

MEETINGS  
WITH A  
DHAMMA MASTER



Suzanne Jeffrey



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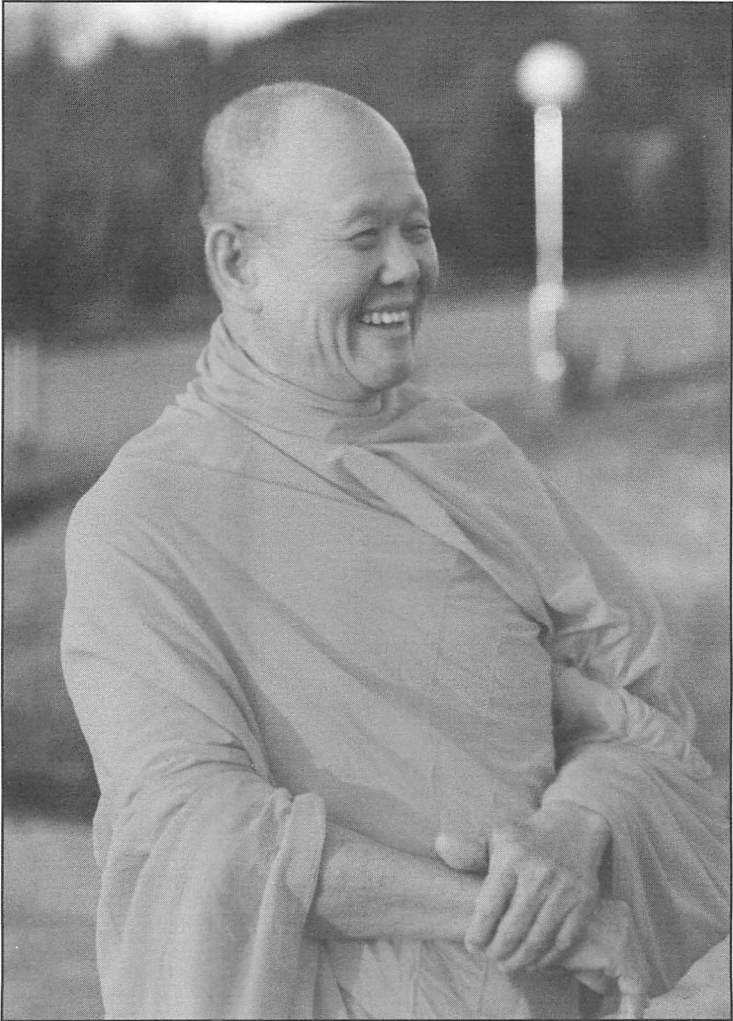
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MEETINGS  
WITH A  
DHAMMA MASTER



*Suzanne Jeffrey*

Respectfully Dedicated to:



Luang Por Dattajeevo, Vice-Abbot  
Wat Phra Dhammakaya, Bangkok, Thailand

Luang Por Dattajeevo (monastic name Phrabhavanaviriyakhun) is a Thai Buddhist monk who was born in 1941, in Kanchanaburi, Thailand. He was educated within the public school system of Thailand and went on to receive a post-graduate university degree in Australia.

When Wat Phra Dhammakaya, located in Pathum Thani, Thailand, was founded in 1970, Luang Por directed the construction of the buildings that were needed to establish a new Theravada Buddhist monastery. In 1971, at the age of thirty, he was ordained at Wat PakNam Bhasicharoen, Bangkok and studied in the Dhammakaya meditation tradition of Phramonkolthepmuni (Luang Pu Sodh Wat PakNam) with his teachers Khun Yai Maha Ratana Upasika Chandra Khonnokyoong (b.1909 – d. 2000) and Phrarajbhavanavisudh (Luang Por Dhammajayo, b.1944).

Within a few years, he had become a well-known Dhamma lecturer. A set of recordings of Dhamma Sermons on the Thirty-Eight Blessings was his earliest work. He was then made Vice-President of the Dhamma Missionary Outreach. Currently, he is Vice-President of the Dhammakaya Foundation, an organization dedicated to the educational outreach of the study of Dhammakaya meditation and the Buddhist principle of World Peace Through Inner Peace. His work in Buddhist teaching was recognized by the Royal Palace of Thailand, and he was consequently elevated to the Royal Order (Ordinary Level) with the title Phrabhavanaviriyakhun in 1992. He also received the Dhammacakra Sema-Pillar award from H.R.H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn in 1993.

Luang Por Dattajeevo has spent the past forty years teaching Dhamma and has spoken regularly before international audiences, as well as being a panelist at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session “World Summit for Social Development” on 30 June 2000 in Geneva, where he highlighted the importance of spirituality in addressing social development and overcoming poverty.

A prolific author, Luang Por Dattajeevo has written more than sixty Dhamma books published in the Thai language, ten of which have been translated into other languages.

## Citation for Call to the Angels

BLESSINGS: Aradhana - Invitation to Devas ([www.buddhist-book.com](http://www.buddhist-book.com))

“One day Sakka, the king of the Devas approached the Buddha and requested Him to invite the Devas to listen whenever the Dhamma was preached. Assuredly pleased, the Devas in return would protect the devotees. Ever since, the Buddha's disciples have always extended the invitation to the Devas before the recital of Suttas, and reminded them of their obligation to protect the devotees.”

Translation by: "A Chanting Guide", by The Dhammayut Order in the United States of America. Access to Insight, October 12, 2009, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/dhammayut/chanting.html>.

# Call to the Angels

(In Pali)

Samantā cakkavālesu	Atrāgacchantu devatā
Saddhammam muni-rājassa	Sunantu sagga-mokkhadam
Dipe raṭṭhe ca gāme	Taruvanagahane gehavatthumhi khette,
Bhummā cāyantu devā	Jalathalavisame yakkhagandhabbanāgā
Tiṭṭhantā santike yang	Munivaravacanang sādhave me suṇantu
Dhammassavanakālo ayambhadantā	
Dhammassavanakālo ayambhadantā	
Dhammassavanakālo ayambhadantā	

(In English)

From around the galaxies may the devas come here. May they listen well to this Protection chanting, the True Dhamma of the King of Sages Leading to Heaven and Emancipation:

Those in the heavens of sensuality and form,  
On peak and mountain precipices, in palaces floating in the sky,  
In islands, countries and towns, In groves of trees and thickets,  
Around home sites and in fields;  
And the earth-devas, spirits, heavenly minstrels and nagas,  
In water, on land, in badlands, and nearby.  
May they come and listen with approval,  
As I recite the words of the excellent sage.

This is the time to listen to the Dhamma, Venerable Sirs.  
This is the time to listen to the Dhamma, Venerable Sirs.  
This is the time to listen to the Dhamma, Venerable Sirs.

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## PREFACE

When I first met Luang Por<sup>1</sup>, it was in the summer of 2008. I had come to visit my son, Luang Pi<sup>2</sup> Joshua, during his first year as an ordained monk living at Wat Phra Dhammakaya in Bangkok, Thailand. I must say that my initial meeting with Luang Por Dattajeevo, the Vice-Abbot of Wat Phra Dhammakaya, was a bit intimidating for me, but that was simply because I had no experience with meeting, and talking to, a Buddhist monk who knows me better than I know myself.

As a bit of background to this book, Wat Phra Dhammakaya is famous for many reasons, including: Its status as the largest Buddhist Temple in the world; being founded in the Theravada tradition by Khun Yai, a master meditator and student of Luang Pu<sup>3</sup> Sodh Wat PakNam who was the re-discoverer of the Dhammakaya Meditation Technique and the monk who is famous for helping to restore the integrity of true Buddhist practices in Thailand; the Abbot, Luang Por Dhammajayo, who is famous not only for his level of meditation but also for the many philanthropic projects he originates and continues to support, including his belief in World Peace through Inner Peace; and, of course, the Vice-Abbot, Luang Por Dattajeevo, the Dhamma Master about whom this book is written, and to whom it is dedicated.

Now, in the Spring of 2011, I look back on all of the meetings I have had with him, and I realize just how lucky I am: Not many Westerners have had the opportunity to speak with a true Master of the Dhamma face to face. Because I am who I am, I simply ask the questions, and he, being who he is, answers them all. Additionally, he seems to tailor his answers so they benefit each listener and I, therefore, find myself understanding issues that I normally might not have if he were not answering them all, while reading my mind! What more could I want?

I wish that I could do justice to a description of him for you so that you could get a total picture of him in your mind's eye as you read his teachings. With the picture I have included, I hope you get an inkling of the aura he exudes and the treasure that those who know him think he is. At one point, I said I was a total Luang Por "groupie", and I would definitely like to start a Facebook page for him. But then I simply came to love this monk as any sane person would: clearly, absolutely, and without reservation or hesitation. He knows I feel this way and so he looks at me, laughs his brilliant laugh, waves his arm, and gives me a twinkle of his eye.

---

1 Venerable Father Monk

2 Venerable Brother Monk

3 Venerable Grandfather Monk

Life, of course, is not as neat as these teachings are laid out for you, and we do not always meet life's stresses, or sufferings, head-on with a Dhamma teaching. When I become frustrated with someone, I have not always thought, "Hm... Life really is suffering, huh, Suzanne, and am I using Right Speech when I deal with this person?" But the more I read and understand, and the more I listen to Luang Por, the more mindful I become, and the more I try to analyze situations and relate them to what I am learning. Luang Por really is the consummate teacher. My hope is that your ears, eyes and mind are open, and that I will write these teachings in such a way that you listen and understand their significance so that you can use them in your own life. I think these teachings are a gift he gave to me and I would like to give them as a gift to you.

Some of the lectures that are included here seem to be repetitious, but I have learned that each time I hear one of his lectures on The Nature of the Mind, for example, I learn something new. All of his lectures are, of course, based on traditional Dhamma teachings coupled with meditation experience, but I have tried to write them all in my own "Western" way because, although Luang Por speaks English, many of these lectures were given in Thai, and I was working through my limited understanding of the language and through translators. When I did not understand a particular phrase or meaning, I asked for a more complete translation. Beside Luang Por himself, three people in particular helped me with these: Luang Pi Anurak, Luang Por's personal assistant; Luang Pi Pasura, translator for Luang Por Dhammajayo and friend to Joshua; and Joshua, my son, who was an ordained monk at Wat Phra Dhammakaya from 2007-2010. Josh also helped me translate other documents and acted as my editor when I needed him the most. Without these three wonderful people, I would not have been able to complete this book.

Additionally, I would like to acknowledge my meditation workshop students from Mystic, Connecticut who have been absolutely brilliant, and have helped me further my understanding of these teachings, and have patiently listened to me, even though my communication skills have, on occasion, lacked their own brilliance. Also, my loving thanks to Sarah, who helped me with the final edit, and Jon, who supported me throughout my adventures in Bangkok. Anumotanaboon Ka<sup>4</sup>, to them all.

And so, I will begin at the beginning and tell you as completely as I can, in the best way that I can, what Luang Por Dattajeevo has told me.

Suzanne Jeffrey

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4 Literally, Rejoice in your boon. Boon is a pure energy which automatically and naturally is created when a person does good things in body, speech, or mind.

# MEETINGS WITH A DHAMMA MASTER

## Meeting #1

12 July 2008 - Ashram

I have been invited to meet Luang Por Dattajeevo, the Vice Abbot of Wat Phra Dhammakaya, by a person named Elsbeth, who is a Swiss woman running meditation retreats throughout Europe. She has a daughter named Joy, who is in high school here in Bangkok, and this meeting is to commemorate Joy's birthday. This is a great honor for me, so Luang Pi Joshua (my son and a monk who currently resides here) tells me, because not many people get to meet the Vice Abbot in person. I, on the other hand, am somewhat hesitant to meet a senior monk, because he is considered a great meditator, and I am reluctant to meet someone who can instantly discern exactly who I am. I totally know what I have done in the past, and some of those things I would prefer to remain hidden from anyone else's mind except my own.

However, the day arrives and Jon (Josh's father) and I bike over to the Ashram where I meet Elzbeth and Joy for our meeting. There is also a monk there who will translate for us if we need him to, however Luang Por's English, I discover, is very good indeed because he attended graduate school in Australia prior to his ordaining as a monk.

The Ashram is a low, single story building and the room where we enter is meticulously undecorated with walls of honey colored wood, wide comfortable wooden chairs of the same color, and wall to wall carpeting (and floor cushions) for people who prefer to sit on the floor.

We are, indeed, comfortably seated ... Elzbeth and Joy on floor cushions, Jon and me on some wooden chairs that are slightly lower than the dais for Luang Por. We all take our seats, and within a few moments, Luang Por Dattajeevo walks in, sees us, and his whole face lights up. He is in his mid-sixties, healthy looking – not thin, not chubby – and, of course, he's got a bald head and he's wearing saffron robes because, after all, he is a monk. He possesses an impossible face to describe because it is so endearing: he looks at you as though you are the coolest person in the world, whereas in reality I have come to learn, HE is the coolest person in the world. I am instantly a groupie, although I have

never been a groupie to anyone so I am not exactly sure what I am supposed to do with that.

After he congratulates Joy on her birthday and speaks with her about her university studies, he looks at each person in the room and takes a breath. With this slight hesitation, Jon immediately interjects a question.

“Could we talk about meditation?” Jon asked. “Why should people meditate? And how can we stop our mind from constantly thinking?”

“There are two types of teaching,” he begins. I am slightly puzzled with this way of answering Jon’s question, but I will eventually learn that Luang Por never starts where you think he should start, but starts to answer the question that you really wanted to ask and allows you the opportunity of honest-to-goodness learning. You know the expression, “Those who have the ears to hear will hear?” Well, that’s Luang Por for you: He’s hoping that everyone who talks to him has the ears to hear. “The first type of teaching is about the things that we are able to prove. The second type is about things that we are unable to prove. Creation, for example, is one thing that people think we cannot prove. Buddha, however, teaches that people need to prove everything for themselves. ‘Don’t believe me, he says, just try it out for yourself.’ Along with this, there are three types of learning: One is listening and/or reading, one is thinking, and one is meditating. It’s like this,” he says, narrowing his eyes, holding up his arm with a slight wave and adjusting his robe. “Meditation is just quieting the mind so that we can, in essence, become a blank slate in order to learn more quickly.”

Then I ask him: “Could we talk about merit, or boon? Would you explain what it is and tell me if intention plays any part in it?”

He looks at me and smiles.

He begins: “Boon or Boonya is not Merit. There is, in reality, no translation for it. Boon is Boon!” He laughs and then instantly gets serious.

“Boon is a kind of energy, but it is pure energy. For example, Sunlight is not pure. Electricity is not pure. Steam is not pure. But Boon is pure energy within your mind. Nowhere else.”

“How do we generate, or create, boon?” I ask.

Luang Por says: “Suppose you see evil. As soon as you decide to do nothing about it, or as soon as you decide to do something about it, boon happens. To create boon a person needs to separate actions into three categories:

- Give up “bad” things (like smoking or drinking) ... boon happens
- Do “good” things (like donating) ... boon happens
- Purify your mind through meditation ... boon happens

He continues: “And WHY do we want to generate boon ... for what reason? Well, because boon is so clear and clean, it will destroy kilesa – and what is kilesa? Ha!!!” He slaps his knee. “Well, kilesa is the garbage of the mind. This is why we clean our minds by meditating! When we meditate, we help get rid of the garbage: When we meditate, we are cleaning our mind. When our mind is under the influence of kilesa, it loses its quality and light. Kilesa has the habit of squeezing the mind ... covering the mind, acting as a puppeteer and coercing it to perform evil, rusting the mind to death. And do you know how kilesa works? It works like this.” He stops, closes his eyes, holds out his arms, spreads his fingers, and smiles. Lowering his arms slowly, and opening his eyes, he says, “Well, first it forces the mind to think what it shouldn’t: To think about bad things or to see bad things in others. Second, it forces the mind to be like a monkey, switching very quickly from one thing to another, often without finishing one thought before it goes to another. Third, our mind then becomes darker and coarser until it reduces our ability to perceive, memorize, think and then to know. SO, don’t blame others automatically. Control your thinking and look at yourself first. Don’t blame others first. Usually we have the habit of blaming others or blaming our environment, our situation, our atmosphere. We have to look at ourselves first. All of these, when done repeatedly, cause bad habits. It grows and spreads most particularly through habit. And that means that habits follow us from lifetime to lifetime. Don’t believe me. Go prove it for yourself.”

We all look at one another, thinking that this was it. But I think, “WOW! So meditating is genuinely important, huh?”

He smiles, patiently, as though he knows what I am thinking.

Then, he says, “So we need to have Samma Samadhi (Right Concentration) and that can be done by concentrating outside or inside the body. If we concentrate on the outside, kilesa will be at work. It is so easy to concentrate on things that are external. But if we

concentrate on the inside, or inside our center, it is impossible for kilesa to exist. Whenever you are angry, your mind goes outside. It is easy to get hooked, easy to be angry. The things you look at – all outside – all Mara. Then we start to criticize because we look at what is in front of us and behind us and all around us! And what happens is that the very thing that you need to work on is the very thing that you do not see – yourself! So, we need to meditate and keep our mind always in the center. Our mind gets used to being outside of our body. And we need to bring it back into our center. Centering our mind back inside of our body, creates more boon, and the pure energy of boon naturally destroys kilesa, or garbage.”

I ask, “So is boon self-generating? Like boon is just out there in the world and creates itself?”

Luang Por says, “It’s like this.” He smiles. “You know all of those material things that you own? Well, if you love them, then you worry about them. When you give them up, then you have less to worry about. And, in giving them up – if it helps another person – they are benefiting from the boon you created. The more we give, the more boon happens within you, the originator. In other words,

1. You do, or create, a good action;
2. When you do this action, boon happens;
3. The boon that you create is pure energy;
4. Energy is power;
5. Pure power overrides and destroys destructive power, or kilesa;
6. This influx of pure power makes you feel happy;
7. With this happiness, you develop a clearer mind;
8. This in turn generates or produces more boon.

One example of this, of course, is the idea of creating boon by giving donations to people. If you donate to a good cause, that seed will grow and it will create the fruit that helps many people.”

Jon, then, interjects, “So is there a degree of goodness in merit? Is there good giving and bad giving?”

Luang Por looks at him, smiling, and says, “Remember, there is no merit in Buddhism, just boon!” He laughs out loud. “And boon does not happen when you sleep, so don’t

be a sleeper!” He looks at me and almost winks. “We need to make boon continuously because, although we are born with boon, we don’t know how much we have when we are born. So we must continually make boon. Some people practice baap, or badness, because, for example, they drink and destroy their liver, thereby destroying themselves. For those people, when they practice goodness, it is like a throwaway. We must practice boon intentionally, and continuously. Then we will be on the right path.

“Now, there are two types of giving: one is necessity/urgency and the other is urgency/necessity. Let’s look at some examples.

“Here is the first action: You give food to the monks (even one spoonful) and the monk studies because he has been fed. In this way, we give Buddhism life. Because the monk lives and teaches Dhamma ... Buddhism is still alive. This is necessity/urgency. But here is the second type of action: There are people in the world who are starving. If they need help and you can help them, then help them! This is urgency/necessity. If you have a budget, however, with which to choose your donation, then you need to think about the differences in the actions. Many factors are involved in deciding who to donate to ... and you need to think about what your giving will bring to society.”

“Well,” said Jon, “what about all of those statues of the Buddha that are so expensive to build. Why do you spend so much money building them when so many people are so poor in Thailand?”

Luang Por lowers his head slightly and looks up at Jon, as though looking out over reading glasses, except he is not wearing reading glasses. “There are two things that you need to remember. The first is that this is Thailand, and the Thai culture dictates that we have Buddha images around because we are a Buddhist culture. The second thing to remember is that these statues are built to remind people of the possibilities. What the statues really represent to Buddhists is that one man in this historical age became enlightened. If we, each of us individually, are reminded by a statue that one man became enlightened, then the possibility exists for other people to do it as well. But you will have to meditate in order to discover this for yourself.” He smiles. And then, after a pause, quietly, he says, “There are many statues of the Christ to remind Christians of his journey, are there not? And statues of other saints and holy men? This simply serves as a reminder for us to live better lives. Christ says, for example, in order to live a better life we should always remember the goodness within us. He said, ‘The Kingdom of God is within you.’ The Buddha, five hundred years before Christ, said that the Dhamma is



within you!”

Jon, obviously not afraid of the hard questions, asks, “Could you tell me what you think is the difference between Buddha and Jesus?”

Luang Por says, “Buddha teaches that you need to prove everything. Jesus does not ... for Jesus, it is more like acceptance. Buddhists do not say resurrection, but birth and re-birth. Buddhists do not say sin, but wholesome or unwholesome.”

Then Jon asks, “Was Buddha aware of his own self-enlightenment?”

Luang Por looks at Jon with the utmost seriousness and says, “Buddha is aware of self-enlightenment forever because He can see his mind, He can see kilesa, He saw no more kilesa in himself, and He knows everything – forever!”

Then I ask, “Could we talk about the Cetiya and the four circles, the circles within the circles?”

Again, he smiles and raises his hand.

He explains, “The Cetiya is built like the mind: There are four circles. From the inside out, they are knowing ... then thinking ... then memory ... then perception. From the outside in ... just like the way people learn ... perception, memory, thinking, and knowing.”

Then I ask, “Can people choose their families in which to be born?”

Luang Por, “Some people can choose and some people cannot ... some can have a shopping window of families!!” He laughs. “It all depends on the amount of boon the person has when they are ready to be born again.”

Then Jon asks, “Is the 60 year building for stopping Mara? To challenge Mara?” The 60 year building is where all of the “serious” meditators spend their time in constant meditation. This building is located on the property of Wat Phra Dhammakaya, but is quite separate from the other buildings. Here, high level meditators reside and they spend all of their days and nights in constant meditation, usually in shifts of six hours: Six hours on and six hours off. Many people consider the 60 year building to be a place where people can train themselves and eventually work together toward bringing about

the greatest possible goodness to humanity, the destruction of Mara, which is the behind-the-scenes influential power of evil in existence. For Christians, I suppose, this would be the same as destroying or nullifying Satan.

Luang Por, “It works like this. Our boss is our mind. Our mind is not so clear. We must practice clarifying our mind. We must clarify our own mind first. Each mind must become clear in order to help. Kilesa is within your mind. We must clear our own mind and then we will be able to stop Mara. Each person must do this for himself or herself. We must always work on ourselves before we try to work on others.”

Then Jon says, “Do you think that Jesus and Buddha are in the same place, talking to one another?”

Luang Por actually looks surprised at the question, “If our minds are refined enough, we all can communicate on the same plane. The inside core, our true self, is the Dhammakaya, or body of enlightenment. Each core is unique because each person is unique. Therefore, Jesus and Buddha do not have the same Dhammakaya body. Because the Buddha and the Arahants do not have defilements, their Dhammakaya body is brighter, happier – and the brightness of the Dhammakaya body depends on the clarity of each mind. Through meditation, each person can see this for him or herself. And that is exactly why meditation is so important!”

Our “chat” has lasted about three hours. When we wind down with the questions, he smiles. And then says, “We will save the other questions for the next time.” My eyes immediately avert to the people in the room and silently think, “Did I hear that correctly? Did he just say ‘Next time?’ Can anyone verify that for me?” No one is looking at me, however. They are all just looking at Luang Por and smiling.

We pay our respects to him as he rises, adjusts his robes in a wave, looks at each of us with a twinkle of his eye, and leaves the room. Feeling as though the sunshine has just left, I sit there for a few minutes bathing in the atmosphere of the Ashram. Although I am not so sure I want a “next time”, I revel in the experience of being taught by someone so knowledgeable, and so willing to talk about the Dhamma.

Lucky us, I think, as I look around the room at the people who are now leaving.<sup>5</sup>

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5 Parts of this chapter are Copyrighted, 2010, *Finding Buddha*, Shires Press, Manchester, Vermont.

## Meeting #2

22 August 2008 - Ashram

After our last meeting with Luang Por, Jon has requested another one. Why he did this, I do not know. What do you ask a man who seems to know everything? Thinking this, of course, makes me even more nervous. Having already met him, I know that he can read my mind. I know this and no one has to tell me. All you have to do is look at his eyes, and they say: I know who you are and what you have done in your past. And then he describes you perfectly to yourself, all through the look in his eyes. Not only that, he describes who you have been in your past million lives and what you are going to be doing in the next million lifetimes if you don't meditate. Again, I am not so sure if this is cool, because I definitely am hiding some secrets in there somewhere.

But, here we are at the Ashram, being introduced to our translator, Khun SueWanee, Luang Por's sister. Although she explains that she is his older sister (meaning that she is about 70 years old), she has beautiful smooth skin and super bright eyes. She is diminutive, coming up to just about my shoulders, with a clear, bright smile and a calm graciousness. We are instantly friends and begin to talk about Buddhism, the book she is writing on learning Thai, and her student (my son) Luang Pi Joshua. When we enter Luang Por's office, however, we sit down quietly and wait for him to enter. Generally, Luang Por does not enter his office until all of his guests are quietly centered in meditation.

Within a few moments, Luang Por enters, smiling. This summer, I have come to realize that the monks who are really worth knowing are the monks who are happy. Happiness, I have discovered, is evident in those monks who meditate all of the time and who recognize the fact that people are the same anywhere you travel... physically or mentally... and these meditators love you no matter what you have done, as long as you are trying to stay on the right path now - today. Ok. Let me rephrase that, there ARE some monks here who are traveling on different realms than I am and who are fighting the spiritual fight and they don't have too much to smile about because they have SEEN what the "other side" is and don't quite agree with them. But Luang Por travels back and forth between the good guys and the bad guys, and smiles at me as though all he can see is the goodness that I bring to the world. I am, I suddenly discover today, in love with a monk and that monk is not my son. This is probably not too good for me karmically, but, I am going to have to deal with that in the next life time, and I don't think it will be too bad for me. That's what I am hoping, anyway.

We start to talk about general stuff like the weather and his health and how Jon and I are enjoying the Wat experience. I decide to start the questions, believe it or not, and so I hand him my notes that I have written from the last meeting (yeah ... I know ... I'm a little obsessive that way). Ok. So I don't just HAND him my notes, I set the paper on his desk, and he picks it up. After all, Theravada monks cannot take anything directly from the hands of a woman. At any rate, I have tried to figure out a definition of boon, kilesa, and Mara – at least I have TRIED to figure out a definition for them.

He laughs and holds out his arm. “Just a minute,” he says, as he gets up, adjusts his robes, and hurries out of the room. Many minutes roll by, while I sit there thinking, “Yikes. What have I done? I hope I haven't offended this person, because that would definitely be some baap I WOULD have to live with the next time around... assuming that I HAVE a next time around.”

When he returns, he tells us that he has asked a monk to copy something for us from the Dhamma, which follows.

Number VIII, The Treasure Store Discourse:

A man a treasure store lays by, Deep in a water-level pit:  
He thinks 'If need arise for aid, It will be there to aid me then  
For my discharge, from kings were I denounced, or from a brigand else  
If held to ransom, or of debts, in famines, or in accidents';  
With suchlike aims, what in the world is called a store will be laid by.  
Though be it ne'er so well laid by deep in a water-level pit,  
Not all of it will yet suffice to serve him all the time; and then  
The store gets shifted from its place, or he perhaps forgets the marks,  
Or Naga-Serpents hale it off, or spirits fritter it away,  
Or else the heirs he cannot bear abstract it while he does not see;  
And when his boon is consumed, the whole will vanish utterly.  
But when a woman or a man shall have with gifts or virtuousness  
Or with refraining or constraint a store of boon well laid by  
In shrines or the community, or in a person or in guests  
Or in a mother or a father, even in an elder brother,  
This treasure store is well laid by, a follower unlosable:  
Among what by abandoning have to be gone [to] he goes with this.  
No others have a share in it, and robbers cannot steal this store;  
So let the steadfast boon make, the store that is their follower.

This is a store can satisfy every desire of god or man;  
No matter what they aspire to have: All that is got by boon's grace.  
Beauty of looks, beauty of voice, beauty of figure, beauty of form,  
And lordliness and retinue: All that is got by boon's grace,  
A local kingship, empire, too, bliss of Wheel-turning Monarchy,  
And godly rule in paradise: All that is got by boon's grace.  
And every human excellence, any delight in a godly world,  
Even extinction's excellence: All that is got by boon's grace.  
A man has excellence in friends; devoting reason right, he wins  
True knowledge and deliverance: All that is got by boon's grace.  
Discriminations, liberations, perfection of disciples, too,  
And both kinds of enlightenment: All that is got by boon's grace.  
So great are the rewards it gives, simply, this boon's excellence:  
For that the steadfast and the wise commend a store of boon made.

“Boonya” he begins, “is all about when you do good, you feel good. You also feel the effect of a long chain reaction. This helps to purify your own mind. Again, it is pure energy.” (I have in my notes from this meeting that say boonya is pure, uncontaminated, unpolluted, spotless energy that we put out there in the universe when we do something good. I like that.)

“And what about this thing that people call ‘Mara’?” I ask. I want to talk about the definition I have written. I say, “Is it something to do with a collectively created construct of kilesa?” I like that alliteration but this definition is, obviously, way too easy.

He smiles. “It’s like this.” Up goes his arm and he adjusts his robes. “There are five types of Mara. In general, Mara, itself, destroys goodness by cutting goodness off ... not like scissors, but it blocks us from doing anything good. Mara is called the Tempter or the Destroyer, and what it destroys is goodness. That, of course, is the broad definition. But, as I said, there are really five types. The first type of Mara is called kilesa, just as we talked about last time. That is the garbage that destroys our mind. As soon as it starts, we become greedy, or angry, or covetous, or jealous. This happens because we focus on material things that are in the external world. We walk down the street and look into a store window, and WHAM, we want that thing that we see. Or we hear something negative about ourselves, and very quickly judge or become angry with the person who said it. But we did not even stop to ask if what we heard was true. It happens on a very subtle level within us. So this type of Mara is all about cleaning our mind, and making ourselves more aware of how Mara can take us outside of ourselves to only see things externally or materially.

“The second type is called Kanta Mara and that is about the human body. Our present biology says that man is body, but in higher biology, man is composed of the human body and the mind which consists of four functions: sensation/perception (happiness, sadness, neutrality, etc.), memory, mental formation or thought, and knowing or consciousness. All five of these together (the body and the four functions of the mind) are called Kanta Mara. If we feel pain, that is Mara, because pain obstructs our goodness. We start to focus on our pain and then start to feel sorry for ourselves. The ‘Why does this have to happen to me?’ ‘Why can’t I get this done?’ kind of thinking starts. Then we attach to this thinking and become angry, or sad, so that this Mara is allowed to influence you, and when we don’t check it, it becomes you, and you label this as your ‘self’.

