



SUNDAY DHAMMA TALKS VOL.7

PHRA RAJYANVISITH

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ABBOT, WAT LUNG PHOR SODH DHAMMAKAYARAM

- Good Governance • The Birthday of Buddhism • Life and Death
- World Peace through Inner Peace • One with Noble Treasures is Not Poor
- Nirvana: The Ultimate Ideal



Sunday Dhamma Talks

Volume 7

by

Venerable Phra Rajyanvisith

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Meditation Institutes of Thailand

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We dedicate this book and any merit it may generate, along with all our efforts at Wat Luang Phor Sodh – The beautiful campus, the Abbot's teachings, Phra Mahā Cetiya Somdej, the International Retreats, the Thai Retreats, and the 24-hour Meditation Vihāra – to our beloved



Venerable Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni
Luang Phor Sodh Candasaro

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I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Phra Khru Baitika Dr. Barton Yanathiro for serving as interviewer during these broadcasts and as the editor of this volume. May he also share in reaping the benefits of any merit generated.

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Phra Rajyanvisith
Abbot, Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakāyārām
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

“Happy Day!” Welcome to Sunday Dhamma Talks Volume 7. I am the editor, Phra Khru Baitika Dr. Barton Yanathiro, from the United States. In 2007 the National Broadcasting System of Thailand invited Venerable Phra Rajyanvisith to initiate a series of Sunday Dhamma Talks in English on the first Sunday of each month. I served as interviewer during the broadcasts.

Venerable Phra Rajyanvisith is one of Thailand’s most eminent meditation masters, Buddhist scholars, and educators, with an extremely impressive record well recognized from local through international levels. He is the National Coordinator of the Provincial Meditation Institutes of Thailand; Director of the Center for Development of Virtues and Ethics for the Security of the Nation, Religion and Monarchy; and the beloved Abbot of Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakayaram. In 2010 Phra Rajyanvisith received the gold award from the Parliamentary Committee on Religion, Arts & Culture for outstanding contribution to the dissemination of Buddhism.

Sunday Dhamma Talks

This is Volume 7 in the continuing series of Sunday Dhamma Talks. Volume 1 began with an overview of Lord Buddha’s teachings and continued through the first of the Three Trainings (*Tisikkhā*) which is Morality (*Sīla*). Volume 2 completed the Higher Trainings with Concentration (*Samatha*) and Insight Meditation (*Vipassanā*) and then focused on Lord Buddha’s instructions for meditation as presented in the “Greater Discourse on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness” (*Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta*). Volume 3 expanded on basics – morality or “Do Good!” – selfless generosity, loving kindness and compassion, expressed through Right Thought, Intentions, Speech, Action, and Livelihood. Volumes 4 and 5 discussed Lord Buddha’s popular discourse on Life’s Highest Blessings. Volume 6 began by stressing that social harmony brings peaceful happiness, in response to the Red Shirt vs. Yellow Shirt violence in Bangkok. From there, the volume continued to teach fostering peaceful happiness and progress, but on a more personal level, until the final chapter returned to national problems and concluded with a recommendation for formalizing a constitutional monarchy based on sovereignty residing in the citizens

Volume Seven

This Volume 7 covers the series of broadcasts from July through December of 2010. It begins by continuing the “good governance” counsel based on Dhamma and then contains a special presentation for Asalha Puja, the Birthday of Buddhism, revering and appreciating Lord Buddha’s first sermon that resulted in Elder Koṇḍañña attaining the dustless, stainless Dhamma Eye.

The rest of this volume is devoted to reflecting on the crucial, overwhelming questions that we all must answer, but too often avoid. What is life? What is its purpose? How should I live? These questions are daunting, but if we give up asking them we risk wasting our whole life.

Chapter 4 is entitled simply “Life and Death.” It lays out the nature of life, its purpose and the way to attain maximum ultimate meaning and peaceful happiness, based on Lord Buddha’s last words. Chapter 5 considers “World Peace through Inner Peace,” based on: Lord Buddha’s well-known *Ovāta-pātimokkha*: “Avoid evil. Do good. And, purify your mind.” The teaching links humanity’s highest hopes for world peace to one’s own personal inner peace.

Chapter 6 lifts one’s vision from the immediate worldly level to supra-mundane considerations. It teaches

that only transcendent, “Noble” Treasures like Faith, Morality, Generosity and Wisdom can be taken along after death.

Chapter 7 completes these supra-mundane reflections with contemplation of the unconditioned Nirvana Element (*Nibbāna-dhātu*) as the ultimate ideal which exhibits “Self” characteristics.

Thus, overall, this volume represents an extremely important collection of contemplations about the most important questions in life that we all too often put aside as unanswerable.

Venerable Phra Rajyanvisith

Now, I would like to introduce Venerable Phra Rajyanvisith for those who are not yet familiar with him. He is the Abbot of Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakayaram in Damnoen Saduak District of Rajburi Province, Thailand. His mission is to stimulate Buddhism, placing equal emphasis on academic study and meditation practice.

Phra Rajyanvisith has been broadcasting, lecturing and publishing about Buddhism since 1970 and toured universities in the United States for four years, before the press of responsibilities at home became too demanding. In 1986, he ordained as a monk with the name Sermchai

Jayamangalo. In 1998 he received the Royal Ecclesiastical Rank of Phra Bhavana Visutthikhun; and in 2004 he was awarded the rank of Phra Rajyanvisith.

Phra Rajyanvisith has been the Abbot of Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakayaram, which he founded and built, since 1991 and has led the temple to become a recognized center of excellence in meditation practice, Pali language, scripture studies, and Buddhist management. The temple conducts or coordinates training locally for Rajburi Province, regionally for Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University and Ecclesiastical Region 15 (four central provinces), nationally for the Thai National Office of Buddhism, and internationally for the World Buddhist University.

Phra Rajyanvisith has published over 70 books, 400 articles, and two journals, and recorded over 1,000 Dhamma lectures. In 2007 he was awarded an honorary doctorate in Buddhist Principles of Management from Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalai University and in 2009 he received a second honorary doctorate in Buddhist Studies from Mahamagut University. In 2008 he was elected National Coordinator of the Provincial Meditation Institutes of Thailand and in 2009 he was appointed Director of the Center for Development of Virtues and Ethics for the Security of the Nation, Religion and Monarchy. In 2010 Phra Rajyanvisith received the gold award from the Par-

liamentary Committee on Religion, Arts & Culture for outstanding contribution to the dissemination of Buddhism.

In sum, Phra Rajyanvisith has an extremely impressive record which has been widely recognized. You will find that the broadcasts compiled here go far beyond the ordinary in both scholastic erudition and inspiration for meditation practice. This is an exceptional union of academic and transcendental knowledge, rarely available in English. Please take full advantage of it.

*Phra Khru Baitika Dr. Barton Yanathiro,
Interviewer and Editor.*



Chapter 2

DHAMMA PRINCIPLES FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

04 July 2010

Question 1: Good morning, Venerable Phra Rajyanvisith. Today is our 37th consecutive program and we eagerly await your profound insights. First, however, could you please review our previous broadcast.

Answer 1: Good morning ladies and gentlemen. Last time we discussed the importance of gratitude and our obligation to appreciate the bountiful nurturing of our motherland. Buddhism has pertinent advice to offer regarding our current political crisis. We have to attack the underlying problem back to the root cause. Lord Buddha advises avoiding fools, implying electing virtuous Members of Parliament not driven by greed, hatred or delusion.

Lord Buddha also advises “Honor the worthy” implying the King. We should honor the King by formalizing

a legitimate constitutional monarchy in a valid constitution with sovereignty stemming directly from consensus of the citizens, where Thai citizens collectively praise the King to serve as Head of State, employing the sovereign power to govern. The king then governs through three channels: Administration through the cabinet and ministries, legislation through Parliament, and administering justice through the courts.

We concluded that these powers should be formalized into two documents: (1) Lak-niti-raj or the Law Governing the State and (2) Lak-niti-dhamma or the Higher Dhamma Law which would govern making changes in the constitution, ensuring impartial administration, and guaranteeing fair application of justice.

Question 2: Thank you very much, Phra Rajyan-visith. Now, what will we discuss today?

Answer 2: Today we shall build on our last discussion by examining the principles for good governance advocated in Buddhist teachings. As monks, we feel deep compassion for our countrymen currently embroiled in seemingly endless political conflicts which are destroying the material, political, economic and social fabric of our country. Thai citizens are about 80% Buddhist. Traditionally, the Thai constitution reflected this and was based on the Buddhist principles of good governance propounded

by the Great King Ashoka who set the foremost historical example of good governance still respected worldwide today.

We monks would like to advise the Buddhist way to solve these national problems through governance based on Dhamma principles. We will consider three fundamental Buddhist principles: (1) Correspondence with Ultimate Truth (*Dhamma*), (2) Moral behavior (*Sīla*), and (3) Effective governmental administration

Psychologically, our national conflicts stem from the three root causes of defilements – greed, hatred and delusion. Sociologically, they pit Bangkok elites, who have traditionally dominated Thai politics against the majority of Thai citizens who live in the countryside. We are experiencing a watershed moment in Thai history. Citizens countrywide have awakened to their democratic rights and are appealing for constitutional participation in government.

Democratic Constitutional Monarchy is most suitable for Thailand because each human is best able to control his or her own fate and all have equal right to elect their representatives. Such a system is most efficient. The democratic system of voting has the least defects and most potential advantages. In addition. Democratic Constitutional Monarchy preserves royal rule which has been highly respected by Thai people for a long time.

Throng of Thai citizens have gathered in Bangkok to appeal for their democratic rights. They recognize the degradation of the Thai governmental system and its elite biases institutionalized in the latest constitution. To be effective and sustainable, any governmental system must conform to the ultimate realities of nature (*Dhamma*) in which the ultimate source of sovereignty lies in the hearts of the citizens. Thai citizens have had a long history of royal benevolence and are ready to entrust their welfare to such aristocratic nobility. But, their brief encounter with elected leaders has been difficult, filled with greed. Thus, Democratic Constitutional Monarchy is most acceptable in Thailand.

We suggest that the directions for good governance be codified in two documents. The Lak-niti-raj or Constitution would be drafted through a democratic process involving representatives of all Thai citizens elected by a majority of the public in each area, not appointed by small clique groups or elites. The Lak-niti-dhamma, would define higher meta-laws to guarantee human rights, civil liberties and moral behavior in line with Buddhist precepts. For example, procedures for making changes in the constitution would be spelled out, along with procedures to guarantee fair elections. Other essential areas requiring such Lak-niti-dhamma direction include systems for guaranteeing fair law enforcement, just court decisions, financial transparency and parliamentary oversight. The

Lak-niti-dhamma would ensure virtuous behavior promoting peaceful happiness in line with the ultimate Truths, forestall anticipated cheating and guide long-term national development upwards. Good governance must aim at satisfying the people's needs, promoting fair contentment and peaceful happiness, and fostering virtuous behavior (*Sīla* and *Dhamma*). It must be conducted by government leaders endowed with Brahma-vihāra mentality.

