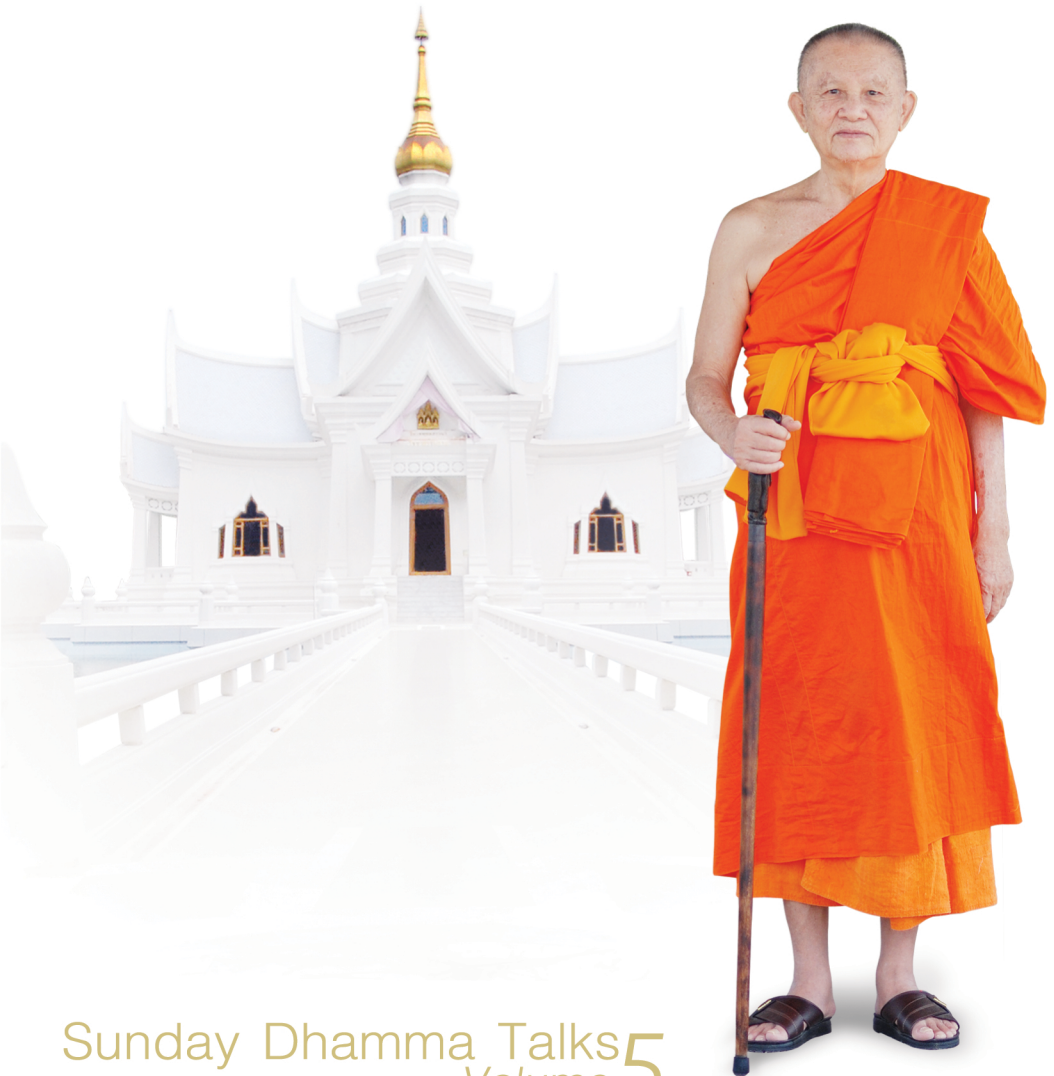


Highest Blessings Part 2
Foster Inner World Peace &
Be Grateful to Your Motherland



Sunday Dhamma Talks *Volume 5*

Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith

President, National Coordination Center of Provincial Meditation Institutes of Thailand
Abbot, Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakayaram



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Volume 5

by

Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon. D.)

President, National Coordination Center of Provincial
Meditation Institutes of Thailand

Abbot, Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakāyārām

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III

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 Chao Khun 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.

Finally, let me also express my deep gratitude to Phra Mahā Prasert Paññāseṭṭho and Phra Natpakanan Guṇaṅkaro of the Wat Luang Phor Sodh Publication's Office, to Phra Mahā Somchat and the Wat Luang Phor Sodh Audio-Visual Staff, to Phra Watcharapol Thirajitto for photography, and to my faithful Secretary Phra Mahā Chainipoj for their indispensable support in making this endeavor successful.

Phra Rajyanvisith

Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith

Abbot, Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakāyārām

President, National Coordination Center of Provincial

Meditation Institutes of Thailand

INTRODUCTION

Happy day, Dhamma friends, I'm Phra Bart from the United States, the editor of this book. I would like to introduce the author, Venerable Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon. D.) who is one of the leading meditation masters, Buddhist scholars, and educators in Thailand. In 2007 the National Broadcasting System of Thailand invited him to initiate a series of Sunday Dhamma Talks in English and the popular programs have continued ever since. I have served as interviewer on the radio shows and editor of the series of books.

Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith is the National Coordinator of the Provincial Meditation Institutes of Thailand and the beloved abbot of Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakāyārām in Damnoen Saduak District of Rajburi Province. He is the recipient of two honorary Doctorates, one in Buddhist Principles in Management, from Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University in 2007 and another Doctorate in Religious Studies in Buddhism from Mahamakut Buddhist University in 2009.

Sunday Dhamma Talks

This is the fifth issue in a continuing series. Volume One began with an overview of Lord Buddha’s teachings and continued through the first of the Three Higher Trainings (*Trisikkhā*) which is Morality (*Sīla*). Volume Two completed the Higher Trainings with Concentration (*Samatha*) and Insight (*Vipassanā*) Meditation and then focused on Lord Buddha’s instructions on meditation in the “Greater Discourse on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness” (*Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna*). Volume Three expanded on fundamentals – morality or “Do Good!” – selfless generosity, loving kindness and compassion, expressed through Right Thought, Intentions Speech, Action, and Livelihood.

Volume Four

Volume Four began the series on Life’s Highest Blessings as presented in the Maṅgala Sutta. This is one of the most popular Buddhist teachings because it outlines concisely and constructively thirty-eight of life’s most important lessons in ten profound verses. The issue arose as a discussion among angels as to what were the best lucky signs or “Fortunate Omens.” The discussion swelled to higher and higher levels of heaven. Finally, Celestial King Sakka recommended that only Lord Buddha could answer this

question. Thus, a high-level heavenly messenger came down to Jeta's Grove, near Savatthi, and posed the question in verse. Lord Buddha responded in verse with the entire Maṅgala Sutta.

The genius of His response was in recognizing that good fortune derives not from good luck, but from appropriate behavior based on Right Wisdom. It is the practice of Dhamma that is truly auspicious. Thus, the translation of the sutta as “blessings” reflects the way the question was asked more than Lord Buddha's reinterpretation and sound lessons on beneficial behavior. Current Pāli and Thai dictionaries, which have been influenced by these teachings, define the word “Maṅgala” to mean “causes of progress or success or rejoicing”.

Here is the question as posed by the celestial messenger.

<i>Bahū devā manussā ca</i>	Many angels and men
<i>Maṅgalāni acintayum</i>	Have pondered auspicious omens
<i>Ākaṅkhamānā sotthānam</i>	Wishing for blessings.
<i>Brūhi maṅgalamuttamam</i>	Please tell us the most auspicious signs.

Volume Four presented the first six verses of responses, which listed 20 lessons for life. These lessons

have been highly prized because Lord Buddha often taught specifically for monks, but these are worldly Dhamma appropriate for all.

Volume Five

This Volume Five completes the Maṅgala Sutta with four more verses that ultimately achieve the highest blessing of an unshaken mind in Nirvana. Then, the two remaining broadcasts touch on topics of crucial contemporary importance worldwide and within Thailand – world peace and the need for gratitude to our mother country.

Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon. D.)

Now, please let me complete my introduction of Venerable Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon. D.) for those who are not yet familiar with him. His mission is to stimulate Buddhism, placing equal emphasis on academic study and meditation practice. Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon. D.) 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 Jayamanggalo. In 1998 he received the

Royal Ecclesiastical Rank of Phra Bhavana Visutthikhun and in 2004 he was awarded the rank of Phra Rajyanvisith.

Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon. D.) has been the Abbot of Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakāyārām, which he founded and built since 1991 and has led the temple to become a recognized center of excellence in meditation practice, Pāli 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.

Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon. D.) has published over 70 books, 400 articles, and two journals, and recorded over 1,000 Dhamma lectures. In sum Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon. D.) has an extremely impressive record which is widely recognized. The broadcasts assembled here rise far above customary standards in both academic sophistication and spiritual inspiration. You are holding a rare blend of scholastic and transcendental wisdom seldom published in English. Please make the most of it.

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

Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon. D.), the President of the National Coordination Center of Provincial Meditation Institutes of Thailand, Director of the Meditation Center of Rajburi Province, Abbot of Wat Luang Phor Sodh, and the Principal of BMI.



Phra Bart or Phra Khru Baitika Dr. Barton Yanathiro teaches introductory and intermediate meditation with notable success. He is a former professor and international development specialist, with a Ph.D. in Sociology & Social Psychology from Cornell University, who has been a monk since March 6th 2002. Phra Bart was a professor of research methodology and was impressed by the depths of what Lord Buddha learned just sitting under a tree. He has concluded that meditation is the best methodology for understanding reality and how to live profitably, and is eager to teach it to all who are interested, worldwide.



Highest Blessings 07

CULTIVATE RESPECT, HUMILITY, CONTENTMENT, GRATITUDE AND LISTENING TO DHAMMA

05 July 2009

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, happy day. This is Sunday Dhamma Talk by Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon. D.), one of Thailand's most eminent Meditation Masters, Buddhist Scholars, and Educators, dedicated to revitalizing Buddhism with equal emphasis on Dhamma study and meditation practice. Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon. D.) is National Coordinator of the Provincial Meditation Institutes of Thailand and revered Abbot and Meditation Master of Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakāyārām in Damnoen Saduak District of Rajburi Province, which is now a recognized center of excellence at Provincial, Regional, National and Global levels. He is the recipient of honorary doctorates from both Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya and Mahamagut Universi-

ties. I am your interviewer, Phra Khru Baitika Dr. Barton Yanathiro from the United States.

Question 1: Welcome, Venerable Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon. D.). We look forward to more of your inspiring wisdom. This will be our 25th Sunday Dhamma Talk, starting a third year of our popular series. This is a big week for Buddhism. Can you let our listeners know what is coming up?

Answer 1: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. We have two major Buddhist holidays this week. On Tuesday the 7th we celebrate Asalha Puja, the day that Lord Buddha delivered the First Sermon, the Dhammacakkapavattanasutta and ordained the first monk, marking the beginning of Buddhism as a religion. On Wednesday the 8th, we celebrate Khao Pansa, the Entering of the Rains, which is the beginning of the three-month Buddhist Lent.

Question 2: Thank you, sir. Now, let's get down to our broadcast. Today, we will continue our segment on Lord Buddha's Highest Blessings. Could you please begin by summarizing briefly our last broadcast.