“The third type of Mara is called Gamma: Action/Formation. This happens, for example, when a person is born with one eye. In this situation, there can be two levels of meaning: (1) it could be an abnormal birth, or (2) it could be the effect of a cause, or bad action performed in the distant past. Remember that we have been in a constant cycle of birth-rebirth. In other words, it could be caused by the actual birthing process in which something happens due to a fault in the delivery, OR, it could be due to a karmic consequence performed before the current birth within the cycle of that person’s birth and re-birth, in other words, due to something connected with a past action of the person being born.

“Fourth, Deity is a type of Mara that controls or influences beings or things to serve a certain purpose. In this type of Mara, we usually can’t see the cause of what we see: we see its soldiers, not it, itself. Mara wants to be worshipped, but is a false god: A wrong view god who will not actually show its self. It may present its self to be a beautiful person who tries to persuade us to travel the wrong road, or a saintly person who leads us to believe something false. And he will use any means that will trick us into not possessing the Right View.

“Finally, Mara is Matuman, or Death. And our own fear creates this Mara. We are afraid of death, of course, out of ignorance. We do not know what will happen to us when we die, so we are afraid. But if we meditate, of course, we would know that this is, indeed, Mara, and then we would not be afraid.

“There is indeed an all-encompassing and greater Mara that is seen through deep meditation. This is the most evil because it is all around us and permeates everything, even our meditation, if we are not careful. The only way to destroy Mara is for every individual to

become pure and then work together. If many pure people came together, then we could help one another destroy Mara. And this is what the temple is trying to do. We prevent peace from happening because we desire, we fear, we are not pure. We have to stop this thinking and doing all of these negative things in order to deconstruct Mara.”

I’m writing as fast as I can because I do not know any of this and I want to remember it all so that when I go home, I can look back and remind myself of his teaching.

He continues: “... because the Buddha, the Dhammakaya, is pure energy, pure and total boon, any force that attacks Him becomes zero, or zeros itself out when it comes in contact with Him. The Buddha acts as a vacuum, so there is nothing in the Buddha that Mara can attack. If we all gathered together, we could protect ourselves from Mara, but we (unfortunately), cannot protect everyone until everyone purifies themselves. Religion, of course, is somewhat of a problem for the Dhamma. We have so many ways of saying the very same thing, and this is caused by so many different religions. There is only one Dhamma ... only one truth ... Just as there is only one sun in the sky, and not a different sun for each religion in the world.”

He smiles as he sits back, raises his arm, adjusts his robe and says: “It’s like this. Mara makes beautiful pictures, sounds, smells, taste, and all of these things hook the mind out of the body. Thus, there is no peace. Because there is no peace, there is no satisfaction. Because there is no satisfaction, we get angry. Because of anger, we hurt others. It is like a fish stuck to bait. There is no peace; there is no letting go. It is all because of greed.

“When we create boonya, we create forgiveness, but we do even more than that. When we spread loving kindness, we generate boon. When you teach with love, you create boon. But when you teach just for your salary, you do not create boon. You must have the right intention. And, when we read the Dhamma, we get boon!”

His eyes start to twinkle again. He smiles. “Of course, if you meditate you will find this out for yourself. So go and meditate! If you center yourself, within the center, you will be able to observe, to see, and then to know – because you have seen. And THEN, you will be able to teach!” He sits back, crosses his arms, and looks at us with a hint of a smile and with great compassion. I think he is finished, but then Jon proceeds to tell him his famous King and Hermit story, which, because it is such a good story, I will repeat here.

## The King and The Hermit

*Once upon a time, there was a King and Queen who lived in a beautiful castle, high on top of a mountain. Most of the time, everything was quite sabai (calm) because they ruled their kingdom with great wisdom. However, one day something went terribly wrong, and even though the Queen consulted the King (as every Queen should, of course, in any tale of this sort) they could not come up with a solution to the problem. So the Queen asked the King to go to the adjacent mountain top where there lived an incredibly knowledgeable hermit. Well, the King ruminated (as any King would, being asked to do such a ridiculous thing) but, in order to please the Queen, he decided to do just that. (I'd call that a pretty wise King.)*

*Many days, and many miles later, the King arrived at the mountaintop of the hermit, whereupon he found the hermit sitting there in his cave waiting for the King. The King presented the problem to the hermit, and the hermit (being even wiser than the King and Queen) helped the King out by supplying him with a quick and easy solution to the problem.*

*Well, the King was so delighted with the ease of the answer that he invited the hermit to attend a banquet in his honor. "Oh, no," said the hermit. "I have nothing to wear to a banquet. Look at me. I am a hermit in rags. You do not want me to attend a banquet!" Whereupon the King refuted this with, "Of course we want you to attend. You have helped us solve our problem! You must come!" And so, they set the date and time for the banquet.*

*The King invited everyone in the kingdom to attend. On the given date, the hermit (having come down from the mountaintop in his rags) tried to enter the castle. When some of the guests, dressed in their finest clothes, saw the hermit, they began to laugh at him, pointed to him and his old rags, and taunted him with words that I cannot repeat here. And so, the hermit turned away to start his trip back up the mountain.*

*When some friends of the King saw what was happening to the hermit, they ran after*



him, and begged him to come back. "I cannot come into your castle with these clothes on," said the hermit. "The people turned me away at the gate because they saw my old clothes." "Hm," replied the friends of the King, looking thoughtful and pondering the problem. "We will present you with new clothes." Whereupon they did just that. Soon, the hermit was dressed up in his new fine clothes and they all went into the castle where all of the town's people welcomed him in for the feast.

As the food was set upon the dining tables, everyone applauded the hermit and his wise answer to the King and Queens's problem, and then began to eat. The hermit began to eat, too, but he took his food and started to smash it on his new clothes. First he took the mashed potatoes and smashed them onto his jacket. Then he poured the gravy into his pants pockets. And, then he stuffed the peas and carrots into his shirt pockets!

Well, you can imagine the reaction! The King said, "Dear hermit! What are you doing?"

And the hermit replied: "Well, King. First you came to seek my advice, which I happily gave you, and then you invited me for dinner. When the townspeople saw me, they turned me away at your door because I was wearing rags. So your friends gave me new clothes, and I was invited to come in for the feast. But, alas, it was not me who was invited in, but my clothes. And so, I am feeding my clothes."

This, as you can well imagine, put a smile on Luang Por's face because it is a total Buddhist story. So he smiles a very wise smile and shakes his head with great satisfaction.

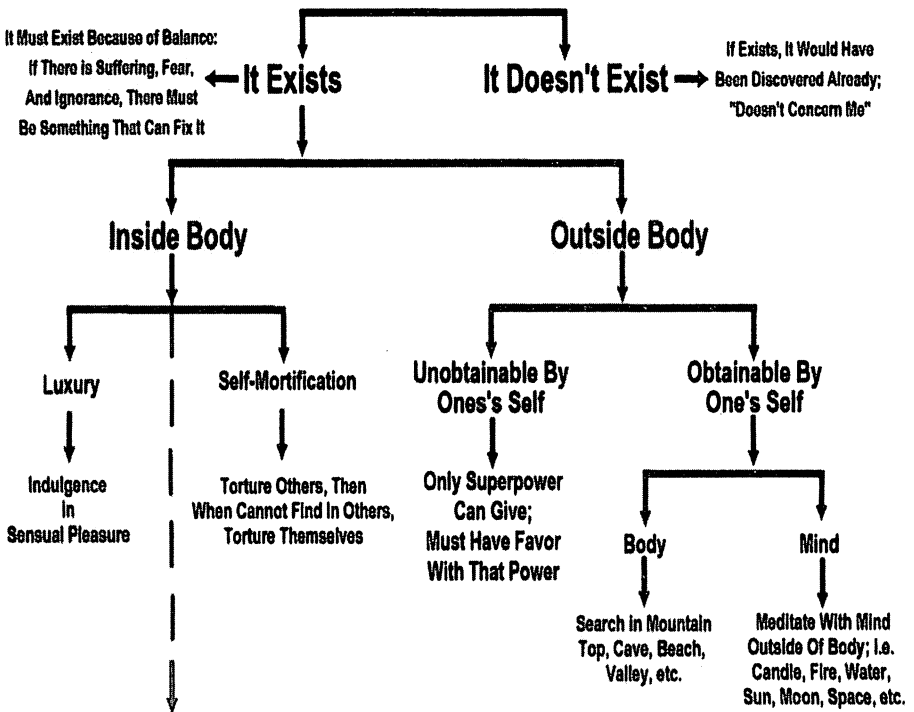
Somehow, we get on the topic of the Unknown Factor, also known as Jah, the ALL, God, Yahweh, THAT which IS, Allah, and, of course, many other names. Now there may be people who think this is super boring but for me, this is super great. Not that I spend all of my time thinking about it, but I do try to answer some of those metaphysical questions that are important to all of us. You know, like Why Am I Here? Why Was I Born? What is my Life's Purpose? Stuff like that.

So, I ask Luang Por if the Unknown Factor exists in order to generate a space in which enlightened individuals or beings can exist. The idea, of course, came from some meta-

physical thinking that originally, God separated itself from itself in order to recognize who it was. And, by the mere fact that in recognizing itself, it created a space in which to exist. This is the basis of creation. In other words, the ALL, creates a space for itself in which to exist. This idea, rather conveniently, allows for Creationism or Evolutionism.

At first, Luang Por says, simply, that the Unknown Factor is the Dhamma. But this explanation is not enough for us and when he sees the look on our faces (one that says "Could you give us a little more help, here?"), he goes on to say that the Unknown Factor is like a spectrum – of pure energy, pure nature. And it takes individual steps ("step by step," he says) in order to attain the knowing of this. He has his assistant give us a copy of the following chart, and then explains it to us. And, so, here is an explanation of the Unknown Factor:

## The Unknown Factor



*The Middle Way: Between Luxury  
and Self-Mortification  
Using The Mind*

Illustration #1

Luang Por: “Humans are categorized into two groups: either believing that the Unknown Factor exists, or believing that it does not exist. There are, of course, atheists, who say that the possibility exists that the Unknown Factor does exist, but we will include those people in the first group – who say that the Unknown Factor exists. In other words, people either believe or disbelieve in God/Allah/Dhamma. In order to fully explain what the Unknown Factor is, we will not discuss those people who do not believe it exists because those people say that if it existed, it would have shown itself by now or it would have been discovered. These are also the people who say that it does not concern them whether or not it exists. So we will only be discussing those people who believe that there is some Unknown Factor out there that exists. Now for those people who believe that there IS an Unknown Factor, they may believe it exists because of the need for Balance: If there is great suffering, fear, and ignorance out there, then there must be something out there to fix it. These people see the Yin-Yang of the Universe.

“Of those people who believe that there is an Unknown Factor, there are two groups: one group believes that it exists outside of the body, and one group believes it exists inside of the body. In other words, God or the Unknown Factor, exists externally or internally. For those who believe it exists externally, there are those who say that this Unknown Factor is undiscoverable, or unattainable, by oneself and it must be given to us by some Super Power. Additionally, we must have some favor with that Power in order to discover who and/or where the Power exists. The medieval Catholic Church would be a likely example of this because of the history of paying indulgences to the Church, or Bishop, in order to get into Heaven, or to find favor with God.

“On the opposite side of those people, there are those who believe that it is totally discoverable by oneself, and they look for it in two ways: either outside of the body (searching the world for it), or with the mind, but they meditate with the mind outside of the body by meditating on a medium flame, or the sun, or in any external space until they reach the right state where they can go on their search.

“Now backing up, for those who say it is discoverable INSIDE of the body, people take two directions, like the Buddha did when He first started: first, through luxury or opulence in which people indulge in sensual pleasure, OR through self-mortification, in which a person inflicts bodily or mental pain upon themselves, perhaps in near starvation or self-mutilation. We know, of course, that this is how the Buddha discovered that a thesis and anti-thesis lead to a synthesis, which is, in this case, the Middle Path. Because he was born as a Prince, he had every comfort that he ever wanted. His father had provided

Him with everything to meet His needs, but this was simply not enough for him to answer his true human need. And what were those needs? Well, one day, while He was still a Prince, He went out into His Kingdom, and saw four things: and old man, a sick man, a dead body, and finally, an ascetic. Because of these four ‘signs’, it dawned on Him that every person would eventually have to live with sickness, old age, and death and that life was, indeed, not without pain and suffering. So his real needs as a human became the answers or medicine that would cure everyone of these atrocities. Even though He had not realized the Four Noble Truths at that time, He did know that He needed to find a way to end suffering forever. Therefore, after seeing the ascetic and understanding the reasons for this type of life, He became a monk and went on His journey to find the answer to His questions.

“And, so, in the end, He discovered the Middle Way: the path between luxury and self-mortification while using the Mind to meditate within and He became known as the Buddha, or He who sees and knows truly. But, remember, if you meditate, you will discover this for yourself!”

And then, Luang Por smiles.

Because Jon and I were both raised as Episcopalians, we have lots of questions about this teaching. We both, of course, are believers. So there was never a question about the actual existence of an Unknown Factor. Jon has been a theology student at Oxford University, so his knowledge is considerable and his own self-study has been with many readings on Tibetan Buddhism, Judaism, Zen, Gnosticism, the Bardo Thodol, various Biblical texts (of course), and assorted other religions. I, on the other hand, came to my religious beliefs through years of church training, biblical reading, and meditation. Always thinking of myself as a Jewish-Christian, because, after all, Christ was a Jew, I found myself here at the Wat on new ground, and the exploration of this particular teaching was pretty exciting. So here I am thinking that maybe I am a Jewish-Christian-Buddhist. Hey, why not?

I like the idea of an “inside” Unknown Factor, because Christ said that the Kingdom of God is within you. Christ also, of course, taught cause and effect, you reap what you sow, and lots of other things that the Buddha taught 500 years before Christ ever existed.

Where this all will lead me, of course, I do not know.

Leaving Luang Por that day, we have no idea when we will ever return. And, so, we say “Good Bye” and thank him for all of his kindness.

He says: “Please continue to meditate and I think you will be very good teachers of meditation for Western people...you will achieve great success in your meditation and you will be good teachers of the Dhamma in the West. Come back soon.” He smiles again, waves his arm as he adjusts his robes, and then he is gone.<sup>6</sup>

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6 Parts of this chapter are copyrighted, *Finding Buddha*, 2010, Shires Press, Manchester, Vermont.

## Meeting #3

15 February 2009 - Ashram

Little did I know when I left the Wat in September of 2008 that I would be back. But, when I was there last, I helped them initiate a project called the Peace Revolution by drafting many of the documents: the Mission Statement, the online self-development program, and several purpose statements that were being used. The project was to culminate with a Peace Revolution Conference in February, 2009, and because I had helped them, they graciously invited me to attend. So, here I am, back in Bangkok.

On the very first day, my host says: “You must go to see Luang Por. He will want to see you.”

“Right. No problem.” I say, and so, here I am at the Ashram.

I run in, just to say hello. I have, of course, missed him, although I did not realize just how much until I saw him sitting on his dais with about 20 other visitors smiling up at him as he teaches them some Dhamma.

Hesitantly, I move into the room so he can see me, bow, smile, and look up. His whole face is smiling, and he begins to laugh when he recognizes me.

“Come in, right now,” he says to me, pointing at an empty space in front of him for me to sit.

“I am sorry, I cannot. I am on my way to meet the participants of the Peace Revolution. But I must say that my eyes, my heart, and my mind are all very happy to see you,” I smile.

He laughs a big belly laugh and he says, “I will see you again soon.”

And then I bow, reluctantly leaving the boon-generating energy of his office.



There is really no way that I can fully explain my feelings toward Luang Por Dattajeevo, an incredibly celebrated and thoroughly perceptive Theravada monk: A person who re-

ally does know me better than I know myself because he meditates 24/7. He sees people as they really are but chooses to focus on their finest characteristics – all unbeknownst to them, of course. There are times when I think we have been on the same plane before, if you know what I mean, in the sense that he seems very familiar to me, kind of like a déjà vu with a person instead of a place, or simply someone that I have known through many lifetimes. We are almost the same age, and he (unlike me) is completely confident and comfortable with who he is and what he does. It is as though he knows just how often he has been around, and how many more times he will go around again. It's all a bit confusing for me because I was definitely not born a Buddhist, but I am beginning to recognize the fact that I have probably been raised as a Buddhist before, and will be again because I am surely wishing for that even as I write this.

As I said, we met only six months ago, but when I enter his office, I feel as though I have known him my entire life – well, probably for thousands of lifetimes before this one although I cannot be exactly sure of just how many lifetimes that would entail – I simply have not reached that level of meditation. Because of his kindness towards everyone, they naturally gravitate toward him, and defer to his wisdom. Perhaps because I am an American, I am not unsettled by his important role within the Wat, or Temple. And, because I am near his age, I think of us as contemporaries who are travelling on the same road, looking for the same things: inner peace, loving and compassionate kindness towards our fellow men, equanimity, mindfulness. In other words, we are both traveling the Eightfold Noble Path, although I know that I am about a million lifetimes behind him at this point in my travels: Whereas he is definitely traveling the path, I am just always trying to travel the path.

However, he always looks at me rather tenderly, although somewhat bemused, as if to say “It's about time you showed up! Why have you not come here sooner? We have lots to talk about!” All of this, of course, with a smile on his face, and a gentle laugh – a laugh that comes from deep within his heart, within the Dhamma that is his mind.

There is another side to Luang Por, however, that I rarely see, but it is a side with which many Thai people are quite familiar: Luang Por is, in essence, the General of the Wat. And, because this is so, he must be the “muscle”, or the hard edge, behind the scenes. I have heard it said, “Wow! He is so stern! He is so demanding!” And, yes, that is true, too.

There is something in him that I see in me: a need for excellence, both for himself, and

for the people he loves... which for him, I found out, is everyone. And that is why he is so stern. He wants people to reach for, and experience, success in their lives, in their meditation, in their ability to achieve the highest level of perfection that they possibly can. If he can help you, he will: At any time, and in any way that he can. He will spend hours visiting and chatting with guests about Dhamma, and then stay up late into the evening to do his own meditation. He rarely sleeps for very long and he is a natural teacher.

Teaching, of course, is our passionate connection. I have been a teacher since the age of twelve, so, uh, let's see, that's about 50 years or so of teaching something. Now, however, I am beginning to focus my attention on my meditation and he is right there to help me with it, offering suggestions, and teaching me patience.

I started meditating years ago, although I did not know it was meditation – at least I did not call it by that name. Most musicians, artists, and athletes meditate if they are simply focused on their art. You can tell by the look on their faces just how focused they are... concentrated... stilling their anxiety and nervousness and just simply being. But since my son, Josh, ordained here, I have learned so much more about the benefits of meditation, and the What? Why? and How? of the Dhammakaya Meditation Technique. Originally, I did not learn about it through Luang Por, but simply by listening to Josh and trying it out for myself.

Luang Por is with me every day, encouraging me to meditate, speaking to me in my mind.

“Meditate,” he would say, “Don’t believe me! Just do it and discover the truth for yourself.”



## Meeting #4

29 February 2009 - Ashram

During the Peace Revolution Conference, the participants (who came from Africa, Australia, the United States, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia) were fortunate enough to have a meeting with Luang Por. Little did they know just who they were meeting, or the effect that he or his Dhamma lecture would have on them, even though we tried to prepare them for it prior to the meeting itself. By “prepare”, I simply mean that we taught them a bit about Thai culture and the history of the Wat, the protocol of proper etiquette around monks, and the hierarchy of the monks. There is, after all, a definite “ranking” of monks depending on the number of years they have been ordained. Luang Por is one of the original founders of the Wat, and “ranks” third in the line of succession from the Abbot. He has been a monk for over forty years.

So here we are, back at the Ashram, in another, larger room. After we are all seated (and that means all of the participants, the mentors, the sponsors, the Upasikas, the Upasoks, and anyone else who is around the Ashram at this time – about 80 people), the translators are in place, and the room is quiet, Luang Por enters, smiling. He greets everyone cordially, and then begins a talk on how to live a “good” life. This is a talk that is, of course, important to each of us, no matter what culture we come from, what occupation we are in, whether we are single or married, or what age we happen to be. And this is to be the first Dhamma talk in which he alone spoke. There really was to be no dialogue, as I was about to find out.

“What is a good life?” Luang Por asks. “And how do we obtain one? Where, in fact, do we even begin to look to discover how it starts or what we can look at to define it?”

“Living a good life, it seems to me, is a life that is lived in peaceful co-existence and happiness. And this happiness, or sense of contentment, is a life that is formed as soon as we are born. But what happens as soon as we are born? We are dependent on our guardian’s good will, are we not? We are independent, but we are not independent. We have lived within our mother, but now, when we are born, we are completely independent. We start our life dependent on other people, even though we think we are independent!” He pauses and smiles, for the effect, I think.

“As soon as we are born, then, we have some automatic responses and some basic needs. We need food, shelter, clothing, medicine, and some people would say that we need love.

But the four basic needs are the first four that I mentioned: food, shelter, clothing, and medicine. Who, then, provides us with these needs? Usually, our parents or guardians are the people who support us as we grow from day to day.

“They are not the only people who support us, of course, but they are the first people who give us what we need. Now, if they give us too much, then we become fat and sluggish. For example, when they feed us every time we cry or get upset or get frustrated, then we simply get too much. And what effect does that have on us? What happens when anyone gets too much? They become ‘fat’ and they don’t realize that they have to have a good work ethic in order to make a living. In fact, they think that someone will provide them with everything that they want. Why? Because they have been given everything their whole life – from the time they were born.

“And what happens if we get too little and our guardian is not there when we need him or her to feed us, or change our diaper? Then we are never satisfied. We anger easily, and we become selfish or greedy: All because our caregiver is not there when we need him or her.

“So, you see, from the time we are born, we have lessons taught to us that provide us with our basic characteristics, or qualities, that will stay with us for a very long time. We learn from when we are in our mother’s womb. And when we become fully conscious of our surroundings and the people who are closest to us in our childhood, we develop our ‘character’.

“Now who, exactly, affects us the most? Well...” he continues, and immediately he uncovers a Lucite case that was specifically, and obviously, designed for this teaching. It is a large clear case, a moveable display, which is built like a multi-dimensional cross with the center piece containing a clear box with a picture of a young person. To the front of the figure is another Lucite box depicting “parents” or “guardians”; to the right is another box depicting “teachers”; to the left, “friends, colleagues, and peers”, to the back, “spouse and family”, above, “spiritual leader”, and below, if applicable, “employees or those under your management”.

“This case depicts the people who are generally in our lives and with whom we have contact almost every day. It is, in fact, a visual sociogram of the groups we belong to in our lives and it is a visualization of the people with whom we interact. As you can see, our parents, or guardians, have the most immediate – and constant – affect on us because we

live with them from the time we are born. Each one of these groups shapes our character, our basic nature, and that is why we teach that the very first, of the thirty-eight blessings in this life is to not associate with fools, and the second is to associate with wise people. You can, of course, understand just how important it is to associate with the best people because then we will not be lead, at an early age, down a path that will be destructive.

“If we look closely at this rendering, we can see that the parents are in front and this is because they are the most important people in our lives when we are born: they teach us, train us, provide us with an education, and provide us with our basic necessities. They also, in many cases, provide us with an inheritance when they die. But what do we owe them? Our gratitude and care in return. Remember that if it were not for them, we would not be born or still be alive.

“To the right of us, are our teachers. Next to our parents, these people are second in importance because they give us knowledge so that we can live a good life socially as well as economically: if we study well and learn the material that we need to learn in life, then we obtain good employment and, thereby, earn a good living. In return for their dedication to us, we owe them our respect, our attention, and our time. They are, after all, devoting their own education, money, and time to help us become better people. They also help us learn how to get along with other people in a group environment. Surely, our family does some of that, but in the classroom, we have to learn to socialize with many different types of people who are all vying for the attention of the teacher.

“To the rear of us, are our own spouse or partner and family, if we have them. Many of you here, of course, are young and do not yet have your own family. But when you do, you will need to always be courteous, faithful, nurturing, and honorable in your actions toward those people with whom you share your daily lives. You will also need to prepare yourselves for instructing your own family in the Six Directions of socialization. You, as the caregiver, need to not only possess the Right View, but teach those in your family what it means to possess the Right View, or Right Understanding.

“To the left of us, are our friends, or if we are students, our classmates. Now in order to be a good friend to others, we need to remind ourselves to be generous with our time and energy. We should always try to help them become better people because one of the things a friend does is encourage his or her friends to be the best that they can be. We need to be loving, compassionate, and mindful of our expectations as well. And this includes all of those friends you are making on social networks like Facebook, or My Space, or Twitter.”

With this comment, the audience looks surprised and expectant. This comment is not something that they would have ever thought a Vice-Abbot of a Thai monastery would ever say.

He smiles at their surprise, and continues. “Our technological age has brought us in contact with millions of people very quickly. We hear news instantly from around the world. And, we connect with people with whom we never imagined connecting just a few years before this one. We now can ‘talk’ to millions of people and hear what they have to say. Imagine the ramifications of our language. Imagine what people will think of us if we suddenly say something rude, or inappropriate, or vulgar. Always be mindful of what we say on these internet pages, or on your mobile phone because these messages will have wide ranging ramifications.

“Almost finished with this,” he cajoles them. “Beneath us, are the people we work with, or for, or employ. Depending on the situation, we need to help them accomplish their own goals in life by giving them appropriately assigned tasks, providing them with good wages and benefits, or giving them a good work or study environment. In order to be a good employee, you must get to work in a timely manner, treat the employees or employer with respect, and perform your work with graciousness and pride. This is essentially good advice whether or not you are an employer, an employee, or you are going to school each day with many other students.

“The last direction is the one above us. These people are our spiritual leaders whose duty it is to protect the people (or their congregation) from doing harmful acts, assist them with a kind heart, give them information regarding the church, monastery, mosque or synagogue, teach them the writings of the religion they are following, and guide them on the path to Heaven. In turn, you must always speak and act with kindness towards them, and welcome them into our home. Support them by giving of our time, and help them so that they will continue to be leaders who are happy in their own path.

“What I have just been discussing are the teachings of the **Six Directions**, and this shows us how, and from whom, we learn our basic habits. All of these are the people who influence the development of our habits. But this is not the only way we learn who we are, or how to be happy in our lives.

“Every day, we follow a particular routine. As children, we have a routine that we follow on most days, like a schedule. As adults we have another kind of routine, and we follow

that schedule almost every day. Now this routine usually starts with us simply getting up in the morning. Whatever time that may be, we all get up and start our day. Most people get up and go to the bathroom, or brush their teeth, or make the bed.

“But, no matter how we start it, we start it – and that is usually in the bedroom, if we are wealthy enough to have a house with a bedroom in it. So, at this moment, we have already developed habits that will be exhibited upon our rising. For example, how many of you make your bed as soon as you get up?”

He waits for a show of hands. There are not many people in the audience who eagerly participate in this, because, after all, we are just kids at heart and we don't want to give a wrong answer. He smiles and waits. “Well, making your bed as soon as you rise up in the morning is a good habit. Why? Because it says that you are ready to start the day. You have made up your mind that you will not get into a bad habit of being lazy and going back to bed. It says that you are organized, thoughtful, and diligent. These are all good habits to get into, not just in your own home, but as a student or employee. And, these habits start right in your bedroom. But what else do you do in the bedroom that is the cause of bad habits? Well. How about watching television? Or working on your computer? If you moved these distractions to another room, you would soon see that the bedroom is really the place where you relax, meditate, and review or start the day.

“The second room that helps us build good habits is the bathroom. This room really teaches us the fundamentals of healthy living. When you look at yourselves, you see what the condition of our health really is! Do you have a good complexion? Are you taking too much medication? Or using too many cosmetics? What is happening with your digestive system? You also discover just how clean you really are! Are you maintaining a clean and organized environment, one that is focused on healthy living? You should call this a room for self-maintenance because this is the room that should be sanitized and free of germs... just like your minds should be clean and free of pollution!” He laughs.

“Now the third room that is important for your good habits is the dressing room, or perhaps the room you use for getting dressed and ready for the day. In our modern age, clothes have become more revealing and more sensual. People spend much too much money on the clothes that they wear in order to compete with other people for the attention of the opposite sex. This leads people to become dissatisfied with themselves, with their economic status, and with their emotional well-being. This is like a roller-coaster

ride: When you have something new to wear, you feel good about yourselves, but when you don't, you feel badly about yourselves. And the only thing that seems to satisfy people is always getting more and more and more. It is an insatiable desire that cannot be met. But what people don't realize, of course, is that their desires cannot be met with external or material things, but only through our internal happiness. And, so, everyone needs to concentrate, when they dress, on appropriate clothing to wear – not simply buying those clothes that are in fashion at the current moment. Instead, concentrate on dressing to protect yourselves from the weather, and cover those parts of the body that need to be covered!” Again, he smiles a warm and gentle smile while looking around the room with a pervasive tenderness.

“The fourth room is the kitchen. Other rooms can be included in this room, such as the dining room and living room (or computer room) but the real focus is on the kitchen. Why? Because this is the room that brings everyone together: This is the socializing room where we gather to sustain our bodies. Here, you have important discussions as well as have fun with your family and friends. Of course, if you spend too much time in this room, you may get fat!”

He stops and listens to the people's laughter. He smiles.

“One of the biggest problems with this room is maintaining it. The people who shop for the food have to know many practical things: how to economize by buying just the right amount of food, when to buy it in season so it is fresh, and how to prepare it. They also need to have good equipment and storage facilities for the produce. And, of course, they need to know how to cook it! Not only is the kitchen important to learn about the economy, but in learning just how to effectively communicate with other members of the family.

“If the computer room is included in this group of rooms, because of the socialization aspect we are discussing, we have to realize that we are building a community of friends with the rise of internet groups, and social networking groups. Now we have the advent of another kind of socialization, not just the face-to-face kind – even though we call it Facebook! Communicating on this level takes on commitment of always using Right Speech, because when we do not see a person with whom we are talking, we have to be careful to build the good habit of always communicating the truth.

“The fifth, and final room, is the school or workplace. The real purpose of this room is

to build wealth, both materially and spiritually. In these rooms, we put all of our good habits that we have developed in the other rooms into practice. By being mindful and aware of our external environment, we begin to progress toward a happy life. We learn how to carefully use our five senses because we are now seen in public places.

“Of course, if we have built good habits, we will have no difficulty with being a conscientious student, or an excellent employee. We will not have any difficulty in earning a living either because we will be honest, clean, organized, diligent, moral or ethical, and be able to problem-solve. We will also know the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behavior. And, of course, we will be able to exhibit these good habits to those of us around us – making us an excellent role model for other people.

