*. When called upon, to be able to put all of one's concentration firmly into one's work without doubt or reservation.
- 7) *Upekkhā*. To allow that which is good to proceed according to its own nature to work for the good of the whole.

These principles apply to all action for the good of others from the meditator to the farmer, laborer, or student.

*Kantham Ngan Duai Cit Wang Ph'ua Sangkhom*  
Society for the Propagation of Buddhism, Bangkok,  
B.E. 2518/C.E. 1975.





## About the Author

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Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (1906-1993) is probably the most important Buddhist master in Thailand from the 20th century, and perhaps in Thai history. Going beyond the usual confines of meditation master or scriptural authority, Buddhadasa re-united the comprehensive standpoint of the Buddhist *bhikkhu* as master of *sīla* (morality), *samādhi* (meditation), and *paññā* (wisdom).

From his forest hermitage called Suan Mokkh (the Garden of Liberation) in southern Thailand, he:

- 🌸 critiqued the wayward traditions of Theravada orthodoxy by emphasizing a direct study of the Buddha's own discourses (the *Suttas*) over the later systemization of them (the *Abhidhamma*);
- 🌸 restored core teachings like dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) and voidness (*suññatā*) to a practical method of practice combined with mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*) for both ordained and lay alike;
- 🌸 and addressed the pressing social issues of his day through a Buddhist lens, such as his teachings on "inner ecology" and "dhammic socialism."

His legacy continues to resound through Thai culture today and offers a refuge beyond the popular Buddhism of making merit and chanting for good fortune for those who seek a Buddhist teaching that unites serious practice and study with concern for society.



## About the Translator

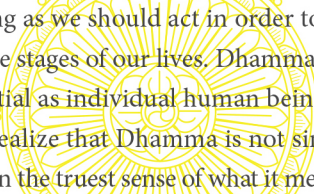
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Donald Swearer directed the Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School, from 2004-2010. From 1992-2004 he was the McDowell Professor of Religion, Swarthmore College. His published works include *Becoming The Buddha: The Ritual of Image Consecration in Thailand* (Princeton & Oxford, 2004), and *The Buddhist World of Southeast Asia* (State University of New York Press, 1995. Silkworm Books, 2009).







Dhamma is acting as we should act in order to be fully human throughout all the stages of our lives. Dhamma means to realize our fullest potential as individual human beings. What is most important is to realize that Dhamma is not simply “knowing,” but also “acting” in the truest sense of what it means to be human.

Correct action is acting for the sake of the action itself, is following Dhamma, is acting for society—not acting for ourselves. To act with a non-attached mind is Dhamma or acting on behalf of society. It also means the successful result of action with *dukkha* (suffering). To act selfishly is to act in a confused manner, which produces suffering and only incomplete results. Therefore, we need to find a way of acting that insures complete results and does not produce suffering. This is the purpose of the Buddha’s teaching.



**Buddhadasa Bhikkhu**