Question 3: Thank you very much, Venerable Phra Rajyanvisith. What is the second Buddhist principle?

Answer 3: The second Buddhist principle is that good government leaders must exhibit moral behavior (*Sīla*). Well-intentioned leaders practicing Right Action, Right Speech and Right Intentions or Thought are crucial for national peace and prosperity. They will produce correct laws and behave correctly in accordance with these Laws. The Thai people respect monarchy because historically kings have fostered peacefully happy living in Thailand – up to and including the current king. Second, Thai kings have always ruled in accordance with the ten Royal Precepts that prescribe mutual obligations for kings and citizens. In brief, these ten Royal Precepts are:

A King should: (1) Be generous, practicing *Dāna*, (2) Observe moral precepts (*Sīla*), (3) Be ready to make sacrifices for his people (*Pariccāga*), (4) Demonstrate in-

tegrity (*Ājjava*) by being straightforward in dealings, (5) Be gentle and kind (*Maddava*), (6) Control sensual desires & demonstrate non-indulgent austerity (*Tapa*), (7) Be free from anger and resentment (*Akkodha*), (8) Be compassionate and non-violent towards all (*Avihimsā*), (9) Be tolerant (*Khanti*), and (10) Be approachable, but undeviating from Righteousness (*Avirodhana*).

These ten rules have been observed by all Thai kings up to the present. That is why the Thai people have so much respect for royalty. The king is our highest refuge. Kings perform their role with supra-mundane Brahma-vihāra mentality – loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. Kings have historically removed serious problems, kept the country free, and brought peace to the nation.

For good governance, Thai government leaders must be well-intentioned and should have the seven “Sappurisa-dhamma” Virtues of a noble individual: (1) Knowing the law showing the cause (*Dhammaññutā*), (2) Knowing the meaning, the purpose and the consequences (*Atthaññutā*), (3) Knowing himself (*Attaññutā*), (4) Knowing moderation – how to be temperate (*Mattaññutā*), (5) Knowing proper timing – how to choose and keep time (*Kālaññutā*), (6) Knowing the assembly and knowing society (*Parisaññutā*), (7) Knowing the individual and knowing various individuals (*Puggalaññutā*).

Government Leaders must recognize that their proper duty and responsibility is to serve the needs of the people – most specifically the majority of the people – while behaving always virtuously with generosity, personal sacrifice and merit-making (*Dāna*), including giving Right advice and teaching dhamma. Ultimately, the highest *Dāna* is giving forgiveness. Good governance must be carried out with Brahma-vihāra mentality.

Question 4: Thank you very much, Venerable Phra Rajyanvisith. Now, what is the third Buddhist principle for good governance?

Answer 4: The third principle for good governance is effective administrative systems based on Buddhist wisdom (*Paññā*) and purity (*Pārisuddhi*). Wise administrative development must recognize that a government leader’s proper duty is to serve the majority of Thai citizens countrywide, not just a small clique of elites. This realization radically alters the services needed, magnitude of cost and logistics of service delivery. Rural health care, for example, becomes highly desirable, but expensive and difficult to provide.

Such considerations rapidly suggest causal analysis of the problems requiring government aid and increased emphasis on educational programs to prevent the problems from arising rather than just post-crisis aid to victims. Bud-

dhism also suggests wide-ranging educational programs to develop the skills of rural Thais to provide lacking services for their neighbors. Government sponsored Pharmacist and First Aid Courses, for example, could help alleviate the lack of such services in rural areas while substantially improving the livelihood of these graduates. From another perspective, village wats represent trustworthy social centers in village communities which can serve as hubs for dispensing government services or conducting government activities. Many now run schools or serve as voting centers during elections.

Buddhist purity provides a framework for justice and transparency considerations. The concept of Agati or prejudice details four types of wrong behavior as follows: (1) *Chandāgati* is prejudice caused by love or desire. (2) *Dosāgati* is prejudice caused by hatred or enmity. (3) *Mohāgati* is prejudice caused by delusion or stupidity. And, (4) *Bhayāgati* is prejudice caused by fear.

The most obvious targets for improvement in Thailand's current democratic environment are the restrictions on the freedom of the press, radio and television and corresponding lack of reliable, independent information on government activities or political candidates. Concerned voter citizens have very little reliable information on which to base their important election decisions.

In conclusion, if the government develops in accordance with these principles, our country will develop as a pure, perfect, democratic constitutional monarchy with the needs of the majority satisfied.

Question 5: Thank you very much, Phra Rajyanvisith for this very thoughtful presentation. Now, could you please lead us in a few moments of meditation.

[Please see meditation practice on Chapter 7 page 67.]



Chapter 3

ASALAHA PUJA: THE BIRTHDAY OF BUDDHISM

01 August 2010

Question 1: Good morning, Venerable Phra Rajyanvisith. This will be our 38th consecutive program. We eagerly await further stimulating insights. But first, could you please review our previous broadcast.

Answer 1: Good morning ladies and gentlemen. Last time we discussed principles for good governance based on Buddhist teachings. We monks feel deep compassion for our countrymen embroiled in seemingly endless political conflicts. Thai citizens are mainly Buddhist, and traditionally, the constitution reflected principles of good governance made famous worldwide by the Great Buddhist King Ashoka. Psychologically, our national conflicts stem from the three root causes – greed, hatred and delusion. Sociologically, they pit Bangkok elites against the Thai majority who live in the countryside. We are experiencing

a watershed moment in Thai history. Citizens countrywide have awakened to their democratic rights and are appealing for constitutional participation in government.

We proposed principles corresponding with Ultimate Truth (*Dhamma*), morality (*Sīla*), and effective administration. Ultimate sovereignty lies in the hearts of Thai citizens. Democratic Constitutional Monarchy is most suitable because voters are best able to control their own fate. They have equal right to elect representatives and democratic voting has the least defects. In addition, Constitutional Monarchy preserves royal rule which has been highly respected by Thai people for a long time. We suggested that the directions for good governance be codified in two documents. The Lak-niti-raj or Constitution would be drafted democratically by representatives elected from each area, not appointed by small cliques of elites. The Lak-niti-dhamma would define higher meta-laws to guarantee human rights, civil liberties and moral behavior, such as procedures for changing the constitution, guaranteeing fair elections, just court decisions, financial transparency and parliamentary oversight. This would ensure virtuous behavior, promote peaceful happiness, forestall anticipated cheating and guide long-term national development upwards.

Question 2: Thank you very much, Venerable Phra Rajyanvisith. Now, what are we going to discuss today?

Answer 2: This week we celebrated the Birthday of Buddhism. Āsālha Pūjā is the day on which Lord Buddha presented his first sermon 2,598 years ago. This first sermon is called the Discourse Turning the Wheel of Dhamma or the Dhamma-cakka-pavatana-sutta. Today we shall revere this noble event with our humble appreciation of its profound penetration and enduring significance. Āsālha Pūjā commemorates three key inaugural events: Presentation of the First Sermon, Ordination of the first Bhikkhu, and completion of the threefold Triple Gem by adding the Sangha to the Buddha and the Dhamma. This constitutes the official birth of Buddhism as a religion:

*Imassmiñca pana veyyākaraṇassamiṃ
bhaññamāne āyassamato koṇḍañña
virajaṃ vītamalaṃ dhammacakkhuṃ
udapādi yaṅkiñci samudayadhammaṃ
sabbantaṃ nirodhadhammantīti.*

During Lord Buddha's sermon, the dustless, stainless Dhamma Eye arose in Elder Koṇḍañña that everything that has the nature of being born innately contains the nature of passing away.

After attaining enlightenment, Lord Buddha spent 49 days experiencing the bliss of freedom and contemplating his accomplishment around the Bo Tree. During this period Lord Buddha considered whether or not to teach, doubting that any humans would be able to penetrate such profound insights. But, Brahma Sahampati highlighted what a catastrophe it would be for mankind if Lord Buddha didn't teach. So, Lord Buddha decided to go to the Isipatana Deer Park near Benares to teach His former disciples, the Five Vakkiya.

The Five Vakkiya were initially hesitant to receive Lord Buddha, but he convinced them to listen by saying “Have I ever before claimed to be enlightened?” In the formal Dhammacak-kappa-vatana sermon, Lord Buddha declares His enlightenment and how it arose, beginning with the two extreme practices to be avoided by Truth seekers, then declaring the triumphant Middle Path and its fruits, including the Four Noble Truths and Nirvana.

Question 3: Thank you very much, Venerable Sir. What are the two extremes to be avoided?

Answer 3: The first extreme to avoid is self-indulgent wallowing in sensuality and sexual indulgence. This is the common pattern of householders. It is vulgar and worldly and is the cause for the construction of defensive ego-boundary houses to hide shameful habits from others.

It is useless with no benefit and makes us unable to escape the foe of defilements. The second extreme is painful, harmful self mortification which brings trouble and suffering. This was the accepted approach of ascetics at that time. It is unworthy and also does not help us to break loose from the foe of defilements. These two extremes should be avoided.

Question 4: How does Lord Buddha describe the middle path that does lead to enlightenment?

Answer 4: The middle path that Lord Buddha awakened to does not approach either of these two extremes. It begins with Right Understanding (*Abhisambuddha*), then vision (*Cakkhu-karaṇī*) that leads to knowledge (*ñāṇa-karaṇī*) and calming (*Upasamāya*) and then on to supra-mundane knowledge (*Abhiññāya*), awakening (*Sambodhāya*), and Nirvana (*Nibbāna*). Specifically, it is the Eightfold Path of Right View (*Sammā-diṭṭhi*), Right Thought (*Sammā-saṅkappa*), Right Speech (*Sammā-vācā*), Right Action (*Sammā-kammanta*), Right Livelihood (*Sammā-ājīva*), Right Effort (*Sammā-vāyāma*), Right Mindfulness (*Sammā-sati*), and Right Concentration (*Sammā-samādhi*).

Question 5: Thank you very much, Venerable Phra Rajyanvisith. Now, how does Lord Buddha describe the final steps to enlightenment on enlightenment night?

Answer 5: On enlightenment night, Lord Buddha progressed through three supra-mundane states of knowledge (*Vijjā*) during the three watches of the night. The First *Vijjā* was Remembrance of Past Lives (*Pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa*) which Lord Buddha pursued during the First Watch of the night. He was able to remember all of his own past lives and also all the past lives of all other beings. Thus, Lord Buddha was able to see all beings in the karmic world and all potential realms of rebirth.

The Second *Vijjā* was Knowledge of the deaths and rebirths of all beings in accordance with the Law of Karma, called *Cutūpapāta-ñāṇa*. Lord Buddha pursued this practice during the Second Watch in order to see the cause and effect linking the past, present and future.

The Third *Vijjā* was transcendent knowledge of How to Eradicate Mental Defilements, called the *Āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*. Lord Buddha employed this during the Third Watch of the night to achieve enlightenment. In the last flush of dawn Lord Buddha attained the Knowledge of the Extinction of all Pollutants:

I knew as it really is: this is *Dukkha*; ...this is Causal Arising of *Dukkha*; ...this is the Cessation of *Dukkha*; ...this is the Practice-path leading to the Cessation of *Dukkha*. [Khan-tipalo, Splendour, I, 175-6, from Majjhima Nikāya i. 247-9.]