“So what does all of this mean? What do all of these teachings that I am giving you have to do with peace? If you develop good habits, and share them with those people around you, you will bring peace into the world. And that is what Wat Phra Dhammakaya is all about: World Peace through Inner Peace. By being at peace with yourself – by meditating, practicing good habits, and sharing them with everyone you meet – you will be helping the world become a more peaceful planet. And there is nothing more powerful than that.”

And with this, he sits back, and asks if there are any questions.

## Meeting #5

March 5, 2009 – Panawat Retreat Center

Right before the Peace Revolution Conference ended, several of the participants and I decided to attend another retreat in a beautiful meditation center in northwestern Thailand, above Chiang Mai, called Wat Kiew Lom. If there is a Heaven on earth, this is it – at least this is what I want MY Heaven to look like. The meditation hall sits high on a mountain top in a sleekly pristine facility overlooking the avocado orchard that the Wat has growing on their grounds. The hall is encased with glass, just so you can remember in your meditation that you are, indeed, in Heaven. The Abbot and the resident monks obviously love this spot, and it is carefully tended each day.

Luang Por just happens to be at a nearby retreat center called Panawat, which is as close to Heaven as Wat Kiew Lom, but much larger and designed for groups of 500 people or more to come and listen to Dhamma talks in the cool environment of the northern part of this country.

I happen to have some questions for Luang Por about the conference, so I call to ask if he is available to see me. “Of course,” comes the answer. And so, I am now sitting in a beautiful room, also encased in glass, with large comfortable chairs. There are several people here in the room with me, but I am the only female, and the other four are monks: Luang Por, his personal assistant, LP Josh, and one other. We are speaking in English.

We greet one another cordially, and he answers the questions that I have on my mind. Of course, he knows what I have on my mind, but he is too polite to simply state the answers to the obvious. So he allows me to skirt around the topics while he sits patiently and smiles. The one thing that I have learned about Luang Por is that no matter how busy he is, he always has time to talk Dhamma. Perhaps that is what makes him a master. And so, he begins.

“There are two parts of the human: the body and the mind. The body is composed of four physical and coarse elements perfectly mixed together. Earth is the solid matter – the flesh, skin, and bone. Water is the liquid material – the blood and so on. Wind is the air and gas throughout the body. And Fire is the energy, or the warmth and heat.

“But what is the mind? The mind is a refined element and is invisible to our physical eyes. It has the ability to know because it is the element of knowing element inside of the



body. And, it resides only at the center of a living human body. If it leaves the body, the body will become a corpse and the mind, and the more subtle form and the more subtle form encasing it, will then travel to its new place of rebirth.

“At its natural state, the mind is pure and clear like a diamond; but if it is disturbed by emotions such as love, hatred, fear and delusion, it will become clouded as though a dye were added to a glass of water. This creates false perception (the color, meaning mood, affects the mind and we don’t see things clearly). The mind is the master of the body and directs the body to movement and reaction. At the same time, the mind receives (and perceives) everything through the brain, nerves and all of the five senses. By practicing meditation, a person can understand the nature and form of the mind when they observe it from the right location, which is the center of the body. But everyone needs to prove this for him or herself by meditating.

“The structure of the mind, as I said, is spherical in form and it consists of four overlapping layers. Each layer is clearer and more refined than the next. The first outer layer is perception. By seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching, we perceive all of the things that happen to us and bring it into our minds. The second layer is memorization,

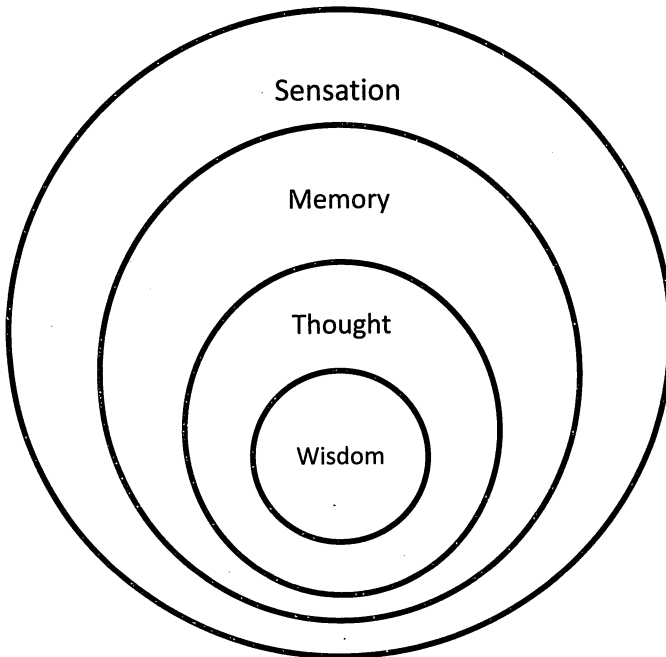


Illustration #2

the third is thought or conceptualization, and the fourth is wisdom, or merging this new awareness into our pool of accumulated knowledge we already have stored.

“War and conflict, of course, are wrong states to be in, in every one of these spheres: perception, memorization, thinking, and knowing. But how do we change this? By keeping our mind pure at all times! But in order to keep our mind pure, we have to meditate, and in order to receive the most benefit from meditation, we have to know with what we are dealing. What is the mind?

“What are the characteristics of the mind, so that we know how to keep it pure? There are thirteen general characteristics: (1) The mind does not have a physical form like our human body, but is a more subtle and refined form of a bright sphere, (2) It can think only one thought at a time and perceive only one feeling at a time (unlike brain thinking where we can simultaneously recognize two or more thoughts at the same time), (3) It is born with a body and must reside in a body because once the mind leaves the body, the body will die, (4) It likes to travel fast and far [Note: Here Luang Por referred to the speed of light traveling so far and fast, but our mind is even faster, which is incredible!], (5) the mind is very difficult to see and behold, but it can still be done, (6) it can switch from thinking and non-thinking faster than one finger snap; in fact, over one million times per second, (7) If the mind wanders, it is very difficult to get it back on track again, so it is best to keep it from wandering, (8) the mind tends to want to think of the very thing that it is not supposed to be thinking of – like sensual pleasures, (9) it is difficult to control, like a monkey jumping from one branch to another, (10) it is difficult to maintain in goodness, because it is easily distracted and habituated to negativity, (11) It is difficult to stop thinking thoughts, (12) it is self-illuminating but it tends to lose this as we grow and age, and (13) it can be trained endlessly ... indefinitely.

“But there is a missing piece to the puzzle – A big caution! The mind is under the influence of what we have called *kilesa*, or defilement, and that means, that we tend to think what we should not be thinking. This causes us to switch from one thought to another very quickly, rarely finishing the previous thought. And, we tend to allow our mind to become more dark and more coarse as we age.

“So what, you may ask, is defilement? Well, defilement is a kind of refined filthy element. It is manifested in the mind since our birth, just like sediment as it settles in the water bowl. The more defilement we have, the darker our mind will become. It is like an eternal enemy of the mind, just like rust is to steel, or disease is to the body. The threats

from defilement are manifested within the mind since we are born. It forces the mind to think, speak, and act imperfectly and it allows us to slide into bad habits. Finally, defilements do not die with us, but remain within our mind and that, along with our bad habits, follow us into the next life.

“We must, then, do two things. First we must have right understanding. We cannot blame others for the habits that we have formulated for ourselves! We are fighting against the wrong enemy if we allow ourselves to think this way. Second, we must control our mind. We cannot get ‘hooked’ by external materialism – jewelry, perfume, material garbage – and we cannot look outside of the body, but stay inside with meditation. That is why the method of meditation is so important, and we need to use internal focus, rather than external focus when we meditate.

“All of the suffering that human beings experience is caused by defilements. We give up resisting the defilements that stay with us from lifetime to lifetime. When we give up, our mind is not within our body anymore. We become hooked on the material things because we desire them, and that leads us to perform some inappropriate action, and then we suffer. Therefore, destroying all defilements is the solution for real happiness and should be the ultimate goal of each and every human being.

“And how, Suzanne, do we destroy defilements? You know!”

“Yes! By giving up bad habits, performing good actions, and meditating!” I say.

“And the more we meditate, the more boon we will have, and the more boon we have, the more successful we will become because we are creating good energy to be used in the world. And the more good energy we create for the world, the more we want to meditate! And so, on and on and on... until we ‘water down’ our defilement!”

And with that, we all smile at one another as if to say, “Well, isn’t this the best chat we have had in a long time!”

## Meeting #6

June 8, 2009 - Ashram

I did not see Luang Por for several months after our last chat. I left the Peace Revolution after helping them re-organize and re-imagine the project for the coming year, and was back in New York before I could even think about it. It all seemed to happen so quickly.

But, before I could think about it anymore, I was on my way back to Bangkok to help them organize it for 2010. I must have some good boon working for me somewhere. Perhaps in some past life, I was connected to Thailand or Buddhism... I am not sure which.

At any rate, I did not go immediately to see Luang Por when I arrived back into Bangkok in May of 2009. It was some time before I did get to see him, and that was because, for some reason, the people at the Wat decided that I was a good English writer and editor, and thus decided to use my talents. This also meant that before long, I was asked to look at another project they were undertaking comprising a series of books about the Dhamma teachings of Luang Por Dhammajayo, the Abbot. The project was being coordinated by a woman named Pi Dang, who has known Luang Por since their university days together. But after two meetings, we all realized that we needed some pertinent questions answered about the Buddha's life, and this, then, led us to this meeting with Luang Por Dattajeevo.

So, here we are, late one night, in his Ashram.

There are several of us at the meeting this time, because the Peace Revolution team has some questions for him, and then the writing team has additional questions for him about the Buddha. I, therefore, know that it will probably last several hours.

The questions from the Peace Revolution take about an hour, and then the writer's team has their turn. I am only the observer here and I feel lucky to be that. Everyone in the room is Thai, so the questions are in Thai, the answers are in Thai, and one of the monks is translating for me. Here goes:

Pi Dang begins, "We want to write a book about the life of the Lord Buddha and combine that with the Unknown Factor. We want to raise the issue of where do we come from,

why we are here and where do we go after death. So, we have some questions regarding His life: for example, why did he spend six years in self-mortification? Is the number six significant? And ...”

Before she finishes, Luang Por raises his arm up in adjustment of his robes. This, of course, signals everyone to be quiet and to listen.

Taking a long, slow breath, calmly, Luang Por begins, “When the Buddha was born, he was supremely wealthy and he had all of the thirty-two characteristics of a Buddha. There are stories that surround His birth that I will not repeat here, unless you have specific questions about them, but one of the great differences between the Buddha and other people is the fact that he wanted to always distance himself from unwholesomeness and ignorance: In other words, he sought wisdom from the time of his birth until his enlightenment. Because He was always concerned with doing the right thing and staying away from ignorance, He was different and special. He always had a different perspective than other people and He was to go on to sacrifice Himself for a greater good, a higher reality.

“*Kusala*, of course, means wisdom or cleverness but later the meaning changed to goodness. But the evolution of this is interesting because *kusala* is really a tool that destroys evil or ‘badness’ which is what the Buddha was born knowing. A wise person will not do something evil so when this person does something good, then Boonya is created. People now think that when people do something good, it means they are creating Boon, so now *Kusala* means Boon.

“Buddha said that the life of a layperson is very narrow, but the life of a monk is very open, very broad. This is because a layperson attaches himself to his possessions and therefore is not really free. A monk, on the other hand, does not do that and frees himself. He is very happy not to be attached to his possessions.

“When the Buddha became enlightened, He did not go to His parents first because He wanted to teach the people who were best trained to understand his teachings. Plus, once He was enlightened, He belonged to the world. He had to teach the people who recognized His enlightenment because the ‘culture’ of the Buddha sees everyone as his son and daughter. This is the culture of enlightenment. And when He became enlightened, He understood ALL religions. He wanted all people to be happy because of His great heart and great vision.

“You may ask, ‘Why is the mind coarse, boorish, or ill-mannered?’ The mind is coarse because of attachment, anger, greed. People are really obsessed with stuff. But the Buddha’s mind combines itself with the Dhamma and He acts as a power plant of kusala for others. In the beginning of His teachings, He wanted to go to all people – to reach out to everyone. But He discovered that there were really three main groups of people: The first group consists of the people who believe in His enlightenment and would be fine if He did not reach out to them – you might call them ‘true’ believers; the second group are the people who do not believe His teachings, and no matter what anyone says, they will not believe; and the third group are the 50/50 group that are balancing on the edge. In other words, this third group is not sure what to believe and even though in the beginning of His teachings, He wanted to reach everyone, He decided to concentrate on this third group.

“You cannot, of course, reach everyone with His teachings. Those who have the ears to hear, will hear.” He looks directly at me.

Pi Dang then asks, “Why did the Buddha choose to teach? What made Him decide to teach?”

Luang Por says, “There are eight reasons why the Buddha chose to teach. (1) First, to create shame in bad actions and to stop the defilement in the mind, or to stop the pollution that the mind should be cleaning itself of, (2) Second, to tell you that you are in the Law of Kamma, not just the Law of Government, (3) Third, to show you that you are just a robot no matter how great you are or think you are. You are like a puppet to your external world. (4) Fourth, to tell you that there is both Boon and Baap in extreme. Meditation or enlightenment is the most extreme Boon whereas killing your parents or Arahants is an example of extreme Baap. (5) Fifth, to tell you about the virtues of compassion and of living harmoniously, (6) Sixth, to introduce you to your origin and to show you that you do not simply come from nowhere, (7) Seventh, to introduce you to the field of merit or the field of Boon, and to help you understand where it comes from and how to generate it for yourself, and (8) Eighth, to help you communicate with one another through the Dhamma or by using the vocabulary of the Dhamma.

“Kilesa, of course, was created in the universe in order for you to get your mind outside of your body. As soon as the mind is consistently focused on the internal, a person is creating good energy and that is the way to fight evil. Imagine if everyone had an internal power plant and they were generating good energy!”

Someone then asks, "Who created the Universe?"

"The Universe was created by three elements coming together: Goodness, unwholesomeness, and impartiality existing in harmony: A continuum of all existence. But 'evil' wanted more power and beings were created. Goodness started to overtake unwholesomeness, so the dark side created kilesa to get everyone's mind outside of their body. This created cause and effect, or Heaven and Hell, which, overtime, brought in sickness and death. But we can fight this by tapping into our own power plant. We just have to meditate to find out for ourselves."

We have been asking him questions for over two hours and it is late, about 10:30 PM. There will be more meetings in the future, no doubt, but for tonight this is enough.

## Meeting #7

June 21, 2009 - Ashram

### The Eightfold Noble Path

Today I am sitting with several other international people who have come to see Luang Por. I, once again, am fortunate to be here, listening. We are seated in his Ashram and this Dhamma talk will be in lecture format.

Luang Por is an historian of sorts, and he always tries to connect Dhamma with the listener's personal knowledge and culture. So when he speaks about the Eightfold Path, he talks about it in terms of the Buddha's Indian history and culture, and then tries to connect it to the listener. On a universal scale, the eightfold noble path helps governments and countries to form, but it also helps individual paths to form: Luang Por personalizes the path, so that the listener can understand it on his or her own terms. Luang Por begins:

“Everyone has their own eightfold path. This path is different and unique for each person, because each person is unique. But the universal qualities are the same for everyone and the cyclical pattern is the same, of course. If we say: ‘Do your best each day’, then each ‘best’ will be different for each person because each person has a ‘best’ for him or herself. Given this, as an example, each occupation has a set of goals and responsibilities or expectations that need to be met. Or, each encounter we have with each person we meet has an outcome. This is why in knowing, learning, and understanding the eightfold path, each person will be able to overcome unhappiness and realize the ‘Path’ that they must follow in order to achieve happiness. Isn’t that the point?

“As we age, each of us is adopted into a set of baggage, so to speak. Sociologically, we are, each one of us, members of certain groups: family, education, neighborhood, work, religion, race, gender, age, and on and on. So we have family baggage, and school baggage, and work baggage and all other kinds of baggage to which we set about becoming a part. If we really sat down and studied each one of the groups we belonged to, it would be mind boggling. That is what a sociogram is all about! But what we really need to do is understand two elements, the approach and the practice, and co-join or synthesize them in order to truly understand the eightfold path. In other words, we need to understand what each means, or how it applies to our lives, and then how we practice what we are learning.



“The path begins with Right View, *Samma-Ditthi*. This is also called Right Understanding. On one level, this means that we understand that there is cause and effect: that doing good deeds will reap positive outcomes and that doing bad deeds will reap negative outcomes. On another level, however, this refers to the wisdom of correctly being able to view the reality of the world and life within it for what it truly is. For example, we are able to differentiate between good and bad deeds, right and wrong, ‘boon’ and ‘baap’ or good energy/bad energy, proper and improper behavior. I am certain that you understand what I am saying. Now then, in different social groups, the lines of what is ‘good’ and what is ‘bad’ sometimes become blurred. We should always be aware of what is good and what is bad, but in some educational practices, good (sound) practice is not always adhered to if there are fifty children in the classroom compared to ten in the classroom. So you can see that even with Right View, there can be a variety of ways that people’s ‘view’ can differ or fluctuate.

“Right Intention (Right Thought) comes next, or *Samma Sangkappa*. This refers to the wisdom resulting from having correct thinking and thoughts; ones that are free from sensual desire, anger or ill-will, delusion, manipulation, and exploitation. The question might arise, then, as to who teaches us correct thinking so that our thoughts are free from delusion... because we are all deluded in one way or another, are we not? We work, as we progress along the eightfold path, toward un-deluding ourselves: we work to see reality, and then be able to let even the reality go by. With Right Intention we ultimately want to dedicate ourselves to the attainment of Nirvana.

“Right Speech, or *Samma Vaca*, means to speak with honesty and truthfulness with an endearing or appealing manner. How many times, however, do we hear sarcasm or gossip spoken every day? And how do we change our speech to reflect a true sense of compassion reflecting on those around us? Therefore, we need to refrain from (1) Telling Lies, (2) Speaking Divisively, (3) Speaking harshly, and (4) Gossiping.

“Fourth is *Samma Gammanta* meaning Right Action. This ranges from abstaining from sexual misconduct to killing to stealing to anything that we do that is not reflecting loving kindness to other people. So if we think about ‘right action’ and the way we conduct ourselves, we have to wonder about all of the white-collar crime that happens as well as the violent crime that occurs. If we always want to display right action, then we have to examine ALL actions that people undertake.

“Right Livelihood, or *Samma Ajiva*, is the fifth of the eightfold path. Initially, this refers

## The Eightfold Noble Path For Attaining Dhamma

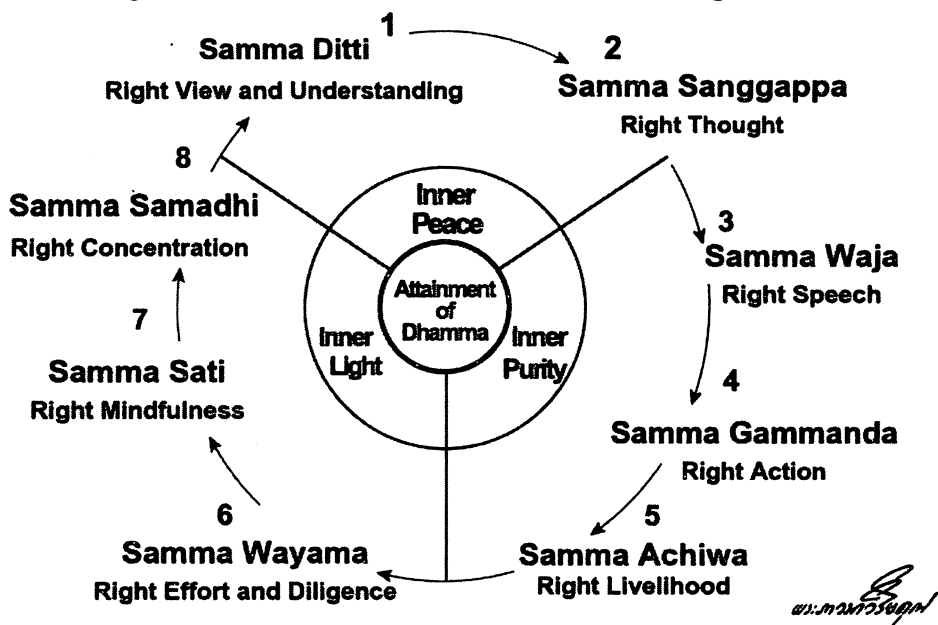


Illustration #3

to earning an honest living that does not hurt us or anyone around us. We neither deceive others nor earn a living by any of the five occupations that are not permitted. That means we must not engage in an occupation that deals with: weapons or armory, the buying or selling of humans, the raising or slaughter of animals for purposes of consumption, addictive substances, and/or poison that is designed to kill. Gambling is also included in this industry. Even though working in such environments might seem exciting, or be lucrative, this type of work can only lead to despair.

“The sixth is *Samma Vayama*, meaning Right Effort. This, of course, is vital to the path itself because it refers to our determination to protect, correct and develop ourselves with the purpose of controlling our mind against the forces that give rise to wrong view, wrong thought, wrong speech, wrong action and wrong livelihood! Right Effort is achieved through continuously and earnestly practicing meditation, which, of course, aids in guarding ourselves from the development of bad habits and also assists in disposing of the bad habits that we already possess. Conducting our life with right effort will create good, new habits and it will also help to maintain the good habits that we already have.

“*Samma Sati*, or Right Mindfulness, refers to correctly maintaining and stilling our mind inside of our self. Not wandering around, in other words. We must always be training ourselves to be careful – not to be reckless. This takes practice, of course, but with practice, we will be able to gain this state. Right Mindfulness encourages us to earnestly and continuously practice meditation to gain further and further progress and insight.

“Now the eighth is Right Concentration, or *Samma Samadhi*. This, of course, is all about meditation. Initially, this refers to correctly and steadily placing the mind in the center of the body, or the center of our very being. If we continuously focus our mind in the practice of meditation, it will lead us to attaining inner brightness which arises from the center of our being. The subsequent result of using this inner brightness from within will be to observe the true nature of the world and life. Simultaneously, we will gain purity, brightness, and calmness. As we repeatedly practice meditation, we will drive the entire cycle forward and eventually, this will lead to Enlightenment.

“So now that we understand the cycle, we need to understand that this does not stop with us going around one cycle, but as we continue to go around and around, and the more we understand it, use it, and meditate on it, the more it will mean to us in our lives. We can then apply what we have learned and become happier people. Our minds will become more refined and eventually, this will lead us to inner peace, inner purity, and inner light. Of course, if we continue to become more refined, we will become enlightened!

“As I said in the beginning of this talk, each person has his or her own sphere or cycle and we all start our journey at different places, in different moods if you will, and at different times of our lives so that we come to understand it in different ways. Because we have all been taught differently, and we have different habits that we have developed throughout our lives, we will be looking at the path from different perspectives and we can come to view this as uniquely our own. Just because we say that we are ‘following the path’, this does not mean we are all in the same path at the same time, or have the same understanding of it. This is why we cannot be critical of one another on our journey, and we must always have love and compassion toward one another, because we never know where each of us is on the path. We must support one another on the individual journey. And, of course, this is why we must always spread loving-kindness to one another before our meditation, after our meditation, and throughout the day. We need to work on our own journey before we can be judgmental of another person’s journey. Right?

“Not only do we have uniquely different journeys, we have to follow each path within

each of our social groups. But, as our understanding becomes more refined, our journey within each group becomes more unified because of our understanding – our Right View. And, in becoming more ‘whole’, we become happier people: more refined, more enlightened.”

Luang Por raises his eyebrow, looks at the group, and sits back smiling.

## Meeting #8

January 03, 2010

Today I am here with Luang Pi Joshua and Luang Pi Anurak. I have just returned to Bangkok and the Wat, after spending the end of 2009 in New York, helping my daughter move into her apartment and begin graduate school. I have been working on several projects while I was there, one of which is a Self-Development program using the teachings of the Five Rooms and the Six Directions. Another is a project for teachers, because Luang Por believes that teachers are the next most important people in the lives of children to their parents. The Wat initiated a project called V-Star that helps teachers teach young people ethical behavior, using meditation and journaling, and this highly successful program is now being started in Bhutan and Mongolia. I have re-written their information journal for young, international people.

My project for teachers is a course that will be offered at colleges and one that is strictly for the teachers themselves. It is called “The Reflective Teacher: Using Meditation, Journaling, and Self-Directed Resolutions to Create a More Effective Learning Environment”. This course has already been approved by a university in Vermont, and we are waiting to see if any teacher signs up for it! I have brought the entire course curriculum for Luang Por to see, and to ask some questions about how we can improve it.

After I present him with some treats from the United States, we talk about general topics; but I must say that with Luang Por, you have to get down to business pretty quickly because he is such a busy monk.

He has just moved his Ashram from one location to this current one in order to make room for a huge conference center that is being constructed. They have had to disassemble his old Ashram, which was so beautiful, and I feel pretty sorry for him, but he cannot get attached to anything. So I think it best that I do not dwell on the topic – because this is my hang-up, not his.

Getting down to some seriousness, I ask, “How can we help all of the teachers?”

“It depends, of course, on how they were raised by the parents. Each person is different, even within families, raised with the same parents, in the same house, having the same education, same food on the table – everything! Same-same. But are they the same? NO! Each one is different, because of different kamma.

“And what is Kamma? Kamma is action with intention. Am I always being mindful of what I am doing? Am I using my mind and listening to my mind? Am I listening to my outside voice or my inside voice? The external voice is one that is influenced by kilesa, because kilesa wants to draw us outside of ourselves. But our internal voice is one that is always compassionate, loving, kind, and one that would never hurt anyone or anything. This is the voice of peace and spiritual reasoning. If that voice dictates anything harmful to others, then it is not our internal voice we are listening to, but a voice that is hurtful or evil. And that is *baap*, negative energy that is being heard. But if we meditate, then kilesa has a tough time going inside. In true meditation, only boon is created, and therefore, people need to meditate every day in order to create good energy around them.

“Remember, of course, that each of us is body and mind. When we are born, *Kamma* is ‘attached’ to us; in other words, we have certain dispositions to a variety of characteristics. But we are not all ‘*kamma*’ if you know what I mean. About 50% is *kamma*, and the other 50% is given to choice. Perhaps for some, this is free-will, or where free-will plays its part. But in reality, this is where we make conscious decisions in our lives. We create this 50% ourselves! If we drink and smoke, or we spend all of our time and money gambling, or having indiscriminate sexual relationships, then that 50% we are creating is going to have a detrimental effect on us in this life and in our next life. But if we have compassion on others, and an optimistic view, and help others by doing good deeds, then we will not only have a better life this time by creating good energy, but we are storing up good energy for the next life, which, of course, we carry with us – that 50%.

“Because of this, when we teach, we are teaching all different people with all different types of kamma. And the teachers have their own kamma. That is why it is so important for everyone to have the same ‘mission’ in the educational process. We all have to come together on the same page, so to speak, and the teachers have to have a common view, a common goal. Everyone has to know that we have a common view on the common outcome.

“What kind of person do we want this young man or woman to be when they are finished their education with us? That is the question. When we find those common characteristics of honesty, integrity, compassion, mindfulness, and equanimity, we have a common outcome. (*The four embracing virtues of friendliness, compassion, gladness with others in their good fortune and happiness, and equanimity extended to all beings in the six directions – the whole world of sentient existence. Kalama Sutta*) Then we build a curriculum around those characteristics that will not only teach children the subject matter,

but teach them how to respond to everyone around them using those characteristics. We have an educational environment that is conducive to learning – and a joyful and peaceful one as well.

“All of this, of course, knowing that each child is different because they have different sets of significant others; they have different people in the **Six Directions** that I am always talking about! But they have one commonality, and that is the educational process. So one of those six directions they share in common. Perhaps they share more, or they will share more in common, but for right now, they have one.

“The teachers, of course, have to be trained in meditation because meditation helps them be better teachers! The teachers must strive to always be aware of using those characteristics as well. They must strive to live their own lives ethically and honestly, following their own eightfold path. Hopefully, they will teach because they love to teach, not simply because they need a paycheck ... although this is, of course, important. Teachers have to have great virtue to teach, because teaching is a gift to others. Every day, they must give something of themselves to their classroom environment, something they love. This is difficult enough, but it is more difficult if they do not meditate. Meditation helps teachers be more calm, more thoughtful, more patient, and more understanding toward their students. Meditation helps them relate to their students better. This creates great energy in the classroom and, in turn, the students pick up on this energy and use it to learn more efficiently. Meditation simply creates a better classroom environment that has better learning capabilities.

“So we ask the questions, What? Why? And How? In educating children, what are we doing? Are we really educating them, or just providing them with a place to go? What does education really mean? Do we really educate them in an ethical way, or do we simply try to teach the subject we were hired to teach? Then we ask Why? Why are we educating them? In order to be better people, or to provide workers for the society? There is a great difference between the two, is there not? If we want happy, peaceful people, then we should be educating them to think for themselves, to meditate, and to provide opportunities for them to help others. If we want those people to flourish, how do we do this?

“The V-Star project is one of the ways we can help educate children in a positive way. This project has now been a resource for over 500,000 students, and the teachers who teach them. It makes the students happier and more productive, bringing them together

with a common goal of ethical behavior. They are happy! And they meditate to become better people. They are all trying to be good people. 'Bad' people, of course, will try to fix everyone around them. 'Good' people realize that they have to help themselves first. That, of course, takes many lifetimes."

And with this statement, Luang Por laughs, and looks at me. I look back. "You," I smile, and look at him closely, "are a monk who is pure boon, aren't you?"

"Yes," He says, with the slightest hesitation, and gives me the twinkle. Then he starts to laugh out loud, long and heartfelt.

LP Anurak and LP Josh open their eyes wide and shake their heads at my audacity and then they, too, start to laugh.



## Meeting #9

17 January 2010 – Ashram Bandita

Today, a group has gathered together in the new Ashram to speak with Luang Por about The Nature of the Mind. Normally, guests gather in an outer room and when they are all together, they are invited to sit in the “inner room” of which there are several depending on how many guests are in the meeting. After they are seated, they quiet their minds by meditating. On this day, I have been invited to hear Luang Por talk with a group of international meditators who have come to seek his wisdom on this particular topic, which just happens to be one of his favorites. This is a topic that he has discussed at various times, to various groups, but the following is a super condensed version of this particular day and it includes some of the other notes I have taken on the topic when I have listened to him speak previously:

Luang Por enters the room, smiles at his audience, quietly sits on his dais, and adjusts his robes. He begins:

“We must first distinguish between ‘brain’ and ‘mind’ because there is always confusion between the two. The brain is an organ of the body. It acts as a filter to the information that goes to the mind. The mind is located in the middle of the body and, so, when we meditate, we always meditate focusing on our ‘mind’ in the middle of the body.