Answer 2: We have been studying Life's Highest Blessings as listed in the Maṅgala Sutta. Lord Buddha offers thirty-eight lessons for fruitful living in ten profound verses. An angel asked, "What are life's luckiest charms"

and Lord Buddha astutely recognized that good fortune derives not from luck, but from virtuous behavior based on Right Wisdom. It is the practice of Dhamma that is truly auspicious. Thus, Lord Buddha responded with the Maṅgala Sutta in which each verse details beneficial behaviors or supporting factors.

The last broadcast covered three auspicious behaviors: Avoiding evil, intoxicants, and carelessness. For laypersons, the essentials of avoiding evil are following the five precepts: don't kill, steal, commit adultery, use improper speech, or get addicted to intoxicants. These precepts avoid the five major causes of rebirth in hell. Self control avoids causing personal suffering and suffering to others.

Refraining from intoxicants is critical because when drunk one tends to break all the other precepts. Addiction, whether to alcohol, drugs or smoking, brings disastrous consequences in both health and social life. These include Sclerosis of the Liver, Delirium Tremens, loss of employment, marital separation, divorce, and homelessness. After death, addicts are reborn in Mahāroruva Hell for an extremely long time.

Finally, avoiding carelessness means living mindfully every second of every day. There is no forgiveness. Once an evil act has been committed, the consequences are unavoidable. We must, therefore, be always asking ourselves,

“Am I doing the right thing? Am I saying the right thing? Am I thinking the right thing?” Ultimately, Mindfulness, practiced both inward in meditation and outward in action, is the path to Nirvana. Lord Buddha’s last word was *Appamāda*, “Don’t be careless.”

Question 3: Thank you, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon. D.). Now, venerable sir, what is the next verse that we will consider today?

Answer 3: Today we continue with verse eight of the Maṅgala Sutta which lists five interrelated auspicious behaviors: Practicing Respect, Humility, Contentment, Gratitude and Apt Listening to Dhamma.

<i>Gāravo ca nivāto ca</i>	Practicing Respect and Humility,
<i>Santuṭṭhī ca Kataññutā</i>	Contentment and Gratitude,
<i>Kālena dhammassavanam</i>	Apt Listening to Dhamma.
<i>Etammaṅgalamuttamam</i>	These are most auspicious.

Let’s take Respect and Humility together. Respect is appreciation of others and humility is modesty about oneself. Both help counter egotism. The Pāli word *Gāravo* means showing reverence, respect or appreciation. We should express such veneration, esteem and admiration for those who exhibit good behavior or Right conduct in

action, speech and thought, especially for our tutors – parents, teachers, and monks – and other respected authorities. Similarly, one should show reverence for religious objects such as Buddha statues or relics. A good way to show respect is being a good listener, attending closely to what others say, understanding their perspective, and, when possible, offering insightful advice. The word *Nivāto* means humility, courtesy or politeness. An unassuming attitude keeps one always open for more learning throughout life and modesty in public presents an attractive, friendly demeanor that draws acquaintances closer. Both respect and humility counter the lax egotistical tendency towards arrogance. Demonstrating reverence or appreciation and modesty or humility is highly auspicious.

The third auspicious behavior is contentment. The Pāli word for contentment, *Santuṭṭhī*, is based on the word *Santi* meaning calm, tranquility or peace, which is sometimes used as “bliss” to mean Nirvana. So, the secret to feeling comfortable and fulfilled is curbing cravings, the voracious desires that spring up incessantly in the heart. “Need” is easily satisfied, but “greed” is insatiable. He who knows when enough is enough will always be contented.

Question 4: Now, sir, please tell us about the fourth auspicious behavior, gratitude.

Answer 4: Let's begin by understanding the concepts; the Pāli word for Gratitude is *Kataññū*. It means, first, recognizing that one has been the recipient of valuable help from a benefactor and, second, feeling thankful for the kindness. *Kataññū* is usually paired with *Katavedi* which means expressing this feeling through words and deeds. Lord Buddha identified two types of people who are very hard to find in this stingy world. First is the initial benefactor (*Pubbakārī*) who selflessly volunteers to help those in need. But, even harder to find is the recipient who recognizes his debt to the benefactor's kindness and does something to try to repay it (*Kataññūkatavedī*).

Here, I would like to express gratitude to Mahinda Wijesinghe of Srilanka whose article on Gratitude in www.buddhist-e-library.org was helpful in organizing the following thoughts. The person endowed with gratitude exhibits faithfulness, integrity, and nobility. Lord Buddha considered Gratitude an extremely important component of mental training. At one point he said that four things were necessary for entry into Heaven: Right Action, Right Speech, Right Thought, and Gratitude. Like humility and modesty, appreciation, thankfulness and gratitude are powerful virtues for overcoming the natural tendencies towards greediness, stinginess, arrogance, conceit and egotism. They lead to recognition of our interconnectedness, seeing how the efforts of parents, teachers and friends have all contributed

to one's own successes, supported by the foundation of stored knowledge in one's social and cultural heritage.

One should feel gratitude especially toward parents, secular teachers and spiritual friends (*Kalyāṇamittatā*) and guides. Gratitude toward parents is best expressed by fulfilling their wishes in five ways: Supporting them in their old age, serving them by looking after their particular desires, continuing their family line, carrying on their business and cultural heritage, and making merit for them after their death. One should also express gratitude toward teachers in five ways: Standing to receive the teacher, entering ahead of time to receive the teacher, listening to and following the teacher, making appropriate offerings as signs of respect, and studying the arts and sciences taught with respect.

For Buddhists, the most important Spiritual Guides to thank are Lord Buddha, the Dhamma or Teachings, and the Sangha or Body of Monks. One should pay gratitude in six ways: Firmly rejecting all evil, establishing oneself solidly in doing good, helping others with beautiful intentions, always listening to learn more Dhamma, practicing the Dhamma one has learned to perfection, and telling others the way to heaven.

Question 5: Thank you very much, venerable sir. Now, specifically, what should Buddhists do this week to show gratitude to Lord Buddha on Asalha Puja Day?

Answer 5: Most importantly, Asalha Puja commemorates Lord Buddha's First Sermon, marking the beginning of Buddhism. Celebrate by going to your temple to participate in listening to the Dhammacakkappavattanasutta. Also, read and study the sermon on your own, contemplating the Four Noble Truths. This will constitute *Kālena Dhammassavanam* or attending to Dhamma on appropriate occasions, which is today's fifth and final auspicious behavior. Some temples schedule a group wien-tien walking meditatively three times around the Buddha statue with flowers, candles and incense. This is a formal expression of gratitude for Lord Buddha. You can also do it informally on your own. While at the temple, observe the beginning of the Buddhist Lent, by donating things for monks to use during the three month retreat. Traditional gifts include rains cloths, tooth brushes, soap, towels, and candles or light bulbs.

Question 6: Thank you very much, Dr. Phra Rajyan-visith (Hon. D.). We deeply appreciate your wisdom. Now I would like to ask you to lead us in a few moments of meditation.

[Please see meditation practice on Chapter 7 page 59.]

Highest Blessings 08

SEEK HOLY DISCIPLES & DHAMMA DISCUSSIONS

02 August 2009

Question 1: Good morning, Venerable Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon. D.). Could you please begin by summarizing briefly our last broadcast.

Answer 1: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. We have been studying Life's Highest Blessings as presented in the Maṅgala Sutta. Lord Buddha offers thirty-eight lessons for propitious living in ten profound verses. An angel asked: "What are life's most fortunate lucky charms?" Lord Buddha's genius was in recognizing that good fortune derives not from luck, but from virtuous behavior based on Right Wisdom. It is the practice of Dhamma that is truly auspicious. Thus, Lord Buddha responded with the Maṅgala Sutta in which each verse details beneficial behaviors or supporting factors.

In our last broadcast, we considered five auspicious behaviors: Respect, humility, contentment, gratitude and apt listening to Dhamma. Respect is appreciation of others and humility is modesty about oneself. Both help counter egotism. We should express veneration, esteem and admiration for those who exhibit good behavior or right conduct in action, speech and thought, especially for our tutors – parents, teachers, and monks – and other respected authorities. Similarly, we should show reverence for religious objects such as Buddha statues or relics. Humility or an unassuming attitude keeps one always open for more learning throughout life. Also, modesty in public presents an attractive, friendly demeanor that draws acquaintances closer. Both respect and humility counter the lax egotistical tendency towards arrogance. The third virtue, contentment or *Santuṭṭhī* is based on tranquility or inner peace which stills the voracious cravings that spring up incessantly. “Need” is easily satisfied, but “greed” is insatiable.

The fourth virtue, gratitude or *Kataññū* means, first, recognizing that one has been the recipient of valuable help from a benefactor and, second, feeling thankful for this kindness. *Kataññū* is usually paired with *Katavedī* which means expressing this feeling in words and deeds. Lord Buddha identified two types of people who are very hard to find in this stingy world: the selfless benefactor (*Pubbakārī*) who volunteers to help those in need and the mindful recipient

who recognizes this debt and tries to repay it (*Kataññūkatavedī*). Lord Buddha once said that four things were necessary for entry into Heaven: Right Action, Right Speech, Right Thought, and Gratitude. Like humility and modesty, gratitude is a powerful virtue for overcoming the natural tendencies towards greediness, stinginess, arrogance, conceit and egotism. One should feel gratitude especially toward parents, teachers and spiritual friends (*Kalyānamittatā*).

Finally, the fifth virtue or auspicious behavior discussed last time was listening to explanations of Dhamma whenever they are available. We urge you all to visit your own local temples regularly and to join us here whenever possible.

Question 2: Thank you, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon. D.). Now, Venerable Sir, what is the next verse that we will consider today?

Answer 2: Today, we continue with verse nine of the Maṅgala Sutta which lists four more auspicious behaviors: Patience, Meekness when appropriate, Meeting with holy disciples, and apt Dhamma Discussions.

Khantī ca sovacassatā

Patience and appropriate
Meekness,

<i>Samañānañca dassanam</i>	Meeting with Holy Disciples,
<i>Kālena dhammasākacchā</i>	Apt Discussion of Dhamma,
<i>Etammaṅgalamuttamam</i>	This is most auspicious.

The Pāli word for patience is *Khanti*. It underlies all appropriate behavior. *Khanti* means exhibiting patience in doing good, refraining from evil, and purifying the mind. It means tolerating or enduring suffering and unpleasantness while continuing to perform appropriate conduct. *Khanti* results in three benefits. First, patience is the root cause underlying all other virtues such as morality (*Sīla*), and concentration (*Samādhi*), which then grow into wisdom (*Paññā*). Second, patience helps to cut the root causes of sin or unwholesome actions stemming from quarrels and revenge. Third, patience supports development of peaceful happiness leading to contentment in this present lifetime and rebirth into happy realms. All of these benefits will bring you good results. First, patience leads to higher personal insight and wisdom. Second, purifying your mind from emotional hatred, ill will and revenge enables you to gain control over your own conduct, displaying only calm, peaceful behavior conducive to social harmony. Third, making your mind peacefully neutral brings internal purity and joy.

Question 3: Thank you, Venerable Dr. Phra Rajyan-visith (Hon. D.). Now, what about Meekness.

Answer 3: The Pāli word for Meekness is *Sovaccasatā* which implies being obedient, amenable or tractable when encountering justifiable, rational criticism. It does not mean timidly yielding to just anyone else's view. It means appropriate meekness, gratefully accepting useful censure, learning from it, and correcting or adjusting behavior to become more beneficial to both yourself and to others based on new insights.