He awakened through insight in a momentary flash of thought to the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment of Heroic Man:

Having cut off craving, I have rid myself of defilement. The dried-up pollutions do not flow. The road of craving has been cut off, and is no longer there. This, then, is the end of Dukkha. [Kantipalo, Splendour I, 176 from Mahāvastu ii, 415-6.]

...Won is the unborn ... Nibbāna. Knowledge and insight arose... Freedom is unshakable. This is the last birth... There is no more again-becoming. [Kantipalo, Splendour I, 176-7 from Majjhima Nikāya i, 167.]

Question 6: Thank you very much, Reverend Sir. Now, finally, what does Lord Buddha tell us about the results of enlightenment. What deep insights are to be anticipated?

Answer 6: Lord Buddha's ultimate attainment was complete penetration and formulation of the Four Noble Truths: First, that life is *Dukkha* which is normally translated as suffering, but might be more generally rendered as unsatisfactory, angst or just perpetual motion which prevent inner peace. Second that the proximate cause of

Dukkha is craving and attachment with delusion and that the ultimate cause of the cause is Ignorance. Third, that escape from *Dukkha* is possible. There is a way out – Nirvana or *Nibbāna*. This was Lord Buddha’s great discovery. Finally, fourth, Lord Buddha detailed the Noble Eightfold Path as the way leading to *Nibbāna*.

We can easily memorize these words, but true comprehension requires transcendent insight and results in earth-shaking revolution of one’s perception of the world. The ordinary human mind takes pleasure in contact with sights sounds, tastes odors and tangible objects and attaches to some with craving and delusion. This inevitably leads to *Dukkha* or suffering. The mind itself becomes degraded – dark rather than bright – by being attached to things which are shabby and dim. A mind attached to dark things will seek darkness rather than light. This is low, unworthy and despicable, not the way of pundits. The mind becomes attached to sensations that it likes; may be inconvenienced; and builds houses of ego-boundaries with high walls to keep others out. The mind becomes covered with cravings. This is the First Noble Truth.

The Second Noble Truth is most fully explained by the formula for Dependent Arising or Cessation which reveals the full linkage between craving and ignorance.

Ignorance gives rise to Volition; Volition gives rise to Mind-Body;

Mind-Body gives rise to the Six-sense Organs; The Six-sense Organs give rise to Contact; Contact gives rise to Feelings; Feelings give rise to Craving; Craving gives rise to Grasping; Grasping gives rise to Becoming; Becoming gives rise to Birth; Birth gives rise to Old Age, Sickness, and Death.

For contemplating cessation one simply adds the word “No” in front of each entry. This yields “No ignorance gives rise to no volition, ... no craving, grasping or becoming, ... and no birth or death. The formula, however, is more easily memorized than penetrated. Dukkha arises due to an underlying platform of support for existence which is evidenced by the instantaneous, instinctual response to external threats. It is the entire destruction of this platform which ultimately gives rise to enlightenment and liberation.

The Third Noble Truth is that Nirvana or Nibbāna exists. Penetration to complete comprehension of this Truth requires transcendent knowledge or vision. This is the Dhamma Eye or Dhammacakku attained by Koṇḍañña during Lord Buddha’s delivery of the Dhamma-cakka-pavatana-sutta.

The Fourth Noble Truth is the Noble Eightfold Path which we have already discussed.

In conclusion, Āsālha Pūjā represents the Birthday of Buddhism. Lord Buddha delivered His first sermon, the Dhamma-cakka-pavatana-sutta, seeking to discover whether or not there was any other human being who could understand the extremely profound discoveries through which He had attained enlightenment. The result was that Koṇḍañña attained the Dhamma Eye, fulfilling the Triple Gem and giving birth to Buddhism as a religion. Lord Buddha exclaimed: Koṇḍañña, you have known! Koṇḍañña, you have known! That was the birth of Buddhism.

Question 7: Thank you very much, Venerable Phra Rajyanvisith. Now can you please lead us in a few moments of meditation.

[Please see meditation practice on Chapter 7 page 67.]



Chapter 4

LIFE AND DEATH

05 September 2010

Question 1: Good morning, revered Venerable Phra Rajyanvisith. This will be our 39th consecutive broadcast. We eagerly await more of your motivating insights. First, however, could you please review briefly our previous talk.

Answer 1: Good morning ladies and gentlemen. Last time we explained the Āsālha Pūjā holiday as the birthday of Buddhism. It commemorates three key events: Presentation of the First Sermon, Ordination of the first Bhikkhu, and completion of the threefold Triple Gem by adding the Sangha to the Buddha and the Dhamma.

Lord Buddha's first sermon is called the Dhammacakka or Dhamma Wheel because of its key role in the history of the world. Its primary emphasis, however, is on the Dhammacakku or Dhamma Eye, which is cited repeatedly in the refrain as the first step to enlightenment. After

attaining enlightenment, Lord Buddha spent seven weeks experiencing bliss and contemplating next steps. His primary consideration was whether or not anyone else could comprehend the profound Truths that He had uncovered. Finally, He decided to teach the Five Ascetics. Upon hearing Lord Buddha's sermon, Elder Koṇḍañña attained the dustless, stainless Dhamma Eye and requested ordination. This was the birthday of Buddhism as a religion.

Question 2: Thank you very much, Venerable Phra Rajyanvisith. Now, what will we discuss this time?

Answer 2: Today's topic is succinctly: Life and Death. We will summarize briefly the nature of life, the purpose of life and the way to achieve a successful life with maximum ultimate meaning and peaceful happiness. Let us begin with Lord Buddha's last words as He passed on to *Parinibbāna*.

*Handadāni bhikkhave āmantayāmi vo
bhikkhave paṭivetaṃyāmi vo bhikkhave
khayavayadhammā saṅkhārā appamādena
sampādetthāti.*

Khuddhaka Nikaya, 25/11/15

Monks, I have assembled you for this last time to warn you all that compound phenomena have eventual total dissolution inherent in their nature. You must each

bring your personal benefit and usefulness for others to ripen on time with care. Don't be careless.

Lord Buddha pinpoints our own essential nature and the nature of the world around us – both living beings and inanimate objects – as *saṅkhāra* or compound phenomena composed of parts. His final message is that all such compound phenomena inevitably disintegrate. We are all destined to die. We must, therefore, assiduously attend to accomplishing the maximum that we can during this lifetime both for our own personal development and as our contribution for helping others. In brief, “Don't be careless.”

As compound phenomena, world beings, including human beings are characterized by the Three Universal Characteristics of all compound phenomena – Impermanence or *Aniccaṃ*, Suffering or *Dukkhaṃ*, and Non-self or *Anattā*. Human beings are impermanent because they just arise, exist for a time, changing continually in accordance with their conditions, and then perish. They can never remain in one state very long. In fact, with meditation one can see that the mind changes many times every millisecond. It is extremely unstable. This underlies the statement that all compound phenomena are impermanent.

Similarly, human beings are “suffering” because nothing in any world, whether living or non-living, endures forever. Thus, anyone who becomes attached to “Self” or to any worldly object with craving and wrong view will inevitably suffer. This includes both eventual suffering upon death and continual suffering throughout life as conditions change. Ultimately, all world beings and all worldly objects are non-self, without any eternal soul, solid core or permanent happiness. This is inherently evident in the short human lifespan, but it can also be observed that all world beings, including humans, are far from eternal happiness and from being the sturdy, dependable hub expected of True Self.

From another perspective, we cannot control our own body and life totally as we would like. For example, we cannot order our body not to grow old; not to get sick or not to die and we cannot obtain everything that we want or need. Thus, this mind-body (*Nāma-rūpa*) is non-self.

Question 3: Excuse me, Venerable Sir, are Impermanence, Suffering and Non-self the only important characteristics of life?

Answer 3: No, they only define the overall context. The most important aspect of human life is defined by the Law of Karma: “Do good, get good; Do evil; get evil.”

Worldly beings, including Human Beings have three types of essential characteristics. The first type is the causes, conditions and components that create them. All beings arise and continue to exist dependent on these causes, conditions and components. As an example, Human Beings consist of Body (*Rūpa*) and Mind (*Nāma*) which must both be present. Further, mind consists of four Aggregates: Feelings or *Vedanā*, Memory or *Saññā*, Thought or *Saṅkhāra* and Consciousness or *Viññāṇa* which must all be present. These, in turn, are supported by many factors detailed in Dependent Origination (*Paṭicca-samuppāda*) which ultimately rest on Ignorance of transcendental knowledge or *Vijjā*.

This ignorance underlies the three roots of defilements: Greed or *Lobha*, Hatred or *Dosa* and Delusion or *Moha*. It gives rise to both Birthplace or *Bhava* and Birth or *Jāti* which are *Rūpa-dhamma* and *Nāma-dhamma* and cause both body and living mentality. This is what world beings call “self” and “others.” They are created constructs and lead to old age, death, suffering, and grieving.

The second type of essential characteristics of all worldly beings, including Human Beings, is the factors which sustain life on a daily basis such as breath, nutrition and medicine. Also included here are factors required to support thought, speech and bodily action.

Finally, the third and most essential type of Human characteristics is the Intentions or *Cetanā* which underlie mentality (*Nāma-dhamma*) and the construction of thinking, speaking and acting, whether wholesome, neutral or unwholesome. Wholesome intention construction (*Puññābhi-saṅkhāra*) brings happiness and development for Sensual Realm and Pure Form Beings and can lead to rebirth in the Pure Form Realm. Neutral construction (*Aneñjābhi-saṅkhāra*) is neutral regarding the Formless Realm and can lead to rebirth in formless states lasting a long time or in the Pure Land Realm. Unwholesome construction (*Apuññābhi-saṅkhāra*) brings suffering both in this lifetime and in future rebirths.

Intentions are where the Law of Karma is built directly inside each one of us. When we act morally based on wholesome construction (*Puññābhi-saṅkhāra*), we immediately feel good and also reap future rewards. When we behave improperly based on unwholesome construction (*Apuññābhi-saṅkhāra*) we immediately feel ill at ease and also bring ourselves future difficulties both in this lifetime and in future rebirths.

Question 4: Thank you very, very much, venerable Phra Rajyanvisith. Now, sir, could you please tell us what is the purpose of life.

Answer 4: Life is essentially a moral playing field in which we are all challenged to develop ourselves and to help others as much as possible. Lord Buddha's exhortation for leading a good life is very simple: avoid evil, do good and purify the mind. As we have seen, the Law of Karma is actually built into each one of us so that the wholesome mental states which accompany good intentions to help others also bring immediate personal happiness and good karmic results in the future. Thus, instead of facing a zero-sum game in which one must choose between personal gain and sacrificing to help others, the wise man sees that helping ourselves and also others to avoid evil, do good and purify the mind will always lead to inner peaceful happiness and good future results.