“Now the Nature of the Mind is naturally pure and clear as a diamond. If it is disturbed by emotions such as love, hatred, fear and delusion, it will be clouded. The mind’s color is darkened just as adding color into water creates a false perception of the water. All of these emotions affect the mind and we don’t see things clearly. The mind is the master of the body and it directs the body to react. At the same time, it perceives everything through the brain, nerves, and all of the five senses.

“By practicing meditation, you can see the mind. The mind is a clear spherical shape. It is generally about the size of an eyeball, but some people can expand their minds so large until it simply gets out into the universe. But you can prove it by yourself if you meditate!

“The Human Being is made up of two components: Body and Mind. [*NOTE: Actually, the mind is made up of three things, but that will be explained later, in another lecture, in a more advanced Dhamma lesson.*] There are four physical and coarse elements

perfectly mixed together in the body: earth, water, wind and fire. The earth element is the solid component of flesh, skin, and bone. The water element is the liquid – blood and plasma, and so on. Wind, of course, is the gas. And fire is the energy, generating warmth and heat.

“But what is the mind? The mind is a refined element and is invisible to the physical eyes. It is the ability to KNOW, or the knowing element of knowledge inside of the body. It resides only in a living human body. If it leaves the body, the body will become a corpse and the mind will search for a new place to be reborn.

“And what is the structure of the mind? The mind is in a spherical form that consists of four overlapping layers. Each layer is clearer and more refined from the outside in. The first outermost layer is perception: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching; the second layer is memorization; the third layer is thinking or awareness; and the fourth layer is knowing or mindfulness. So it looks something like this...”

Luang Por has an overhead projector by his side, and draws, on the piece of paper that is placed on the overhead, the following diagram:

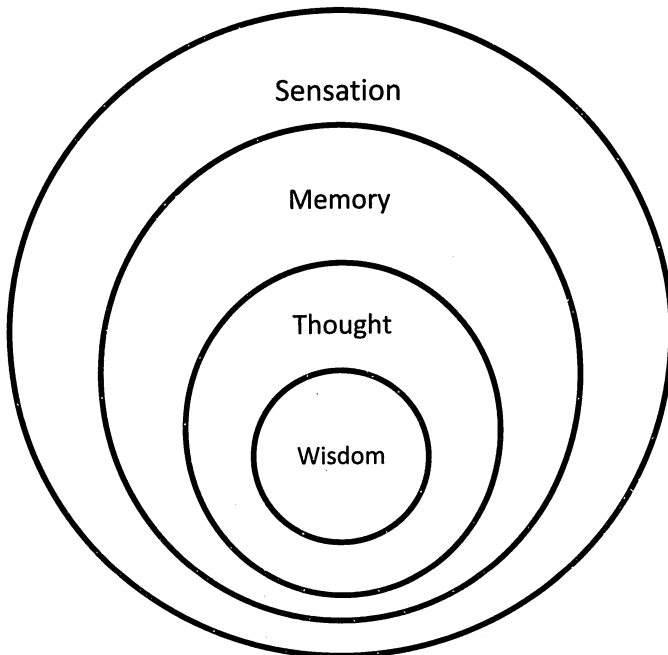


Illustration #4

“Our brain (the five senses actually) takes in information in this way: Perception, Memorization, Thinking, Knowing or Cognition. Perception, of course, starts the process by an action happening to us, or by us simply taking in information due to what is happening in the world around us. The word comes from the Latin *preceptio* meaning to receive, or collect. So we first become aware of, or recognize, the action, or thought.

“Then, we memorize this ‘thing’ or ‘action’ – and we do this by committing it to the next level of our mind; we learn it by heart so some would say. Sometimes we learn things by rote, or learn it by repetition, and this rote learning can take us some time – like learning our multiplication tables. Other things, we learn quickly because we need to remember a telephone number or a person’s name or face because it will be important information for us to use at some future time. Either way, we memorize these things.

“Next, we form some opinion on the thing or action or thought itself. Usually we place a value judgment on this as well. In other words, we start to actually think about it, and thinking about it means that we consider it, or reflect on it, or reason-contemplate the thing or the action. This level is a much deeper or higher level of the mind, and some people do this very little – this thinking. Many people just memorize things that they need to know, but they really don’t reason WHY they need to know it, or what it actually means to them to know what they know. We are in a world now that really doesn’t WANT us to think and, therefore, we are not taught to think. But that is another talk for us, isn’t it?” He smiles.

“The final, and smallest, sphere of the mind is the knowing or cognition sphere, but this is not the most accurate description because it is really Meta-cognition, or the awareness of the awareness of the mind. This is easy to see when you meditate, but not as easy to describe to you. When you reach the stage in meditation in which you become aware of this, and you can allow your awareness to ‘speak’, then you will gradually speak with more wisdom. Just as when you practice the eightfold noble path.

“War and conflict are examples of wrong perception, memorization, thinking, and knowing. In other words, war is wrong ‘mind’. But how do we change this? We change it by keeping our mind pure at all times: clean and clear.

“The characteristics of the mind are many: (1) It is not a physical body, but it forms a bright sphere. (2) It can think only one thought at a time and it perceives only one feeling at a time. (3) It is born with a body. It must reside in a body and once it leaves the body,

the body will die. (4) It likes to travel fast and far. The speed of light is 186,000 miles a second, so it takes 8 minutes to see from the earth to the sun. But our mind perceives the sun instantly. (5) The mind is very difficult to be seen simply because most people don't take the time to meditate, in order to actually see it. (6) The mind can switch off and on a million times within one finger snap while the A/C switch can only switch off and on 50 times a second. (7) If we allow our thoughts to wander away from meditation, it is very hard to control our mind in order to bring it back - so it is better to prevent it from wandering in the first place. (8) The mind will think of the things that it is not supposed to think of - mostly about sensual pleasure, such as using the five senses. (9) The mind is very difficult to still - like monkey mind - and our thoughts work incessantly to keep us from meditating. (10) The mind is difficult to maintain in goodness - or in loving compassion - and it easily changes topics, and desires. (11) The mind is hard to control because it wants to think bad thoughts. (12) The mind is self-luminous but this disappears as a person grows older. (13) The mind can be trained indefinitely and endlessly.

"Here are some cautions regarding the mind: The mind, under the influence of defilements or kilesa, will be forced to: (1) think what it should not be thinking about, (2) switch from one thought to another very quickly before it finishes the previous thought, and (3) become darker and more coarse.

"Now what is defilement? Defilement is a kind of refined filthy element. It is manifested in the mind since our birth, just like sediment settles in the base of the water bowl. The more defilement we have, the darker the mind will become. It is an eternal enemy of the mind, just as rust is to steel, or disease is to the body. The threats from defilements are many and varied. First, we must remember that we are born with it. Defilement forces the mind to think, speak, and act badly, thereby forming bad habits. Defilement does not die with us, but remains within the mind and moves from body to body during our rebirth. So, defilement and bad habits follow us into our next life.

"So, we wonder: How do we get rid of defilements? We must have the right understanding. If we blame others for our mistakes, we are fighting against the wrong enemy. We must control our mind by not looking outside of the body (even for meditation practices) but stay inside of the body. If we look outside, we get 'hooked' because our eyes are simply built that way. The moment we open our eyes, we are looking outside, instead of inside. So we tend to get 'hooked' by our environment: jewelry, perfume, beauty, and so on. Do not get hooked. Stay inside. Meditate.

“In conclusion, the sufferings of all beings are caused by succumbing to the influence of our accumulated defilements - from the past until this moment. We open our eyes (all of our senses are open) → we come into contact with our external world → we feel drawn toward specific people, places, and things → we perform actions based upon those feelings or we desire specific results → we experience the consequences of those actions. Actions create results. We experience suffering because our actions are based upon desires (or desired results), or emotional attachment to the things outside of ourselves. As long as we still have desires, or desires for external objects, then there is no end to this cycle. Therefore, destroying all defilement is the solution for real happiness and this should be the ultimate goal of each human being. Defilement is what causes us to feel, or experience, desire and because we identify with this feeling of desire, we think that we need to act upon it, because it is ‘us’.

“In order to destroy defilements we must do three things: (1) Perform good actions, (2) Stop all poor habits or actions that we do, (3) Meditate. All of these create boon which is simply pure energy that gets out into the universe to destroy defilement. Happily, the more good energy we put out there, the more it comes right back to us. So, if we do not think improper thoughts, act incorrectly, or speak harshly, we will create pure energy. If we do good things, we create pure energy. And, if we meditate we create pure energy. The more we meditate, the more boon, and the more boon, the more successful we will become at meditating. What goes around, comes around! We do reap what we sow!

“Finally, can we ‘know’ without using the brain at all? Is it a straight line from the brain to the mind? In Samsara, a person’s brain acts for him and he really is not aware that his mind is functioning in the four areas that it has. He THINKS, and therefore, he is. The notion that ‘We are what we think’ only contains us in the cycle of birth-rebirth and in the cycle of Samsara. But our mind really uses our brain as an office – receiving sensory information for the mind to use. As we meditate, and gradually become aware of the difference between brain and mind, then we realize that we are actually speaking our brain-thoughts and not our mind-thoughts. For the advanced meditator, all speaking comes from the mind. And that, my friends, is the beginning of wisdom! So, an ‘equation’ might look like this...”

Again, he draws on the paper and places it on the overhead.

- |                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| 1. In Samsara:               | Person's Brain $\leftrightarrow$ P/M/T/K |
| 2. Initially with mind:      | Brain $\leftarrow$ P/M/T/K<br>↓<br>Mind  |
| 3. Advanced (in Meditation): | Mind $\leftrightarrow$ P/M/T/K           |

P = Perception/Sensation

M = Memorization or Memory

T = Thinking or Thought

K = Knowing/Cognition

“Remember, we are not what we think with our brain because thinking with our brain can confuse us due to Samsara. We should not allow our brain thinking to dictate everything we do, but we should ‘think’ with our mind. Samara traps us – contains us – and forces us to see only the reality that it shows us. This is done through our habits, so we have to change our habits, but as we all know, habits are not easy to change! So we should be thinking with our mind: Everything we do, everything we are, comes from that source. We simply need to clean our mind, get rid of our defilement, and then we will be functioning with wisdom.

“If we think with our brain, we allow Samsara to have control of us, our action, and our habits. In order to discover who we really are, we have to still our mind in meditation. With a still mind, we allow who we really are to surface or come into realization. We allow ourselves to become aware of ourselves. In doing this, we come to realize the greater connection we have to one another and we allow ourselves to use ‘information’ in a clear and effective way. Thinking with our mind releases us from the matrix.”

Luang Por smiles, adjusts his robes, sits back in a more relaxed position, and asks if there are any questions.

## Meeting #10

04 February 2010

I am here today with a friend and volunteer to the Wat, Jane Welfar. She has been helping various programs here for the past three years, and literally gave up her life in England to become a volunteer. Now, she comes to Luang Por to say goodbye for awhile, because she needs to return to the UK.

After our little mini-goodbye, we are delighted to have another Dhamma teaching from him. Although we are somewhat surprised that he would be gracious enough to spend the time with us, this is his calling, as you well know.

He asks his assistant to get us some pens and notebooks, and when we have them in hand, he begins:

“The real problem of living is not an economic one. As I have said in the past, we all consist of body and mind. Our body is composed of four basic elements: water, earth, wind, and fire. These four elements are not pure but decay every moment of every day. We know that our cells die all of the time and, of course, they must repair themselves over the course of time. Because we have to bring these ‘repair’ elements in from the outside – in other words, we have to eat, we have to clothe our bodies, we have to drink – we know that the elements may not be pure. So we are constantly in a state of decay, and we have to constantly repair the elements.

“It is shallow thinking if we just ‘repair’ our body without thinking of the elements we are repairing the body with – in other words, we need to think of five things when we are replenishing the elements: quality, quantity, technique, timing, and environment.

“There are, of course, two stages to this: When we are children, and when we are grown. In the first stage, as children, we depend solely on our mother, our parents, or our guardian. As soon as our umbilical cord is cut, we become independent. But we are not really independent, are we? This is really our ‘poorest’ time because we have no knowledge, no power, and no means to replenish our elements by ourselves. We are, in fact, required to be ‘feed’. But really, as soon as the umbilical cord is cut, we need to be able to help ourselves. Even though our mother replenishes our elements, we also need to realize that we need to rely on ourselves. And, even though the Law of Kamma actually starts in the womb, we could say that the Law of Kamma begins when the umbilical cord is cut. If

anything is wrong in the womb with the five elements, then our health will be affected. All of our habits are affected by this early process and continue to affect us throughout our lives. This is why creating good habits when we are young is so important.

“If we have bad habits, then we are in big trouble. Even if people tell us how to change, what do we change? Or, even if we have the willingness to change, we may not have the opportunity to do so. Habits are very difficult to change even if we know that we will lose everything by not changing them! But, by not changing them, we only continue and contribute to bad kamma. This continues to punish us all of the time. But, as we grow older, the opportunities become less and less, and then, who can help us? If all of the opportunities are lost, then the chances of improvement become less and less.

“For me, Khun Yai said, ‘you ordain!’ because this was her way of telling me how I could change my own bad habits!”

And Luang Por laughs his wonderful laugh.

“Some people, of course, accumulate good or bad habits from past lives. The good habits that we create in this life (because from our last life we can do nothing!) begin when we are in our mother’s womb. But if the mother’s habits are bad, then watch out! The mother needs to practice good habits for this life. If she doesn’t practice good habits and meditate all the time, then our own life will be in trouble! Therefore, we must always practice good habits, meditate, and make the resolution to be born in a good family the next time.

“When the umbilical cord is cut, our habits start. Our mother (or parent/guardian) controls the making of those habits and, therefore, they program us with their own habits.”  
[Note: He adds here that we must all meditate in order to see the cause and effect of how our habits are built. Meditation, of course, causes us to see our defilements (our bad habits) and that gives us the opportunity to see a way to change those bad habits. This is important because this really is the start to the process of taking responsibility for our own actions: We meditate and recognize what we need to change, and we meditate to help make that change possible.]

“Now, then, let’s talk about quality: Most people only understand physical quality, not spiritual quality. Take, for example, breakfast food. First, how did we acquire it? Did we steal it or buy it? How was it prepared? Are we eating it while we are angry, happy,



or frustrated? Feelings are important! Are we giving thanks for that food? Are we feeling gratitude when we are eating? These feelings are acquired, or learned, from generation to generation. Do we pray before we eat? We should pray for our life, for the strength to do goodness, not simply pray without thinking, or for things that are simply material. We should pray for all of the goodness that we can do because of our food. This, of course, causes a chain reaction. When we understand this, then we understand the universal continuity and connectedness.

“In order to see the chain reaction of the universe, we need to meditate. If we meditate, then we know.

“The importance of the parents is due to the fact that they are the habit-builders in our life: they are the people who cause our habits to be good ones or bad ones. Here is an example: If we are feed too much food, what will happen to us? We will grow up to be lazy because we have always had everything that we have ever wanted. We are spoiled. Perhaps our mother did not mean to do this, and is feeding us so much because she loves us, but in reality, she is causing us harm because we are learning that every time we want something, we just need to whine and we will get it. This is, indeed, a bad habit and one that will be a detrimental one when we grow up. Let’s suppose, however, that we are not feed enough: That we have very little food when we are young, and we are always hungry. What kind of adult will we be? Well, we will be greedy and anxious. This is another terrible habit: We may grow up wanting what we cannot have, always desiring more and more and more, never being happy with what we have! And, so, a mother’s decision on when and how to feed her child becomes a very important one. Every routine that we learn when we are a child creates a habit that can be very difficult to overcome. The habits of parents and/or guardians, both good and bad, are imposed on children.

“About 50% of kamma that a person has comes from their past life, and about 50% comes from this life. This is why it is important to meditate and to change the bad habits into good ones. This is also why developing good habits right from the beginning is so important and, of course, why having good parents (who also have good habits) is so important.

“To go back a little bit... The problem of living is twofold: First, our basic habits should include three aspects, (1) Discipline (such as cleanliness), (2) Respect (such as keeping an open mind to accept the goodness from everywhere), and (3) Patience. Secondly, how do we deal with the four basic needs I just talked about: food, clothing, shelter, and

medicine? There are five aspects to this. The first, as I just said, is quantity. How much do we have? If we have too much, then we are spoiled and careless with our things, and we become careless adults. If we have too little, we do not share our things with others and therefore become greedy adults. With everything that we have to do, there is a lesson involved, and a habit can develop out of that.

“The second is quality, or the quality of the things we have. We do not just consider how much we have to eat or how many material things we have, but we must consider the quality of those things. Do we eat anything that comes along, or do we eat the best things that we can obtain? Are those foods full of chemicals, or are they the best foods for our bodies? This same thinking goes for education, living, working, friends, and on and on.

“The third aspect is Technique. How are those things prepared for us? Are they done with great care, and do we respect the way we are doing them?

“Fourth is timing. Do we eat too often? Do we not eat enough? Timing is important because we need to be able to fit into our schedule all of those things that are most important for living a good life filled with Dhamma. So we need to build good habits so that we not only meditate each day, but we do good deeds, and teach those things to other people, including our family and friends.

“The fifth aspect is environment. Our environment, of course, is a vital part of everything we do, not only when we are growing up and maturing, but where we choose to live when we are adults and have families of our own. Where we live is vital to the kind of person we become. We should develop friendships with the best people we can who have ethical behavior and good morals. The environment we surround ourselves with is imperative to our own development because if, for example, we choose a livelihood that is inherently corrupt, then no matter how ethical we might be when we start, we will become corrupt at the end.

“And so, if our basic habits are not developed properly when we are young, then when we go to school and are living closely, studying closely, with people who do not have the same values that we have, and we are not being reinforced with good habits, then our problems follow us into adulthood and then they become economic problems. These people do not know what their duties are, or how to live together in groups, or even what their duties are to their parents or society. And, so, these bad habits affect everyone around us.

“We are like flowers that need to be watered every day. We need good soil and good water in which to grow. Of course our Kamma plays a role in this, but we can overcome some of our bad kamma by changing our bad habits, doing good deeds, and meditating every day. If we do not meditate properly, then we cannot discern the right path.

“We need to help ourselves first before we help others. We need to make our resolutions so that we have good parents in our next life. This is a critical part of our meditation and an essential part of making resolutions each day. If we have good parents in the next life, then our journey into enlightenment will be fulfilled quickly. But we need to see the potential Buddha within us to understand our Kamma – and that means we need to meditate. Every day.”

And now, Luang Por’s secretary has come in to tell him that other people are waiting to speak with him. He has graciously given us two hours of his time this afternoon. But before we leave, he says:

“Teach your daughters how to meditate. Just like this. Breathe in through your left hand, center, and out through your right foot. Breathe in through your right hand, center, and out through your left foot. Breathe in through the top of your head, center, and release. Always center of the center.” Luang Por is demonstrating as he is talking to us. He is still seated on the dais, because others are coming into the room as we are leaving. But he says: “This is a very easy way to instantly find your center, so easy!”

And he smiles brilliantly at us, knowing how powerful this new “instant” centering instruction will be for us and for others that we teach: Knowing we will, indeed, pass this along to our daughters.

Luang Por Dattajeevo is the man.

## Meeting #11

27 February 2010 – Ashram Bandita

LP Joshua has been in Korat for the past six weeks helping with a massive ordination project that the Wat initiated, and when he returns, he brings back two turtle-planters for Luang Por. We fill them now with a beautiful grass that symbolizes long life (turtles are also a symbol for long life) and call to see if Luang Por was available to see us.

When we get to the Ashram, Luang Pi Anurak is there. I have also brought along a writing that I have done so he can check it to see if the Dhamma is accurate – or what Luang Por means to say given the fact that English is not his first language. LP Anurak's spoken English is just about perfect. It happens that Luang Por is in a meeting, but when he sees us, he asks us to come in.

When he sees the turtles, he just laughs and laughs. I want to describe his laugh for you because it is so infectious. It is deep, like a belly laugh, and really jolly. Like you know that he means it. This man does not laugh easily, so when he does, it is from his heart and his mind. He closes his eyes narrowly and his eyes then look as if they are a passageway into his most hidden inner self. It is wonderful and amazing both at the same time.

He asks LP Josh about his trip up north and so LP Josh tells him several stories about the men ordaining and about the events that occurred at the Wat where he was staying. There seems to be a great deal of alcoholism amongst the village people, and the idea of ordaining and going without alcohol for any length of time is a bit troublesome to many of the men. Additionally, every man is needed to work the rice fields, so ordaining puts a strain on the family's resources.

We also talk about a meditation session we attended that morning which was new and different for both of us – not that it was bad, just different. So we talked about breathing and inside meditation and how wonderful the Dhammakaya meditation is for its ease and brilliance at getting people to focus on their own center.

“The best meditation is to focus on the middle of the middle, the center of the center. Other meditation techniques are ok to start, but then you need to practice center of center. Always center of center. Then you will find out everything for yourself. No need to ask people questions because the answers are always there for you.”

Suzanne Jeffrey

We have taken up an hour of his time. "Remember," He says, "Center of center." He raises his eyebrows, looking at me with a half smile.

"I know," I say, "I know. Center of Center," shaking my head yes and smiling back.

## Meeting #12

28 February 2010

Today, a meeting has been planned for all of the people, and the monks, who are the organizers of the Peace Revolution and the monks who run the Middle Way Retreats. The Peace Revolution, as I have said previously, is primarily for young adults, aged 18 to 30, and is an on-line self-development program along with a meditation program, to encourage young people to improve their lives. They have just completed a two-week conference that brought about 35 people together from around the world. After participating in the Conference in 2009, I decided not to do it again this year due to all the other projects I was working on with the Wat.

The Middle Way Retreats are actually for people of any age and they are organized to help people learn about the Dhammakaya Meditation Technique. There are several retreat centers used for this program that are located north of Chiang Mai – they include, in fact, some of the most beautiful places that I can ever remember visiting. The retreats are pretty much free to anyone who wants to take them: Well, about \$100 US for transportation from Bangkok and the cost of food that is consumed while they are on retreat. The retreats run for one week, and the Wat organizes them once a month. Additionally, many of the monks travel around the world teaching the meditation technique, and they are all part of the Middle Way Team.

So ... we are all gathered together for this mega-meeting. There are 14 monks and 3 women – one woman from the Peace Revolution, one from Middle Way, and me. Three of the monks are with the Peace Revolution, and 11 are working either for Middle Way in Thailand, or for other centers around the world.

The monks are seated in a curved semi-circle in front of Luang Por's desk, and the two women and I are seated to the side closest to his left hand. Since it will all be spoken in Thai, I have decided to use my "channeling" technique, and channel Luang Por. (Ok. To be fair, I just sit and listen and try to figure out what he is saying.) I will then compare my notes with LP Josh, to see how accurate I am! This would be kind of fun, actually, if it were not so intense.

Luang Por is super serious when he walks in. Here is why: For the past 40 years, Luang Por has dedicated his life to studying and sharing the Dhammakaya Meditation Technique. Currently, there are many centers worldwide, yet these centers were founded

predominantly by Thai people, and cater to the Thai population. Luang Por begins by saying that even though there are centers around the world, if the Wat really wants to gauge its' success, we need to know how many local people participate in these centers. In looking through this lens, the Wat has not been as successful as it could be. Luang Por is truly concerned about reaching out to the local people in each country. As in any large organization, there are now many monks who have come into the Wat after its' founding forty years ago. These monks are now heads of various departments who have developed their own individual ideas and programs. Luang Por's concern in this meeting centers on refocusing the staff on the two objectives of the Wat: (1) World Peace Through Inner Peace, and (2) teaching people of all religions the Dhammakaya Meditation Technique.

Luang Por begins:

“Today, I would like to speak with you about refocusing our attention on the true philosophy of the founding of the Wat. How can people get along in this world if we cannot? There is too much garbage going on, and everyone on this international team needs to be here, at the same time. You need to be hearing the same thing at the same time which is why I have called you all to this meeting. How can we reach the goal of World Peace through Inner Peace so that everyone gets along in this world if they do not meditate? You all should have the same focus! Luang Pu had that vision and we have that vision – the vision of World Peace. But if the people at the Wat do not have peace among themselves, how can we expect others to have it, and how can we spread it around the world?

“You don't even know that you don't know. You never ask Why? You never ask How? You only want to know What: What has been done? What are other people doing? What I am going to do? Are you even reaching out to people? Look at Singapore (the Dhammakaya Center in Singapore) and how successful that is! That is because they reach out to all the people there and they do not just depend on the Thai population that lives in the city. The monks there speak the language, and go out into the city to become a part of that city. And how are you all doing that? How are you reaching out to people so that more and more people are learning about meditation? It does not matter what religion they are: All that matters is that you try to reach out to people to help them learn to meditate!

“Perfect meditation is based on seven factors, and it all starts with Right View. People

must have the right view in order to start, and to understand, how to bring about world peace. We know, of course, that we are all made of body, mind, and Dhamma, and without Dhamma, we cannot be successful. But all of the problems we encounter are because we do not have the right view. So how do we get people to the right view? How do we get people to listen, and to apply it to their lives? How do we teach the right view?" Luang Por stops and looks at me, eyes wide, smiling.

"Right meditation depends on people following the eightfold noble path – every part of it – every component. Because following the eight fold noble path leads to understanding the Dhamma. And where is the Dhamma? Within you! Not outside or somewhere that you can see it.

"Each person, of course, has their own eightfold path to follow because each person is unique. How do we teach all of the different qualities of right view? By teaching them meditation! Different cultures have different understandings of the eightfold path, but it is still the eightfold path! And it is still the same meditation technique! We can have many cultures, and many languages, but the message and the meditation are the same: center of center, middle of middle!

"There is no compromise! We have to teach Dhamma to the world. But how do we do that when we ourselves are talking with our backs to one other, rather than actually facing each other! The culture may change, but English is English, no matter what city it is spoken in – Singapore, Hong Kong, New York, or London. Dhamma is Dhamma!

"As I said, we are composed of body, mind, and Dhamma. The body contains the four elements that cannot be changed. The elements are both inside and outside. The mind is our knowing element that contains defilements unless we meditate and try to clean this element. But the Dhamma, well, the Dhamma is for you to reach out and teach it to the world. You all are the missing element that needs to go forth. You are the same as nutrition, because you are feeding people Dhamma. But let's just look at that. Here's a simple loaf of bread. [*Note: He draws on the paper that is placed on the projector.*] Now, how did you get the money to buy the bread? Did you, in fact, buy the bread, or did you steal the bread? You can see that the method of getting this nutrition is not the same. What do we aim to do with it when we get it? Are we eating it by ourselves, or are we sharing it? Are we angry, or are we smiling, when we buy the bread and eat it? And that is just a simple loaf of bread. Everything that we do while we interact with our environment and the things in our environment are important, because the end product



can lead us to a perfectly balanced mind. In any culture or society, if they don't support the eightfold path, it is a throw-away. All cultures need to have Respect, Patience, and Discipline because that is how we arrive at wisdom, and a wise culture will be a peaceful one.

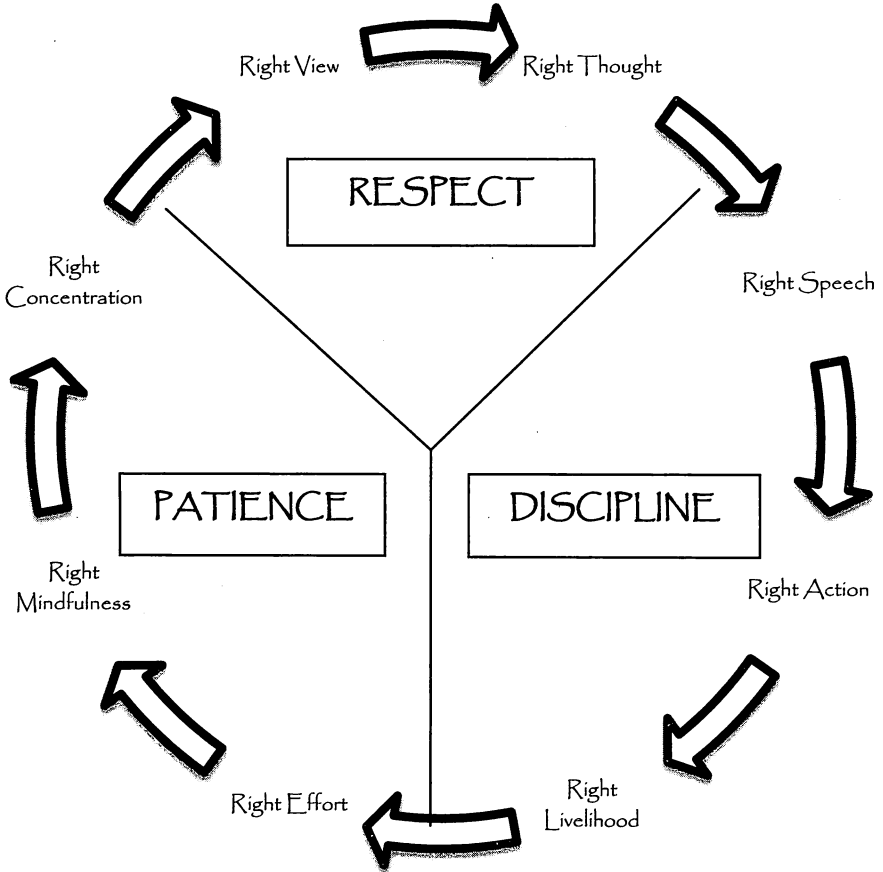


Illustration #5

“In any culture, it is really all about balance. In order to obtain wisdom, we need respect. And in order to obtain respect we have to have the right view, because it all begins and ends with the right view. If you follow the wheel, we need right speech, action, and livelihood to obtain Discipline. Effort, Mindfulness, and Concentration will give us Patience. And we continue around the wheel, developing each pathway in order to lead us to inner wisdom.

“Through meditation, we learn that we need to follow the eightfold path in order to meditate more profoundly and to continually improve. Every part of this path supports the other. For example, Right View supports thought, mindfulness, and effort. Right thought supports, mindfulness, effort, and view. And so on and so on. Each path supports the others in the wheel. And it will all support better meditation. But a person cannot go out drinking, smoking, and behaving poorly just because they meditate. Even better, following the precepts will lead people to better meditation.

“So, it is your job in the projects that you are building, to teach the eightfold path and the meditation technique through helping people understand how habits are developed: and that, of course, is through the teachings of the Five Rooms and the Six Directions. Every part of the eightfold path has to do with these two teachings. But it all starts with the Right View. And that means that every one of you have to have the Right View as well.”

With that, he sits back, looks at the monks with narrow eyes and a partial smile, and straightens up his paperwork. There are no questions. Everyone pays their respects to him as he gets up and leaves the room. It is always confusing for me because I, as a woman, have to get on my knees and bow three times to Luang Por and the other monks, whereas the monks simply stand up as he is leaving... so, on occasion, there is some awkwardness. But I just do my thing, and then carefully back up and step away from the monks, being careful not to touch them or their robes.