Question 4: Thank you very much, Sir. And, what can you tell us about Meeting with Holy Disciples?

Answer 4: Meeting with Holy Disciples means associating with and learning from persons with virtue who have dedicated themselves to following the Noble Eightfold Path to Nirvana. Ideally, this means Noble Disciples who have reached at least the Sotāpanna level, having already purified the first three of the Ten Fetters – false self concept, doubt, and reliance on useless rituals. If Noble Disciples are not available, one can at least associate with other dedicated disciples. These constitute *Kalayānamittatā* or spiritual friends. The benefits of such association are, first, seeing the good examples set by these more advanced beings. Second, one can listen to their explanations of Buddha's Dhamma teachings.

Question 5: Thank you again, Venerable Sir. Finally, what about the fourth virtue of participating in apt Discussions of Dhamma.?

Answer 5: In last month's verse, Lord Buddha praised apt listening to Dhamma. This verse goes a step further, praising participation in Dhamma discussions. One must be careful not to misinterpret this advice to mean the usual heated debates among conflicting wrong views which are common in most religious disputes. It means, instead, seeking out, consulting and learning from senior devotees who have developed higher insights. It is especially valuable to learn from Noble Disciples, but those at each level can learn effectively from those who have reached any higher level. Rather than confrontational debate, the interaction should take the form of active learning, based on questions and answers. This will move all towards Right Speech, Right Action, Right Occupation, Right Thought, Right Intentions, Right Wisdom, and ultimately peaceful happiness.

The benefits of such discussion are similar to those from listening to Dhamma. First, one may hear something that had never been heard before. Second, one may come to understand clearly something that had been confusing before. Third, new explanations may remove doubt that was present before. Fourth, new insights may help straighten out previous misconceptions to agree with the correct interpretation of Dhamma. Fifth, with proper discussion the

good participant's mind becomes peaceful and pure from hindrances.

Question 6: Thank you very much, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon. D.). We deeply appreciate all your wisdom. Now, could you please lead us in a few moments of meditation.

[Please see meditation practice on Chapter 7 page 59.]





Highest Blessings 09

ARDENTLY PURSUE THE HOLY LIFE, PENETRATING NOBLE TRUTHS & REALIZING NIRVANA

06 September 2009

Question 1: Good morning, Venerable Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon. D.). We enthusiastically look forward to more precious insights. Today we resume our series on Lord Buddha's Highest Blessings. Could you please summarize our last session.

Answer 1: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. We are reviewing Life's Highest Blessings as presented in the Maṅgala Sutta. An angel asked: "What are life's most fortunate lucky charms." Lord Buddha recognized that good fortune does not depend on luck. It comes from virtuous behavior based on Right Wisdom. Thus, it is the practice of Dhamma that is truly auspicious. So, Lord Buddha responded by listing virtuous behaviors and factors supporting them.

In our last broadcast, we considered four auspicious behaviors: patience, meekness (when appropriate), meeting with holy disciples, and apt Dhamma Discussions. Patience or *Khanti* underlies all appropriate behavior. It means tolerantly continuing to do good, refrain from evil, and purify the mind despite unpleasant circumstances. Meekness or *Sovacassatā* implies being obedient and amenable when encountering justifiable criticism, gratefully accepting useful censure and learning from it. Association with Holy Disciples means learning from monks on the Noble Eightfold Path to Nirvana. Finally, participating in Dhamma Discussions implies active learning from senior devotees with higher insight.

Question 2: Thank you, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon. D.). Now, Venerable Sir, what is our lesson for today?

Answer 2: Today, we continue with verse ten of the M āṅgala Sutta which lists four more auspicious blessings. We move beyond mundane concerns to the ascent to Nirvana. This is truly our greatest blessing as human beings – the opportunity to ascend to undreamed of heights through meditation. We stand at the foot of the ladder and have only to climb up. This is, indeed, our highest blessing.

Returning to specifics, today's four blessings are: Ardent Effort, the Holy Life, Insight into the Four Noble Truths, and Realization of Nirvana.

<i>Tapo ca brahmacariyañca</i>	Ardent Effort and the Holy Life,
<i>Ariyasaccāna dassanam</i>	Insight into Noble Truths,
<i>Nibbānasacchikiriya ca</i>	Realization of Nirvana,
<i>Etammaṅgalamuttamam</i>	This is most auspicious.

Ardent Effort or *Tapo* means devoted exertion to reach higher attainment by burning out defilements through virtuous austerity and moral practice. Defilements are shame or degradation, beneath the dignity of a noble human being. We must honor our blessing of being born human by taking advantage of it. We must realize that our higher spiritual nature is divine.

Just ask yourself what is most important to you in life. Answers vary, but usually boil down to “happiness.” Where is happiness? It is inside, not in the luxurious car or mansion on the hill. Maybe we should seek a different path to happiness, looking inside! But, happiness is not of this world. Pauper or king, we are all destined to old age, sickness and death. This is the First Noble Truth. Life in this world is essentially suffering. Everything, including our own psycho-physical organism, is temporary. The more we attach to things in this world with craving and wrong view, the more we will suffer when they are gone.

Question 3: Wow! That was a mouthful. Does that mean that the ardent effort should be to avoid attachment to things in this world? Is that the holy life? Should we all become monks?

Answer 3: The ardent effort is to purify defilements. Defilements are anything that makes unhappiness for oneself or for others. The essence of avoiding defilements is living morally. But, we must also avoid over attachment to this small world by recognizing higher planes and future lifetimes. Right View includes also the Law of Karma: “Do good; get good. Do evil; get evil” which teaches us to live morally here and now in order to ensure happiness in the next lifetime. In this cynical age of skepticism it is easy to dismiss our parental moral training as just another “Santa Claus” designed to make us behave. But, with meditation we can see for ourselves.

In this high-tech consumer age of focus on the latest gadget, it is also easy to ignore nagging thoughts of higher planes or future lives. “Don’t feed me any religious fables; I believe in science. Look at this neat new Laser OS5 from Cenmania, just out based on the latest scientific advances.” Well, Buddhism is scientific. Lord Buddha teaches: “See for yourself!” No faith required; just open-minded, objective observation – inside! Ah, that’s the insight. Reality is inside. Happiness is inside. Forget Cenmania, just focus on the center of the center and medi-

tate. When we calm the mind to stop still at the center of the center, we can see forever. We can see the whole world and beyond, all the way to Nirvana. Reality is inside. Happiness is inside.

The Maṅgala Sutta now leaves lay life behind and focuses on life's very highest blessing – the opportunity to ascend to Nirvana. In the Holy Life or *Brahmacariya* that Lord Buddha praises in this verse, monks go three times around training in morality (*Sīla*), concentration (*Samādhi*) and wisdom (*Paññā*) at successively higher levels, purifying passions, sensual enchantment and cravings. At the highest level, it integrates advanced moral training (*Adhisīla-sikkhā*) and advanced mental training (*Adhicitta-sikkhā*) to attain advanced wisdom (*Adhipaññā-sikkhā*). Moral purity advances to observing 227 precepts. Mental training advances from *Samatha Jhāna* to *Vipassanā-ñāṇa*. *Vijjā* includes knowledge of past lives, knowledge of cause and effect regarding rebirth, and knowledge of how to eliminate defilements.

Question 4: What is the Higher Wisdom (*Adhipaññā*) that you mentioned?

Answer 4: *Vipassanā* insight knowledge leads one to higher wisdom (*Adhipaññā*). There are two levels: preliminary wisdom and advanced wisdom. Preliminary wisdom means lucid penetration of the Triple-characteristics

(*Tilakkhaṇa*) of all worldly phenomena – that they are impermanent, potentially suffering and ultimately non-self.

Advanced wisdom (*Adhipaññā*) is lucid penetration of the Four Noble Truths. It is the third Highest Blessing that Lord Buddha praises in this verse. Wisdom is attained by contemplating each of the Four Noble Truths in three successive *Ñāṇa* or transcendental states. First, from the knowledge perspective (*Saccañāṇa*), one understands each Truth clearly as it really is. Second, from the action perspective (*Kiccañāṇa*) one understands what is to be done regarding each. Suffering is to be eliminated; Craving is to be abandoned; Nirvana is to be lucidly penetrated; and the Eightfold Path is to be developed. Finally, in the (*Katañāṇa*), the meditator realizes “I have already done that.”

Question 5: Many authors say that we can only talk about what Nirvana is not. Can you throw more light on what it is?

Answer 5: In the fourth and final Highest Blessing considered today, Lord Buddha cites “Realization” of Nirvana. “Realization” is used in its strongest sense of making a hope become a reality. Meditators can visit and experience Nirvana for themselves, not just peeking in, but experiencing it. One sees Lord Buddha and his enlightened disciples.

Nirvana comes from *Ni-* meaning “departure from” and *vana* meaning “craving.” It can be understood from three perspectives. First, it is a mental state that can be experienced temporarily during meditation. This is interim transcendence via suppression (*Vikkhambhana-vimutti*). It lasts while the Five Hindrances are restrained by the *Jhāna* Factors. It allows one to “realize” Nirvana, knowing for oneself that it exists and experiencing how wonderful it feels.

Second, Nirvana is a realm, beyond time and space, where Lord Buddha and his enlightened disciples continue to exist in eternal peaceful happiness. It is their refined inner enlightened Dhammakāya Arahant form that one sees in Nirvana, not their crude outer bodies.

Third, this refined Dhammakāya Arahant form is also called *Nibbānadhātu* [Nirvana Element], because it is the base element that supports Nirvana or *Nibbāna*. It is not made up of Five Aggregates; it is non-compound, made up of Truth (Dhamma). This is the third perspective on Nirvana.

Nirvana has three defining characteristics: It is eternal, ultimate happiness, and ultimate usefulness or advantage (*Paramata*). These are the exact opposites of the three characteristics of compound nature: impermanent, suffering and non-self. Our ability to experience Nirvana, even temporarily, is Life’s Highest Blessing.

Question 6: Thank you very much, Dr. Phra Raj-
yanvisith (Hon. D.). This has been an extremely stimulating
discussion. Now, could you please lead us in a few moments
of meditation.

[Please see meditation practice on Chapter 7 page
59.]



Highest Blessings 10

REALIZE A MIND UNSHAKEN

04 October 2009

Question 1: Welcome, Venerable Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon. D.). We enthusiastically await more of your fascinating insights. Today we continue our series on Lord Buddha's Highest Blessings. Could you please review our last broadcast.

Answer 1: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. We are studying Life's Highest Blessings as presented in the Maṅgala Sutta. An angel asked: "What are life's most fortunate lucky charms." Lord Buddha recognized that good fortune does not depend on luck, but comes from virtuous behavior based on Right Wisdom. It is the practice of Dhamma that is truly auspicious. Thus, Lord Buddha responded by listing virtuous behaviors and factors supporting them.

In our last broadcast, we followed the Maṅgala Sutta as it transcends from worldly to spiritual concerns, mounting the Noble Paths to Nirvana. Last time we focused on four auspicious behaviors for scaling the Noble Paths up this highest peak: Ardent Effort, the Holy Life, Insight into the Four Noble Truths, and Realization of Nirvana. Ardent Effort means devoted exertion to attain noble purity by blasting out defilements and triumphing in the sublime dignity of our true spiritual nature. The four Right Efforts are constant acute alertness and mindfulness to prevent the arising of evil and unwholesome states, to abandon existing evil and unwholesome states, to generate new good and wholesome states, and to maintain and develop existing good and wholesome states.