The noteworthy exhortation is "Purify the mind." All religions teach avoid evil and do good, but Lord Buddha adds purify the mind to see clearly what is good and what is evil. Meditation is the added jewel in Buddhism. It enables one to see for oneself. It is what makes the Buddha's teachings scientific.

Question 5: Thank you very much again, Venerable Phra Rajyanvisith, for your brilliant insights. Now, could you please tell us how to win the game of life.

Answer 5: If life is viewed as a game, it must be played by the Law of Karma (Kamma). Winning would

mean living most profitably for yourself both in terms of immediate rewards and future benefits. This involves both self development and providing assistance to others. Benefits can be tracked and scored along five dimensions: (1) Wealth versus Poverty, (2) High status versus Low status, (3) Praise versus Blame, (4) Temporary Worldly Happiness versus Suffering, and (5) Ultimate Release and Permanent, Supreme Happiness versus Worldly Rebirth into Suffering

This list includes both the immediate rewards recognized and treasured by most Human Beings and the ultimate reward recognized by Pundits. One's "score" on the last scale is called "Merit." All scores rise or fall readily based on one's behavior as well as changing conditions. Most people behave with a mixture of wholesome and wrong actions, so these scores fluctuate up and down continually.

To win the game of life, one needs to know and practice ten restraints and also avoid the Highway to Hell that leads directly to rapid disaster. The Highway to Hell is bar hopping that integrates multiple defilements such as drunken, sexual and gambling misbehavior. The ten restraints are avoid:

1. Three physical Actions: Killing, Stealing & Sexual Misconduct.

2. Four verbal Actions: Lying, Slander, Coarse speech & Gossip.
3. Three mental Actions: Thought based on Greed, Hatred & Delusion.

Practicing these ten restraints regularly will purify the heart and mind, leaving one ready for death whenever it knocks on the door. As we began:

*Handadāni bhikkhave āmantayāmi
vo bhikkhave paṭivēṭayāmi vo bhikkhave
khayavayadhammā saṅkhārā
appamādena sampādeṭhāti.*

Khuddhaka Nikaya, 25/11/15

Monks, I have assembled you for this last time to warn you all that compound phenomena have eventual total dissolution inherent in their nature. You must each bring your personal benefit and usefulness for others to ripen on time with care. Don't be careless.

One who practices *Samatha-Vipassanā* Meditation and practices Mindfulness of Death (*Marāṇasati*) sees death as normal. This is knowing impermanence, suffering and non-self, recognizing that everyone must die like this. We must not be careless while we still have life. We must

diligently store up doing good. Any good that we have not yet done we must hurry to do. This is thinking about death or contemplating death. One does not look at death like one lacking wisdom. Those who practice *Māraṇasati* will not fear death. Hurry to do good as in the proverb:

Think of death contentedly it cuts attachments and worries. It limits darkness and delusion. It makes one brave enough to disappear. To realize suddenly, without entanglement

In conclusion, thinking about impermanence, suffering and non-self not only makes us careful, but also pushes us to Vipassanā, looking inward to understand the Three Characteristics and develop other worldly wisdom to penetrate the Four Noble Truths, ultimately knowing, giving up, letting go, and having a mind freed from attachments. This will make that life able to be lived comfortably with the heart lighter and peacefully happy. This is a life led with Right Wisdom. It will find progress and peaceful happiness.

Question 6: Thank you very, very much, exceptionally Venerable Phra Rajyanvisith. Now can you please lead us in a few moments of meditation.

[Please see meditation practice on Chapter 7 page 67.]



Chapter 5

WORLD PEACE THROUGH INNER PEACE

03 October 2010

Question 1: Good morning, Venerable Phra Rajyanvisith. This is our 40th consecutive Sunday Dhamma Talk. We enthusiastically anticipate more of your inspiring wisdom. Can you please begin by summarizing what we covered last time.

Answer 1: Good morning ladies and gentlemen. Last time we discussed life and death. Lord Buddha's last teaching was that "All compounds ... naturally dissolve ... bring your personal benefit and usefulness for others to ripen on time. Don't be careless." As humans, we are all destined to old age, sickness and death. "Working for your personal benefit" means developing wisdom towards the ultimate release and eternal, supreme happiness of *Nibbāna*. "Fulfilling your usefulness for others" means accomplishing your goals for "good works."

Practicing ten restraints while avoiding the “Highway to Hell” of drunken debauchery will purify the heart and mind, leaving one ready for death whenever it comes. The ten restraints are to avoid physical killing, stealing and sexual misconduct; verbal lying, slander, coarse speech and worthless speech; and mental greed, hatred and delusion.

The wise meditator practices Mindfulness of Death (*Marāṇasati*) contentedly, anticipating freedom from entanglements, worries and delusion. Recognizing impermanence and seeing death as normal, without fear, makes one diligent in storing up good and avoiding carelessness. It leads toward *Vipassanā* and makes life lived comfortably with a light, peacefully happy heart.

Question 2: Thank you very much, Venerable Phra Rajyanvisith. Now, what will we discuss today?

Answer 2: Today we will consider World Peace through Inner Peace. We begin with Lord Buddha’s well known *Ovāta-pātimokkha*, His often repeated call for us to foster World Peace through developing our own Inner Peace. It was first delivered to 1,250 enlightened monks at Veluvana Bamboo Grove by Rajagaha on Māgha Pūjā day, nine months after Lord Buddha’s enlightenment.

*Sabbapāpassa akaraṇaṃ,
Kusalassūpasampadā,
Sacittapariyodapanāṃ,
Etaṃ Buddhānasāsanāṃ.*

Khuddhaka Nikaya. 25/24/29-40

Avoid all evil, Cultivate the good,
and Purify your mind. This is the Teaching
of the Buddhas

“World Peace” means people worldwide living together in harmony, sharing loving kindness. This collective Inner Peace and harmony is lacking in our modern, hi-tech consumer culture where the click of a mouse can span the globe, but is more likely to pop up an ad. No matter how easy life becomes, our inner craving for more always leaves us dissatisfied. This is the Truth of *Dukkha* (suffering). It comes from within and cannot be cured by a faster processor.

It is a paradox that as our ability to reach out in friendship becomes more instantaneous our dread of vicious brutality becomes more pervasive. Fear of terrorism permeates global travel and political factions shoot it out in our Land of Smiles. Peace begins inside. Only by purifying our hearts, radiating loving kindness and avoiding evil can we individually and collectively develop lasting peace in our hearts, families, society, our tiny world, and our far flung universe.

Question 3: Thank you very much, Venerable Phra Rajyanvisith. Now can you please tell us how to avoid evil actions?

Answer 3: Evil or unwholesome behavior is any conduct that causes sorrow for either oneself or for others. One of Lord Buddha’s most important discoveries was that these two are synonymous. The Law of Karma is built into our nature so that whenever we do something that hurts others we also reap suffering personally, inside. We must polish our minds to see this clearly, to stay ever mindful of this fact and to constantly behave wisely based on this recognition throughout every second of every day.

Misbehavior is of three types: physical misbehavior or *Kāya-ducarita*, verbal misbehavior or *Vacī-ducarita*, and mental misbehavior or *Mano-ducarita*, or thoughts and feelings culminating in intentions. Today we will focus specifically on avoiding the physical misbehaviors which threaten world peace. There are three major misbehaviors to avoid: Killing, Stealing, and Sexual Misbehavior. During enlightenment, Lord Buddha saw these as the major causes of rebirth in the unfortunate realms or hells. Let us focus first on “killing” as most important. The disastrous consequences of “killing” are not limited to killing human beings. They include killing any living beings – even swatting the annoying fly or mosquito. Advanced meditators can see for themselves the round of rebirths in which we can all be reborn as such other beings.

A common consequence of killing, among beings with animal or human mentality, is a blood feud continuing over successive lifetimes. A fascinating illustration is the “The Bitter Feud of Kala Yakkhini” told in the Dhammapada, Chapter 1, Number 4. In Buddha’s time there was a nearby family in which the father had died and the son resolved not to marry in order to take care of his mother. But, the mother wanted a grandson to carry on the family name. She convinced the son to let her find him a wife. Over the years, however, the wife never gave birth. So, the mother found him a second wife. The first wife was really upset, but pretended to be happy.

The second wife proved very fertile. Twice, the first wife fed the second wife medicine to induce an abortion. The third time, the second wife did not tell the first wife that she was pregnant. When it became obvious, however, she again induced an abortion. Eventually, the second wife died in childbirth. On her deathbed she vowed vengeance. This was the beginning of the feud. The husband found out what the first wife had done and killed her.

In their next lifetimes, the second wife was born as a cat and the first wife as a hen in that same family. Whenever the hen laid eggs or had chicks, the cat would eat them. In the end, the cat also killed the hen. While dying, the hen vowed vengeance on the cat.

Next, the second wife or cat was reborn as a female deer and the first wife or hen was reborn as a leopard. Whenever the deer gave birth, the leopard would eat the child. Eventually, the leopard also ate the mother. While dying, the deer vowed vengeance on the leopard.

After that, the first wife or hen and leopard was reborn as the daughter of a nobleman in Savatthi and the second wife or cat and doe was reborn nearby as a giant ogress named Kala Yakkhini. Whenever the lady bore a child, the ogress would eat the baby. One day, while carrying a new baby, the lady and her husband recognized the ogress in human disguise chasing them. They ran to Jetavana monastery where Lord Buddha was teaching and laid the baby at Buddha's feet for protection.

The celestial guardian stopped the Yakkhini at the gate while the lady told her story. Then, Lord Buddha called in the ogress and told them both about their bitter feud over successive lifetimes. They came to see that hatred only breeds more hatred and can only cease through forgiveness and mutual understanding. They realized their mistakes and made peace.

The ogress listened to Lord Buddha's teaching and attained Stream-winner status. Then, Lord Buddha requested the lady to hand her baby to the Noble Yakkhini. Afraid, she hesitated, but because Lord Buddha directed

her again, she finally handed over her son. The baby was warmly received by the Yakkhini. After kissing and caressing the baby tenderly, the ogress handed the child back to his mother. As a result of this episode, there was much goodwill on both sides.

Lord Buddha concluded:

<i>Na hi verena verāni</i>	Hatred never ceases through
<i>Sammantīdha kudācanam</i>	hatred in this world.
<i>Averena ca sammanti</i>	Only through
	loving kindness.
<i>Esa Dhammo sanantano</i>	This is an eternal Truth.

Khutthaka Nikāya 25/11/15

Loving-kindness and forgiveness can restore and develop faith, wisdom, perfection and moral action. The story highlights four hidden Truths: First, the Truth of re-birth. We are continually reborn over and over engrossed in “unfinished business” from the past and continually create new kamma” for the future. Second is the truth that one can be reborn as an animal or other being such as an ogre, commonly considered mythical. Third is the truth of vengeance that we often bind ourselves into destructive modes of behavior, causing difficulties for each other. Finally, the fourth Truth is that hatred can be overcome with loving-kindness and forgiveness. This is the key to remember.