## Meeting #13

04 March 2010 – International Buddhist Association Building

Luang Por has agreed to meet with the members of the Peace Revolution Conference for a Dhamma talk and a question/answer session. We are, therefore, seated in a conference room in seminar-style, meaning all the chairs are facing forward toward the table and chair where Luang Por will sit. There are about 50 people in the room, although not all of them are members of the Peace Revolution – simply people who have heard that Luang Por will be speaking and have come to listen. About 30 are from the Peace Revolution.

The meeting is interesting because I like to observe the behavior of people when they meet Luang Por. Because the people here are not Thai, there is some confusion as he enters the room with his English-speaking assistant. The people who do know the protocol will bow in respect. Those who do not know, simply sit there, talking with one another.

Luang Por starts with a question: “How is your meditation experience?”

The crowd, perhaps because a super-meditator is asking them about their own meditation experience, gives no response.

“Regardless of whether you are a male or a female, you are made of two parts, body and mind. Your brain is part of your body but you need to pay attention to both parts. You usually don’t see your mind but that doesn’t mean you will never see it. When the mind becomes bright, you can see it. But in this instance, you need to prove it yourself by meditating! If you don’t try to prove it yourself, you are simply a stubborn person.” He smiles.

“In reality, people are made up of body, mind, and Dhamma. This seems to be Buddhism by definition, but Dhamma is ‘pure nature’. It is the purest part of our human nature. When we meditate, we see the sphere of Dhamma. It will become visible with further training, but don’t believe me, prove it for yourself!

“What I would like to talk about today is what we meet in everyday life, and today I would like to look at it closely. First, the body. Why do we eat? Why do we breathe? If we say ‘...because we don’t want to die too quickly’ ... that answer is too simple: it is not a wise answer. When I was in school about fifty years ago, the teacher told me

to eat because of energy and repair and growth. We cannot, of course, argue with that. However, when we meditate, we have a greater insight because our mind is clearer and our view becomes more profound. When we meditate, we will see that our bodies are made up of four elements: These are the ancient elements of earth, water, fire, and wind. These elements are not pure, but impure, and because of this, we have problems.

“Every minute in our lives about 300 million cells in our body die and we need to constantly need to repair these cells. We breathe – the wind element – to repair that part of us. Food is the earth element, water for the water element, and clothing for the fire element – to keep us warm so we do not deplete this element. What do we learn from this? Every moment of our life, we are dying. And at what age do we start to get old? When we are born. Every moment is one step closer to the grave. Because of our impurities, we are a built-in time bomb for our existence. Each of us has impurities, so we have to keep on trying to repair our cells all of our lives. This is at the foundation of our life. Even though we sit around with a good life, we might not feel good. This is why sometimes the doctor cannot find anything wrong with us when we complain about something, or we have an ill feeling. We might sing Happy Birthday to one another but underneath, the cells are dying.

“Now suppose our elements are not of high quality. Then, more than those 300 million cells die. Perhaps you have had impure food, for example. What is impurity? Generally speaking, we think about nutrition – and pure means no virus, no bacteria, no preservatives. But that is limited. If we look at a single plate of food, it may be pure in terms of nutrition, but then you have to think about the ethics that are involved with that plate of food. Did you buy it? Did you steal it? It may have the same nutrition, but the ethics involved are very different. Suppose you are angry when you eat it, or suppose you use the energy for something unethical after you eat it. Is it wholesome? Or are you causing problems? Feelings are important. Giving thanks and feeling gratitude is learned from generation to generation. When you are grateful, you should give thanks for your life, your strength to do goodness. Say, ‘thank you for all of the goodness that I can do because of my food.’ This causes a chain reaction: When you understand this, then you see the universal continuity and connection.

“If we use it for meditation, we will get deeper answers. Each person’s individual ability is important: We must not be content with what we have attained. Usually we want happiness, but if we see things deeply and profoundly, we will be able to help others and create more happiness. This will help us understand why we experience crises.

“And what is our biggest crisis? Birth. When the umbilical cord is cut, we become independent, and we have to find the four elements for ourselves. When we first start out in life, we are not only the weakest and the poorest, but also the most ignorant. We bring nothing into this world with us. If we had no mother, no caregiver, or if our birth mother chose to abandon us, we would be about as valuable as a piece of garbage.

“We take so much for granted. We don’t have a contract for our birth and mothers know this. We, as humans who are just re-born, are expensive and extremely demanding, and it sometimes destroys the health and the wealth of the mother. But mothers do not give up! We have a huge debt of gratitude toward our mother, and it is never too late to think of this.

“When we are born, we must breathe for ourselves, drink our own water and milk, and then somehow provide for clothing and food. We must help ourselves as much as possible: We must learn to help ourselves! And we must meditate in order to see cause and effect.

“Of course, we must also be careful of the way we use these four elements. First, we must think of **quality**, because if the things that we use in our lives are not of good quality, they may affect our health. Most people only understand physical quality but they do not even think of spiritual quality. Second, we much think of **quantity**, because we should not have too much or too little. Third, we think of the **technique** by which we help ourselves, or we are helped, to these elements. How are those things prepared for us or how do we prepare them? Are they done with great care, and do we respect the way we or others are preparing them? If we are handled with love and devotion, or if we are cared for in an affectionate manner, then those elements are valued in a particular way. If not, however, then those elements have a different meaning for us. Technique is vital because that is the origin of all of our habits. Fourth, **timing**. If, for example, the mother brings milk at odd times, perhaps because she is poor or because the baby cries for a long time, the baby will suffer. This may cause ulceration because of irregular feeding. It will also cause the baby to be ill-tempered. Habits, remember, start from the cradle. If the mother overfeeds the baby or leaves the bottle in the baby’s mouth, the baby will be good tempered, but lazy. But, if the mother feeds the baby on a regular schedule, the baby will be aware and communicative. As you can see, even from one common practice of feeding children, different habits are formed. Diapers are another example. If children are left with wet diapers on, then bad habits are formed.

“Additionally, the **environment** in which these things are used affects our health and habits. We must pay attention to every small detail. If we have a good doctor, we can help an illness even though it may cost a lot of money. But if bad habits are formed [*NOTE: Luang Por is comparing bad habits to an illness*] then it is too difficult to change. It may take a lifetime to change a bad habit. Why? First of all, it is difficult to even know what a bad habit is! Secondly, our brain and eyes force us to look out, not in. So the moment we open our eyes, we see other people, not ourselves. When we look in the mirror, we see a reflection. When we are looking for a solution, or when we are critical, we look outside of ourselves, never within. This is why it is so hard to know our own bad habits. It is even hard to find someone to tell us that we have a bad habit! And, if someone does, it is difficult to believe them! And then, suppose we believe them. Then it is hard to change them. And then, even if we know how to change them, it is difficult to have the motivation. So, we see it takes a lot of everything to change!

“Sometimes our health gets in the way of changing, too. Habits are, after all, instilled in us from birth, so when we need to unlearn them, we need to go to the source. So we need the motivation, the physical strength, and the opportunity in which to change our habits. We need to overcome all of the damage from our past.

“And, where do good habits come from? The five things: Quality, Quantity, Technique, Timing, and Environment. And we get these from birth: from our parents, our teachers, and our religious organizations. Our good habits are a result of a team effort from birth. If we think about our life in this way, it will be hard to make serious mistakes. And remember, the more we meditate, the more brightness, and the more reality is exposed. So don't be lazy: Meditate!”

It is now time for questions. Luang Por has been talking for over an hour.

**A young Italian man poses this question: “I would like to talk about the fifth precept of not drinking alcohol or taking intoxicants. My father makes his own wine and we drink it at meal times. Sometimes we drink it for celebrations. We do not sell it. I would like to know why this is so wrong.”**

Luang Por says: “You are not alone in asking this question. My own father's income came from making whiskey. He produced it and we drank it. When I started to meditate, I started to ask questions about this to my father. He then decided to stop producing it and also stopped drinking it. Looking at it on the deeper level, I found that alcohol is a

solvent that destroys cells in the body, no matter how we use it. From the medical point of view, cell destruction will continue to increase if we continue to drink. The damage caused to the nervous system should be enough for you to calculate for yourself if it is worth it. It is, of course, up to each individual whether or not it helps your spiritual development. But I want to leave you with this thought: In terms of emotions you have and especially in the way you use the energy you have, you must be careful on all levels. If you think of the family, there are many children who are born with mental defects because the mother drank while she was pregnant. And so, the way I justified it to my own family and the way I justify it to other families is through (1) meditation, that is, alcohol will interfere with your meditation experience, and (2) prevalence of birth problems that are caused by women drinking alcohol when they are pregnant.

“On a final note is this: The reason we talk about self-sufficiency from birth has to do with developing good habits. Anyone who grows up with parents who have good habits, is indeed fortunate. Good health plus good habits cultivate boon! Everyone, of course, has a mixture of good habits and bad habits. The first problem that affects habits is what we have just been talking about, and that problem is one of survival. Many people are greedy, for example, because of their survival mechanism. Supposing a family is poor. Then the child becomes greedy. Some people have a lot, but if they are not taught to share, then they, too, will become greedy. Some people are born wealthy, and they have so much stuff that they throw it around and don’t take care of it.

“It all comes down to each individual and how they acquire their things. So if there is a problem, it might be individualistic at first, but as soon as we go to school, it becomes a problem there. If it is not addressed in school, then it becomes a social problem, and then an economic problem, and then a political problem. But, of course, we must start with the individual. The individual does not know his or her own duty of living together with society. We don’t know how to live with our teacher and we don’t know the duty of a teacher-student relationship. We cannot expect problems to change unless we change the dynamics of the family. And that starts with the teachings of the Five Rooms and the Six Directions: The direction most likely to help with the problems of living is the Spiritual Direction, or the person who represents this direction. This is the person who offers us the moisture to grow. This is the person who will most likely teach us meditation: If we are not meditating properly, then we will not be able to discern the right path.

“At the root of the problems are the limitations of the body. But there are also problems of the mind. The mind has equivalent problems. The mind is the element of knowing.

It is not something to see with the eyes, so you must meditate and practice and see it for yourself. The mind is at the seventh base, and is approximately the size of an eye socket. It will expand and expand, but you will have to meditate to prove this by yourself.”

“If your perception is correct, everything follows correctly into memorization, thinking, and knowing. If your perception is wrong, however, you end up with inaccurate knowledge. Why should people have problems with perception? Well, there are several:

“The **first** is the limit of health: headaches, mental challenges, and the like. The **second** is your mood because that affects how you see reality. **Third**, if your habits are faulty then you will have problems. For example, if you are greedy or if you anger easily, your perception may be skewed. The **fourth** reason you might have problems with knowing your mind is the function of environment. If your environment is too dark, you will not be able to get correct information. And this is the very reason why we can’t trust our senses and why we must always be cautious. Just as the body has diseases, the mind can have diseases, or impurities, as well. In the mind, these impurities are called ‘defilements’. If you see this word in your own studies, it means the elemental impurities of the mind. The things that affect the mind, in other words, are things like delusion, anger, ignorance, fear, jealousy, and on and on. It presents to you a whole new set of problems to deal with. Of course, the more you meditate, the more you will become aware of how you can overcome these defilements, or viruses of the mind.

“How can we do anything about any of this? We must take responsibility for our own problems. Don’t blame anyone but ourselves for our problems. No one can solve our problems for us! And let’s not waste our time finding fault with other people either.

“And who can see their mind? We can, but we must train ourselves to see it. Little by little. It is not just one body, but we have many layers within us. We cannot see it with our eyes looking outside of our body, but the inner eye sees the mind. The inner eye sees the inner layers of the mind. If we have the experience, we will be able see ourselves in a different way, just as if we were looking at light through a prism. Layers upon layers upon layers. There is no use asking why to this fact, it just is, just the nature of it. Rather like seeing ourselves in our dreams.”

**Someone asks, “Do we have an individual mind or is there a universal mind?”**

Luang Por, without hesitating, says, “Each person has their own individual mind. Each



inner body has a mind in its own existence. The mind – the Dhamma – is like looking at ourselves in a dream within a dream within a dream. Each dream body has its own mind. In meditation, we must look inside not outside. Our inner body will be nested, like layers. If we look outside of ourselves, we will not be able to make any sense of it. Meditating on the center of the center means that we are meditating on the focal point of all of the bodies. Even though we may magnify these, we are still in control of it, if we look at the outside. The whole purpose is to cultivate inner peace, not outer peace.”

**A young Peruvian woman asks if there is a difference between meditations and dreams, or if what we dream is real.**

Luang Por says: “The dreams we have can be for different reasons. (1) There is an imbalance in our metabolism (perhaps because of something we ate or drank) and they are usually senseless dreams. (2) If we are worrying about something, then we might dream about it and we usually don’t remember these dreams, (3) A guardian angel whispers in our ear. This could be a good sign or a warning. These dreams usually happen around 4 to 5AM in the morning and are super clear. But we should not obsess with them. (4) Kamma. These are actions that we are about to do and they could be good or bad.

“There are many examples of Kammic dreams, including those of the Buddha, and those of Luang Por Dhammajayo. When Luang Por Dhammajayo’s mother had her dream, she dreamt she was given a gift of an old Buddha statue that was not in good condition. She decided to clean it, but before she could, the Buddha became bright and clear. Because of this dream, his mother woke up and knew she was going to have a great son. But don’t believe anything too easily. If we ourselves make a decision to be great, then we don’t need to believe in bad dreams.

**A young man asks: “Is there a way to remove defilements?”**

Luang Por draws a circle on a piece of paper. “This,” he says, “is a diagram of the world and the world is surrounded by darkness. When the sun comes up [and he draws a sun on the left side of the paper] even the first rays will give light and dispel darkness. When the sun is up, there is no darkness, but then the sun sets, the world of darkness begins to come back. If we are smart we will try to find brightness all day. How do we do this? If we kept the sun on one side of the earth in brightness then the other half would be *unhappy*, right? It is better to put the earth inside of the sun!

“The Dhamma is sphere shaped. If we put our mind in the center of the Dhamma, then we will be bright all of the time and get rid of our defilements. Center of the center, middle of the middle!

“In meditation, you are an observer, not a creator. Don’t make the scenario, just let it happen. The more we observe, the purer and more refined we will become. This always must be done at the center.”

**Another young woman asks, “When we are babies, are we totally pure?”**

Luang Por smiles at the question, and says: “When we are born, the body has diseases, and the mind has defilements, too. Where did these come from? Previous lifetimes. Even identical twins have different habits because they are coming from different places in previous lifetimes. From one person to the next, the defilements are different. No one person is the same as another. Even habits come through into the next lifetime – like a bank account being carried from one life to another.

“When we are born, we are born carrying 50% karma with us. The other 50% is what some call free-will. That is, we have the choice of whether or not we will be doing something good with our lives. In reality, the 50% that is free-will is also dependent on our parents when we are born and how they help us to develop good or bad habits, but I have already spoken about this.

“We all know, of course, that some people do very evil things, and they don’t even hesitate when they do them! But when it comes to doing good things, they hesitate. For example, if people drink, they know that it may give them liver problems, and they will die. But do they still drink? Yes! In fact, they are risking their lives in order to drink. If a person slanders another person, and they are imprisoned for it, when they come out of prison, they might want to take revenge. But does that stop them from doing the slandering? NO. People will still do evil things. People know all about HIV and sexually transmitted diseases, but they still risk their lives to have sex with prostitutes.

“But who will risk their life for another person? Gamblers will sit for hours gambling, but they can’t even sit for five minutes to meditate. We are ingrained to do bad things because we are so weak! It seems like the good people are always on the wrong side, always fighting the fight! We must help ourselves! We can change ourselves and our kamma but in part it depends on our past kamma and our parents. Again, this is why we

need to make our resolution of having good parents in our next life.

“Of course, we must first take the stick out of our own eye before we look at other people’s eyes. In other words, we must always take responsibility for our own actions before we start to blame other people for any wrong action that we think they might be doing. We will understand this concept if we meditate, because we will see and understand cause and effect.

“But don’t blame others – Blame Yourself! Don’t try to change others – Change yourself!”

And, with that, two and one-half hours have passed by, and Luang Por tells the crowd that he has another appointment and how much he has enjoyed himself talking to them. He gives us the most beautiful blessing that I have ever heard. Saatu!

## Meeting #14

06 March 2010 – Ashram Bandita

I have just been called into a meeting that includes a few people I know, and a few whom I don't know. It was an "emergency" call that I received while I was working in my condo, and when I picked up the phone, someone said, "Get over to the Ashram right now." So I bike over, and in about 15 minutes I am seated at a front desk next to a woman named Sam. Luang Por greets me with a smile and a nod.

I jump into the conversation that they have going on in which they are talking about the drinking question that happened in the recent meeting.

"Yes," Luang Por says. "It is like the smell of the jackfruit. It still smells even after many years because it is the smell of the yeast. People, of course, take medicine that has alcohol in it, but some people drink the medicine because of the alcohol. Drinking alcohol because it is contained in the medicine you are prescribed is one thing. But when you are finished with the medicine, then people need to stop taking it. Drinking affects decision making skills. Sometimes we drink because we think we are amongst friends, but those who are drinking are not really our friends.

"When I first met Luang Por Dhammajayo, I offered him a drink. But he said he was following the precepts. And that he did not need to drink in order to be friends with anyone. Without that statement, there may not have ever been a Wat Phra Dhammakaya today.

"When the Peace Revolution mentors coach, they should be role models for all of the people. So, they should not drink. It is a matter of discernment, a matter of expectations. But we cannot just write people off either, just because they drink. Let us suppose that there is a father with five children, all of whom he loves equally. He asks all of the children to come up to the second floor. The oldest comes quickly up the stairs. And one by one, from the oldest to the youngest, they make it up the stairs. But the youngest child cannot make it up simply because he is too little. And so, we must help them all on a case-by-case basis."

We then get on the topic of making resolutions. Resolutions, of course, are vital when we are making boon, or creating good energy. In fact, Luang Por says that he never made a wish until he met Khun Yai.

“If we do something good, then we have this good energy floating around out there, and we should make a wish to create something good. If we do something bad, then something bad will be created in the universe. So we must always be careful with our actions. Our actions are also created by our feelings which are recorded inside. If we are feeling good, then this will help other positive things to occur. These feelings are multiplied and they create habits. These will carry over to all of the things we do. If we give easily, then we gain love and a good reputation. With those two things, we will get support in return. If we give easily, then we will get easily in return. So, when we die, we will be reborn in a good family. The affects of bad habits are the same. All of our habits affect not only this life, but all of our future lives.

“This is true for all people of all religions. Meditation, however, is our common ground.

“One of the first times that I met Khun Yai, I asked her about making resolutions. She said that we have to be exact when asking otherwise it just spreads out and doesn’t have the meaning attached to it that we want. If we share easily, then the fruit will be in this life and the next, and so on and on. But we have to be careful of how we spend the fruit of our boon. We must spend it in the right way. And we must always make a wish to be born in the right family who has the right livelihood. So I took all of this into consideration when I decided on my resolutions. The first time I made a resolution, I said, ‘I wish to be born in Thailand.’ And Khun Yai said, ‘Are you sure that there will be Buddhism in Thailand in the future?’ So then I wished, ‘In any country (wherever that may be) I want to be born where Buddhism is.’ And Khun Yai said ‘Have you ever seen anyone living by the Temple who says bad things about the Temple and doesn’t practice Buddhism?’ And so, I learned that I needed to be more thoughtful about my resolutions and to extend them to exactly what I wanted: To visualize my dream. And then my resolution became, ‘May I be receptive to always be pure of mind...and so on...and to be born with the right family who holds with the right view.

“And so, whatever we are thinking, we should not have negative thoughts, or thoughts of retribution. We must always be centered... middle of the middle. But life is not always like that, is it? Why? Because defilement is our disease of the mind. We are born with bad habits and defilements from our last life. How much defilement? We don’t know! We have a lot of boon, but we have a lot of baap, too! We need to remind ourselves every day to stay centered. Every day, we need to refuel. But every day, through our senses, our mind wants to jump out. We are so easily trapped if we are not centered. And then it

is hard to get back when it runs away. It is hard to bring it back into control! So we need to train children from a very early age to meditate and stay centered.

“When we practice, day by day, it becomes a habit. And so, in our training or practice, we begin by thinking mostly outside of ourselves. Then, gradually, we are sometimes outside and sometimes inside. And then, finally, we become focused inside!

“Happiness is peace of mind. If we don’t run away, the Dhamma within comes closer and closer. Our mind, then, becomes centered. We have to practice through meditation. By centering, two finger widths above our navel, when we meditate, the sixth and seventh base will finally be drawn together into the sixth base, which is Dhamma based. But if we meditate, as some do, on the base two finger widths below the navel, then it is very different. This base is quite strong, but we will never reach the Dhamma. The strength quite easily creates sexual desire, and it is very powerful, usually associated with the martial arts. In practicing meditation outside of the body, we might get a clear, bright mind, but we will never touch the Dhamma because Dhamma is inside the body. There is a lot of magic associated with outside meditation – black AND white magic – and it may be powerful, but it will never touch the Dhamma.

“If we continually filter through in our meditation, we pass through many bodies. But we must always be an observer, not a creator.”

He stops, as though listening for questions that have not been verbalized. Then begins again.

“In giving birth, we have the egg, the sperm, and the inner body, or the dream body. The mind, or inner body, moves from the father into the mother through the sperm into the egg. We, therefore, need our parents to be our role models. Bad kamma can go from human to animal body and in an animal body we still have our consciousness... even if we have been a human before, we remember our humanness but we are trapped in an animal body. Animals have consciousness because they have been human before, but, again, they are now trapped in an animal body.

“There is great virtue in being a mother: Great boon, and they are lucky because they have the ability to raise us and teach us to become a ‘pure’ human being, with good habits and good ethics. The more we meditate, the more we are aware of our good and bad habits.

“We cannot change our past, but we can change today and our future. Therefore, resolutions are very important. So we must resolve to be born with a pure mind to parents with pure minds. Wherever Buddhism is, we want to be born there so it will be available for us to learn. Then we must study the Dhamma and practice it. And we must develop the right view. We all have a ‘boon budget’ so to speak but we don’t know how much it is. So we create boon, make our wishes, and develop good habits so that we can always be creating good energy.”

Luang Por smiles. I am not sure why I have been invited here to listen, but perhaps it is because I am always learning something new to share with the people who matter most to me.

## Meeting #15

08 March 2010 - Saphaa

Upasika Kaew Training is one of the most remarkable experiences in which I have participated at the Wat. Here we are, all 8,000 of us women sharing the same space. In the closing ceremony, there will be 100,000 of us and that is a pretty amazing thought – getting 100,000 women together.

We have gathered in the Saphaa –8,000 women from Bangkok – in order to do the week long nun-like training. The nuns here are called “Upasika” although they do not shave their heads, nor do they wear all white. Their uniforms consist of white shirts and long navy blue skirts. In the training, however, we are wearing white shirts and big white skirts that wrap around the waist, the tops of which are then folded over and knotted, or a belt is used to hold everything together. At any rate, there is plenty of material in which to sit comfortably in meditation.

The Saphaa, of course, is huge: like several airplane hangars all strung together but instead of airplanes, it holds about 500,000 people at any given time. The floor is concrete, some of which is covered with green plastic mats sewn together to stretch endlessly across this huge open space. There are booths set up for a variety of displays, and when I get to my area (Section 7), there are hundreds of individual tents, and mosquito netted areas, already set up.

So here I am at the Saphaa on Monday afternoon and I see several monks I know who are English speakers. Unfortunately, they are soon to leave, and I find myself standing here with five other lone English speakers in a sea of 7,994 Thai speakers... but who's counting. There is me; Anita, a 29 year old South African; Sam, a 40 year old Australian; Choi, an 18 year old Mongolian; and two college students from Germany who mistakenly thinks that this is going to be a meditation retreat. Oh, ha, ha, ha on them.

We are assigned individual tents and immediately put all of our belongings into these tents for safe keeping. A strict listing of everything we will need during the week has been given to us, and I have adhered to this list by only bringing those items listed on the sheet. When I look around, however, women have brought their hair dryers, and fans, and cosmetics ... so I'm thinking, ummm, so much for the lists.

Anyway, our schedule runs from 4AM until 10PM and it is filled with such things as



meditation, eating, the funniest exercise program in the entire world and, oh yeah, lining up to do activities which takes us about 45 minutes every time we do it. I have come here to practice my meditation and to learn patience. This is not an easy thing for me to say – or to do. I am not a patient person by nature. I hate standing in lines, let alone standing in a line for 45 minutes several times a day. But I need to learn this: patience is simply a characteristic that I do not possess. And so, I relax. I mean truly, down to the bone, relax. Perhaps this is because of the meditation; perhaps this is because Luang Por Dhammajayo and Luang Por Dattajeevo are around here keeping an eye on us all. (I know this intuitively.) Perhaps, I think to myself, it is because I am close to the Dhammakaya Cetiya and I know, and feel comfortable, with the thought that it is now, this week, within my power to achieve my patience-goal.

We also had one super interesting Dhamma talk from Luang Por that I think would be of interest, so I am enclosing it here. This talk takes place on Tuesday morning:

We all line up, and then walk over to the main site in the middle of the Saapha. Here, we face into the middle of the “room” where Luang Por will sit, on a raised dais, to address all 8,000 of us. It takes us about an hour to get from our various sections to our seats facing the dais. Luang Por enters, bows three times to the Buddha statue, raised high on the staging, and turns to face the crowd. We then bow to him, paying respect to our teacher. He begins:

“Ever since the Lord Buddha’s time, the Upasika has tried to practice. But most are simply too busy. In fact, most women are simply too busy with their children or their household, or making a living. But this experience is good for your life because you can learn to stand on your own two feet in order to take care of yourself. To do this, you need to be sure that you make a living in the right way. That is always the fight – to make a living. But the preparation for the next life is so important and Right Livelihood is part of that preparation.

“This is why we have this ceremony: To help you prepare yourself – to help you gather strength within yourself - here at the Wat and all over the world. This is why the training is happening now. [*This’ means the call for 100,000 Upasikas to train themselves, and to become ordained now.*] In order to complete this, Luang Por Dhammajayo would like to give you a picture, or a look at the big picture. If we look at human life – in our life it does not matter if you are male or female, or any race, or any nationality – everyone has the same problem.

“The first is the structure of the physical body. The head dictates to us that we need to open our eyes. And when we open our eyes, we look outside. We never look inside. So when we look outside, we only see other people: When we look outside, we do not see our own face, we only see other people’s faces. And others do the same. We don’t even realize that we don’t see ourselves. When we look at other people, we see either the good or the bad in other people. But we need to train ourselves to see only the good. Even though we always find fault with other people, we need to recognize the good in other people. But because we tend to find fault with other people, we overlook the fault within ourselves. And, because we tend to see what is wrong rather than what is right, problems arise.

“If we have something wrong with us, we never find it because we are always looking outside. So we need to always look at ourselves rather than at other people. First, we open our eyes, and we see other people. Then, we look into a mirror and see the reflection of our body. But the only way to really see who we are – to truly look at ourselves – is to meditate.

“The second commonality is that no one is perfect. We are all imperfect. Each of us has goodness. But when we live together, we have to tell ourselves that we are not perfect, although we have to find goodness in other people. And we take that goodness back home with us. And how do we find that goodness in others? We meditate. We sit quietly, never seeking faults in others. The meditation mats are designed for sitting longer. If we don’t sit straight, we cannot find the center of our body. We must train ourselves and follow the role model of Khun Yai, who was always perfectly straight as though she was leaning on air. Remember that our spine should be straight up, and that will make it easier to find the center of our body. Animals cannot meditate, of course, because they cannot find their center. So, either sitting perfectly straight up, or lying down perfectly horizontal – those positions are really important. We need to learn from others about our meditation position. Most people cannot sit perfectly all of the time. They cannot walk perfectly or sleep perfectly. So we need to train ourselves in all of our activities. Many times we learn perfections from others, both physically and spiritually. Remember, we open our eyes, and we see outside of ourselves. So we learn what is appropriate from others.

“On Magha Puja Day, 1,250 Arahants came to visit the Buddha. He spoke to them in order that they should then go out and talk to others. We need to be patient because everyone has imperfections. If we are imperfect, we must be patient to the pain, for ex-

ample, of sitting for long periods of time in meditation. We must also be patient toward the imperfection of others. And we must practice this. Why? Because this helps us correct the faults in ourselves in order to improve ourselves.

“And how long must we do this? I have been with Luang Por Dhammajayo for thirty-nine years now and I realize that the most difficult thing to do is to improve faults or habits. But I never understood why it was so difficult to correct the behavior in myself. So I meditated and I found that I had a bad habit with patience. But it was hard for me to accept the fact that I had this bad habit because I was always looking outside of myself, rather than looking inside of myself.

“It is hard to find people to tell us about the bad habits in ourselves. But it is even more difficult to believe them when they tell us that we have that bad habit. So how do we correct our own bad habits?

“We have to find the strength within ourselves to correct it. Or, to put it in another way, we have to realize we have a bad habit, we have to find it, and then we have to correct it and that takes strength. How do we correct bad habits in our body and our mind? We might be able to do it in our mind, but then our physical body can't take it! We need to always be thinking in terms of healthy body and healthy mind.

“Of course another problem is that sometimes society won't accept it. For example, people in prison. They do something wrong and serve their punishment, but then when they come out of prison, people simply do not accept them. And this is a fact of life. So we must be patient. Always.

“How long do you need to be patient? Until you attain Nibbana. (*Nirvana*)

“Do you know that birds were human before they were birds? They used to be Upasika or Upasok! [And with this, he smiles a big smile.] But they needed to learn how to be patient over many lifetimes. How do we show our patience?

“Do not say bad words to other people. Everyone is the same. Everyone has good and bad traits. The Buddha says ‘Speak nicely.’ In the beginning, we may need to use comparisons, and really explain what we are saying, but if the person we are talking to doesn't get it - if that person does not understand what we are saying - then we have to be honest.

“First, we must try to go to them indirectly. Do you see? We will only be here for seven days so we must be patient. We should always train ourselves to speak kindly and by doing this, we will gain big boon from this new patience. This is the Buddha’s teaching. So do not harm others. We can create big baap with impatience. But we can create big boon with patience and kindness.

“Within this week, you will all be following the eight precepts<sup>7</sup>, and you should follow them with good manners. If you do this, you will not interrupt other people’s meditation because you will be quiet and sabai<sup>8</sup>. You must always think of the other people around you. You should sit apart when meditating to find your own ‘good’ space. And also because of body heat. You should change your meditation position quietly so that you do not disturb other people. You should have good manners whether you are walking, eating, drinking, and talking. When you follow the eight precepts, you should try to follow them completely.