The Holy Life that Lord Buddha praises is going three times around in successively higher levels of training in morality, concentration and insight wisdom, purifying passions, sensual enchantment and cravings and coming to lucid penetration of the Triple-characteristics (*Tilakkhaṇa*) that all worldly phenomena are impermanent, potentially suffering and ultimately non-self.

Insight into the Four Noble Truths is attained by contemplating each Truth in three successive *Ñāṇa* or transcendental states. First, one understands each Truth clearly. Second, one understands what must be done regarding each Truth. Finally, one achieves the realization that “I have already

accomplished that.” The essence of this process is comprehending that suffering is to be eliminated; craving is to be abandoned; Nirvana is to be penetrated; and the Noble Eightfold Path is to be developed.

Finally, the fourth blessing considered last time is “realization” or direct experience of Nirvana. This is the ultimate goal and highest blessing. Unfortunately, most Buddhists seem to have given up. This dream seems too lofty and distant to even contemplate. It is true that permanent residence in Nirvana, like Lord Buddha and the Arahants, requires uncountable lifetimes. But, most simply, **Nirvana is just a mental state free of craving** that can be experienced temporarily here and now during meditation. “*Ni-*” means “departure from” and “*vana*” means “craving.” Interim transcendence during meditation can be attained via suppression (*Vikkhambhana-vimutti*) and lasts as long as the Five Hindrances are restrained by the *Jhāna* Factors. As humans, we each have the potential to visit and experience Nirvana temporarily in this way. It can be an unforgettable, life-changing experience, revitalizing perseverance on the Noble Path.

One can see Lord Buddha and the Arahants and experience Nirvana personally, knowing for certain that it exists and feeling its unconditioned eternity, supreme peaceful happiness and ultimately fulfilling sense of meaning (*Paramamma*). These are the opposites of the *Tilakkhaṇa*

of conditioned phenomena: impermanence, suffering and non-self. Comparing them produces supreme *Vipassanā* insight. This opportunity to Experience Nirvana is life's highest blessing.

Question 2: Thank you very much, Venerable Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon. D.). Now, Sir, what will we study today?

Answer 2: Today we continue with Verse 11 of the Maṅgala Sutta, which lists four auspicious fruits attained as one mounts the four Noble Paths to Nirvana.

<i>Phuṭṭhassa lokadhammehi</i>	A mind unshaken
<i>Cittam yassa na kampati</i>	By the world,
<i>Asokaṃ virajaṃ khemaṃ</i>	Griefless, dustless,
	and secure.
<i>Etammaṅgalamuttamaṃ</i>	This is most auspicious.

Here, Lord Buddha lists the virtues developed by Noble Disciples on their ascent to Arahantship and Nirvana. Lord Buddha has cited nine ultimate Supra-mundane phenomena, that exist eternally outside of our universe. They are four paths, four fruits and the ultimate goal of Nirvana. The four stations of highest mind along this last leg of the journey to Nirvana are called Noble Disciple States. Each consists of a path and a fruit at the end which represents attainment of that level.

Noble Disciples must purify ten final “Fetters” or most deeply ingrained defilements “pickled” inside their spiritual essence. The first Noble Disciple is *Sotāpanna* or “Stream Enterer” at the beginning of the flow to Nirvana. *Sotāpanna* and the other Noble Disciples are guaranteed of eventual success in reaching Nirvana. The stream will carry them home; it is only a matter of time. *Sotāpanna* abandons or purifies the first three of the ten Fetters. These are False Self Concept or *Sakkāyadṭṭhi*; Doubt or *Vicikicchā*; and reliance on useless rituals or *Sīlabbataparāmāsa*.

The second Noble Disciple is the Once Returner or *Sakadāgāmī* who only needs to return to earth one more time before achieving enlightenment. He does not completely remove any additional Fetters, but greatly reduces the two major remaining Fetters of Sensual Lust (*Kāmarāga*) and Irritation or Repulsion (*Paṭigha*) until they are under control.

The third Noble Disciple is the Non-returner or *Anāgāmī* who never needs to return to earth, but will live all remaining lifetimes in the Pure Land of the Brahman world until achieving enlightenment. He completely removes all of the five gross Fetters.

Finally, the fourth Noble Disciple is the Arahant who achieves perfect mental purification and attains enlighten-

ment. The Arahant removes the remaining refined fetters such as enjoyment of meditation. They are Attachment to the Pure Form Realms - *Rūparāga*, Attachment to the Formless Realms - *Arūparāga*, Conceit - *Māna*, Restlessness - *Uddhacca*, and Ignorance - *Avijjā*. The Refined Dhammakāya Arahant is the perfectly purified element or *Nibbāna-dhātu* which can support Nirvana as a mental state.

Question 3: Thank you, Venerable Sir. Now, we come to the specifics of our verse; why does Lord Buddha talk about a mind “unshaken”?

Answer 3: The Pāli word *Kampati* means shaking or trembling, so “unshaken” is a good translation. The phrase “The unshaken” is sometimes used to refer to Nirvana itself. The commentary explains that a solid mountain is never shaken by the wind. Likewise, for Noble Disciples, sense contact with the outer world, whether favorable or unfavorable, does not affect them. The mind remains stable because Noble Disciples see this world with the Right Wisdom to realize that everything here is impermanent, subject to change, and ultimately devoid of real, durable substance.

Noble Disciples realize that eight worldly conditions are an inherent part of human life – gain and loss, fame and disgrace, praise and blame, and pleasure and pain. These are all just fleeting phenomena, impermanent, subject to change, and ultimately non-self. Where ordinary humans grasp at

the positives with greed and avert the negatives with detest, Noble Disciples accept both as just natural, fleeting phenomena. Thus, neither favorable nor unfavorable conditions affect a Noble Disciple. These concerns have been cleared out of the mind and disappeared from conscious consideration.

Question 4: Thank you again, Reverend Sir. What about the remaining auspicious virtues: “Griefless, Dustless, and Secure”?

Answer 4: These are the attributes of Noble Disciples which become perfected in the Arahant. As one develops purity from passion and sensuality, the mind becomes liberated, calm and serene. One can witness the sorrowful drama of life while remaining untouched by it.

The Pāli words are *Asokaṃ*, meaning without sorrow, *Virajaṃ* without lust, and *Khemaṃ* meaning secure. *Asokaṃ* includes sorrow from birth, decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. The word *Virajaṃ* or without lust implies that the mind is undefiled and sees clearly. The word *Khemaṃ* means secure from passions and defilements and from the dangers of *Māra* or delusion which include sickness and death.

Question 5: Again, thank you very, very much, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon. D.), for sharing your erudite wisdom with us. Now, would you please lead us in a few moments of meditation.

[Please see meditation practice on Chapter 7 page 59.]



FOSTER INNER WORLD PEACE

01 November 2009

Question 1: Welcome, Venerable Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon. D.). We earnestly await more of your captivating insights. Could you please begin by reviewing our last session.

Answer 1: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Last time we completed reviewing Life's Highest Blessings as presented in the Maṅgala Sutta. It is one of the most popular Buddhist Suttas. An angel asks: "What are life's most fortunate lucky charms." Lord Buddha recognizes that good fortune does not depend on luck, but comes from virtuous behavior based on Right Wisdom. The practice of Dhamma is most auspicious. Thus, Lord Buddha responds by offering thirty-eight lessons for fruitful living in ten profound verses. The last verse concludes that the Arahant cannot fall back; final attainment of Nirvana is assured. One cannot be defeated and enjoys happiness everywhere. Please appreciate this whole series of broadcasts on our website at www.dhammacenter.org.

Question 2: Thank you very much, Venerable Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon. D.). Now, Sir, what will we study today?

Answer 2: Beginning today, we will take up a different individual topic in each broadcast, focusing on subjects of special importance to our listeners. Today we begin with “World Peace and Prosperity.”

Commentators like to blame world leaders for the lack of world peace and prosperity, but Lord Buddha takes the opposite approach. World peace and prosperity begin with each and every one of us – inside. We are the family of man. Inner peace leads to personal peace, family peace, social peace, national peace and ultimately, world peace. At heart, world peace means each one of us living a peacefully happy life in a beautiful, orderly way. Lord Buddha first expounded this prescription for world peace to His disciples in His exhortation called the *Ovāda-pātimokkha* [The Principle Teaching - avoid all evil, do all good and purify one’s mind] presented at Veluvan Vihāra on the full moon day of Macha, the third lunar month, nine months after His enlightenment, 2,597 years ago. Lord Buddha repeated this exhortation often throughout His 20 years of teaching.

Sabbapāpassa akaraṇaṃ Avoid all evil;

Kusalassūpasampadā Do only good;

Sacittapariyodapanam And purify the mind.

Etam Buddhānasāsanam This is the teaching of
all the Buddhas.

Inner peace can be hard to find in this hectic age of high tech consumerism where we are all caught up racing to buy the latest gadget brought directly to us over the Internet. But, Lord Buddha has taught both what to avoid and what to undertake to live a peacefully happy life. His prescription has three components: Moral behavior (*Sīla*), Concentration (*Samādhi*), and Wisdom (*Paññā*). Today, we focus on the first of these, moral behavior. It is the foundation for the other two.

Question 3: Thank you, very much, Venerable Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon. D.). Now, how does one avoid evil?

Answer 3: When Lord Buddha attained enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree, he saw three physical actions as the major causes of rebirth in the suffering worlds. Number one is intentionally killing other world beings; number two is theft; and number three is sexual misbehavior. There are others, but today we focus on these three main causes.

These three misbehaviors are the most obvious external evidence of the internal root causes of defilements that need purging: greed and lust, hatred and delusion. Killing generally reflects hatred; stealing indicates greed; and

sexual misbehavior signals lust and delusion. Lord Buddha saw that humans who act improperly in these ways receive suffering as the result, both in the present lifetime and after dying. These are the major causes of being reborn into the suffering worlds: the worlds of hungry ghosts, animals, demons, and hell beings. This is just the natural Law of Karma. Most people do not know or believe the Law of Karma. If they did, their shame and moral dread would keep them from such perilous behavior.

First, consider Killing. All beings hold their own life as most dear. Knowing this, we should act with compassion to avoid killing other beings. A common consequence of killing is a feud between victim and killer over many lifetimes, as in the case of Kali Yaksini, told in the Dhammapada, Chapter I, Verse 5. Initially, the first wife killed the babies of the second wife; second, the cat killed the babies of the hen; third, the tigress killed the babies of the deer, and fourth, the Yaksini ogress was killing the babies of the aristocratic lady when Lord Buddha made this feud known, engineered mutual forgiveness, and summed up that hatred is never conquered by hatred, but only by forgiveness.

Such feuds can cause wars. In Cambodia, inhabitants killed fish in their huge lake by the millions. When dying, the fish vowed revenge. Eventually reborn as humans, they killed people indiscriminately. This shows how lack of individual peace can lead to lack of world peace. The positive

opposite of hatred and killing is loving kindness, compassion, and Right Livelihood.

Question 4: Thank you very much, Venerable Sir. Now, what about stealing. What should we do to be careful to avoid that?