Personally, intentional killing can cause direct retaliation or legal punishment and rebirth in the first hell, Sañjiva. When reborn as a human, one is sickly with a short lifetime and prone to suffer serious accidents. Some kill secretly and others make excuses such as I was ordered or forced to do it. This doesn't matter. One cannot escape the kamma.

Globally, our current mass slaughter of animals may be setting the stage for violent revenge. Wars do not begin rationally. They often stem from vengeance sought by beings previously slaughtered inhumanely who are reborn as humans while the perpetrator is still alive. We have seen such long-term, vicious feuding in the story of Kala Yakkhini. The wanton genocide of the Khmer Rouge appears to have been an example of such vengeance sought by beings who were formerly fish netted by the millions in the Tonle Sap Lake. Worldwide, our current human society is slaughtering animals on a much more massive scale, both for food and, more inhumanely, when there is a potential outbreak of some contagious disease such as swine flu or bird flu. Supposedly to prevent such outbreaks, millions of animals have been killed in very inhumane ways such as burying them or burning them alive. When these animals are reborn as humans, which may not be that far in the future, we may see similar pointless massacres arise on a much more massive scale, due to the same underlying search for vengeance.

Question 3: Thank you again, Venerable Sir, that was quite a story. Now, what about the second type of misbehavior, stealing?

Answer 3: The Pali words are translated as “not taking that which is not given.” In modern times, the most pervasive concerns are dishonest and immoral practices in business and government. In commerce, these include cheating and embezzling. Buddhism also bans immoral or harmful occupations dealing with weapons, poisons and traps, raising or selling animals for food, and the whole sex industry. In government, dishonest practices refer first and foremost to the bribes and corruption, but also include abuse of power.

Those who practice theft, corruption and cheating will continually worry that their conduct will be revealed and punished. They may actually be arrested and jailed. They are also likely to be cheated by others. After death they may be reborn in the second hell, Kālasutta or as hungry ghosts. When reborn human, they will be very poor – perhaps even beggars.

Question 4: Thank you, Venerable Sir, Now can you please tell us about the third evil to avoid – sexual misbehavior?

Answer 4: Sexual misbehavior is primarily adultery, breaking the vow to one’s partner. It leads to myriad

personal and social problems such as jealous attacks and health dangers such as HIV. Most pervasive are family problems such as quarrels with the spouse which can lead to separation, broken homes and children being born out-of-wedlock. Children may suffer psychological problems, becoming disobedient delinquents and going astray, following their parents example. Governments must spend large sums to cope with such social problems. This is very much what we see in our present social reality.

Those who commit adultery may be reborn into the third hell, Sanghāta Hell or as animals or as hungry ghosts. When reborn human, offenders face many lifetimes of failure, beginning as a prostitute.

In conclusion, world peace must ultimately be based on inner peace which can only be developed by each one of us individually practicing right behavior here and now – avoiding killing, stealing and sexual misconduct and pursuing their positive opposites.

Question 5: Thank you very, very much, exceptionally Venerable Phra Rajyanvisith. Now can you please lead us in a few moments of meditation.

[Please see meditation practice on Chapter 7 page 67.]



Chapter 6

ONE WITH NOBLE TREASURES IS NOT POOR

07 November 2010

Question 1: Good morning, Venerable Phra Rajyanvisith. This is our 41st consecutive Sunday Dhamma Talk. We enthusiastically anticipate more of your inspiring wisdom. Can you please begin by summarizing what we discussed last time.

Answer 1: Good morning ladies and gentlemen. Last time we considered World Peace through Inner Peace, based on Lord Buddha's brief summary of the teaching of all Buddhas as Avoid all evil, Cultivate the good, And Purify your mind.

World peace means living together in harmony, sharing loving-kindness. This is still lacking in our modern, hi-tech consumer culture where the click of a mouse can span the globe. Sadly, as our ability to reach out in friendship becomes more instantaneous, our dread of wanton

terrorism has become more pervasive. Even our own “Land of Smiles” has degenerated to shoot outs in the streets of Bangkok. Only by purifying our hearts and radiating loving kindness can we develop lasting peace in our hearts, our families, our societies and our tiny world.

We must avoid physical, verbal and mental misbehavior: killing, stealing, wrongful sexual behavior, improper speech and thoughts motivated by greed, hatred or delusion. Most importantly, we must avoid killing – not only killing humans, but killing any living beings. This is the most serious and most disastrous misbehavior that often results in a blood feud continuing over successive lifetimes as in the case of Kala Yakkini and can lead to irrational wars on a larger global scale. Lord Buddha teaches the eternal Truth that Hatred never ceases through hatred but only through loving kindness and forgiveness.

The story highlights four hidden Truths: First, that we are all reborn over and over again; second, that one can be reborn as an animal or other being such as an ogre; third, that we often bind ourselves into destructive modes of behavior with vengeance; and fourth, that hatred can only be overcome with loving-kindness and forgiveness. This last lesson is the key to remember.

Question 2: Thank you very much, Venerable Sir. Now, what will we examine today?

Answer 2: Today we will study “The Seven Ariya Treasures” – specifically, Lord Buddha’s statement that “One who has Ariya Treasures is not poor.” The Seven Ariya Treasures are virtues of an upright disciple. They are inner treasures, not usually counted as wealth by laymen, but Lord Buddha sets out to demonstrate that they are, in fact, more valuable than money or similar worldly treasures such as good health and long life. The seven are: Faith, Morality, Shame, Moral Dread, Study, Generosity or Sacrifice and Wisdom.

Let us begin with the first and most important of the Ariya Treasures, Faith. Having Right Faith means trusting in people, teachings and practices that deserve one’s confidence. The greatest of all such worthy people is Lord Buddha who attained self-enlightenment through his own effort. Lord Buddha had purity of virtue, never doing anything wrong, even in private. He had only the highest compassion for all beings, wishing success in overcoming defilements and attaining peaceful happiness for all beings everywhere in the three worlds. With this compassion, He taught for 45 years to help others overcome suffering as He had done. This is why Lord Buddha is the first of the Three Gems in which one should take refuge.

Second, the greatest of all teachings deserving trust is Lord Buddha's Dhamma – the Four Noble Truths – which shows that life is suffering, but that there is a way out because suffering stops when one removes its causes. Furthermore, Lord Buddha's precepts constitute the practices worthy of trust – the practices leading to the destruction of defilements. The Noble Eightfold Path to Nirvana is the 4th Noble Truth. The Dhamma is the second gem in which one should take refuge and have faith.

Third, the Sangha of monks who have studied and practiced well with good results are the third gem in which one should have faith and take refuge. This means the Arahants of history who have taught to keep the Buddha-dhamma alive as well as current monks who are studying and practicing well. By extension, it also includes having faith in and showing respect for relics of the Buddha, relics of noble monks, Buddha statues, Dhamma teachings in books and scrolls, Stupas, Cetiya, the Sangha, and Buddhist proverbs.

Those who have faith in Lord Buddha, expressed by taking Lord Buddha as their refuge, will not go to hell or the unfortunate realms. When they give up the Human Body they will attain a Celestial Body and enjoy heavenly treasures for a long time. On the other hand, those who denigrate the virtues of Lord Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha with Wrong View will receive the results of their

bad Karma, both in this lifetime and in future lifetimes. Thus, faith is a valuable treasure that can amount to a “Get Out of Hell Free Card.”

Unlike other religious leaders, Lord Buddha did not demand blind faith up front. He taught that it is natural and proper to be wary of that which one has only heard but not seen. Justifiable faith develops over time based on accumulated evidence. Thus, lack of faith is not a sin, but simply an indicator of one’s state of mind. Faith develops with certainty based on seeing personally or believing because of trust in the person delivering the message. Holding justifiable faith implies that one has contemplated the available information and decided to accept the Truth of what has been heard, read, seen or felt.

Thus, lacking faith is an indicator that one is not yet ready to practice wholeheartedly. Either one has not yet seen enough evidence or one may be obstinate by nature, or one may be blinded by false belief in some wrong teaching. In any case, those lacking faith are not yet ready to ascend Lord Buddha’s Noble Path to Nirvana. Such people are not protected from falling into the unfortunate realms. The implication is that we should all be diligent and persistent in our search for Truth to make progress in understanding that will lead on to Right Practice. Too many of us used to contemplate ultimate truths in our youth, but gave up such deliberation for the comforts of consumer society

when answers seemed to evade us. Scientific Skepticism as practiced today is another dead end. One puts on a blindfold and then says “I don’t see it.” As Quantum Mechanics now recognizes, the observer is part of the system. The proper scientific stance is “open-minded, objective observation.” This is what Lord Buddha teaches – “See for yourself.”

Question 3: Wow! Thank you very, very much, Venerable Phra Rajyanvisith. Now, what about the second Ariya Treasure, *Sīla* or moral virtue?

Answer 3: *Sīla* or Morality does not stem from stone tablets handed down by some higher power. It is a very practical, personal guideline for proper behavior based on self-interest. Most simply stated, foundation-level moral behavior is that which does not cause any problems for oneself or for anyone else. The second component – not causing problems for anyone else – is ultimately based on the fact that we are all part of the same whole, so that any harm to another being is also harming oneself. Historically, this is the Law of Karma “Do good, get good. Do evil, get evil.” It is also Newton’s Law: “For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.”

This minimal morality expressed as what not to do, as in the Five Precepts, is called “Human Virtue” or *Manussaya-dhamma*. It is the foundation on which higher morality can be built. The Five Precepts, most basically,

are to avoid killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and intoxicants. During enlightenment, Lord Buddha saw that these are the five main causes of suffering and rebirth in hell. Thus, avoiding them is a purely practical, personal survival tactic.

One might invert each of these negative Five Precepts into a positive, virtuous rule. This might sound something like foster life, honesty, fidelity, truth and rationality. Well, the higher moral precepts, called the Enoblers, might be considered something like that. They are based on the *Brahma-vihāra* or Divine Abiding mentality of Loving Kindness or *Mettā*, Compassion or *Karuṇā*, Sympathetic Joy or *Muditā* and Equanimity or *Upekkhā*. Essentially, one wishes others happiness and to overcome suffering, behaving with compassion, never thinking of doing harm, pursuing Right Livelihood, controlling sexual behavior, speaking truthfully and usefully, and recognizing right from wrong, and being imbued with wisdom regarding natural arising and falling in life. One who practices precepts with these Enoblers in mind pursues only goodness, leading to development and peaceful happiness, free from degeneration. Others who behave against the precepts, either openly or in secret, will receive the fruits of their misbehavior both in this lifetime and future lifetimes. Thus, *Sīla* or morality is a treasure that pays dividends beyond this current lifetime.

Question 4: Thank you again, Venerable Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith. You have explained how faith in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha and virtue in following precepts can be regarded as great wealth. What about the remaining Ariya Treasures – in what sense can one endowed with them be regarded as “not poor”?