“You can benefit from these teachings more than you think. The Buddha started out with eight precepts – not the two hundred twenty-seven that the monks follow today. And, further, if you follow them perfectly, they can lead you to Arahantship.

“Additionally, you should eat properly. And eat in the right quantity. Always four or five bites less than fullness. This is the proper quantity of food. You need a lot of strength in order to train yourself.

“Take, for example, the mosquito: shooing them away is much better than smacking them. When you smack them, chances are they will be killed. So think of the mosquito and his or her family the next time you want to kill that mosquito. You should control yourself in order to strengthen yourself.

“Remember, too, that solitude is important. Although you are amongst eight thousand women, you must try to always be sabai. You should be with yourself more, with no interruptions, because you need to be centered and mindful all of the time. You need

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7 Eight Precepts: (1) No killing any living being, (2) No stealing or taking anything that does not belong to you, or is given to you, (3) No sexual contact, (4) No Lying or False Speech, (5) No ingestion of illegal substances or alcohol, (6) No wearing jewelry, cosmetics, perfume, or anything that makes you “stand out”, (7) No eating after 12 Noon, (8) No sleeping on a bed higher than 8 inches from the ground and/or is to luxurious.

8 Sabai: Cool, calm, comfy. A feeling of softness and ease.

to find the time to really look inside of yourself: Be calm and look inside. You should sleep in the sea of boon, wake up in the sea of boon, and still your mind. Make yourself calm and happy all of the time. And, in order to do this, you need to cut loose from the outside.

“Every day, you should review yourself and learn from the day, and the past. Always look at the teachings. The Buddha taught you not only how to improve yourself, but your family as well. The habits you form here will be carried to your family. But the habits that your children have are because of you. This is your opportunity to look at yourself.

“Meditate continuously: Meditate all of the time. Use your ears more than your mouth. And pay attention to Luang Por Dhammajayo’s meditation. When you are watching DMC and when you are meditating with him on Sundays.”

He smiles a huge smile and waves to all of the women in training. Then, solemnly, he adjusts his robes, turns and faces the Buddha statue, bows three times, and rises from the dais, walking slowly away with his assistants, who follow along behind him.

## Meeting #16

17 March 2010 – Panawat

I am here in Panawat (a beautiful retreat center north of Chiang Mai) to attend a Teacher's Conference conducted by Wat Phra Dhammakaya and decide to go see Luang Por in his office to say hello. Since I always try to find something to take him as a little gift, I have brought him some dried fruit that I know he likes. His ashram is beautifully decorated in an understated elegance, and because I had never been there before, I comment about the plants and gardens that surround it outside. Luang Por is noted for his interest in plant varieties so walking around Panawat is like walking around Heaven. I then ask him about the Conference:

“You know,” he begins, “our morals or ethics start with the first four precepts. But we have three additional responsibilities: First, a social responsibility of not having any bias or prejudice based on love, hate, ignorance, or fear. The second is a responsibility on an economic model but it is one of moral economy: no drinking, no excessive night life, no negative entertainment, no gambling, no associating with bad people, and no laziness. The third is the responsibility we take regarding our own development of creating good friends. Of course, we have to take the responsibility of keeping the four precepts, which is the ‘capital’ of human beings.

*[NOTE: The first four precepts are (1) No Killing any living being, (2) No stealing, or taking anything that does not belong to you or been given to you, (3) No sexual misconduct, and (4) No lying, gossiping, or false speech.]*

“This week is all about teaching the teachers about moral responsibilities and how important it is for them to take this teaching into the classroom. There are three groups of teachers: Teachers at home (parents), teachers at school, and teachers at the temple/church/synagogue. These teachers all need to work in harmony in order to raise a moral society. It is their duty and responsibility. If they do not, then the society will be filled with individuals who (1) hate themselves, (2) hurt everyone around them, and (3) will not be born as human beings again. If you do not teach the individuals in the society to be moral, the good people can potentially become bad people.

“In Buddhism, the three most important groups that individuals first come into contact with are the parent, the teacher, and the monk. All three of these groups have an equal input into every individual with whom they come in contact. And they need to teach

those individuals their moral responsibility to the society in which they live. If they don't practice moral economics, then people can't live together. The first time that the Buddha wanted to ordain, his family thought it was a joke. The same thing happened to Christ, and to Muhammad. They were all prisoners of the world. Humans are the prisoners of the world.

"The teachers are the second parents and they have to accept being the role model for the individuals. Any other person to whom we think is important in our life, for example, our doctor, is only a person who is in and out of our life on an as-needs basis. But our teacher is our teacher for life.

"Currently, teachers only teach the subject they are hired to teach, but they do not teach moral development. We have to change that. Americans originally came from Europe looking for religious freedom. Everyone was responsible for the country's freedom of mind. They did, in fact, create freedom of mind and body. But the responsibility of the country now is not the same as it was when it was founded.

"It has to change. And each person has to change him or herself. Each person has to ultimately be responsible for him or herself. But do not let the evil of others destroy us. Be moral. If I don't have evil, I will not use the evil of others to destroy, nor will I be the cause of doing evil.

"The world needs moral people. The world needs role models to follow. Be that role model."

And then I think, if I am standing in the middle of my six directions and I am meditating, spreading out loving kindness, my light will automatically spread to everyone.

## Meeting #17

18 March 2010 – Panawat

Approximately two hundred teachers have gathered at Panawat from around Thailand, for several days of talks with Luang Por about being role models for their students. Panawat is a beautiful retreat center that holds up to 500 people, some in dormitory style buildings, and some in spacious executive suites. There is an amazingly beautiful garden that has been built by the gardening staff here and these people who have traveled around the world to collect species of plants and fish for the site. It is a meditation space that is impeccably cared for by many people.

We meet for breakfast each morning around 7AM and always have a beautiful buffet set in a spacious, and incredibly clean, dining hall. Lots of rice, lots of vegetables, and lots of coffee.

The following is the first in a series of talks. They begin at 9AM:

Luang Por walks briskly into the large meditation/seminar room. He bows to the Buddha, then to the photo of Luang Pu, and then, turning, faces the crowd with a smile. We all then bow to him, paying respects to him as our teacher.

“How is your meditation?” he asks the crowd, and looks around to see if there is anyone who is going to be brave enough to respond. Most of the time, he starts off the sessions like this because meditation is about the only thing that the Abbot and the Vice-Abbot are interested in talking about!

He then begins by describing various types of meditation – full moon, stars, crystal spheres – and he is using humor to get the teachers to lighten up and eliminate the tension that all people feel when they are around people of super-significant importance. Many of these teachers have been with Luang Por their whole lives, and treat him as though he is a national treasure, which, for these Thai people, he is.

He describes his own journey with meditation and how important it is to always keep our mind at ease and with no tension: “Don’t put too much effort into it. Relax. Sabai. Easy. That is the secret to good meditation!” He also talks about the bio-chemical reaction of meditation and the chart that he uses to describe exactly what happens to our body when we meditate.



“When I was first starting out, before I met Luang Por Dhammajayo, I used to meditate on the outside, not the inside. This is a very powerful meditation, but I learned that it is not as powerful as the inside meditation that we use today. But it took me almost eighteen years to totally change over. So please learn the inside meditation and do not do any other kind.

“Today, I will talk about the human being, who is composed of body and mind. We always want to know if the mind exists and most people think that we only have a body, or a body plus a brain. But we also have ‘mind’. And the mind wanders, wasting lots of energy. So then we want to know how we keep the mind inside all of the time.

“Stars travel far and fast. Light travels at approximately 186,000 miles per second. But we see the stars in a blink! But the mind wanders and thinks all of the time, switching around from one thought to another and sometimes we can’t even complete one thought before jumping onto another. And when we can’t sleep, we think and think and think.

“Students are the same way when you teach them!

“The mind is self-illuminating. But as we grow, it becomes darker and darker because the mind goes outside more and more to become dark with anger and greed. But babies don’t have greed except, perhaps, for attention, food and dry diapers! Hence, this is the importance of the mother’s timeliness. As we grow, our eyes go outside more and more.

“The Bio-Chemical Chart explains this, and why we need to meditate. In meditation, the darkness disappears because it is a natural cleansing of the mind. But when we get up and open our eyes to the world, we are looking out. When we look into the mirror and see the reflection of our face, we are not looking at our own true face. So how do we truly see ourselves? Through meditation, of course.

“After we look outside, we become more critical of others, but we never really see them, nor do we truly see ourselves. So how do we see ourselves? We close our eyes and meditate. We clean our mind so that our mind becomes brighter. True wisdom comes from meditation.

“And, so, we have to rest our body and mind. When we start to see our own behavior, we realize that this behavior is the source of our mindfulness. We say that we have friends

## Biochemical Reaction During Practice

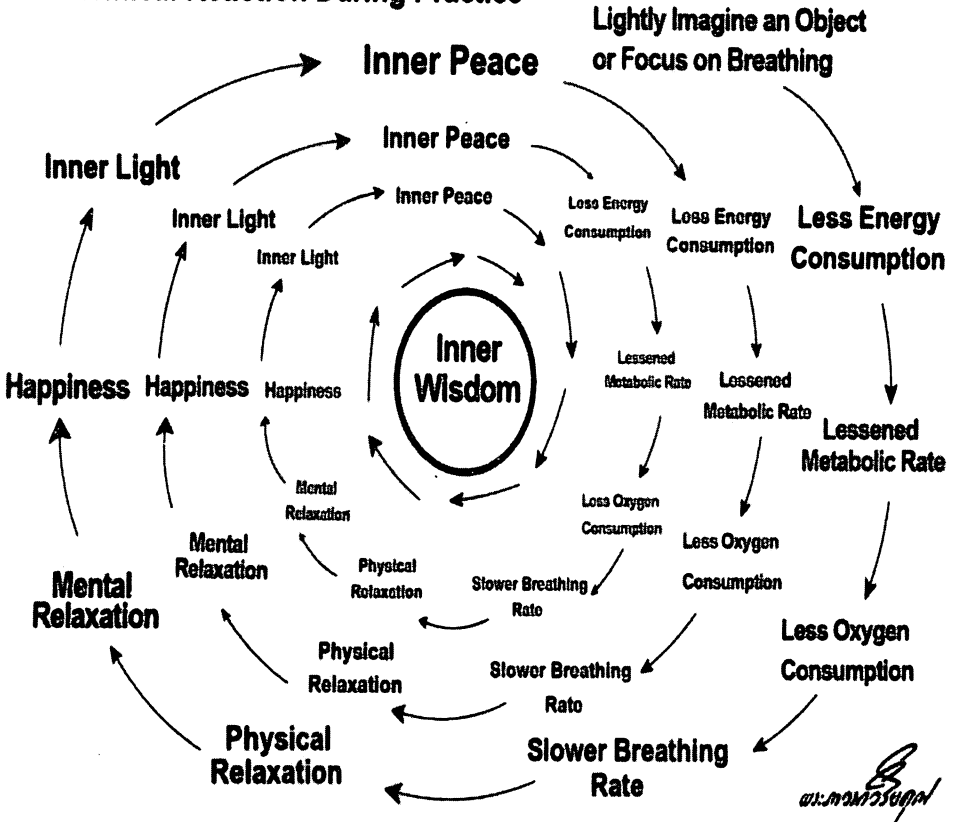


Illustration #6

and know our friends, but we don't even know who we are. Who is I AM?

“Habits are a strange thing for human beings. Are they good habits or bad habits? How do we know our habits? Can we find people to tell us our habits? Or, even when someone tells us about our habits, do we believe them? And, then, if we believe them, how do we change them: Is there a method to change them? And, then, even if we know the method, or how to change our habits, how can we actually do it? And, so, we need to find the strength to do it.

“For example, let us look at the ordination program of the 100,000 monks that just happened recently. In this program, there were men who had a serious problem with drinking and smoking. And in order for us to help these people, we needed to provide an opportunity for them to stop. So we provided an opportunity for them to do it. Perhaps

they drank because of cultural values; but in order for them to stop their drinking and smoking, we needed to provide an opportunity for them to follow the five precepts – or more!

“Breaking a bad habit is not easy at all. It can take years to do it. Once we have a bad habit, how do we get rid of it? No one can really tell us, so the only way to change is to meditate and find out for ourselves. So keep meditating! And don’t complain about sitting for meditation.

“If a man can sit at the gambling table and gamble for hours and hours and hours, then he can sit for meditation!”

Everyone laughs.

“It all depends on what we think is important, doesn’t it?”

“There are four principles to think about here: (1) Associate with good people (seek and find good teachers); (2) Listen to the Dhamma (listen to the teaching clearly and thoroughly); (3) Seek true understanding of the teaching of those teachers; and (4) Follow those teachings completely.

“The fifth principle is the outcome because when we do the first four, the outcome will be the virtue of the individual when they have listened to the first four!

“And why do we do it? Well, we would have to start by saying ‘Why do we need a good teacher, and what IS a good teacher? What are the qualifications of the teacher who is to be a superior role model for the student? Teachers are models of virtue, knowledge, respect and discipline. But what is respect? And how do we define it? In Thai, the definition of respect IS ‘teacher’; unfortunately in Thailand, not all of the students show respect for their teacher.

“The job of a teacher is a heavy one. If we are ‘just teaching’ that is one thing, just like any job in which we are producing a product, then we do not have to think about it too much. But if we need to develop good habits in our students, then it becomes difficult. And it is more difficult because not only do we have to develop good habits in ourselves, but then we have to help our students develop their own good habits. This is a heavy duty, or responsibility, for the teacher. It is not as difficult as it sounds, but the students

have to realize that the teachers have to help them through the hardships in order to change. So it is a double duty, or a dual duty. One for the teachers and one for the students – both have to realize their role in the relationship.

“Respect means that we must see the virtue and goodness in others, and that means for the teachers and the students, in order to help them attain Dhamma. Respect is not simply making the gesture of the Wai<sup>9</sup> but the feeling of respect comes from the inside. A monkey can do a gesture, but we must be able to look at the inner virtue of our students.

“How can we develop the virtue in ourselves and the students? First, we must be able to look at positivity, not negativity. And secondly, we must encourage others to be positive and look at the positives. Otherwise, our students will grow up to be very jealous people. And this applies to the teachers as well as the student. We cannot think in negative terms, and we must be good role models. When we have respect, it is easier to develop virtues, and then knowledge and wisdom will come more quickly.

“So. As a parent of a child, let us examine the qualifications of a good teacher. First, the teacher must have true knowledge. Second, the teacher must be able to do what he knows. Teaching is action and implementation. Third, teachers must have good habits. If the teacher has bad habits, s/he will use the knowledge incorrectly. And fourth, teachers must have the ability to teach.

“Why do we need good teachers? To develop moral people for the world. The students must listen to their teacher with respect, and the teacher must be able to discipline the student and help them have good manners. Students must develop the habit of listening. The principle of listening is important for learning. The teacher must try to capture all of the teachings – condense it so that it makes sense to the student, and is pertinent

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9 Wai: An action done as a sign of greeting and respect. Almost everyone in Thailand wai's when they greet one another, particularly if they are meeting for the first time. The person will put the palms of their hands together about chest high and slowly bow their head, putting the tips of their thumbs onto a certain part of their face. When a younger person meets an older person, the younger person will raise their hands higher than the older person, putting the tips of their thumbs on the bridge of their nose, for example. When a person meets a monk, the tips of their thumbs go even higher, perhaps to their forehead, or the person may even drop to their knees depending on how devout the person is to Buddhism.

information for them to know. The teacher must try to make the information relevant for the student, finding some way to make the information vital for their lives, according to the student's understanding. The teacher must prioritize the teaching so that all relevant information is given, and finally the teacher must be able to connect and combine the teachings together, to synthesize it and to help the student synthesize it. And, the teacher must do this all with patience and discipline. If you cannot do this, then the student cannot learn.

“Now the student has to be respectful toward the teacher, as well as patient, and quiet – and if all of these things are in place, then the learning environment is conducive to healthy discovery. You must understand the objective of the teaching, whether or not it is righteous and good, how worthy it is to practice or follow, is it for everyone or only for a group, examine a way to implement it, and when to ask why? First, we must ask what? And then we must ask why?

“The students must then follow the teachers thoroughly with respect, patience, and discipline because we are passing along pertinent knowledge to them. So they must have a willingness to follow the teachings of the teacher. This might be easy or difficult. Students must also have the willingness to persevere, then focus on doing it, and then develop the practice even further so that one day they can be as good as, or better than, the teacher!

“Then comes the question of How? We have already addressed What? and Why?, and now we need to ask the question that implements it all – How? So, to repeat: Here are the steps of implementation: (1) Ask the question of who or whom? Who is my own role model? Who should be my children's? Who should be my children's teacher? Where is that teacher located? (2) Ask questions about the overview of the curriculum – the what? Ask it directly from the teacher. (3) Ask why they do or do not learn the material, and finally, (4) How? How is all of it implemented in the classroom in order for it to be successful and for the entire learning process to be realized.

“Now from all of this, we start to see the process of learning and we are drawn into this cycle until we have knowledge. If we clearly know the objectives, we can follow all of the teachings to reach our potential (with good habits) until we finally come to self-reliance.

“This is the process of learning. This all comes from Buddhist teachings, but in order

to put this into practice, it takes a lot of practice. So, we see that **good habits + good teachings + meditation = self-reliance.**

“In Buddhism, there is an overview of knowledge that we learn from the top: We learn about it from the Buddha’s enlightenment, or the process of Buddha’s enlightenment. Through meditation, we see the path that the Buddha has laid out for us. Even just learning about visualizing a bright object took the Buddha six years to do this. But he started with the realization that there was Body + Mind. And, then, that if the mind can be still, or sabai, in the beginning, then we can find happiness. But not only happiness, brightness as well.

“What we call wisdom, and the way to seek it, we learn by the following three ways: (1) From listening or reading. This wisdom really comes from memorizing and is rather superficial. (2) From contemplation, analysis, and thinking. (3) From meditation, from a standstill mind and from inner brightness. Throughout our lives, we usually have the first two types. But real wisdom comes from the third type: Meditation.

“Meditation is that state of mind that is still, firmly inside of the body. When the mind becomes still we can then say that we are meditating. The Buddha, of course, always has a still inner mind. We do not. We need to be meditating on the inside, not the outside, and this is called right concentration, or right meditation. Anger, greed and delusion occur in the mind but outside of the body. If we do outside meditation, the mind will be standing firmly in the wrong place! And this is called ‘wrong meditation’. Why do we observe our breath? We don’t really need to do this, but we do it because we cannot see the mind. We can observe the abdomen or observe the breath, to get the mind to firmly be inside the body. When we can do this, people call it obtaining the first absorption or jhana. So the first absorption is when the mind is still and we feel happy or joyful. In the second jhana, there is a feeling of brightness inside, but we are not really thinking about it. Our self-illuminesence starts to develop. This happens because we are meditating at the center of gravity, or the center of our body. The Buddha re-discovered this over 2,600 years ago! Then, the brightness becomes more intense, our physical tension disappears, and we develop equanimity. There are no distractions in our meditation, and mindfulness is observed. This is the third jhana. After we practice more and more, we reach understanding only if we bring the mind inside the body through meditation. And that is meditation! Keeping the mind inside and still. And, where there is action, there is also reaction. So in meditation, we can then see the refinement of the mind.

“For example, let us suppose that we are lighting a candle. When we do this, three things happen: first, there is brightness. Second, heat is generated around it. Third, there is combustion. Why, in lighting a candle, do these three things happen? It is the same in meditation. Things happen. With a candle, we want brightness. In cooking, we want heat.

“Meditation is all about brightness. And mindfulness is generated by the heat or combustion. Combustion is the effort... the Right Effort (on the eightfold path). Everything happens together at the same time: Effort, Mindfulness, and Meditation. Everything together.

“At the fourth jhana, you get rid of sadness or suffering, and you are able to attain indifference which is beyond happiness or unhappiness. Since this feeling is beyond happiness, there is no word to explain it. Words can only explain the abstraction, but they cannot reach the feelings, so we really cannot find the words to explain the fourth jhana. Because we cannot explain some things, we have developed the following chart about languages:

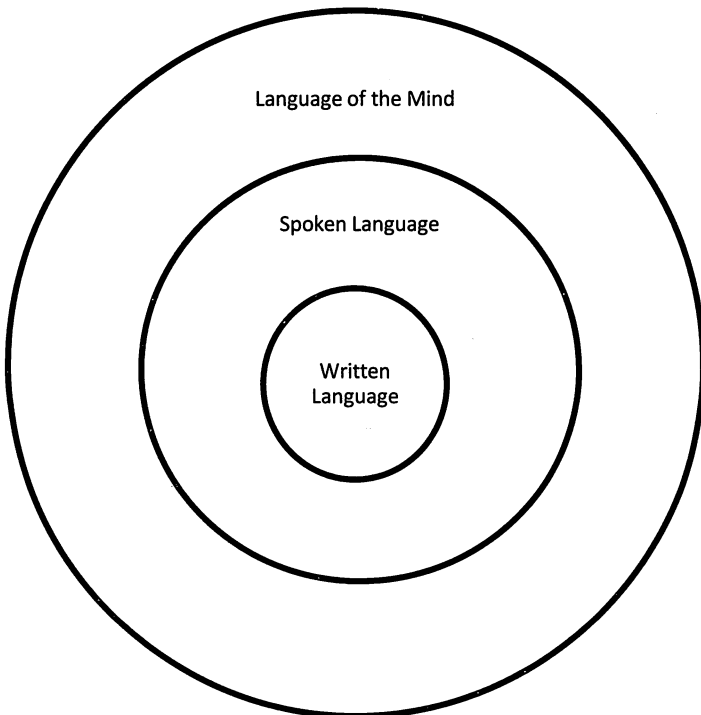


Illustration #7

[Luang Por then draws the circle within the circle that follows, regarding languages...]  
“As you can see, the language of the mind is far greater than any other language. And, because of this, the Buddha cannot explain all things: There are limitations in language and our ability to speak and write is limited.

“The human being is made up of four elements: earth, water, fire, and wind. But they are all impure and expire in time. If we let them expire, we will die. We breathe, for example, because we must refuel the wind element. Because we are impure, we refuel continuously. But the mind is a knowing element that is invisible to the physical eyes. We can only see it by using our inner brightness. But what, we might ask, does the mind look like?

“In the beginning of human life, the parents come together to bring about the human being’s existence. Now the human body has special qualifications: we can stand upright, we can lie down to sleep, and we can position ourselves in many directions. No other animal can do this. We are fortunate to be born human because it is very difficult to get here, into a human body. You should think of all of the animals in this world, and then realize that to be born human is not very common – in fact, it is pretty extraordinary. So we should never use our body to do bad things. We should use this body to only do good things because we have to return it.

“Now the mind is the knowing element, as I have just said. The mind resides in the human body and always needs that body in which to reside. Otherwise, without the mind, the body would be dead. The mind is crystal clear when we are born, but it becomes dirty when it is mixed with greed, anger, and delusion. But, in reality, the mind is the master of the body and can be seen to sensitive eyes in meditation.

“The mind is spherical-shaped about the size of a person’s eye socket, and is built layer within layer within layer. The outer layer is called perception and it is based on the five senses: seeing, smelling, hearing, tasting, and touching. When the mind receives information, it is that information in which we perceive something is happening. It is that form of knowing that comes when we superficially perceive information in a specific setting. The next layer as we go into the inner layer is memorization. This is like a video/CD/DVD player that can memorize everything that is going on around us. It records all sounds, visuals, and videos perfectly because the mind is refined as an element – not like the body. The third layer is the thinking layer, and the fourth layer is the knowing part of the mind in which we synthesize all of the information that we have previously known



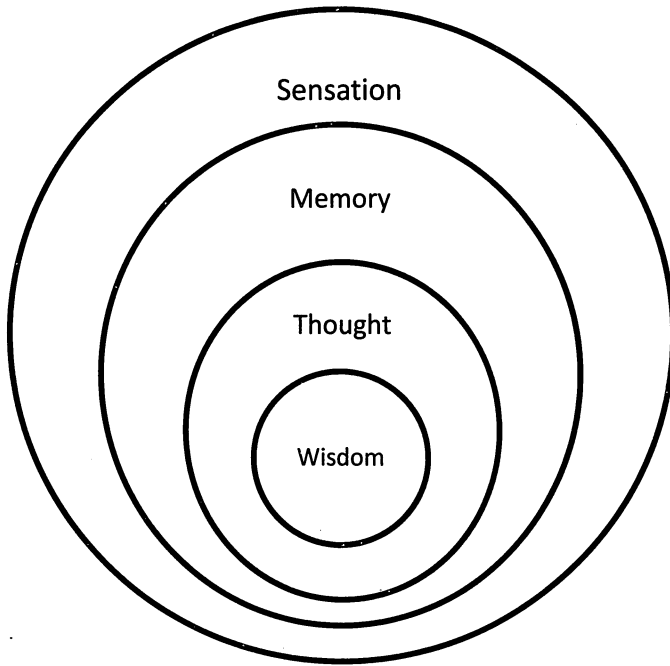


Illustration #8

and amalgamate them for true understanding.

“Of course, the mind works properly if all things are working properly. But, as we are aware, nothing is really always working perfectly. If we receive the wrong input, then everything else is input incorrectly. If we are drunk, or sick, or angry, or in the wrong environment, then all of the information we receive goes into our mind incorrectly. And that is why meditation is so important, because it cleans the mind. The same thing happens to students, of course, and you need to remember this.

“This information is from the Buddha, because He could see His own mind and what it looked like, and He could see His past lives and the past lives of other people as well. This was the first supreme enlightenment: He could see the structure of the mind, and He could see His past lives.

“The second supreme enlightenment was when He saw the mind become dark because of greed, anger, and delusion. Remember that when the mind is still, without defilements, it is clear, more free, more firm. But when it is not, when the mind has defilement, then we begin to do evil things. At the time of the second supreme enlightenment, the Buddha

discovered the Law of Kamma. He was not the creator of the Law, but the re-discoverer of the Law of Kamma. All beings who do evil or wrong things will discover the Law of Kamma after death, if not before. This discovery comes from seeing with the inner brightness of our mind. When evil people die, and we ask about where they are (in Heaven or Hell) we will not be able to point to them, but we will be able to see them when we meditate. This is the time that the Buddha saw Heaven and Hell. So we will be able to see Hell in one of two ways: (1) Meditate, increase our brightness, and see what it is like, and (2) Do bad/evil things, and go see it for yourself, experience it yourself. Here, the Buddha witnessed birth and death.

“The third supreme enlightenment occurred when the Buddha brought His mind to a total standstill and saw the accumulated defilements from all lifetimes. He brought to His mind all of these and discovered the Four Noble Truths and the method to end suffering, which is the Eightfold Noble Path. At this stage, He could see and know both. After He knew this, His mind was free: It was free not to be born, free from ignorance, and He knew that He knew He was free from rebirth.”

With this, the session is over. We wait for Luang Por who is now smiling to the crowd, bow to the Buddha, and exit the conference room. There are several English speakers, so we have Luang Pi Pasura and Luang Pi Joshua as our translators. We also have delicious Thai food awaiting us for lunch!

2PM – 18 March 2010

This is a time for Questions and Answers. We have been asked to write them down on a piece of paper and submit them to Luang Por’s secretary. Luang Por will then decide which are the most relevant, and answer those questions.

**Q: Could we discuss more about the Buddha’s enlightenment that we talked about this morning and what happened during the process?**

A: The Buddha saw Hell and Heaven because of the brightness from inside of His mind. If He saw the mind and the defilements of the mind, then He must be in a celestial body. This is the inner body, or the body within the body. If you meditate, you will see it. Sometimes, for example, you see a body in a dream. That is your astral body, but your light astral body. You can see it clearly in your dreams, but when you get up, you don’t see it again. But, if you practice, you will be able to see it again. You have not just your

astral body, but other bodies as well. If you look at light through a prism, you will see seven different colors. It is like that: the bodies are there, but unless you shine a light through them, you will not see them. Your celestial body will return to you when you keep the precepts. But if you do not, and your body becomes twisted or drunk or angry or greedy, you will be born differently. Celestial beings are part of this.

It is your job to tell your students about this. If they deny it without proof, then they are simply stubborn. They have the method to prove it for themselves!

Ever since the time of the Buddha, people had more than one body. Once you meditate, you will find this out for yourself.

**Q: Was the Buddha seeing His mind with celestial bodies? And then He could see defilements, or kilesa?**

A: Remember that the body is made up of the four impure elements, and the mind is a refined element. But the mind can get extremely dirty due to defilements. So there are impure elements that can become attached to the mind. We can, of course, see this for ourselves. But defilements are manifested in the mind. Ever since we were born, defilements have been with us because they came with us from past lifetimes. This is called accumulated defilements. The more we have, the more we have defilements that continue to cloud our mind. But it depends on the shade of glasses that we wear.

After the Buddha practiced, He got rid of defilement because He realized that defilements were a twisted perception that caused us to speak and act badly. Defilements are an eternal enemy, but not a living organism. It can, however, spread like rust and that is how defilements deteriorate the mind. You can ask 'why?' but that is its nature. If you want to learn more – because language is a limitation – then you need to meditate.

We know how germs attack the body. And what causes us to be sick, and perhaps to kill us. Well, defilement is the same, except that it follows us from lifetime to lifetime. The mind becomes infected and we begin to think badly and that becomes a bad habit over a period of time. When we think, speak, and act badly, the habit becomes more difficult to break. So when we die, defilements follow us into another world through the mind. Bad habits also follow us, and that is why bad habits undermine the mind.

And how do we get rid of defilement? How do we eradicate defilements?

If we are not mindful, then defilements become even more apparent to us. We must bring together concentration, effort, and meditation. They must all come together. The Buddha eradicated His own defilements by first recollecting his past lives. Suppose we imagine a perfect sphere like the world. As the sun comes up, the brightness slowly chases the darkness away until it becomes noon and then there is brightness all around. But as the sun sets, darkness comes again. The light chases the dark away. To get rid of defilements, we must live in the light. If we had the power, we could stop the sun and make the world bright all of the time, but that would not be fair to the people who live on the other side of the world because they would be in darkness all of the time. So we need to meditate and bring each individual's light into the world. We need to put the world in the middle of the sun and have brightness all of the time, for everyone.

The origin of Buddhism sought to answer this question.

After His enlightenment, the Buddha realized that the human being was composed of three things, not two. The body + the mind + Dhamma. Here, Dhamma has many meanings. Usually, Buddhists know only one meaning and that is the teachings of the Buddha. But the word means 'pure nature' that exists within each human being that is discoverable through meditation.