Answer 4: The Pāli words are broader than “stealing.” They translate as “not taking that which is not given.” In modern times, major concerns are not so much outright theft as dishonest and immoral practices in business and government. In commerce, these include cheating, embezzling, and manipulating the stock market. Buddhism also bans Wrong Occupations which harm others or foster immoral behavior, such as prostitution, pornography, trading in intoxicating drinks and drugs, operating night clubs, bars, and casinos, or other occupations which lead customers down the highway to hell. Also prohibited are occupations dealing with weapons, ammunition, poisons, traps or nets for killing, catching, or harming other living beings, and, any trade related to raising animals for food. In government, dishonest practices refer first and foremost to the bribes and corruption, which are everywhere rife. More broadly, they also include abuse of power such as overthrowing elected governments and plundering people’s sovereignty taking away the people’s right to elect their representatives. Positive opposites are doing good with compassion and

loving kindness, generosity, and honesty. In government, they could include fostering improved educational and health care opportunities.

Exemplary government conduct has been compellingly modeled by King Asoka the Great of India, who ruled the Indian sub-continent for 40 years starting in 273 BC. He was the first to develop policies for Buddhist rule. The basic principles were: Non-violence, tolerance towards all, obedience to parents, respect for Brahman and Buddhist teachers, liberality and generosity, and humane treatment of servants. King Asoka wrote:

*All men are my children. I am
like a father to them. As every
father desires the good and
happiness of his children, I wish
that all men should be happy
always.*

Both humans and animals were protected by the law against sport hunting and branding and served by hospitals with herbal medicine. King Asoka promoted vegetarianism, built hospitals and universities, renovated major roads with wells and trees, and built water transit and irrigation systems. He treated all subjects as equals regardless of their religion, politics and caste. Previous Kings claimed Divine Kingship, but King Asoka sought legitimacy through approval

by the Buddhist Sangha, a step towards constitutional monarchy and democracy centuries ahead of its time.

Question 5: Wow, thank you very much again, Venerable Sir. Now, what about sexual misbehavior, how should we avoid that?

Answer 5: Refraining from wrongful sexual activity means, most specifically, avoiding intentional adultery. Dangers include: interference with work, HIV, criminal attacks and family problems. Most serious are the family problems such as quarrels, separation and divorce. Family life will not be as warm and loving as it should be, leaving scars on the children which cause big social problems in the next generation, such as children born out-of-wedlock, psychological problems, and delinquency, following the parents example. This is very much what we see in our present social reality. The government spends huge sums to cope with the myriad resultant social problems.

After death, those who committed adultery are re-born in hell or as hungry ghosts or animals for a long time. When eventually returning to the human world, they will be prostitutes for up to 100 lifetimes.

On the positive side, those who avoid adultery and are satisfied with their own spouse will have a warm, loving family relationship with healthy, well-adjusted and well-

behaved children and will contribute to solving these social problems. This is how inner peace fosters personal peace, family peace, social peace, national peace and ultimately world peace. If you want world peace: Just Do it! Live it! Be exemplary!

Question 6: Wow! Thank you again, very, very much, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon. D.). Now, would you please lead us in a few moments of meditation.

[Please see meditation practice on Chapter 7 page 59.]



BE GRATEFUL TO YOUR MOTHERLAND

06 December 2009

Question 1: Welcome, Venerable Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon. D.). We look forward to more of your inspiring wisdom. This will be our 30th Sunday Dhamma Talk, completing two and a half years of our popular series. Can you please review briefly what we covered last time.

Answer 1: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Last time we discussed “World Peace and Prosperity,” noting that world peace and prosperity begin with each and every one of us – inside. We are the family of man. Inner peace leads to personal peace, family peace, social peace, national peace and, ultimately, world peace. At heart, world peace means each one of us living a peacefully happy life in a beautiful, orderly way. Lord Buddha first expounded this prescription for world peace in His *Ovāda Pātimokkha* exhortation.

We can each promote world peace through controlling our own actions to avoid killing other world beings, theft, cheating or corruption and sexual misconduct. These misbehaviors are the most obvious external evidence of internal greed, lust, hatred and delusion. Recognizing that all beings hold their own life as most dear, we should act with compassion to avoid taking life. Lord Buddha teaches that hatred is never conquered by hatred, but only by forgiveness.

Modern “theft” is more often dishonest or immoral practices in business and government. In commerce, these include cheating, embezzling, and manipulating the stock market, or “Wrong Occupations” such as prostitution, pornography, trading in intoxicants and other pursuits on the highway to hell as well as dealing in weapons, poisons, or traps for killing living beings and all trades related to raising animals for food. In government, reprehensible practices refer first to rampant bribes and corruption, but also include abuse of power such as overthrowing elected governments, plundering the people’s sovereignty and taking away their right to elect representatives.

Finally, refraining from wrongful sexual activity means, most specifically, avoiding adultery. Infidelity leads to many major problems. Most serious are family problems such as quarrels, separation and divorce. This is very much what we see in our present social reality.

Question 2: Thank you, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon.

Answer 2: Today we will reflect on the gratitude that

<i>Gāraṇa ca nivāṇa ca</i>	Practicing Respect and Humility,
<i>Santuṭṭhī ca Kataññutā</i>	Contentment and Gratitude,
<i>Kālena dhammassavaṇaṃ</i>	Apt Listening to Dhamma.
<i>Etammaṅgalamuttamaṃ</i>	These are most auspicious.

Let us quickly deal with the last of these. “Apt listening to Dhamma” means, quite simply, going to the temple to listen to Lord Buddha’s teachings on holy days. One who listens to Dhamma may hear things not heard before, clarify ideas heard previously, dispel doubts, straighten out views, and achieve calm and happy peace of mind.

Taking respect and humility together, respect is appreciation of others and humility is modesty about oneself. Both help counter egotism. The Pāli word *Gāravo* means showing reverence, respect or appreciation. *Nivāto* means humility, courtesy or politeness. An unassuming attitude keeps one always open for more learning throughout life

and modesty in public presents an attractive, friendly demeanor that draws acquaintances closer. Both respect and humility counter the lax egotistical tendency towards arrogance.

Today we shall focus on the third and fourth virtues listed – contentment and gratitude – specifically with respect to the nurturing we have all experienced from Thailand. The Pāli word for contentment, *Santutṭhī*, is based on the word *Santi* meaning calm, tranquility, or peace. The secret to feeling comfortable and fulfilled is curbing cravings – the voracious desires that spring up incessantly in the heart. “Need” is easily satisfied, but “greed” is insatiable. He who knows when enough is enough will always be contented.

Question 3: Now, sir, please tell us about the fourth auspicious behavior, gratitude.

Answer 3: Let’s begin by understanding the concepts; the Pāli word for Gratitude is *Kataññū*. It means, first, recognizing that one has been the recipient of valuable help from a benefactor and, second, feeling thankful for the kindness. *Kataññū* is usually paired with *Katavedī*. It means expressing this feeling through words and deeds. Lord Buddha identified two types of people who are very hard to find in this stingy world. First is the initial benefactor (*Pubbakārī*) who selflessly volunteers to help those in need. But, even harder to find is the recipient who recognizes his

debt to a benefactor's kindness and does something to try to repay it (*Kataññūkatavedī*).

The person endowed with gratitude exhibits faithfulness, integrity, and nobility. Lord Buddha considered Gratitude an extremely important component of mental training. At one point Lord Buddha said that four things were necessary for entry into Heaven: Right Action, Right Speech, Right Thought, and Gratitude. Like humility and modesty, appreciation, thankfulness and gratitude are powerful virtues for overcoming the natural tendencies towards greediness, stinginess, arrogance, conceit and egotism. They lead to recognition of our interconnectedness, appreciating how the foundation of knowledge stored in our country's social and cultural heritage and the efforts of our parents, teachers and friends have all contributed to our own successes.

Question 4: Thank you very much, venerable sir. Now, specifically, what should we do to show our gratitude and respect for Thailand?

Answer 4: Since BE 2549, Thailand has been experiencing continuing political conflict. On September 19th 2549 there was a military coup d'état. The constitution of BE 2540 was abandoned and we are currently under the new constitution of BE 2550. However, the conflict between Red Shirts and Yellow Shirts continues today. It has adversely affected political and governmental development as well as

economic development and the nation's reputation as a "land of smiles," together with foreign investment and the tourism industry. In addition, the world economic crisis and natural disasters such as floods have left our nation in a precarious situation.

Those who love their country advise both sides to step back to reduce the level of conflict and often recommend a Joint Commission or Coalition Government with representatives from both sides working together to solve national problems. I would like to comment, however, that such cooperation is not yet feasible and would only be a temporary solution as long as the root causes of the conflict are not addressed. Whichever side lost would not accept the decision.

The conflict will continue as long as there is no respected middleman to make a just, impartial decision and no third party to support that decision. The large majority of the general population is filled with defilement, craving and attachment, motivated by greed, selfishness and the power of money to seek personal advancement. They do not care about national development. Those with higher mindfulness, wisdom and understanding of Karma are few. Thus, it is difficult to resolve this conflict.

If there were more people with wisdom, the conflict could be solved through negotiation and compromise. There-

fore, I would like to urge all of us to undertake two practices based on Lord Buddha's teachings:

First, let us establish Right Mindfulness, finding the right time or occasion to make our minds peaceful and then contemplate the benefits of our nation which provides a place to live and the means for earning a living for ourselves, our family, our society, and for all people living together in Thailand. We must all help each other to protect our country and solve these problems together. Let us contemplate the cause of the cause back to the root cause of the problem until we see clearly the core difficulty engendering this discord throughout our country and the family of Thai people.

Second, let us carefully consider with wisdom what or who is the central cause of the cause giving rise to these escalating conflicts, tracing this all the way back to the original cause. Then, let us work together to extinguish each and every cause, following six behavioral principles. First, the principle of right behavior in accordance with the Five Precepts, the law, the rules of responsible authorities, and the consensus of the general public. Second, the principle of appropriate behavior in accordance with the people, social situation, time and place involved. Third, the principle of behaving with a pure mind free from the influences of greed, hatred and delusion. Fourth, the principle of behaving fairly with justice, not subject to prejudice or bias stemming from

love, desire, hatred, delusion or fear. Fifth, the principle of behaving with sacrifice, being ready to give up one's own happiness for the benefit of the majority. Finally sixth, behaving with Brahmavihāra principles – loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. Collectively, such joint behavior can foster peace and prosperity for our whole country.

Question 5: Thank you very, very much, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon. D.). We deeply appreciate your profound wisdom. Now, could you please lead us in a few moments of meditation.

Requesting Five Precepts

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

Layman: *Ahaṃ bhante viṣuṃ viṣuṃ rakkhaṇat-thāya tisaraṇena saha pañca sīlāni yācāmi,*

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

Dutiyampi, ahaṃ bhante viṣuṃ viṣuṃ rakkhaṇat-thāya tisaraṇena saha pañca sīlāni yācāmi,

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

Tatiyampi, ahaṃ bhante visuṃ visuṃ 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

Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ 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,

Dutiyampi, Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

For the second time, ...

Dutiyampi, Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

Dutiyampi, Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

Tatiyampi, Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

For the third time, ...

Tatiyampi, Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

Tatīyampi, 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 Sugatim Yanti.*

These Precepts bring a happy life.

Layman: *Sādhū* - It is proper.

Phra Rajyanvisith: *Sīlena Bhogasampadā.*

These Precepts bring prosperity.