Answer 4: The next Ariya Treasures are Shame or Hiri and Moral Dread or Ottapa. These are called the Guardians of the World or Lokapala because they act internally to prevent one from doing evil. These are the heavenly virtues that distinguish angels. Humans are the lowest beings able to develop them, and enhancing them is a step towards heaven.

After this comes the Ariya Treasure of Study or Suta. One who is well learned or who has heard much attains Right View, able to distinguish Right from Wrong in many complex situations that may arise, thus achieving the ability to practice *Brahmacariya* (the chaste life) beautifully.

Next comes the Ariya Treasure of Generosity and Sacrifice or Cāga that overcomes the widespread human stain or defilement of stinginess and selfishness, helping to bring one up to *Brahma-vihāra* mentality. This leads one from worldly treasures to heavenly treasures.

Finally, the last Ariya Treasure is Wisdom. This is the wisdom of noble understanding of birth and death that breaks up defilements and brings an end to suffering. In conclusion, these Seven Ariya Treasures – Faith, Morality, Shame, Moral Dread, Study, Generosity and Sacrifice, and Wisdom – yield dividends both in this lifetime and future lifetimes. Therefore, the Pundits say that one with Ariya Treasures is not poor.

Question 5: Thank you very, very much, Venerable Phra Rajyanvisith. Now can you please lead us in a few moments of meditation?

[Please see meditation practice on Chapter 7 page 67.]



Chapter 7

NIRVANA: THE ULTIMATE IDEAL

05 December 2010

Question 1: Good morning, Venerable Phra Rajyanvisith. This is our 42nd consecutive Sunday Dhamma Talk. We look forward to more of your stimulating wisdom today. First, however, could you please summarize what we considered last time.

Answer 1: Good morning ladies and gentlemen. Last time we reflected that “One with Noble Treasures is Not Poor.” The seven “Noble” or transcendent treasures are: Faith, Morality, Shame, Moral Dread, Study, Generosity or Sacrifice and Wisdom. These are the virtues of an upright Truth-Seeker. They are inner treasures, not usually counted as wealth by those focused on immediate worldly gains, but they are actually more valuable than gold, good health or long life, because they continue to reap rewards for their owner throughout uncountable future lifetimes. You CAN take them with you.

Question 2: Thank you very much, Phra Rajyanvisith. Now, Venerable Sir, what will we consider today?

Answer 2: Today we shall contemplate Nirvana as the Ultimate Ideal. We begin by examining human-level norms of behavior, then reflect on celestial standards, and finally conclude with the perfections of Nirvana as the ultimate ideal. This is a very important lesson. It lays out and clarifies our current position, next step and ultimate goal in life's journey like GPS guidance. It can set each of us on the right path. Let us begin with Lord Buddha's statement about Truth-seekers (Khuddha Nikaya 25/11/16):

Asāre sāramatino Those who see Illusion
as true

Sāre cāsāradassino And reality as false

Te sāraṃ nādhigacchanti Never reach truth.

Micchāsaṅkappagocarā Misconception is their
pasture.

Sāraṅca sārato ñatvā Those who know reality
as true

Asāraṅca asārato And illusion as false

Te sāraṃ adhigacchanti Transcend to truth.

Sammāsaṅkappagocarā They graze in Right
Thought.

The Pali word “Sāro,” here translated as “Truth” or “Reality” can also be rendered as essence, core or heart, implying that Truth is found at the center, inside. It refers, thus, to our own True Nature.

Lord Buddha emphasized that there is no “True Self” in this world. We are only composed of Five Aggregates which are impermanent, suffering and non-self. These ephemeral phenomena just arise together temporarily while conditions are right and jointly delude us into the false belief of being a separate entity with a lasting soul. This Wrong View or essential Ignorance, then, usually underlies our restless, aimless search for meaning in life.

Lord Buddha, however, devoted 45 years to showing us the way to enlightenment, urging each of us to make ourselves into our own refuge. The Four Noble Truths first disclose the deceptive, enchanting, suffering nature of this world and the roots of suffering in our own unquenchable, addictive craving. The Third Noble Truth, then, joyfully declares that there is a way out – another realm, Nirvana – which is eternal peaceful happiness. Finally, the Fourth Noble Truth details the Eightfold Path for transcending to Nirvana.

The Eightfold Path and corresponding Five Precepts and Three Trainings that Lord Buddha taught are not “Commandments” issued by some Almighty God, but

scientific discoveries made by a Human Being who attained Right Enlightenment on His own and then taught others to follow His path, providing a concrete demonstration of their efficacy. In Sociological terms, they are “Norms” or rules for proper behavior that specify a Way of Life for developing oneself to a higher state of “being.”

Question 3: Thank you very much, Phra Rajyanvisith for that lucid explanation. Now, can you please elaborate on Lord Buddha’s norms for proper behavior at the human level.

Answer 3: The ten *Sāradhamma* or norms for proper behavior at the Human level are based on the Five Precepts. They are: refraining from killing, stealing, sexual misbehavior, lying, harsh language, divisive speech, useless speech, greed, hatred and delusion. They aim at self control to avoid causing suffering for oneself and other living beings. First, are three precepts covering bodily actions – refraining from killing, stealing and sexual misbehavior. Intentional killing of either humans or animals causes suffering for both victim and villain, possibly resulting in retaliation, jail, sickness, accidents or shorter lifespan as well as rebirth in Sañjiva Hell. Thieves, swindlers, cheaters and corrupt officials risk legal punishment, revelation of their bad conduct, being cheated by others, and rebirth in Kālasutta Hell or as hungry ghosts. Adulterers suffer

strained family relationships, quarreling, and broken homes and risk being killed in jealous rage. After death they reap rebirth in Sanghāta Hell or as animals or hungry ghosts. The children also suffer and grow up to follow their parents bad example. This is very much what we see in our present social reality.

The Fourth Precept prohibits improper speech of four kinds: lying, coarse speech, disruptive speech and dangerous or useless information such as wrong teachings or gossip. Those who practice lying, deceit, dishonesty or double-dealing earn a reputation as unreliable that engenders lack of trust and fewer good friends, close colleagues, and loving partners. After death they are reborn in Roruva Hell or as hungry ghosts or as animals. When eventually reborn as humans they suffer from a very bad smelling mouth.

Finally, the Fifth Precept, avoiding intoxicants, includes addiction to alcohol, cigarettes, marijuana, opium, and heroin. Addictions bring disastrous consequences immediately, such as physical and mental deterioration ranging from Sclerosis of the Liver to Delirium Tremens. Addiction also leads to catastrophic social consequences such as loss of employment, marital separation, divorce and homelessness. Addictive behavior is also usually instilled in the children. Addicts are reborn in Mahāroruva Hell or Mahātāpana Hell which is reserved for those who descend

the “Road to Ruin” or *Apāyamukha* like bar-hopping which integrates intoxication, sexual excesses and gambling.

Beyond the Five Precepts, Human-level norms include Right Livelihood, refraining from five immoral vocations: Trading in... (1) Human beings, as in slavery or prostitution; (2) Weapons and munitions; (3) Flesh, such as animals for slaughter or meat; (4) Intoxicants, such as alcohol and narcotics; and (5) Poisons. Finally, a Human-level Norm for mental behavior disallows thoughts based on the three root causes of improper mental behavior – greed, hatred and delusion.

Question 4: Thank you very much, venerable Phra Rajyanvisith. Now, please tell us about celestial or heavenly level ideals.

Answer 4: After excelling in the Human-level Norms or *Sāradhamma* practices, one graduates to the Celestial level and attains two more virtues – moral shame (*Hiri*) and moral dread (*Ottapa*). Moral shame means shying away from bad behavior as reprehensible and dangerous. Moral dread is alarmed terror regarding doing evil, based on recognition of the horrific future consequences. These are angel-level Norms or *Sāradhamma*. Further practice at the Celestial level develops the Divine Abode or *Brahma-vihāra* Virtues of Loving Kindness (*Mettā*), Compassion (*Karunā*), Sympathetic Joy (*Muditā*) and

Equanimity (*Upekkhā*). The mind then becomes peaceful in Samādhi in either the Pure Form or Formless Absorptions called *Jhāna*. This is Brahman-level *Sāradhamma radhamma*. It gives great pleasure, but is only temporary, worldly experience of these states. When one ceases to do good and returns to doing evil, one immediately falls back to lower levels. Thus Lord Buddha taught that: “Anyone who wishes to make merit must do so often and take satisfaction in making merit, for appreciating merit will bring happiness.” [Khudaka Nikāya, 25/19/30].

Question 5: Thank you very much, venerable Phra Rajyanvisith. Now, please tell us about Nirvana as the Ultimate Ideal.

Answer 5: Worldly beings gain the mundane treasures of riches, status, health, fame and happiness, but when they behave badly, these benefits are quickly lost. Both Human and Celestial beings soon fall back into struggle and suffering. Worldly treasures are not firm. They are impermanent, essentially suffering and ultimately non-self. Thus, they are not the permanently internalized essential virtues or ultimate *Sāradhamma*. They are, however, the foundation for higher practice.

Transcendental Ariya Treasures, however, are true, essential virtues or ultimate *Sāradhamma*. The practitioner trains body, speech and mind to internalize all Ten Perfec-

tions in generosity, morality, renunciation, wisdom, effort, patience, truthfulness, resolution, loving kindness and equanimity at all three levels: *Pārāmī* (ordinary perfections), *Upapāramī* (superior perfections) and *Paramattapāramī* (supreme perfections).

There are three Higher Training Practices: Training in Higher Morality or *Adhisīla Sikkhā*, Training in Higher Mentality or *Adhicitta Sikkhā*, and Training in Higher Wisdom or *Adhipaññā Sikkhā*. These practices lead to the beginning of the transcendent path or *Pathama-magga* and on to Path Mentality or *Magga-cittā* and Path Wisdom or *Magga-paññā* detailed in the Transcendent Eightfold Path, developing the wisdom to penetrate ultimate reality and attain the four transcendent paths, fruits, and the ultimate goal of Nirvana.

These are the true, ultimate essential virtues or real *Sāradhamma*. By treading these paths, one internalizes these Perfections and makes oneself into a perfected island refuge. We can, therefore, argue that such a Seeker finds his True Self in Nirvana.

In recent years there has been an erudite debate among Buddhist scholars over whether Nirvana is “Self” or “Non-self.” For a summary, see “Nibbāna as Self or Not Self” by Potprecha Cholvijarn, which is downloadable from www.dhammadcenter.org. The debate focuses on

Lord Buddha’s specification of the “Three Characteristics or Tilakkhana of All Compound Phenomena” as Impermanent, Suffering and Non-Self. The dispute is whether or not the “Non-self” characteristic also applies to Nirvana.

We have just shown how one can argue that a Seeker does, indeed, find his True Self in Nirvana. This is very important from a motivational perspective because a Seeker could ask “Why should I strive over many lifetimes to reach Nirvana if it, too, is “Non-self.”