So. What is Dhamma? It is pure nature that exists within the human body. If we can still the mind, then we can attain and be one with our pure nature – the Dhamma. And, if we can be pure with the Dhamma, we can be pure permanently. And Dhamma has another name: Nibbana within the human body. But you have to train yourself to see it. The monks who come to ordain want to attain this Dhamma.

The mind is invisible to the human eyes, but you can see it with your inner eyes. The Dhamma has many levels: Nibbana is the most pure. It is the duty of each Buddhist to discover the Dhamma by him/herself. But don't ask me why – it just is. Just nature.

**Q: What do we need to know about defilements?**

A: Just like the river is filled with fish, if we don't get rid of bad habits, our mind will be filled with defilements. We are attracted to defilements like fish to water. If our mind is under the power of defilements, the mind loses the ability to clean itself. The mind travels out of the body and travels to attach itself to defilements.

Defilements are individual, so getting rid of defilements is a personal journey. But we, as teachers, can help if we teach students good habits. Defilements can force the mind to think, speak, and act badly. So we always need to put our mind into the Dhamma.

**Q: What is the crisis of human life?**

A: The most critical time in a human life is the time when the umbilical cord is cut: We cannot move, we have nothing. This is the crisis moment of human life: THE critical moment of our life unless we have good parents who take care of us. We are born with ignorance, and we have nothing. Plus, our past defilements that we are born with force the mind to do bad things. This causes two main problems: (1) How do we survive, and (2) How do we deal with conflict, one to another.

We must look thoroughly into the educational process when we deal with these two problems. But, even after studying them, we never think about how we need to refine the elements. And we can't refine the elements because we start with the wrong questions.

Here is an example: Why do we eat? We eat because of energy and repair and growth. When the question is deep, then we need to answer deeply. What are the pure elements outside of the body. Look at a plate of rice. Is it pure? Does it have good nutrition? Was it purchased or was it stolen? When you eat it, what do you do with it? How are you using it? You need to look at the purity of the elements involved. If we put water into a cup, how are we involved with the process? People who are angry and those who are not have different molecules that line up differently. Remember that nothing is pure naturally, nor is the intention to use it pure.

By the time our umbilical cord is cut, we have to rely on ourselves – we are our own refuge. In food alone, with each sip of milk, we have five “ingredients” to think about: (1) Quality, or is it of superior value and worth, (2) Quantity, or is it too much or too little, (3) Technique, or how are we eating the food and is it done with anger or sadness, happiness or joy, (4) Timing, or when and how often the milk is given, and (5) Environment, or where it is given. All five of these ingredients result in the physical health of the receiver, and, more importantly, are the major contributors in the formation of habits. Fitting all of these together is kind of scary. We need to look back at ourselves and our own habits. After all, we are teaching people, influencing them and their habits.

In addressing the problem of living together we have to look at what everyone has learned

at home and what they are bringing into the classroom. And, how many bad habits can we actually fix? The teachers tend to blame the parents and the parents blame the teachers, particularly if the children grow up to be bad people. But this all comes from human defilements, ignorance and impure elements – and, of course, from using the wrong methodology. So, we could say that ignorance + living together → defilements! If we develop ethics correctly (and other things, too, of course) then we help to develop a great child. But it also depends on how he can develop himself. True knowledge about the nature of life is something that we learn if we really want to get rid of problems. And vice versa: when we learn it, then we can choose.

Education is missing a certain piece. And that is the ethical and moral development of the child. No one can guarantee the ‘wisdom’ or habits or ethics of the graduate from college or university because they do not know about the mind. The Buddha gave us a standard and that is the qualification of a person who has a good education is a person: (1) responsible for his own mistakes or, the opposite, his own awareness and mindfulness, (2) responsible for the morality of society and (3) responsible for the economy of morality. When a person follows the first four precepts, he or she will not hurt others, and will be responsible for his own morality. That person will not hurt others in any way, through physical force or malicious slander, and follow the eight fold path. When the person becomes responsible for society, he or she will stay away from people with prejudice and/or bias due to love, hate, fear, or ignorance. And, when we talk about the economy of morality, we are talking about how we must not follow the path to our own decay: drinking, dishonest nightlife, corrupt entertainment, gambling, associating with bad people, and laziness. These are indeed the road to ruin.

If the economy is good at a school, then young people don’t worship money as god, and then a little drinking does not lead to more drinking, and gambling does not lead to more gambling. But, we need to teach young people how to take responsibility for their own actions.

Humans, of course, need companionship. And we are surrounded by people on every level with which to obtain this companionship. But we need people who are surrounding us to be moral and ethical people because the qualities that we are looking for in our companions do not simply drop down from the sky. We have to be responsible for our outside environment, just as we are responsible for our inside environment. So we need to be responsible for our own six directions: our parents, our teachers, our (spiritual) leaders, our family, our colleagues, and our friends. Each person has their own six direc-

tions, although in the beginning of our life, when we are developing our habits, our six directions give us total input – in other words, we are in-taking all the information that will be the key factors to our self-development and habit-building. But as we grow and mature, these six directions become interactive and the people around us learn from us as well. Further, whoever has the better standards in life is more successful. So we need to develop ourselves in our own six directions so that we are moral, ethical people in order to be successful.

We can see the Dhamma by practicing the eight fold noble path. Because the Buddha meditated and saw his own mind, He then saw everyone else's mind. He could see the defilements in his mind and then in the minds of others – those defilements cause us to see, speak and act badly. Sometimes, when we look at an object in the dark, we cannot see it clearly. But the Buddha could see clearly the goodness and the evilness in other people. The Buddha saw and knew the unwholesomeness in others.

There are three main actions that are considered immoral actions: killing, stealing, and adultery. Those are corrupt actions of the body. But there are also corrupt verbal actions as well. And they are: lying, using harsh speech, causing conflict through speech, and idle chatter or gossip. These unwholesome actions lead to vengeance and having the wrong view. So the Buddha gave us the clear cut scale of what is good and what is bad. The Buddha could also understand the Law of Kamma and what would be perceived as good and bad action. As I said, the Buddha was not the creator of the Law of Kamma, but the re-discoverer. Unfortunately, most people don't study this law and they don't know how to use the existing laws that we have.

The Buddha also saw the celestial realms that He perceived in meditation. He saw the ignorance that causes all of the bad actions in the world: Ignorance manifested in the mind. Then He saw the Four Noble Truths and saw, upon enlightenment, that even the mind is impure. Since the body deteriorates, and the mind has defilements, we must put our mind in the middle of the Dhamma. And this is done through repeated meditation. Then the mind will stay within the Dhamma permanently.

But for most of us, defilements take us out of this state. It is best, of course, to start your meditation practice before the age of 50, because then we have better meditation. Age triggers things within the body that do not help us with our meditation and we tend to fall asleep more easily. Plus, our body cannot meditate as easily for long periods of time. So we need to practice meditation as soon as possible for as long as possible.

*[With this, he smiles because many of the people in the room are past 50. And they are groaning at the thought that they are passed the meditation stage.]*

If we can eradicate 50% of our defilements, then we will eventually go to Nibbana. At 60-70% we will become a stream-enterer, at 90% we will become a non-returner, and at 100%, we will become an Arahant. So we need to keep on practicing in order to reach enlightenment.

Ignorance, as I have said, is the source of defilement, along with anger and delusion. Feeling is the symptom of defilement. And Anger is the result of defilement; it is not the defilement itself. Our true duty, of course, is to get rid of suffering.

**Q: How do we get rid of defilement when we have to work and earn a living?**

A: It all starts with the Right View. There are, of course, side effects of any job. If you look at any occupation – policeman, attorney, judge, fisherman, and so on – every job has its problems. So you have to accept these as facts. Perhaps the problem is fame, or diet, or clothing: each occupation has its own kamma. Working and earning a living at the same time challenges most people, but not many jobs have the same advantages as teachers. Teaching gives you the opportunity to create good energy: Helping other people gain knowledge and develop good habits is a gift.

With the Right View, and following the Eightfold Noble Path, you will eventually reach Nibbana. It is a circuitous route starting with the Right View, and you as teachers are part of instilling the Right View within your students. No matter how good or bad your students are, you have to show them respect just as they have to show you respect. And you will need to teach this from the very beginning. You will also need to instill in them the desire and importance of only seeing the good in others. You must observe their behavior and their manners, and teach them to observe the good in other people. So you must teach students this, or they will start to concentrate on being critical and looking at the bad things in people. They will start with you. But if you teach them to observe the goodness in other people, they will be the source of respect with other people.

Discipline is vital to studying and to student behavior. Basic discipline includes: (1) Showing respect to the teacher and to others, (2) Cleanliness, (3) Punctuality, (4) Keeping the five precepts (no killing, stealing, lying, sexual misconduct, or taking intoxicants), and (5) showing patience for meditation. The people who can model this behavior are, of



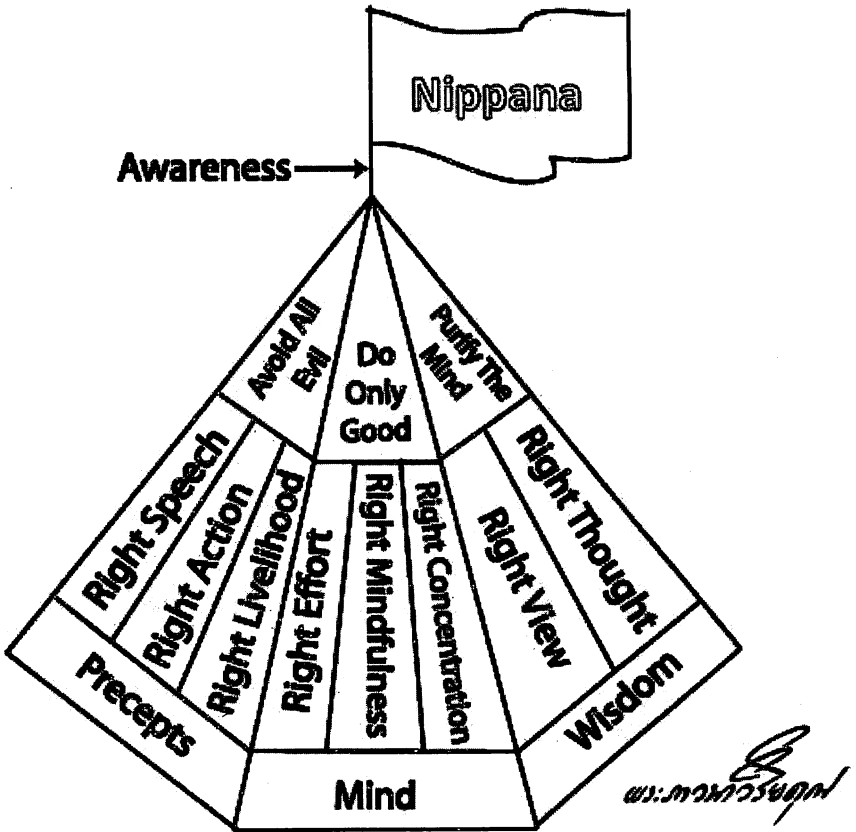


Illustration #9

course, the teachers. This is the way to practice the Eightfold Noble Path, although most people don't even know that it is the Eightfold Noble Path! If they practice 'cleaning their minds' in the first five minutes of class time, they will be beginning a lifelong habit of good meditation. But if we let it go, if we don't teach them to meditate until they are older, then they will let it go, too. The first five minutes of class time is the best because they are just settling down, and they can 'clean their minds' to get ready to listen to you. They will be more attentive, and be more tuned into listening to your lessons and your own inner wisdom. This is the perfect time to teach them, in your own way, about core values.

The core concept is, of course, the Eightfold Noble Path that everyone can practice. The Dhamma can be taught to anyone as well, because the Buddha taught it for forty-five years to all kinds of people. The Dhamma is not just for smart people. The Buddha

systemized, or categorized, the Dhamma, and he was able to individualize the lessons so that the people He was talking to would have the ears to hear, and the wisdom to understand what He was saying.

Some people need more teaching than others. There are some people who heard the Buddha say one word and became an Arahant. But other people need more teachings in order to understand the Dhamma. So teachers have to have patience with their students when they teach them just as the Buddha had patience with the people that He taught.

**Q: Why should men ordain as monks?**

A: Ordaining allows the mind to expand and it is an opportunity to do good works. Monks will be able to create boon. When a man ordains, then his eyes can see the horizon. But when he is married, he cannot see the horizon but only sees one face. His mind retracts and becomes smaller. A monk has the strength to carry an elephant, but when he is married everything shrinks and becomes smaller.

**Q: Is there any way to teach the teachings of the Buddha easily?**

A: You need to be calm and still and allow the students to be the same. This is why those five minutes of meditation in the beginning of class will allow your students to have a clearer mind to receive your teachings.

The role of the teacher is not an easy one: That is, the patience and ability to develop morality in children. No matter how good a doctor is, they cannot resurrect a person with medicine. But the teacher can resurrect a student from death: The teacher can bring the student back to live in goodness again because the teacher can re-train students in good habits. Parents, of course, retain the first role as teachers to guide their children in right from wrong, good from bad. But the knowledge that is instilled in children from their teachers is used for the rest of their lives.

**Q: What is boon?**

A: Boon is pure energy. You cannot see it, but you know that it is there. Boon always gives good energy. You create boon, put the good energy into the universe, and then boon comes back to you.

**Q: How is boon generated?**

A: Boon is created by doing good acts, keeping precepts, meditating, and listening to the Dhamma. You can feel the energy that is created by these four things. So if you do good acts with good intention, you stop doing bad things, and you purify your mind through meditation, you will be generating boon. Boon is boon and you don't even have to think about it. So just go make boon and eradicate your defilement. Otherwise, you will be creating baap which is bad energy. Baap is generated by thinking bad thoughts through greed, anger, and jealousy. It is, in fact, dirty energy and undermines your feeling good about what you do, and the desire to do more good.

**Q: Could you talk more about the meaning of Dhamma?**

A: The first meaning of Dhamma is pure nature. Pure nature leads us to Nibbana. If we have pure nature, or pure mind, we will be filled with happiness. The second meaning of Dhamma has to do with the teachings of the Lord Buddha: It is the summary of the 84,000 teachings and those teachings are about how to practice, and attain, the pure nature within. Unfortunately, there was no recorder during His time to record all of these teachings. But we can summarize all of the teachings as "noncarelessness". The third meaning of Dhamma has to do with the good habits accorded those who follow the teachings. From beginning students to the more advanced students, it is the ethics, virtues, or morals that we practice and the habits that develop when we follow the teachings. So the third meaning has to do with the behavior or good habits that we display.

**Q: Is offering money better than meditating?**

A: They are different so this is difficult to compare. But being generous is getting rid of stinginess and it develops a habit of compassion in the mind. And more, you have to understand that you reap what you sow. If you give knowledge easily, you will make a living easily. But we all need to meditate!

**Q: What is the result of meditation?**

A: The actual results of meditation are individual, but it does get rid of stinginess. If we keep the precepts, we can get rid of our anger by not allowing our mind to follow our anger. It also helps us to be more beautiful! [Everyone smiles at this because, after all, who doesn't want to be more beautiful!] The results of following the precepts are to

have more money and to be more beautiful. Meditation clarifies our mind because we can see it the way it should be. So meditation makes us smart! Therefore, if we follow the precepts, we will be beautiful. If we are charitable and benevolent, we will be affluent. And, if we meditate, we will be smart!

**Q: Does the Wat (Temple) see this?**

A: There are three sources of the teachings: Parents, Teachers, and Monks. But all answers begin with ourselves. Are we moral? If we cannot behave in a virtuous way, then we cannot criticize others. We must always start with ourselves and resolve any conflict we have within ourselves first. Change yourself to change the world.

**Q: Is it better to be born a Buddhist or to be born in another religion and convert to Buddhism?**

A: Heaven and Hell belong to all religions.

**Q: How can we resolve bad Kamma from the past?**

A: First, look at a glass of water. Let us suppose that the water represents the refined element of our mind. Defilement is like putting a cup of salt into the water. But when we pour that water into a bucket and add more water, or boon, we lessen the impact of the salt. Then we pour that water into a tank and add more water. Every time we add water, or boon, we lessen our bad kamma from the past. In order to change our kamma, we must do three things: (1) give up bad habits, (2) do good works, and (3) meditate.

**Q: What is the meaning of suffering? And impermanence?**

A: Impermanence is when things are changing all of the time, recreating the cells all of the time. Suffering is impermanence. We suffer because we cannot stay in the same form forever: No matter how old we are or how many wrinkles we have. We always try to prevent this from happening. But we cannot stop ageing. One day as the Buddha was teaching, a big wind came along and He said, “Monks... just dust in the universe...”

**Q: What if I just break one precept, or just two precepts?**

A: Everything has a cause and effect. We reap what we sow.

**Q: Does Mara exist? What does Mara look like?**

A: Yes. Mara exists. Khun Yai used to say that Mara is Mara. Mara does not like good deeds and Mara always interferes. Mara cannot stop goodness being done, but it can put things in our way to interfere with us doing good deeds. For example, if we want to meditate, and our spouse starts to snore: This is just an interference to stop us from our meditation.

**Q: Is the mind spirit?**

A: You have to train yourself and see this for yourself. If you practice meditation, then you will be able to gain wisdom and answer these questions yourself.

**Q: Do I have to wear white, or light incense, or give flowers in order to attain good results in meditation?**

A: No. But these things only help you create an atmosphere that is pleasant for meditation. You can use any or all of them if it helps you meditate more frequently.

Luang Por gave us a blessing and said:

“All people desire happiness. But here is what we all have in common: Birth, Old Age, Sickness and Death. Meditate and follow the Eightfold Noble Path, and you will find true happiness because you will end the cycle of re-birth: You will attain enlightenment.”

## Meeting #18

9AM – 19 March 2010

Today, Luang Por is somber. His whole demeanor has changed from one of the joviality he displayed yesterday to one of crucial significance. I am not sure why, but I think that he sees the enormity of the task that lies ahead. These are the teachers of Thailand, and he considers them to be the future of Buddhism and Thailand: The education of Thailand falls on most of the people in this room. It is a serious task.

He begins:

“Yesterday, we had an overview of Buddhist teachings. From this knowing, we will come to understand the meaning of Dhamma. But any level of Dhamma must be seen from the inside of each individual. Goodness, righteousness, virtue: All of these things you must look and find inside of yourself.

“As I said yesterday, there are three meanings or levels of Dhamma. The first is Pure Nature, or Nibbana. This exists within the human body, but it cannot be seen unless we meditate and eradicate our defilements. Then we can see Nibbana, or Dhamma. And in order to do this, we must practice the eightfold Noble Path.

“The second concerns the teaching of the Lord Buddha which purifies the mind and incorporates the mind within the Dhamma. This enables us to reach our pure nature but it all depends on the effort that we put into it. Are we willing to put our own lives on the line for this? If we are not, we can at least help in the third meaning.

“And that is, Dhamma means good habits that are accumulated through the practice of patience, right thinking, respect – and all of these habits are ethical. We need to keep the precepts in order to develop morality.

“There are three questions that we must address: What are we teaching? Why are we teaching it? And how do we implement the teachings? The history of Thailand is an interesting one because it is the only country that has never gone to war. But if anything goes wrong, who do we blame? We always blame the politicians. If we put the blame on the government, then we are not looking in the right direction. WE are the ones who have to change.

“The students you are teaching now will be the politicians when you retire. If you do not teach them properly, then who is to blame? We are!! We are to blame because we are probably not following the eightfold Noble Path. During the time of Prince Siddhartha, people thought he was crazy to practice the path, but He realized that there would be too many problems if they were not followed.

“Throughout history, there are people in the world who always ask if there cannot be something or someone in the world to help with the problems of the world. We think: are we paranoid? Ignorant? And so people started to believe that something must exist.

“We can call this anything that we want to: Nibbana, or God, or Truth, or the Unknown Factor, or Dhamma, or Supreme Knowledge. What we call it depends on where we are and the time we are alive. You have to remember that darkness is always balanced by the light. With right thinking, we can search for this dynamic force through the correct meditation.

“There are all kinds of people in the world. People might think ‘let me stay here until someone else discovers whatever it is, and then I will take it for my own belief system.’ But there are others who believe it, and go in search for it. They search for the Unknown Factor until they discover it for themselves.

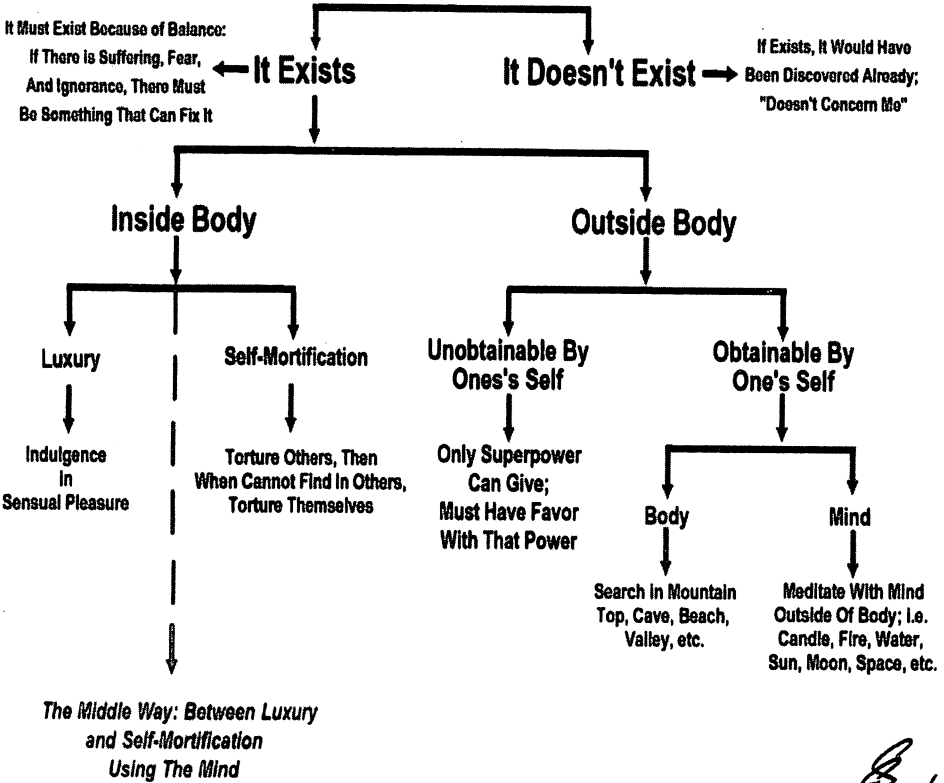
“If the Unknown Factor is outside of the body, we think it can be attainable or unattainable by humans, by one’s self. Some people think that IT must be a special power given to us, because this would indicate that IT gave us the sun, the moon, and the stars. So we must pray to IT and ask IT for services or favors. This thinking was the origin of Deism. There are others who think they can obtain IT themselves, and meditate outside of the body, or search the world around for IT. This thinking is, then, for people who believe that the Unknown Factor exists outside of the body.

“There are some exceptions to this: There are hermit yogis who look for the Unknown Factor inside of the body, but practice meditation outside of the body and can go searching all around the world for the source.

*[Note: Remember that we must understand the sources of religion so we can understand the way people think.]*

“There is another major group who think that the Unknown Factor is obtainable inside of

# The Unknown Factor



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## Illustration #10

the body, but they do not know where. They practice in two ways: One, through enjoyment and physical pleasure, and Two, through self-mortification. Both, of course, are extreme. The Buddha had practiced both ways, but He was also the one who discovered that the Middle Path was the best way. Because he had meditated inside the body when He was seven years old, He knew that He could do this again. He, therefore, meditated and discovered the Middle Path.

“All religions start from the ideas of suffering, fear and ignorance. And the common things that happen to all people are birth, ageing, sickness, and death. Something or someone must exist because there needs to be a Balance: If there is suffering, fear, and ignorance, there must be something or someone that can fix it!



“Meditation and concentration help us to discover and understand all of this. One of our jobs, as you well know, is to train the future leaders so that they will understand this, too. We have the material to start the fire, but we need the people to ignite the mind: We know what is right, what is Dhamma, but we need those people who understand this to teach it! We, ourselves, must not be afraid to teach this. And hopefully, we are not too late!

“So what motivates humans? Who teaches us right from wrong, or how do we gauge between right and wrong? In discussing this topic, we have to discuss kamma. Kamma, once again, is action with intention. It is, simply, cause and effect. If we do something good, then good will return to us. And, vice versa. When we talk about the retribution of Kamma, we talk about actions that happen because of the initial action that a person does. Retribution of Kamma can be in this life or future lives. Some actions have immediate effects – like growing vegetables or fruit – and depending on the kind of fruit that we grow. Some vegetables are almost immediately available to us. Sometimes it takes many seasons. This is the same as kamma. Kamma can be good or bad. Some kamma bears fruit in this lifetime, and some in the future, although we should know the results of our actions.

“Meditation also works in this way. If we meditate and continue to meditate we create boon which comes back to us. If we offer food to the monks, we see the results of this immediately as well. Baap, or bad kamma, works in the same way. Suffering will be the retribution of the corrupt or immoral act itself. So what are the acts that are considered unwholesome? We would have to break them down into three areas: (1) Body, (2) Speech, and (3) Thoughts. For the body, the three acts causing retribution are killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct. For speech, the acts causing retribution are lying, using divisive speech, using harsh speech, and idle chatter, or speaking without any benefit. For thoughts, the acts are covetousness, having a vengeful mind, and having the wrong view - or having the wrong theory or philosophy of life. These are: thinking that there is no such thing as good or bad kamma, thinking that there is no reason to be born, believing that there is no afterlife, believing that the mother is not worthy of respect, believing that the father is not worthy of respect, believing that spontaneous beings do not exist, believing that there is no Heaven or Hell, and believing that Arahants do not exist – or that a person cannot become self-enlightened.

“Unwholesome acts, then, bear an unwholesome result. If we could go to the unwholesome realms, we would see that the retribution of doing unwholesome acts is to be born

as animals, or born into bad places. There are various levels of these: (1) born as an animal (and that includes ANY animal), (2) born as a Hungry Ghost, (3) born as a monster, (4) Go to one of the various levels of Hell. Retribution is like throwing a stone in the air, you know that it will eventually, but always, come down. Or kicking a ball. It will move forward for awhile but then it will eventually stop. It could be rolling into the future, but it will eventually stop rolling.

“Wholesome acts are, of course, just the opposite of the unwholesome ones. Anyone who has the Right View is like the first sunlight in the morning. And the person who has the ten wholesome actions going on in their lives has the Right View, the Right ‘theory’ or philosophy of life. And there are four Right Views: (1) Sharing. This is the way to live in the world together. All humans (and animals) need to share. Just as teachers share knowledge, we need to share our good fruit because we need to give something good in order to bring happiness. Sharing is really the basis of life and will deteriorate our impure elements. When we are trying to refuel our four elements, we realize that the resources are unequally distributed if we do not share. When we share, we have a livable world. (2) Charity. In times of trouble, if the whole village has the problem, whose problem is it? The only caution would be that to offer assistance must be creative and truly helpful. (3) Encouragement and Respect. If we want good things to happen, then we have to do things. In order to create good vibes in the universe, we need to create boon. If you lose the feeling of doing good works, or your students lose the feeling that they are not being encouraged to do their best, then it is easier to wake the dead. So we must be encouraging to our students to do their homework, for example. (4) The result of a good and bad action exists. People must see this to believe it unfortunately, because they really don’t believe it.

“There are reasons why we are living the way we are living in this world. If we are wealthy or poor, there are reasons for this. How we are today is an accumulation of what we were up until today. There is a reason for why we are here and what we will be doing tomorrow. Although we cannot correct the past, we can certainly change the future – today and tomorrow. There is a reason for the next life, or the future in this life. This can be designed, depending on how we live the right view. We should not necessarily be caught in familiarity: Take, for example, the bee and the fly. The bee goes to the flower and the fly goes to garbage. Why? Because that is what they are used to doing!

“Our mother is our first most significant figure because she is the first person to instill values. Without her wisdom, we may not be human unless our mother is human. She is

the person who gives us the right view. If children are given the wrong view, then they will follow a path into Hell. Many teachers can teach their students, but they cannot teach their own children. The father, of course, is significant as well because he will instill values that are either harmful or noble. Additionally, teachers are significant to their students but this can be a double-edged sword because if you teach them bad habits then they will use that information in the wrong way. If we teach them good habits, of course, they will grow to be moral people. We must all understand this clearly. This is our responsibility and we cannot blame anyone else but ourselves if the future adults leading the country are selfish or self-serving. We must accept that responsibility as a teacher.

“Spontaneous beings exist. It is necessary to talk about spontaneous being because it makes us think about the life cycle, birth and re-birth. Life after death exists, and the life we have in this world is short. But the life we have after death is so much longer; in fact, it could be for millions upon millions of years. Because life after death is long, if we make a mistake, our life could be extremely unhappy. And that is, unhappy beyond any explanation. We might suffer for many millions of years. One tiny finger movement which leads us to kill a mosquito leads to the death of a being which leads to a clouded mind which can lead us to Hell. This action affects everyone because everyone shares in our actions ... we affect each person in all of our six directions. We share in evilness just as we share in goodness. This acts like an insurance rate that increases over time unless we create boon to dispel the baap that is created by ourselves and others. If we give just one spoonful of rice to a monk, that monk will be able to spread more Dhamma, and that will last for many lifetimes. No matter how small our gift of goodness is, that act of sharing has significant consequences. We simply do what we can.

“The Buddha trained Himself, received the knowledge, and then shared the knowledge He obtained. He taught everyone, it did not matter to whom it was taught – rich or poor – and the depth of His teaching depended on the individual to whom He was teaching. He could see what the individual needed to understand at the time He was teaching him or her, and that made Him the consummate teacher. Not only that, but the Buddha had a great curriculum – and we all just have to follow it. He can guarantee the teaching. That applies to anyone who has the Right View: If we follow the teaching, it will be like a shining light of the sun rising in the mind.

“The standard of good and bad is right here for us to understand. Wholesome or unwholesome, coarse or refined. Charity, compassion, virtue – use the Dhamma to decide what is good and bad teaching. But use the precepts as well. If we use custom, which

is a more coarse way to judge good and/or bad, we might not have the best way but at least people can live with one another. In addition to custom or tradition, we can also use the law where there is evidence and/or a witness. But law can have a true and a false interpretation: Or, the law can be good or bad depending on the interpretation because if we are judging by custom, then it will be coarse. It depends on each situation and the people, and that is why the Buddha taught to all the people, not just to specific people. Not just an overview, but everything – all 84,000 teachings. And that was just the beginning.”