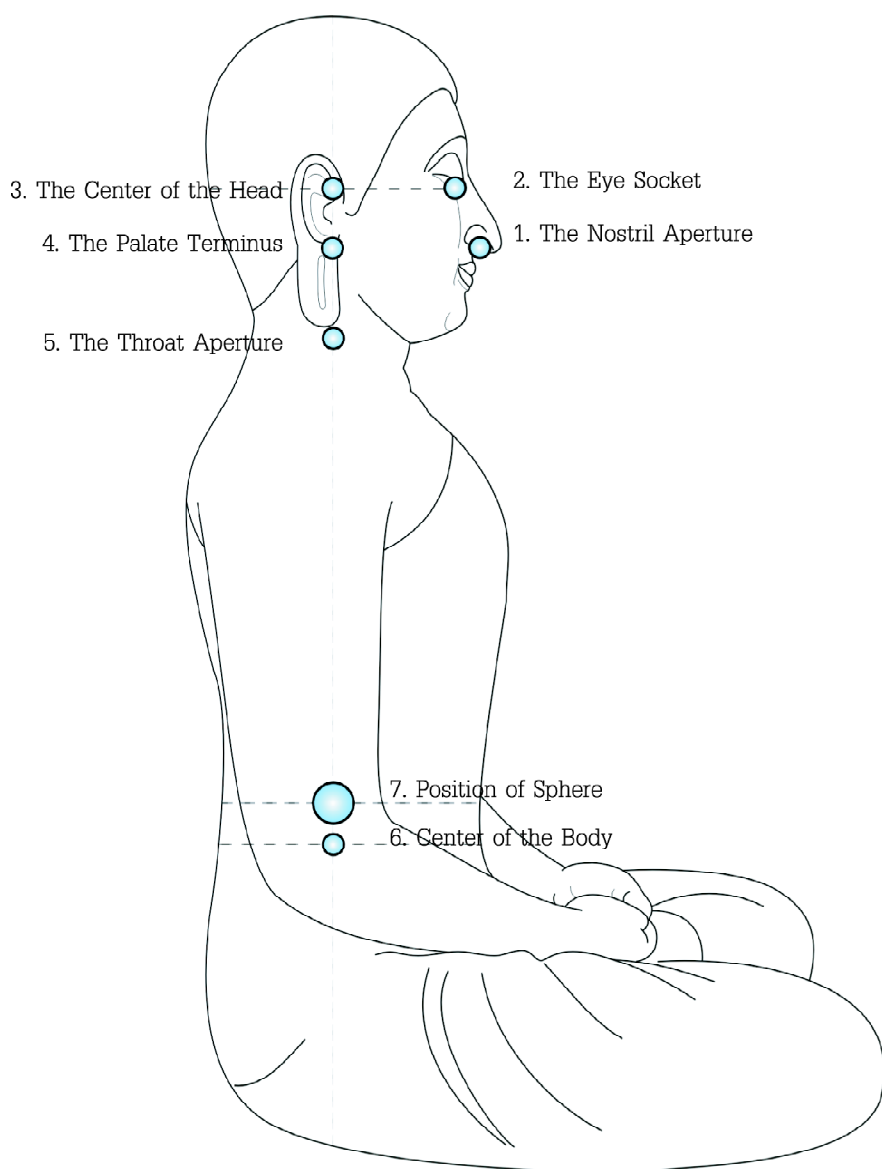
Layman: *Sādhū.*

Phra Rajyanvisith: *Sīlena Nibbutim Yanti. Tassmā Sīlam Visodhaye.*

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

Layman: *Sādhū.*

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



Dhammakaya 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 Kasīṇa* 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 *Vimuttiñāṇadassana* 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,

purier, 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 63.]

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 grandpar-

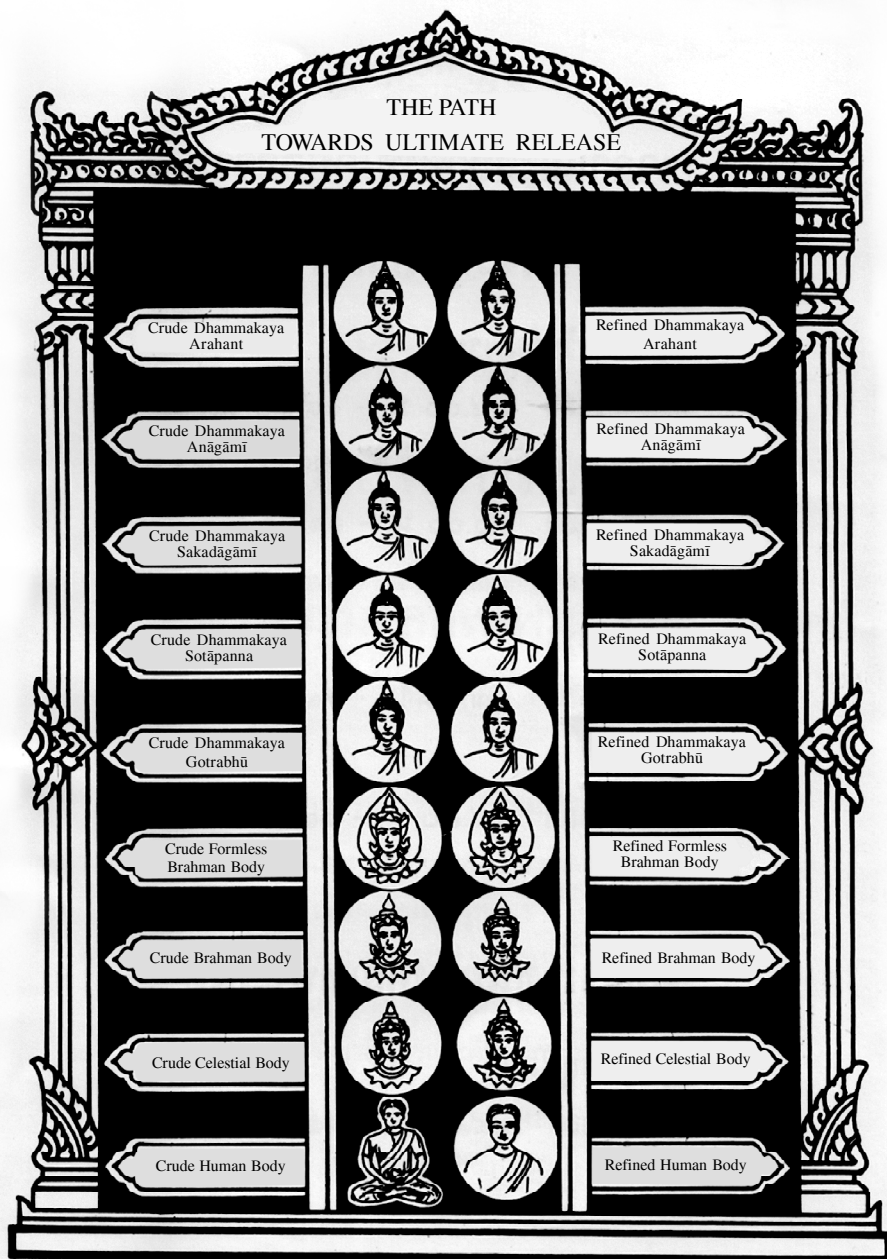
ents, our family, our teachers and our friends. We share with our King and our Queen and the whole royal family. May Lord Buddha bless all of us to lead a peaceful, happy life, free from suffering, free from problems and free from enmity, and may this meditation help to bring us closer to transcendence and Nirvana. [Pause]. And, now, we come slowly out of meditation and open the eyes.

Interviewer: Thank you very much, Dr. 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 seven 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 twelve to two P.M. Please come join us.

For details, please see our English websites at www.dhammacenter.org and www.meditationpark.org or our Thai website at www.dhammakaya.org.







SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

Maṅgala Sutta - Volume Four

To sum up, this book has finished our series of broadcasts on Life's Highest Blessings found in the Maṅgala Sutta which was initiated in the last volume. A celestial messenger posed the following question to Lord Buddha in verse:

<i>Bahū devā manussā ca</i>	Many angels and men
<i>Maṅgalāni acintayum</i>	Have pondered auspicious omens
<i>Ākaṅkhamānā sothānam</i>	Wishing for blessings.
<i>Brūhi maṅgalamuttamam</i>	Please tell us the most auspicious signs.

Lord Buddha replied in verse with the Maṅgala Sutta, recognizing that good fortune derives not from good luck, but from appropriate behavior based on Right Wisdom. Thus, each verse details beneficial behavior or factors promoting

such conduct. The lessons presented previously in Volume Four were:

1. Avoid fools.
2. Seek out the wise.
3. Honor the worthy.
4. Live in a conducive environment.
5. Have merit from the past.
6. Set yourself on the right course.
7. Have broad expertise in arts and sciences.
8. Have thorough training in discipline.
9. Have pleasantness of speech.
10. Support your parents.
11. Care for your spouse.
12. Care for your children.
13. Perform faultless work.
14. Practice generosity.
15. Perform virtuous conduct.
16. Help relatives.
17. Perform blameless actions.
18. Avoid & abstain from evil.
19. Refrain from intoxicants.
20. Avoid carelessness in daily behavior.

This listing helps to reveal the precedence underlying Lord Buddha's inventory of behaviors. First priority are immediate associates: avoid fools and seek the wise,

because fools may take you down with them, but the wise may open opportunities.

Second is a conducive broader environment that supports virtue and purity.

Third comes recognition of the temporal context – merit from the past and setting the right course for the future.

Fourth priority is education – expertise, discipline and social skills including pleasant speech.

Fifth is performing expected social duties – caring for parents, spouse and children and performing faultless work.

Sixth is exceeding social expectations with exceptional personal generosity, virtue and blameless actions.

Finally, seventh is Lord Buddha's often repeated counsel to be ever mindful, each minute of every day, avoiding temptation, evil, intoxicants and carelessness, while continually asking yourself "Am I doing the right thing? Am I saying the right thing? Am I thinking the right thing?" Lord Buddha's last words as he passed on to Nirvana were "Don't be careless."

Maṅgala Sutta - Volume 5

The earlier lessons presented in Volume Four were primarily concrete worldly directions like “avoid fools” or “take care of your parents,” but the wisdom presented in Volume Five takes a sharply upward turn. Here is the list of our discussions.

1. Show Respect.
2. Exhibit humility.
3. Be contented.
4. Express gratitude.
5. Listen to Dhamma when it is presented.
6. Associate with holy disciples.
7. Discuss Dhamma when the opportunity arises.
8. Exert ardent effort.
9. Lead the holy life.
10. Gain insight into Noble Truths.
11. Realize Nirvana.
12. Dwell with a mind unshaken.

Counsel progresses from “Be humble and respectful” through “Listen to or discuss Dhamma,” and “Exert ardent effort,” to “Lead the holy life,” and ultimately “Gain insight into Noble Truth” and “Realize Nirvana” to “Dwell with a mind unshaken.” Thus, we have finally reached life’s highest blessing.

Inner World Peace

Two chapters remain. Having completed contemplation of the Maṅgala Sutta, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon. D.) turns to World Peace – the most critical issue in this era of terrorism and turmoil. We have learned that life’s highest blessing is actually the opportunity to practice Dhamma, employing appropriate behavior based on Right Wisdom. How can we apply this lesson here and now in our current context of violence and disorder?

Chapter 6 reflects on world peace. But, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon. D.) presents a very unusual perspective. World peace begins with each and every one of us – inside. We are the family of man. Inner peace leads to personal peace, family peace, social peace, national peace and, ultimately, world peace. In reality, world peace means each one of us living a peacefully happy life in a beautiful, orderly way. Thus, our individual task is to live mindfully, practicing Dhamma as expounded in the Maṅgala Sutta.