The question remains, why did Lord Buddha deliberately change His wording in the Tilakkhana Sutta, first saying that all conditioned phenomena (*Saṅkhāra*) are impermanent (*Aniccaṃ*) and suffering (*Dukkham*), but then stating that all perceived phenomena are Non-self (*Sabbe dhammā anattāti*). We posit that this wording may reflect the deeper truth that ultimately all beings are interconnected. To be precise, there is no “Self” among conditioned phenomena (*Saṅkhāra*), but, as Lord Buddha taught in the Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta, the unconditioned Nirvana Element (*Nibbāna-dhātu*) has “Self” characteristics.

Question 6: Wow! That was deep! Thank you very, very much Phra Rajyanvisith. Now, could you please lead us in a few moments of meditation.

Answer 6: Let us begin by requesting the Five Precepts.

Requesting Five Precepts

Phra Rajyanvisith: Today we will begin by requesting the Five Precepts first and then continue on to meditation.

Layman: *Aham bhante visum visum rakkhaṇat-thāya tisaraṇena saha pañca sīlāni yācāmi,*

Venerable Sir, I ask for refuge and for the five precepts.

Dutiyampi, aham bhante visum visum rakkhaṇat-thāya tisaraṇena saha pañca sīlāni yācāmi,

For the second time, Venerable Sir, I ask for...

Tatīyampi, aham bhante visum visum rakkhaṇat-thāya tisaraṇena saha pañca sīlāni yācāmi.

For the third time, Venerable Sir, I ask for ...

Phra Rajyanvisith followed by Layman:

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

Homage to the Exalted One, the Holy One, the Perfectly
Enlightened One.

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

Buddham saraṇam gacchāmi

I go to the Buddha for refuge,

Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

I go to the Dhamma for refuge,

Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

I go to the Saṅgha for refuge,

Dutiyaṃpi, Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

For the second time, ...

Dutiyaṃpi, Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

Dutiyaṃpi, Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

Tatiyaṃpi, Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

For the third time, ...

Tatiyaṃpi, Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

Tatiyaṃpi, Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

Phra Rajyanvisith (Pāli Only) followed by Layman
(Pāli & English)

1. *Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*

I undertake the precept to refrain from destroying living creatures.

2. *Adinnādānā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi*

I undertake the precept to refrain from taking that which is not given.

3. *Kāmesumicchācārā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ
Samādiyāmi.*

I undertake the precept to refrain from unlawful sexual activity.

4. *Musāvādā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*
I undertake the precept to refrain from incorrect speech.

5. *Surāmerayamajjapamādaṭṭhānā veramaṇī.*
sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.

I undertake the precept to refrain from intoxicating drinks and drugs which lead to carelessness.

Phra Rajyanvisith: *Imāni Pañca Sikkhāpadāni Samādiyāmi.*

Layman: *Imāni pañca sikkhāpadāni samādiyāmi.*

I undertake to observe these Five Precepts

Imāni pañca sikkhāpadāni samādiyāmi.

Imāni pañca sikkhāpadāni samādiyāmi.

Phra Rajyanvisith: *Sīlena Sugatiṃ Yanti.*

These Precepts bring a happy life.

Layman: *Sādhu* - It is proper.

Phra Rajyanvisith: *Sīlena Bhogasampadā*

These Precepts bring prosperity

Layman: *Sādhu.*

Phra Rajyanvisith: *Sīlena Nibbutiṃ Yanti. Tassmā Sīlaṃ Visodhaye.*

All beings will attain Nirvana by *Sīla*. Thus, *Sīla* is holy [should be purified].

Layman: *Sādhu*.

Phra Rajyanvisith: Prostrate three times to the Buddha Statue, if available. Now we begin meditation.

Dhammakāya Meditation Practice

We sit upright in a regular meditation posture, cross-legged as seen in some Buddha images, with the right leg resting upon the left. The right hand rests on the left, palm turned upwards, with the right index finger just touching the left thumb. The body is straight and the mind is fully alert. Take a deep breath and relax the body until you feel comfortable. Close your eyelids lightly, do not press them.

We use two aids: a mantra, “*Sammā Arahang*” and an object of visualization, a bright, clear luminous sphere called *Āloka Kasiṇa* or light object. Using these aids, we draw the mind inward to the center of the body and the mind components of vision, memory, thought and awareness come together into oneness. Imagine a bright, clear, luminous sphere located at the center of the body, two inches or five centimeters above the navel. Rest your mind inside the sphere and Repeat “*Sammā Arahang, Sammā Arahang, Sammā Arahang,*” continually and mindfully.

Look for the pinpoint of bright light at the center of the center. Focus your mind there. Stop Still.

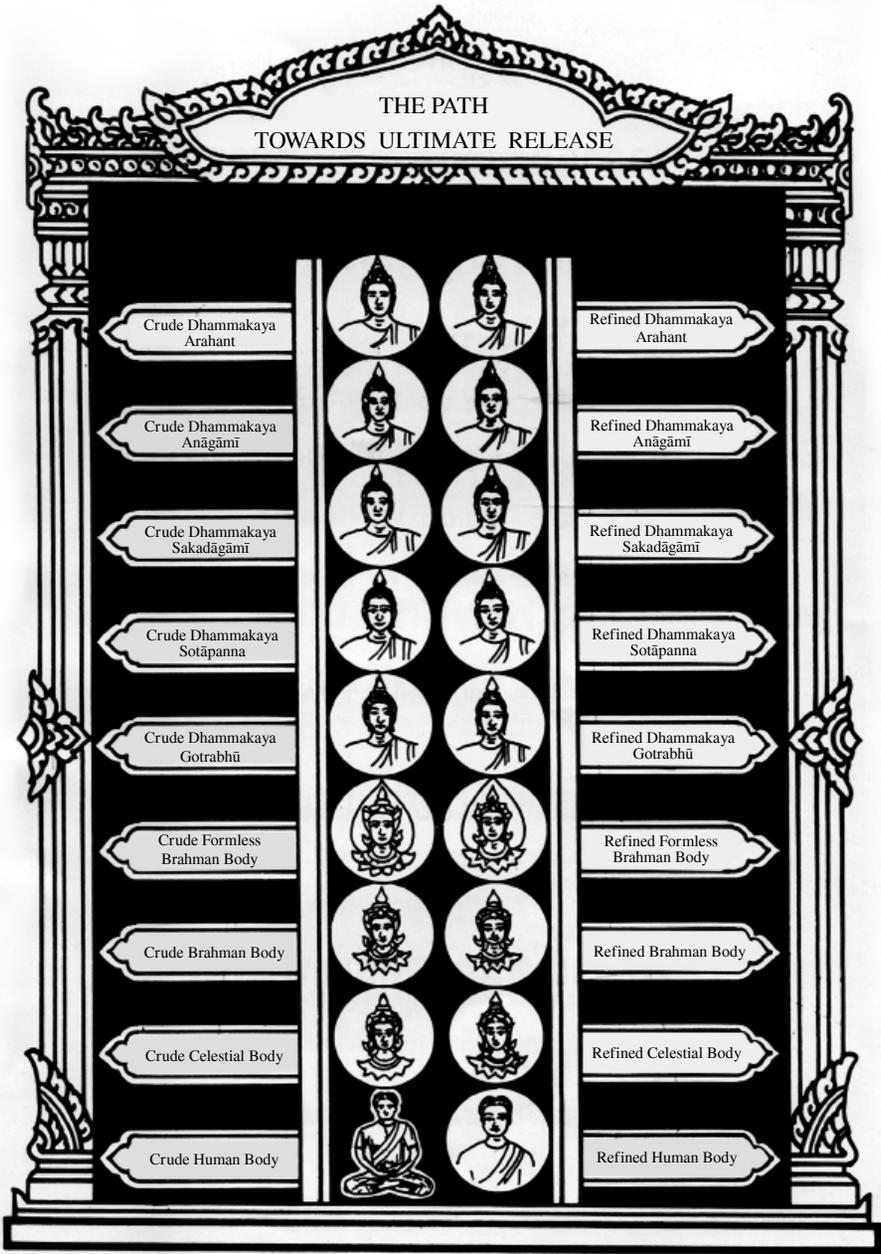
When the mind stops perfectly still at the center of the center, the center expands itself and becomes a new sphere. Place your mind gently inside the new sphere. Look for the pinpoint of bright light at the center of the center. Place your mind there. Stop still. Eventually, a bright clear sphere will arise. This is the Dhamma Sphere. Do not be overjoyed. Keep your mind calm in equanimity. Hold the mind still, and stop repeating *Sammā Arahang*. Just concentrate at the center of the Dhamma Sphere. This is your own nucleus which gives rise to this body and this mind. You should experience the greatest happiness you have ever known – not happiness based on an external object, but happiness arising from within, due to being fully pure from the Five Hindrances.

Continue meditating as before by stopping still at the center of the center of the Dhamma Sphere. When the concentration is just right, sphere after sphere pops up by itself from the center, each one inside the previous one. The Spheres of *Sīla* or moral behavior, *Samādhi* or concentration, *Paññā* or Wisdom, *Vimutti* or transcendence, and *Vimuttiñāḍassana* or insight appear one after the next. Enter each sphere, successively, and focus your mind still at the pinpoint of bright light or hollow spot at the center. When the mind stops still, a new sphere emerges.

When you reach the Insight Sphere, you continue in the same way, stopping still at the center. Again the center expands itself, but this time, instead of a new sphere, you see your own Refined Human Body, sitting cross-legged in meditation position, facing the same direction as you are facing. Don't be startled, just keep observing. It looks very much like yourself. It has your own face, but it is brighter, purer, and more radiant. It may even be crystal clear. Take your time to make the body and its pedestal bright and clear.

When you feel comfortable with the Refined Human Body, place your mind gently inside the Refined Human Body. Expand to fill the whole body. Feel the body from the inside. Feel the arms. Feel the legs. Feel the head. Feel the toes. Say to yourself, "I am the Refined Human Body. I have become the Refined Human Body. I have the Refined Human mentality." When you feel comfortable inside the Refined Human Body, place your mind gently inside the sphere at the center of the refined human body. Focus on the pinpoint of bright light at the center of the center. The center expands itself and you see your Celestial Body. [Please See all 18 bodies on page 70.]

For those who reach this state of mind, go on with the same procedure. As larger and larger, more and more radiant bodies appear, become each more refined body, one-by-one, until you reach Dhammakāya. Dhammakāya looks like a transparent Buddha statue – very radiant, very



pure! The Buddha statue, sitting cross-legged, is about 9 meters in height and width. Become Dhammakāya fully, right away.

And now, let us share all of the merit that we have made in this meditation and previously – together with all of our loving kindness – with all beings everywhere throughout the universe. We share with our parents, our grandparents, our family, our teachers and our friends. We share with our King and our Queen and the whole royal family. May Lord Buddha bless all of us to lead a peaceful, happy life, free from suffering, free from problems and free from enmity, and may this meditation help to bring us closer to transcendence and Nirvana. [Pause]. And, now, we come slowly out of meditation and open the eyes.

Interviewer: Thank you very much, Phra Rajyanvisith. We reverently appreciate your superb meditation instruction.