Chapter 7 applies such “here and now” reflection to the political chaos in Thailand. Our country has been experiencing continuing conflict since the military coup d’état of September 19th 2549. We should all feel deep gratitude for the generous nurturing provided by our motherland. If more people would act with wisdom the conflict could be solved through negotiation and compromise. Each Thai

should quietly meditate to specifically identify the root cause of the problem. We must unite to extinguish the root cause and resolve the problem to show appreciation for our homeland. This must be done with behavior that is: moral and legal, appropriate to the situation, free from passion, unbiased, sacrificing, and based on Brahmavihara principles [loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity]. Such wise Dhamma practice could renew inner peace in the family of the Thai people.

Sunday Dhamma Talks

Sunday Dhamma talks are aired on the first Sunday of every month at 8:00 AM, Bangkok Time (GMT+7:00), over four frequencies of the Thai National Broadcasting System: FM 88, FM 95.5, FM 107, and AM 918. We hope you can join us.

Sound tracks and transcripts of the broadcasts as well as the meditations can be downloaded from Wat Luang Phor Sodh's English-language website at www.dhammacenter.org or our Thai website at dhammakaya.org. See also www.meditationpark.org for other meditation instruction. Please email any questions to bmi@dhammacenter.org.

Phra Khru Baitika Dr. Barton Yanathiro
Interviewer and Editor

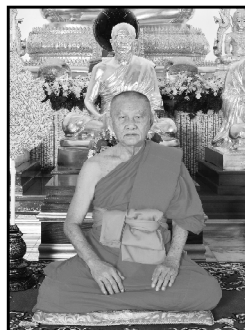
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Appendix A

The Author:

Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith (Hon. D.)



Meditation Master, Buddhist Scholar & Educator

1. Abbot, Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakāyārām (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, Mahachulalongkorn-rajabhidyalaya University Region 15 Academic Services Center (November 19, 2007).
5. Director, Dhammakāya 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 Dhammakāyārām, 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 Rajbrahma-thera, 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 Mahachulalongkorn-rajavidyalaya University 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.

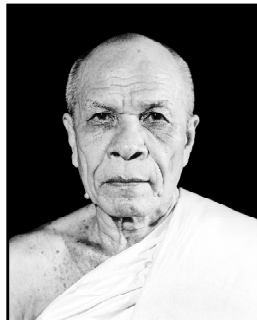
Certificate in social science research, Institute of Social Research, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA.

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



Appendix B

Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni (Sodh Candasaro)



The Late Abbot of Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen

The master of the Vijjā Dhammakāya approach, the late Abbot of Wat Paknam, the Venerable Chao Khun Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni, is fondly known and revered throughout the land as Luang Phor Wat Paknam, or simply as “Luang Phor Yai,” meaning senior father or meditation master.

Luang Phor was born October 10, 1884 (BE 2427) to a humble rice-merchant family of Supanburi Province as Sodh, the second child of Nai Ngern and Nang Sudjai Meekaewnoi. As was typical in those days, young Sodh received his education from the temples. At fourteen, when his father died, he became the chief breadwinner for the family. Successful as he was in rice trading, at age nineteen the compassionate young man resolved to become a monk (*Bhikkhu*) for life.

Having made arrangements to ensure his mother’s welfare, the young man entered monkhood three years later,

in July 1906 (BE 2449). At the age of twenty-two, he was ordained as Candasaro Bhikkhu at Wat Songpeenong, near his home. Phra Ajahn Dee of Wat Pratusarn, Supanburi, was his main Preceptor.

The day after his ordination, Candasaro Bhikkhu began meditation practice and study of Pali scriptures in search of deeper and wider knowledge, he moved from Wat Songpeenong to Wat Bodhi (Wat Phra Chetupon Vimomangkalaram) in Bangkok. There, he frequented the centers of meditation practice and Pali study.

Soon, Luang Phor was recognized by his teachers, Phra Khru Yanavirati (Po) of Wat Bodhi and Phra Ajahn Singha of Wat Lakorn Tham, as an accomplished meditation instructor.

During those early dry seasons, Luang Phor adopted *Dhutangavatra*, the Austere Practices for Purification such as wandering in solitude through the forest wilderness, staying in caves and practicing the Dhamma with piety.

After ten years, Luang Phor set aside his informal study of the Pali Scriptures, having reached sufficiency to read the Mahāsatiṭṭhāna Sutta. Thereafter he devoted himself totally to meditation practice.

Luang Phor spent the next Buddhist Lent at Wat Bang Khoo Vieng, on Bangkok Noi Canal, where his benefactor,

Phra Ajahn Choom, was the abbot. There, at nightfall on the full-moon day of September, in his twelfth year as a *Bhikkhu*, Luang Phor prepared himself for meditation in the *uposatha*. He invoked illumination and guidance, and made a vow dedicating his life to Buddhism. Luang Phor vowed not to rise from his seat in front of the Buddha statue until he was permitted to attain some understanding of the Dhamma as discerned by the Buddha.

With his mind set and its components of vision, memory, thought and cognition all at rest at the center of his body, two “Anguli” (joints of the middle finger) above the navel, Luang Phor was able to penetrate the full depths of the Dhamma as it was revealed to and by the Buddha. That revelation of the Dhamma and ever more refined Dhammakāyas (Dhamma bodies) was so profound that it was only possible when the mind was at rest at the body’s center. After lent, Luang Phor went to teach at Wat Bang Pla, where three monks and four laymen who followed his meditation procedure were also able to attain various degrees of insight. Thereafter, Luang Phor gradually became renowned throughout the land.

Somdej Phra Vanarat, Head of Bhasicharoen Sangha District, spotted Luang Phor’s potential and requested him to assume the Abbotship of Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen. This was a neglected and deteriorating monastery erected five centuries earlier. Luang Phor wanted to decline this request,

but he could not. With utmost patience and remarkable leadership, Luang Phor gradually rebuilt the monastery until it is today one of the largest and most important monasteries in the land. In 1949 (BE 2492), Luang Phor received the ecclesiastical rank of Phra Bhavana-Kosolthera. This was followed by the title Phra Mongkol-Rajmuni, and in 1957 (BE 2500) by the title Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni.

Vijjā Dhammakāya, the revelation of the Dhamma as attained by Luang Phor, was the heart of his teaching. His service to Buddhism can be seen from his regular routine:

- Meditating day and night with *Bhikkhus* and *Upāsikās* in different sessions.
- Leading *Bhikkhus* and *Sāmaṇeras* in the uposatha every morning and evening, paying homage to the Triple Gems and ending with a sermon.
- Teaching public meditation practice every Thursday at 2:00 pm.
- Delivering public sermons on holy days (*Uposatha* or *Wan Phra*) and Sundays.
- Supervising the Pali Institute.

Thus, Luang Phor devoted his time and effort almost exclusively to teaching meditation. His disciples multiplied

into the thousands. It was not uncommon for revered *bhikkhus* in far corners of the country, who apparently never met Luang Phor, to know him well and to respect him as their mentor.

His decease at the age of 75, on February 3, 1959 (BE 2502) was just a pause for the immortal master. His life should serve to remind other mortals to pursue their own obligations to the Noble Path carefully. Luang Phor's teachings live on, manifesting the *Ultimate Righteous Truth*.

*Written by Phra Bhavana-Kosolthera
Veera Ganuttamo (Now Phrarajbrahmathera)*





Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakāyārām **Damnoen Saduak District, Rajburi Province**

1. Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakāyārām

The temple is located on the beautifully landscaped campus of the Dhammakāya 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 Dhammakāyārām, in loving memory of Luang Phor Wat Paknam, Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni (Sodh Candasaro). Here is a brief Profile.

Address: 109 Moo 7 Damnoen Saduak - Bangpae Road,
Damnoen Saduak District, Rajburi Province,
70130.

Phone: (032) 745-180, Ext. 220/191

Fax: (032) 745-170

Websites: www.dhammacenter.org

E-mail: bmi@dhammacenter.org

2. Dhammakaya Buddhist Meditation Institute

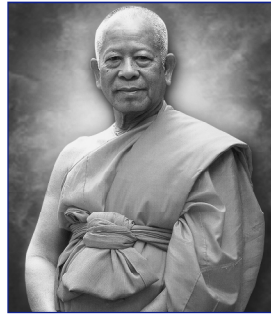


1. President

His Holiness Somdej Phra Buddhajahn: Abbot, Wat Saket, Sangha Council & Chairman, Acting Sangharaja Committee.

2. Vice-President

His Holiness Somdej Phra Mahā Ratchamangkalajahn: Abbot, Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen & Sangha Council Member.



3. General Manager and Meditation Master

Phra Rajyanvisith: Abbot, Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakāyārām & Coordinator, Provincial Meditation Institutes.

4. Financial and Property Management

Dhammakaya Buddhist Meditation Foundation.

3. 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.

4. 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. |

5. 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.

6. Buildings and Grounds

1. The Ubosota Hall is a three-story building located on its own island, surrounded by trees. Like most Wat Luang Phor Sodh buildings, it is all white, with a white roof to indicate purity.



Designed by the king's architect in the late Ayuthaya style, it won the award for Outstanding Preservation of Architecture in 1996. The building features Buddha Relics and over forty Buddha images made of semi-precious gemstones or valuable metals, located at the front of the main assembly hall on the third floor. The second floor displays a large plaque listing major donors. The first floor, which can hold approximately one hundred people, has the history and rules of the wat displayed on the wall. Surrounding the main assembly hall are six small viharas or chapels, three on each side. The two middle viharas contain rare Buddha images and an image of Luang Phor Sodh. The others are used for breakout meditation groups.



2. The Information Center, situated at the central fork as the first building to receive visitors, is a white two-story enclosed pavilion with an extremely steep white roof. Its

main Buddha image is in blessing position. There is also an image of Luang Phor Sodh where the laity can pay homage. Originally, this was a multipurpose hall for all temple activities. It has now become a museum filled with Buddha relics, Buddha statues, and related displays.

3. The Vihara of Luang Phor Sodh

is located at the center of its own sacred island right by the central fork. It is surrounded by rare trees with historical significance for Bud-



dhism. There are two images of Luang Phor Sodh, a large, ferocious standing image and a relatively small, approachable sitting statue that devotees love to honor with gold leaf and offerings.



4. The Two Twin School Buildings

are three-stories high and constructed of red brick. They are located at the back, left of the campus, by the Dining Hall. These buildings

get heavy use. Monks study Dhamma and Pali for the national exams. For Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, the Wat teaches Bachelors and Masters Degree programs in Buddhism. The buildings also service a continual stream of grade school and high school students coming for brief retreats. Most popular is the library with its Internet connection.

5. Sala Somdej Dining Hall

is a three-story white building which can serve up to 500 monks and novices on the second level. The first level provides both dining hall and



sleeping quarters for large numbers of Laity. The top floor is an assembly hall for up to 500 persons, used for morning and evening chanting, Sunday Dhamma practice, and major special events.



6. The Meditation Vihara, located in the lake, near the Abbot's residence, is the Wat's most beautiful building. Four equal wings join in sweeping upward curves into a tall central tower with an onion-shaped cap. Inside, one wing is devoted to Buddha statues and another to Buddha relics. The remainder seats about 130 meditators sitting cross-legged.