Phra Rajyanvisith: May Lord Buddha bless all of you. We would like to invite you all to join us for meditation at Wat Luang Phor Sodh, any Sunday. Our bus leaves from Wat Saket, the Golden Mountain Temple, at 7 o'clock every Sunday morning. I lead morning chanting and meditation for all, beginning at nine thirty, and Phra Bart conducts an afternoon meditation session in English from 12 to 2 P.M. Please come join us. For details, please see our English websites at *www.dhammacenter.org*.



Chapter 8

SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

In summary, Volume 7 has presented the series of broadcasts from July through December of 2010. Chapter 2 began by expanding on our previous examination of Dhamma principles for good governance, so powerfully exhibited by King Asoka, which we began to consider in response to the Red-shirt – Yellow-shirt conflict in Bangkok which stemmed from insidious human greed, hatred and delusion and pitted Bangkok elites against Thai citizens in the countryside. Chapter 2 presented three basic principles for Right leadership: Correspondence with Ultimate Truth (Dhamma), moral behavior by leaders and effective governmental administration. These could culminate in effective constitutional monarchy based on sovereignty residing in the hearts of Thai citizens and codified in two documents: the Lak-niti-raj or Constitution and the Lak-niti-dhamma or Bill of Rights defining meta guarantees of human rights, civil liberties and moral behavior to ensure virtue fostering peaceful happiness and long-term na-

tional development. The Lak-niti-dhamma would include procedures for enacting constitutional amendments, fair elections, impartial law enforcement, just court decisions, financial transparency and parliamentary oversight.

Chapter 3 celebrates Āsālha Pūjā, the Birthday of Buddhism, which commemorates the first sermon, first bhikkhu and fulfillment of the Triple Gem. Lord Buddha's first sermon is called the Dhammacakka or Dhamma Wheel because of its key role in the history of the world. It's primary emphasis, however, is on the Dhammacakku or Dhamma Eye, cited 12 times in the refrain as the first step to enlightenment. Lord Buddha had just spent seven weeks reflecting whether or not anyone could comprehend the profound Truths that He had uncovered. He decided to teach the Five Ascetics. Upon hearing Lord Buddha's sermon, Elder Kondañña attained the dustless, stainless Dhamma Eye (*Dhammacakku*) and requested ordination. This was the birthday of Buddhism as a religion.

The rest of this Volume 7 was devoted to reflecting on the crucial, overwhelming questions that we all must answer, but too often, avoid. What is life? What is its purpose? How should I live? These questions are daunting, but if we give up asking them we risk wasting our whole life.

Chapter 4 illuminated life and death based on Lord Buddha's last teaching: "All compounds naturally dissolve. Bring your personal benefit and usefulness for others to ripen on time. Don't be careless." This chapter reiterated that, as humans, we are all destined to old age, sickness and death. "Working for your personal benefit" means developing wisdom towards ultimate release "Fulfilling your usefulness for others" means accomplishing your goals for "good works" during your lifetime.

Following precepts purifies the heart and mind, leaving one ready for death. Proper "Mindfulness of Death" (*Maraṇasati*) is not morbid fixation on corpses, but preparedness for the inevitable, contentedly anticipating freedom from snares, worries and delusion. Admitting transience, accepting death as normal without fear, fosters diligence in doing good and developing insight, living life comfortably with a light and peacefully happy heart.

Chapter 5 considered World Peace via Inner Peace. World peace means living together in harmony, sharing loving kindness. In our modern, hi-tech consumer culture, the click of a mouse can span the globe. Our ability to reach out in friendship has become more instantaneous. However, our dread of wanton terrorism has become more pervasive. Only by purifying our hearts, radiating loving kindness and abiding by precepts can we develop lasting peace in our hearts, our families, our societies and our tiny

world. Wars and terrorism are not based on reason. They usually reflect feuds over successive lifetimes, as illustrated in the story of Kala Yakkini. Such hatred can never be appeased through vengeance, only by loving-kindness and forgiveness.

Chapter 6 lifted our contemplations above worldly concerns to supra-mundane Noble Treasures. The seven “Noble” or transcendent treasures are: Faith, Morality, Shame, Moral Dread, Study, Generous Sacrifice and Wisdom. These are the virtues of vanguard Truth-Seekers on the final paths to enlightenment. They are inner treasures, not usually counted as wealth by those focused on immediate worldly gains. They are, however, more valuable than gold, good health or long life. These treasures continue to reap rewards throughout uncountable future lifetimes. You can take them with you.

Finally, Chapter 7 ascended the peak of pondering Nirvana. It laid out the path like GPS guidance, beginning with human-precept norms (Don’t kill, steal, commit adultery, lie or take intoxicants), rising through celestial Divine Abode standards (loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity) to the ultimate, transcendent virtues (*Sāradhamma*) of the Ten Perfections (generosity, morality, renunciation, wisdom, effort, patience, honesty, resolution, loving kindness and equanimity).

One can argue that a seeker finds his “True Self” in Nirvana. There is no “Self” among conditioned phenomena (*Saṅkhāra*), but, as Lord Buddha taught in the Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta, the unconditioned Nirvana Element (*Nibbāna-dhātu*) has “Self” characteristics.

In conclusion, this volume represents an extremely important collection of reflections about the most important questions in life that we all too often put aside as unanswerable.

Phra Khru Baitika Dr. Barton Yanathiro
Interviewer and Editor



THE AUTHOR:

PHRA RAJYANVISITH

Meditation Master, Buddhist Scholar & Educator

1. Abbot, Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakayaram (July 9, 1991).
2. President, the Executive Committee, National Coordination Center of Provincial Meditation Institutes of Thailand (Elected by the Directors of Provincial Meditation Institutes from throughout the country at a Seminar and Practicum organized by the National Buddhist Office 23-25 April 2008 at Wat Yanawa, Bangkok, Thailand and recognized by the Sangha Body).
3. Director and Principal-Meditation Master, Wat Luang Phor Sodh Buddhist Meditation Institute (Since 2006) An Associated Institution of the World Buddhist University.
4. Vice-chairman, the Administrative Committee, Maha-chulalongkorn-rajabhidyalaya University Region 15 Academic Services Center (November 19, 2007).
5. Director, Dhammakaya Buddhist Meditation Institute (1981).
6. Manager, Rajburi Provincial Pali Studies Center (Appointed by the Sangha Body, October 20, 1999).

7. Director, Rajburi Provincial Meditation Practice Center (Appointed by the Sangha Body, March 6, 2001).

8. Director, Center for Development of Virtues and Ethics for the Security of the Nation, Religion and Monarchy (2009).

Profile as a Monk

Name: Phra Rajyanvisith (Phra Ajahn Maha Sermchai Jayamanggalo) Abbot of Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakayaram, and Director of Dhammakaya Buddhist Meditation Institute

Date of Birth: March 6, 1929.

Entered Monkhood: March 6, 1986.

Buddhist Dhamma: Completed grade three of Buddhist Theory, and grade six of Pali studies.

Meditation Master: Venerable Phra Rajbrahmathera, Deputy Abbot, Meditation master, Wat Paknam

Meditation Experience: Practiced Buddhist meditation since 1970.

Preceptorship: Appointed since January 31, 1996

Ecclesiastical Title from December 5, 1998:

Phra Bhavana Visutthikhun

Ecclesiastical Title from December 5, 2004:

Phra Rajyanvisith

An honorary Doctorate in Buddhist Principles in Management from Maha-chulalongkorn-rajavidyalaya Univer.ty in 2007.

An honorary Doctorate in Religious Study in Buddhism from Mahamakut Buddhist University in 2009.

Profile before Monkhood

Work: Research specialist, United States Information Services (USIS), Bangkok.

Visiting lecturer in research methodology, research and evaluation, and public opinion surveys to various academic institutions (Thammasart University, Bangkok University, etc.).

Academic Qualifications: Certificate in accountancy, Bachelors of Commerce, and Masters of Arts in public administration (Honors), Thammasart University.

Certificate in social science research, Institute of Social Research, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA.

Certificate in Wang OIS Management Courses, organized by USIS, Washington DC, USA.

WAT LUANG PHOR SODH DHAMMAKAYARAM

The temple is located on the beautifully landscaped campus of the Dhammakaya Buddhist Meditation Institute at kilometer 14 of the Damnoen Saduak - Bangpae Road, in Damnoen Saduak District of Rajburi Province, 93 kilometers from Bangkok. It encompasses 244 rais. The 74 rais surrounding the main monastery were registered in 1991 as Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakayaram, in loving memory of Luang Phor Wat Paknam, Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni (Sodh Candasaro).

Founding

21 May 1991: Registered as a Wat [a temple] by the Ministry of Education and recognized by the Sangha body

2 May 1992: Consecrated as a Temple by His Holiness Somdej Phra Buddhaghosajahn, Former Abbot of Wat Sampaya, Bangkok, and Sangha Council Member.

Recognized Excellence

- 1999: Recognized by the Sangha Body as Rajburi Provincial Pali Studies Center.

- 2004: Recognized by the Sangha Body as Rajburi Provincial Meditation Institute.
- 2005: Designated by the Sangha Body as an “Exemplary Development Temple with Noteworthy Success.”
- 2006: Established as Sangha Ecclesiastical Region 15 Academic Services Unit for Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (for four provinces).
- 2006: Wat Luang Phor Sodh Buddhist Meditation Institute established as an Associated Institution of the World Buddhist University.
- 2008: Elected the National Coordination Center of Provincial Meditation Institutes of Thailand.
- 2009: Established by the Sangha Body as the Center for Development of Virtues and Ethics for the Security of the Nation, Religion and Monarchy

Objectives

1. To help humans rid themselves of suffering and penetrate Nirvana.

2. To educate laity and monks to become knowledgeable, virtuous instructors spreading Lord Buddha's teachings.
3. To become a center of virtue supporting peace for all world beings.
4. To become a pilgrimage center for the faithful:
 - Displaying sacred objects worthy of veneration.
 - Providing a clean, beautiful, serene environment for peaceful meditation and introspection.
5. To faultlessly manage and preserve the sacred treasures and offerings of the faithful.



INTERNATIONAL MEDITATION RETREAT

Wat Luang Phor Sodh Buddhist Meditation Institute

An Associated Institution of the World Buddhist University

Wat Luang Phor Sodh Buddhist Meditation Institute, an Associated Institution of the World Buddhist University, teaches Concentration-Insight Meditation (Samatha-Vipassana), which has proved astoundingly effective. Meditation proceeds to successively higher levels by always focusing at the center of the center.

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3. Contact

Please see our website www.dhammacenter.org, where you can register online or email us at bmi@dhammacenter.org.

Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakàyàràṃ is 2 hours southwest of Bangkok by #78 air-conditioned bus, which leaves from the left-hand sidewalk outside the Southern Bus Terminal, every 20 minutes 06:00-19:00. Do not look for the bus inside the station and Do Not Take Any Other Bus!!! Look for the bus in stall #1 or by the large blue sign in English towards the back of the sidewalk which says “No. 78 Damnoen Saduak, FLOATING MARKET.”