Accessible from both banks of the lake by two bridges, the hall is occupied twenty-four hours a day by shifts of advanced meditators cultivating world peace. It is open on weekends for visitors to pay homage to the large golden Buddha statue and Buddha Relics.

7. Phra Maha Cetiya Somdej, under construction, will be a huge, four-story cetiya-shaped pilgrimage and conference center displaying the wat's exceptional collection of Buddha relics. Four wings and connecting stairways come together to form a Cetiya shape.



The first floor will provide space for up to 2,000 lay persons to attend conferences or meditate. It will also contain the administrative offices. The second floor will provide space for up to 2,000 monks to meditate. The third floor will be a museum exhibiting Buddha statues demonstrating all the various poses as well as samples of meditation practices. The smaller fourth floor at the neck of the Cetiya is where the Buddha Relics will be displayed.

8. The grounds of the wat and institute campus are noteworthy in themselves. The first five years of site development were devoted to constructing the lake, rivers, forests and islands and planting rare and special trees from around the world. This effort won a royal award for turning the worn-out rice land back to nature. Most of the trees under which various Buddhas have become enlightened are represented.

7. Programs in Thai and English

The Wat conducts numerous educational programs on meditation and scripture study in both Thai and English, as follows:

Programs in Thai

1. **Sunday Dhamma Practice:** Wat bus leaves Wat Saket, Bangkok, at 07:00 and returns about 16:00.
2. **Workshops:** 3, 5, 7, or 10-day meditation-Dhamma study workshops for various lay groups – students, teachers, government officials, state enterprise/private business personnel, etc., (year-round except during the rainy-season), train over 20,000 participants per year.
3. **Retreats:** Two semi-annual retreats for hundreds of laity and monks, May and December 1-14, since 1982.
4. **Vipassanā Teacher Training:** Two-week courses for meditation masters.
5. **Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University:** Pre-university studies for Monks in Region 15, BA in Buddhist Studies, MA in Buddhist Administration.
6. **Dhamma Studies School:** Three month preparation for National Dhamma Exams (Nakdhamma 3, 2, 1).

7. **Pali Studies School:** Three month preparation for national Pali exams in grammar and levels 1-9.
8. **Radio Broadcasts:** Lecture on Dhamma (Mostly) every 3rd Sunday of every other month at 08.00 - 08.30 AM. on National Broadcasting Station of Thailand, Own FM radio station plus weekly and monthly national and international Dhamma Talks in Thai.
9. **TV Broadcasts:** Every 1st and 3rd Sunday of the month at 05:00 on Modern 9 TV, every morning at 05.00 - 06.00 AM. on People Channel.
10. **Publications:** Over 70 books, numerous pamphlets, and a monthly journal in Thai.
11. **Ordination for Monks:** Ordinations most Saturdays plus special group ordinations.
12. **Ordination for Novices:** Two-week “Hot Season” Novices Program.
13. **Special Ceremonies:** Four major Buddhist holidays plus Dhammakāya holidays plus special events.
14. **24-hour Meditation for World Peace** Continual advanced meditation in shifts around the clock.
15. **Pilgrimage Center:** Now building Phra Maha Cetiya Somdej to display the Wat’s exceptional collection of Buddha relics.
16. **Center for making merit:** The Wat is offering very sacred Buddha statues as “Thank you” for major donations for Cetiya construction, some donated by celestial beings.

17. **Website:** Dhamma & meditation in Thai on *www.dhammadakaya.org*.

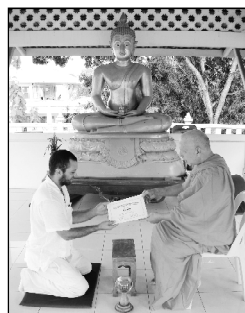
Programs in English

1. **Meditation Guidance:** Year-round, semi-private meditation guidance in English, which has proved astoundingly effective. Come anytime and stay as long as you like.
2. **Retreats:** Three intensive retreats May 1-14, August 1-14, and December 1-14.
3. **Website:** Buddhist Meditation Institute (An Associated Institution of the World Buddhist University) at *www.dhammacenter.org*.
4. **Radio Broadcasts:** Monthly Dhamma Talks over National Broadcasting Service of Thailand – 08:00 on the first Sunday of each month on FM88, FM95.5, FM107, and AM918. Downloadable from websites and published every six months.
5. **Buddhist Immersion – EFL:** The Wat conducts programs for international volunteers to serve as teachers of English for monks, novices and others while participating in Thai temple life and learning meditation. Potential volunteers should Contact Global Service Corps of San Francisco (*www.globalservicecorps.org*).

International Meditation

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 (*Samadha-Vipas-sanā*), which has proved astoundingly effective. Meditation proceeds to successively higher levels by always focusing at the center of the center.

1. Meditation Guidance

BMI offers Meditation Guidance or semi-private tutoring in English all year round, starting whenever you choose and lasting as long as you like. If you have the time, please try to come for 10 days to two weeks, for the best result. It generally requires 5-7 days to develop the inner calm necessary for rapid progress. But, individuals vary greatly, so all are welcome for either longer or briefer periods.

2. Meditation Retreats

BMI offers three intensive retreats per year, May 1-14, August 1-14, and December 1-14. Retreats are similar to guided meditation, but more intensive, with a sunrise meditation at 05:30. They usually involve 20-50 international meditators. Several hundred monks and laity attend the Thai retreat simultaneously in May and December. During retreats there is more access to the venerable Meditation Master in joint Thai-English sessions. This is especially useful for those who become advanced. There is also more chance to study Buddhist practices, Vinaya, Dhamma and Chanting. The large number of participants necessarily implies less silence.

3. Buddhist Immersion – EFL

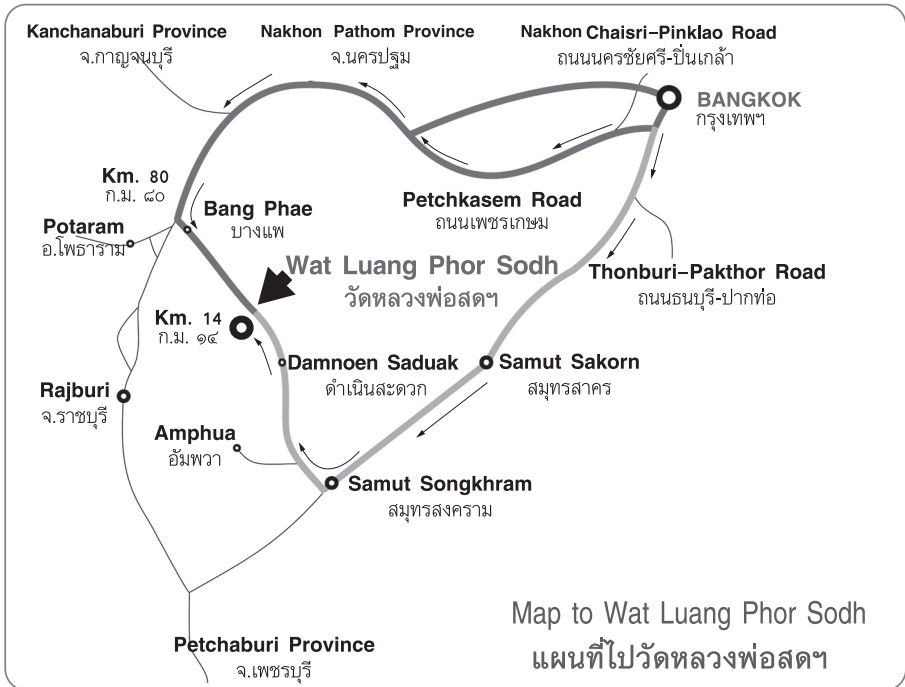
BMI conducts year-round programs for international volunteers to contribute their services as teachers of English for monks, novices, hill-tribe workers and others while participating in and experiencing Thai temple life, learning meditation and studying Thai Buddhism. The program also includes orientation to Thai culture and a visit with villagers in a rural temple.

Potential volunteers should Contact Global Service Corps of San Francisco (www.globalservicecorps.org).

4. Contact

Please see our website www.dhammacenter.org, where you can register online or **E-mail** us at bmi@dhammacenter.org or call Phra Bart at (+66) 089-068-0521.

Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakāyārām 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.**”



Tributes from Meditators Around the World

- **Rianne, Holland:** Extremely valuable; once in a lifetime opportunity! I will take this with me back home and enjoy Buddhism the rest of my life.
- **Pablo, Chile:** Extremely valuable; made me feel one with the world. I feel love, peaceful love for everything and everybody.
- **Lieke, Holland:** This trip has been the best thing I've ever done in my life, and the things I've learned and seen out of meditation are a very important part of it. I want to thank you so much. Never in this life will I forget about this experience, and I will definitely continue meditating at home.
- **Richard, USA:** Extremely valuable; this all too short time, none-the-less did give me an entirely new awareness of an inner world of richness and resourcefulness that wants to be known and welcomed into conscious awareness.
- **Roosmarijn, Holland:** Very valuable; my meditation studies showed me a new world and that I was capable to get there – that was more than I expected.
- **Rachel, Canada:** Extremely valuable. As we say, I “straightened my head out” ...many illusions, veils were lifted and things were sorted out ... I realized a new way to live that I had really known all along.

- **Niels, Holland:** Extremely valuable. It let me put life in a much bigger perspective than I've ever seen it in before. It showed me what's really important in life. And, it definitely encouraged me to live in a more altruistic way. (*Niels's mother was so impressed with his meditation that she also came with her friend, and both meditated to experiencing Nirvana.*)
- **Anke, Germany:** Extremely valuable. In Nirvana I was overwhelmed. I knew I don't have to doubt any more. Whatever I've seen and felt was real. I never meditated before and achieved quite much in such a short time. (*She declared herself a follower of the Buddha.*)
- **Andrew, USA:** I didn't know much about Buddhism and wasn't sure what to expect. I tried to keep an open mind and couldn't have followed a better approach. I was able to purify myself mentally and spiritually. The environment of the wat emanates peace and contentment. The monks were some of the most peaceful, respectful people I have ever met and led by example rather than proselytizing. Phra Bart guided us with patience and a sense of humor. All in all, it's hard to think of a time better spent. I have become a more confident, clear-thinking person. I encourage anyone out there to give the Meditation Institute a try.
- **Steve, Singapore:** Extremely valuable! In Nirvana I saw Lord Buddha. In Heaven I felt very peaceful. In Hell I saw my grandpa. You can really experience things that you cannot see with the eye. It is very peaceful when you are in Nirvana.

- **Judith, Holland:** Very Valuable! In Heaven I saw celestial beings living on clouds and a mountain and felt peace and lightness. I've made a big step from no experience. Now I know I'm on the right way. I did not ever expect to be able to feel so calm and peaceful and happy while meditating, but also afterwards.
- **Teddi, USA:** Extremely valuable! In Nirvana I felt completely weightless, at peace and stillness. I reached a level of peace and stillness that I never had before. I'm not sure exactly what happened, but it was the most beautiful experience of my life. This is a wonderful program. Everyone was very kind and patient. The food was great! Just keep doing what you are doing!

World peace and prosperity begin
with each and every one of us – inside.
We are the family of man. Inner peace
leads to personal peace, family peace,
social peace, national peace and,
ultimately, world peace. At heart,
world peace means each one of us living
a peacefully happy life in a beautiful,
orderly way. Lord Buddha first expounded
this prescription for world peace in His
Ovādatimokkha exhortation.

Phra Rajyanvisith