2PM

“How do we judge good and bad actions according to the Buddhist way? There are standards, but it is difficult to find an equal to this because in other religions we cannot see our own mind and the defilements in our mind. So in order to actually figure out Kamma and the source of Kamma it is difficult because there is no clear measure of good and bad. It depends a great deal on intention.

“If we do not preserve the land, then the mind of the people will not be able to see the good and bad and then the people will be in conflict. Just as it has been throughout history, the country and the people will be separated. This is what happened recently in 1989 with the USSR. The country split into many countries because they did not know what was good and what was bad throughout their history.

“The way to keep Thailand intact is to keep Buddhism because if we cannot keep it, then we will lose the line between good and bad. Until 1973, we had a teaching curriculum that was based on Buddhist principles and practices. But it changed during that year because the Minister of Education was not a Buddhist. A country has to have the ten right views as a basis for correct teaching because it gives a clear line or delineation of what is good and what is bad.

“Because we define kamma as action with intention, everything we do has kammic consequences but it also depends on whether or not we are people who have significant defilements. If our mind is pure, our action does not result in kammic action. But we need to be very careful because even though we may have good wishes, deep down inside, we have defilement, and our sincerity is not there. Therefore, the Buddha could do things and not reap kammic consequences because He had no defilement. This applies to Arahants as well.

“Kamma, then, applies to body, speech, and thought: action with intention. And the actions that we perform throughout our lifetimes reflect negatively or positively on the people around us. These people are: our Mother/Father, our teachers throughout our lifetime, our own family when we are older, friends, our colleagues, and our spiritual leaders and/or mentors. We call these the six directions. In the front are the people who care for us as we are growing, to the right side are the people who are our teachers, and to the top are the spiritual guides we have throughout our lives. These three directions are the most vital at birth.

“Teachers, then, are one of the most important sources of value training. If we look at our own actions, we must decide for ourselves if our actions are healthy and moral. Or, do we commit deeds when we are angry, greedy, or deluded. The people committing the deed must always think of the consequences because if they do not, and commit a wrong deed, they will regret it later on. We must always look at the result of our actions. If we do something out of bias or prejudice, then the consequences will be significant. So look at the cause of the action and the result of the action in order to understand the correct definition of cause and effect. If the Dhamma is not clearly understood it will cause many problems within the community. If it is, then there will be no problems.

“Next, let us look at the words ‘should’ and ‘should not’. ‘Should?’ or ‘should not?’ are not easy questions, nor do they have easy answers. With anything we do, if we do anything, there is a tendency to ask the question: ‘Should I do this?’ ‘Should I not do this?’ Any time we cause an unwholesome act to happen, that is a ‘should not’: If we are thinking of doing some action and it will cause something unwholesome to happen, then we ‘should not’ do that action. At the time we ask the question, however, it is neither right nor wrong, good nor bad. If, however, a wholesome act might occur, then it is ‘should’. Anything that we do that might result in an unwholesome action occurring, then that is a ‘should not’. And, vice versa, anytime a wholesome action might occur, that is a ‘should’. This is the standard for any leader and it is the Dhamma left by the Buddha. This should also be used for our laws because our leaders have to look to the future.”

Luang Por then discusses the Eightfold Noble Path and how “Should” and “Should Not” reflects on the teachings of the eightfold path. Because these are teachers that he is speaking with, he wants them to understand that there are two levels of knowledge.

“There are two levels of understanding: Common understanding, or general understanding, and Profound understanding. The first has a minimal effect to the mind, but the

second significantly affects the mind. You can take any subject that you teach, whether it is math, or geography, or biology, if a student has wrong understanding, it does not cause that student (or you) to go to Hell. But right understanding is always better! In profound understanding, however, it affects our afterlife. If we don't think there is an afterlife, for example, then it significantly affects the mind and whether or not you go to Heaven or Hell. This, in itself, has significance and can or cannot affect the mind.

“This is called having the Right View because profound understanding is the Right View. If we can instill the right view into the student's mind, then we will be able to change people for the better. The right thought also has common and profound meaning and so on, around the wheel, but we always need to think in terms of the ten right views. Teachers need to use the eightfold path to profoundly affect their students in the right way, but not to create thoughts that might direct them to use the wrong view. For example, in teaching chemistry, we do not want students to come away thinking it is moral to make a bomb, a gun, or to have an abortion. We can do this because we are basing everything on the right view.

“Right motivation has everything to do with good deeds, just as right understanding has to do with views of life after death. If we do this, teach this, then people will be reluctant to behave badly. Societies fall apart because they have not been educated in the eightfold path. If you teach the students the Dhamma, you will have given them the safety net for their lives. Because they have the right view, they will have the right thought, and so on around the wheel.

“Every time we lie, we deceive ourselves and we lose confidence in ourselves. We reap what we sow. Our speech should always be within the context of what is in the Dhamma. And, because the mind is clear, it is easy to be successful. Buddhists would not go into the wrong livelihood if they were taught the eightfold path as a child. They would simply not give people drugs, so they would not be available. And so, as teachers, we need to practice the eightfold path for ourselves. If people don't tell you, you don't know how to fix your habits. You must always think of your responsibility you have and the good that you do.

“The tradition in Thailand, when the children were growing up, was to gather around the grandparents in the evening and the children would tell the grandparents what good actions they had performed that day. This created good energy in the family and for the individual members of the family. During the rainy season (June through October) the

fish would come to the road and Luang Pu would feed the fish and give them a blessing. That created good boon for the fish, the family, and Luang Por. When he grew up, then, the Dhamma had already been taught to him indirectly. The grandparents and the parents would apologize for incorrect thinking. But these days, the blessings are not the same. There is just TV, not Dhamma. But we have to take the responsibility for that. We support children wearing make-up, for example, or we support them going into the army. This is the wrong way to support them. Children grow up too fast, too soon. They go out just for the sake of entertainment, and from doing this, they have a wandering mind. They lose their good judgment when they follow the celebrities. They must learn to keep their mindfulness. The Eightfold Noble Path can be taught in Kindergarten. We can teach them etiquette, manners, and effort until mindfulness is achieved for them on that level.

“A good person, then, practices the Eightfold path, and reaches out and around to everyone. The person becomes this way, because you (the teachers) teach them responsibility without prejudice or bias. And this is the only way to change society: Change yourself. You are responsible for your own actions. And you, as teachers, are given responsibility for your students. This is the job you take on as a teacher. We can only change society if

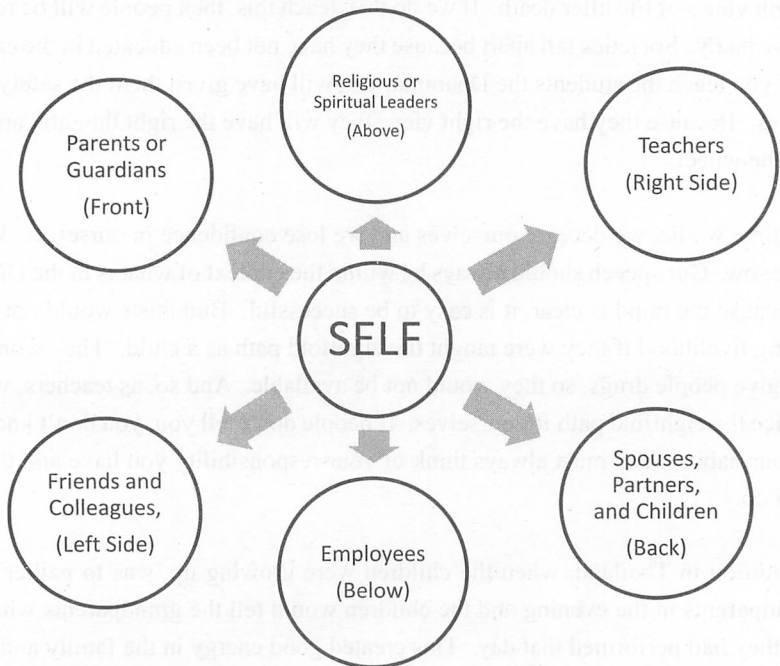


Illustration #11

we first start with our own individual self and then work outward in all directions.

“The six directions start with the smallest unit, ourselves. We are in the center of the sphere of the six directions that influence us, and the people we influence in return as we grow. There is a direct ‘input’ when we are born, but as we grow and mature, the interaction becomes a dynamic, fluid one. Depending on the virtues of those around us, we grow and develop. This is why it is vital that parents have good ethics. If they do not, then people become unethical: The same with the teachers. If the teachers are not ethical, what chance do the children have? But, of course, it is not as simple as this. Each person has some good habits, and some bad habits. In all situations, there are people within our six directions who are true, and some are false. And they may change quickly within our lifetime. We move, or we change schools. We are always forming new relationships and therefore the dynamics within our sphere changes. We think, of course, that we are our own refuge, which, of course, can be true on some levels. But if we are to live together, we have to have certain duties that are the duties of any citizens within the society.

“Because we are imperfect, we share and interact imperfectly. The only way to change this imperfect ‘sphere’ of dynamic relationships that we have is to meditate and change ourselves in order to learn to be more perfect so that our interactions with others will be more perfect. And that is how we change our society. We start with ourselves and we learn compassion and equanimity for others. If you say it is not your duty, then whose is it? Any country that has unrest, at the grass roots, or at any level, that is a problem within society. And we must solve our problems together.

“If we have these teachings, and we hear them but don’t even practice them, then what good is it? We need to practice them until they become good habits. The Buddha said that one day people will become lazy and not practice the teachings. Therefore, it creates the necessity to have a future Buddha. History, then, is cyclical. But we must take this information and train ourselves. The most difficult part is using it to develop good habits. How strict are we about developing ourselves within the cycle?

“Education is all about developing good habits. But different habits lead to different lives. If we seek knowledge and virtue, these are good habits. In thinking, speaking and acting positively and admirably we will receive excellent results. We will have great friends, our future will be bright, and we will be successful because we have trained ourselves with morality. Likewise, bad habits will lead to thinking, speaking, and acting poorly



which will lead to destructive thoughts and eventually into darkness. So, as we can see, different habits lead to different lives. All of our habits come from our early training.

“How do we define habits and how are they formed? When we hear, see, taste, feel, and touch something repeatedly, and we think, act and speak repeatedly: If we are encouraged to do it and repeat it, then it becomes a habit. A habit is formed if, when we don’t do something, we miss it. If, in fact, we don’t do something and become frustrated because we are not doing it, then it is a habit. Habits, of course, can be good or bad. So repetitive actions that we do = Habits. Students develop habits from home. But before we try to correct our student’s habits, we need to correct our own. And, in correcting our own habits, we should use the Eightfold Noble Path to do it. The encouragement to do this comes internally, through meditation (both our own, and through a short meditation before class) and externally, from other people.

“Meditation teaches us and our students to find internal support. Anyone who practices meditation finds it easier to see the problems and issues that they need to address. Meditation is ultimately a ‘re-charge’ and finally becomes a good habit.

“Teaching morality is usually not successful. You cannot teach with just words because they do not work. Generosity, charity, and compassion need to be taught through words in conjunction with activities. Your students must clearly understand that there is a connection between good and bad actions. And that connection is what kamma is: Action with intention.

“In the past, mothers used to take their children to offer food to the monks. Now, that culture is lost. If the culture is lost, how do we teach it? At home, the duty of the children included supporting the parents through sickness, illness, and old age. And that was not just duty, but charity and compassion with love.

“Teaching these values through activities, as well as learning the eightfold noble path, is the way to help the students develop morality throughout their lives. But teachers have to practice these as well. The teachers have to get along collegially and encourage each other. Doing this is a habit. Academic education is also built on habit as well as supporting one another in this endeavor. Good deeds receive good results. And how do we organize activities that will encourage the right view? We make those activities: Students may think negatively if we don’t encourage them to think positively. If WE don’t do it, then everything that we have learned yesterday and today would be like throwing

everything into the garbage. It we do it, that will start the wheel of goodness – otherwise it will not spin, but we can still make it in time.

“Education should be used to develop good habits, and to systematically get rid of bad habits. The duty of the teachers is to develop respect, discipline, and patience. How do we develop respect? We teach the students to accept the virtues that already exist in the person or the object. Respect means that we accept or recognize the goodness that exists. And how do we show respect? We need to speak about it, recognize it, see it, and talk about it. Teachers need to teach this.

“The statue of the Lord Buddha is respected because it represents the virtues of the Lord Buddha. We practice Buddhism with respect. And we study the Dhamma teachings in order to show respect. In education, respect is shown (for example) by people sitting quietly in your office. We learn to show respect in circumstances with people because we never know when we will meet them again. We will earn a good reputation if we show respect with hospitality. So we must train students in hospitality as well. Standing up when someone enters the room, being quiet, and so on and on, shows people that they are respected. And it is the duty of the teacher to find activities to teach those good habits.

“And what is discipline? Discipline is the willingness to follow the rules of the community that look after the community itself and the members within it. A person who has discipline is one who is willing to follow the rules. Students must know how to be disciplined and make it a good habit. The first discipline is to show respect. This is the beginning of living together peacefully.

“And, finally, what is patience? Patience is when your mind is in neutral. We are concentrated on the goal. Unfortunately, there are many obstacles. Colleagues can be obstacles as well as some of our friends.

“So, therefore, we need respect... discipline... patience. We should practice meditation for patience. And then help train one another.

“Tomorrow we will talk more about the Six Directions.”

## Meeting #19

9AM – 20 March 2010

“Yesterday, I said to you that we would talk about the six directions. These, we cannot separate. They are, in fact, the same thing, only each direction has a different issue – but we cannot separate the entirety. Just like lighting a candle, we have the candle, the match, the act of lighting, the heat, the combustion, and the light. Separate things, but integrated into one unit and the acts of one affect the acts of the other, and the outcome.

“Education is the same. Although the person is at the center, the six directions show us the smallest and most complete social unit. This is the network for the individual’s moral development. If we manage to have people in each direction working harmoniously, it will be beneficial to the self, as well as the entire nation. Buddha taught us these sixteen years after his enlightenment. If everyone works in harmony, then it is beneficial. If they do not, then it is not beneficial.

“When we add in everyone else’s six directions, and extend the six directions out, we can see that the six directions incorporate everyone in the world. But let us now look at how we can see this dynamic: (1) Parents – we connect to our parent’s six directions to become acquainted with those people in each of their six directions, (2) Teachers – how many teachers do we have in our lives? Many. And sometimes we even connect to teachers in their six directions. (3) Friends and Colleagues– we have friends from every walk of our life, from school and the neighborhood, from social networking (just look at the friends we have on Facebook or MySpace!), to friends of friends of friends. (4) Our own spouse or partner – and we then connect to those people who are connected to them. (5) Employees – these connections can be huge! Look at how we interact at our job and the people we meet through our connections to our work! (6) Religious leaders/Monks/Priests/Mentors – these are the people whom we respect and confide in. These are the people to whom we go to for advice. Perhaps these are the people who lead us in our moral development when we are older and can speak for ourselves.

“Each of the people in our six directions should behave correctly – have high moral standards. Any society can develop morally if the duties of each person are performed properly. That is, of course, if each of us knows our duty and performs it properly.

“If we allow ourselves to live solely within the external world, we will develop bad habits. We can see the pattern of behavior that is created if we do not stop, and see ourselves

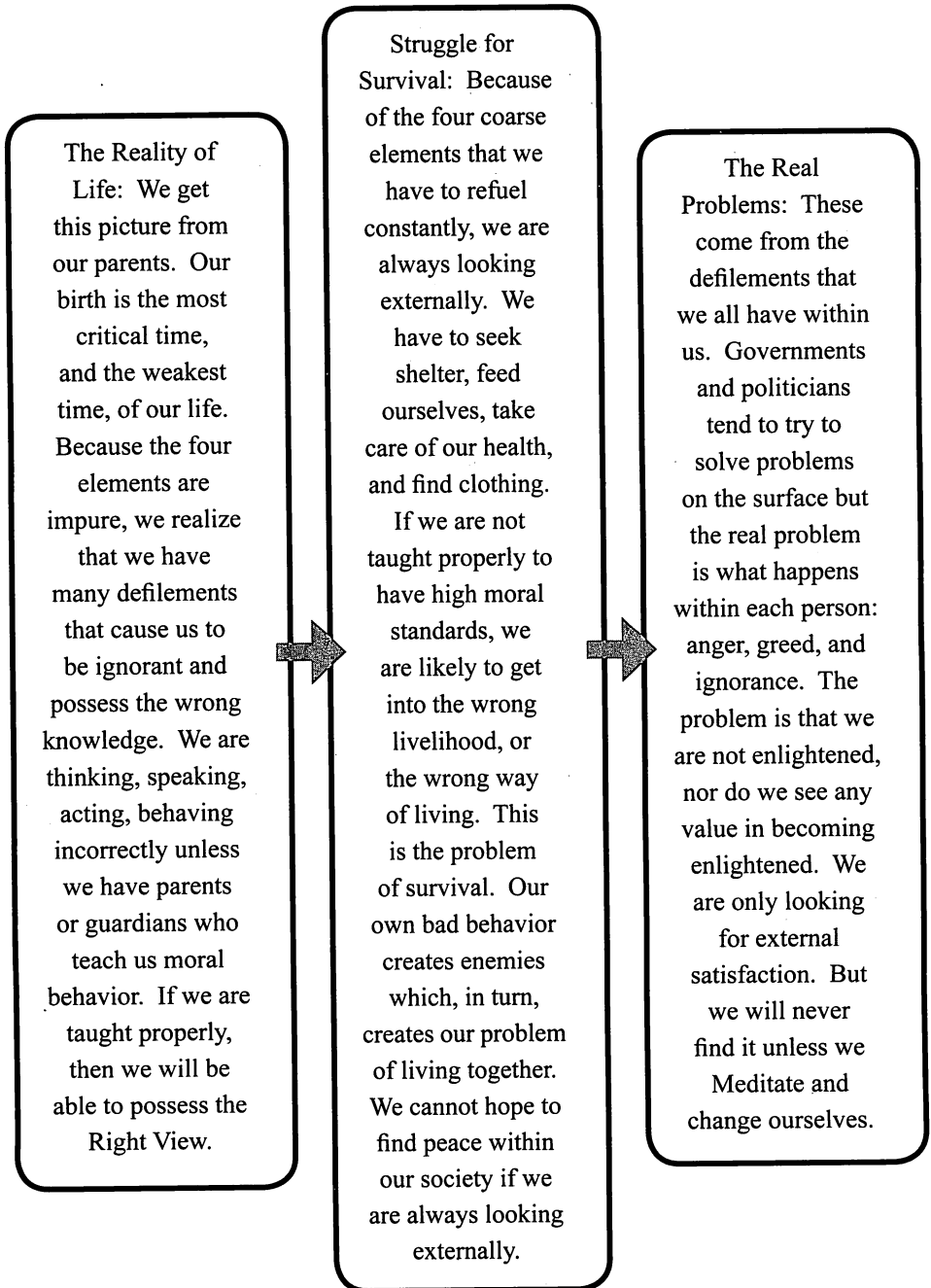


Illustration #12

for who we are: Not in the mirror, but inside of our mind. If we focus on the external, then defilements cloud our mind. We will develop false friendships and these are people around you who have not been trained to live their lives morally: these people become false friends. There are four groups of them: (1) Selfish or greedy people, who want us to behave in a way to benefit them, (2) Smooth talkers, who are insincere and want us to do things that are on their agenda, (3) Flatterers, or people with no principles. These people enjoy good and bad things, but essentially are self-promoters and back-biters. (4) People who lead us down the path to destruction in our own lives. These people like to invite us to do the immoral things in life because they possess no wisdom. They cause society to decay, which will eventually cause the country to collapse. If all of the trends continue, they will continue to flourish. But we cannot just reflect about them from the outside, we must think of ourselves and work on our own development.

“We need true friends. These are people who are (1) Loving: When you are happy, they are happy. They are supportive and encouraging and kind. (2) Good counselors: They encourage you, teach you, and guide you along your path. (3) Sincere: Through thick and thin, these people stick by you when times are tough. They accept you as you are and would put their lives on the line for you. We need people who will come and protect our things when we are gone, who are dependable in times of need, and who give more than what is asked.

“Any society full of false friends will collapse sooner or later. However, if true friends are widespread, then the society will be efficient, powerful, harmonious, and honest. The Buddha saw this through the six directions in the mind, and grouped them as true and false friends. But we must also have these same behaviors that we look for in our true friends. And in order to get these characteristics, we have to meditate. In a sense, meditation is closing down our bank and checking our balance sheet. Everyone who does accounting has to do this because the bank has to check its balance every day. So we have to check our Boon Bank every day! And we do this through our own meditation. If we can do this, we will be developing ourselves for each person to observe this for themselves. Meditation is an activity in which we observe ourselves. And it is a duty for each of the six directions.

“Each direction has its own duty. For the parents, it involves training children to be moral adults, preventing them from doing immoral acts, not giving them any debt to repay, and so on. But how can parents teach their children if they don’t know what is good or bad?

“The teachers have a double duty, one of moral training and the other of academic training. So how do we solve this problem of teaching children what is good and bad? We train the parents, too! We need to have the parents, the teachers, and the temple (moral leaders or religious leaders) all working together. If the father ordains, for example, he understands what moral behavior really is. If the mother does Upasika training, then she understands as well. Then both parents understand moral behavior and can teach it to their children. Parents need to find the Dhamma and train together. This solution takes a great deal of effort, but it must be done together. We definitely have to do something because we cannot simply sit around as we watch our society deteriorate.

“And, so, we help children develop good habits when they are young. It is repetitive action that is developed from seeking the four elements. And we can use the model of the five rooms in which to teach them: good character developed from the (1) bedroom, (2) bathroom, (3) dressing room, (4) kitchen/dining room/living room/computer room, and (5) school or workplace. These five areas are the training ground for good moral development. If we follow this into the six directions, we will see that our true friends have the same model, and that this model is the road map to success.

“But, first, when you want to affect the development of good habits in your students, you must look at yourself. If you have good habits, then your students will develop good habits as well. But if you do not, then you must first correct yourself, and then correct your students!”

## 1PM

“We have been learning about the six directions in its smallest unit and how it applies to society. The Buddha set this up for us in order to solve the problems of human behavior and because we were born in ignorance. Ignorance is why we experiment. We try, but then we make mistakes. If we have no one around us to help us learn good habits, these mistakes will lead us to bad habits. We think, of course, that if we destroy things, we can rebuild them. But if we develop bad habits, we will be generating baap, and it will take us a long time to recognize what we have done and to correct those bad habits. We are usually proud of our good habits and we certainly do not like to recognize our bad ones. It takes a great deal of mental and physical strength to change our bad habits. And we can change them only if we recognize that we have them, and then have the willpower and courage and opportunity in which to change them.

“There is a total interconnectedness of everyone in the six directions. Now, if we all refrain from bad habits and keep the first four precepts devotedly, as well as to avoid any biases caused by love, hate, fear and ignorance, we would be a pretty amazing society. We should all be avoiding what are called the roads to ruin as well: drinking, lustfulness, gambling, associating with corrupt people and anyone who thinks that money is GOD. According to the six directions, educational administrators must not only be the center of their own six directions, but also part of the student’s six directions. We have a duty, as parents and as teachers to one another, and to the children. So we see, in the upbringing of our children, there is a total interconnectedness of everyone in all directions. We must, of course, be centered in our own six directions as well as be a part of everyone else’s with whom we come in contact.

“Learning comes from everywhere in the universe. It can take place inside and outside of the school. It can take place in the middle of the forest, but if it does, what are the tools? The teacher-student exchange. Learning happens automatically from the six directions. But we need to learn certain information because we are born into ignorance and with defilements. Because the problem of living together is caused by defilements, which of course is the power that they have, we must solve the problems of living together by learning – through education.

“Through the meaning of education, we come to understand that we have to pay attention to the learning process of another while we ourselves strive to learn. We need to be a part of their six directions. We, as teachers, must develop our students in a way that they will persevere to do goodness. Not just to know, but to use the information they learn to do good deeds. And they need to use the power of the teachers to do this. We need to develop in students the discipline to take care of themselves – their mental and emotional health, and their physical health. And with this, the whole picture of education should be clear. We are all worthy of being human.

“The object of education and educational administration or management is to develop good habits in our students. Of course, they strive to obtain knowledge. We have to help them understand the knowledge they possess and the knowledge they acquire and then give them the skills and expertise to use the things that they learn. Included in this is the educational management aspect, in which they learn to be responsible for the classroom, the desks, the chairs, the floors, and bathrooms and so on and on. This habit carries over to being responsible for themselves and their own cleanliness. They must learn to take care of their physical and mental health as well, by eating the proper foods in the proper

proportion, and in getting the proper amount of exercise.

“In the educational environment, we all have to practice a code of conduct. This is why respect is the vital part of the six directions and why we have to have respect, discipline and patience as the three basic core values of any school. We must help students learn to make the correct decisions, and we must be clear about it. We must have a clear delineation between good and bad. And so, as with any decision, we need to look at intention and we need to look at the end result. What result will that action bring? If the outcome is good, then the action will be good. If the parents do not train the child, or train him or her poorly, then it is not the fault of the teacher. But bad habits can be corrected if we (as teachers) take our job seriously. Simply use the eightfold noble path in which to train the students. Each student may start at a different stage, but you still must try.

“Once again, habits come from the home environment initially. There are the five ‘spaces’ or ‘rooms’ or ‘areas’ in which we are all trained. And it is the training that matters. Habits are the repetitive actions that we do every day, just like making the bed. And, initially, it is the responsibility of the primary caregiver to train the children: In the **bedroom**, or in the sleeping area, we are concerned with right view and right concentration. We can meditate in this space and we take responsibility for the cleanliness of our area. (Monks are taught all of their rules of behavior by the monastic rules.) The sleeping area is one in which the child will learn about morality. In the **bathroom**, we learn about contemplation and right thought. Here, we look after our health because our body is really a nest for disease. Our bodies are simply our bodies and they will deteriorate over time. There is not really much good in it, except that it houses our mind. It is, in fact, a walking graveyard. And thinking in this way reduces our ego. In the **dining room**, which includes all **living spaces** like the **living room, the computer room, and the kitchen**, we learn about right speech and right action. Here we learn good manners because we are eating together. We learn how to handle complaints and criticism. If the dishes are left undone, then ants will collect which results in the possibility of killing the ants. (Which, of course, denotes that there is the possibility of killing living things.) Then the lesson we learn is that we cannot blame others for our own actions. We also learn about the economy in this room because we have to budget for food, and figure out portion control. Additionally, if we are involved with social networking, we learn many of our communication skills, albeit in an impersonal way – also having to do with manners and proper rules of conduct. In the **dressing area**, we learn about mindfulness. In this room we tend to lie to ourselves about our own importance and outward appearance. This is really the room in which we need to learn to be humble, discreet, and patient with



ourselves. This is also an important room for economy, as well, because we have to learn to cut back on our spending for clothing and accessories. The last room is the **school** or **workplace**. This is when our total accumulation of habits comes into play. And here is the source of success in our lives.

“At home we need a teacher, too, and our parents or guardians are our first teachers. But if children are neglected and the parents don’t teach them, they will be like monkeys, and the teachers will need to show great patience and tolerance for these young people. In order to help them, we need to create the five rooms at school. Simply re-create the atmosphere and the physical space so that we can give them the teachings they need. There are many, many activities that we can use to teach students about the Eightfold Noble Path without calling it that. Just the use of the bathroom at school can utilize important lessons for the students. Rotate the duties and teach them how to monitor their own health. We can monitor their manners, how they dress, how they interact with one another, and then compliment them and make suggestions as to the appropriate behavior.

“However, we must remember that in developing habits and correcting our student’s behavior, we have to know ourselves and look at our own behavior. The teacher is the model in each of the rooms. Teachers have to strive to have morals and knowledge. And they have to strive to meditate each and every day so that they can teach their students. Remember that teachers have to follow the precepts if we are asking students to follow them. So in Buddhism, we look at ourselves, and we look at our own six directions. We look at how we were trained, by our parents, our own teachers, and the temple that we attend. We always look at our own directions first, and we look at how and where our own six directions received their teachings. So you will see that it is all a chain reaction.

“If the students can keep the precepts, then they can be responsible for their own morality. If they can abstain from having prejudices and biases, then they can be responsible for the morality of the society. If they can abstain from all of the ten ‘roads to ruin’, then they can be responsible for the economy. This could be the evaluation standard.

“It is our duty to help the parents teach their children ethical behavior. The story is told about four different people planting trees. The child says: Grow fast so that I can work under your shade. The younger adult says: Grow fast so I don’t have to work hard and the birds can use your shelter. The older person says: Grow fast so that I sit in your shade, meditate under your branches and listen to the Dhamma. The Wise person says: Grow

fast. And may everyone who sits in your shade attain enlightenment.

“We should always think about the last person’s world. All of these people were planting trees at the same time: They were all doing the same actions, but they all wanted something different and achieved different boon because of their wishes. For teachers, the effort to teach is the boon. The teachers are the Arahants of the house.”

Luang Por ends the conference with this thought:

“Ask yourself this question: How many of your own teachers from years past do you now hold in your heart? What made them a great teacher for you? Think about those qualities and try to emulate them in your own teaching.

“And ask this: In twenty years, would you be willing to bow down to the very people you are teaching right now? How will you prepare your students for their leadership roles in the future?

“The real learning in education comes from a reflection of the self. If you love yourself, you will send that out into the six directions. Ultimately, you must remember *Attā hi attano nātho attā hi attano gati*: You are your own refuge, you make your own future. You must help your students understand their future.”

## Meeting #20

25 March 2010 – about 9:00 PM

There are four of us here today to talk about the V-Star Project because one of the people (Don) wants to institute a similar program into the Lab School at the University of Hawaii. So Don is here, with LP Pasura who will act as our translator, a woman named Ping Ping and me. I have been asked to come along because this all has to do with education, and, as you know, I am all about education.

Luang Por walks in, and looks pretty darned serious. I'm not sure I want to be here when he is looking like this.

After explaining what the meeting is all about, LP Pasura sits down – well, we all sit down – and wait. He looks more serious than I have ever seen him look except for that look he gave one of the monks when he was meditatively reprimanding him.

“The problem of education is historical. We do not, as in the days of JFK, ask what we can do for our country, but we take, take, take what we can get without acting responsibly. Look, for example, at the fall of the Thai government in Ayutthaya.

“Ayutthaya was the Golden Capital of Siam. But because there were so many independent provinces making up the capital, the Burmese invaded and conquered the city in 1767. The entire Siamese army fled to the south. Eventually, a great hero, King Taaksin, unified the Siamese and in 1775 overthrew the Burmese. But Taaksin did more than that: He really unified the nation, not just for Siam, but also for Cambodia and Laos. He also improved the governments, and rebuilt the physical infrastructure in addition to improving education and art and, in particular, Buddhism.

“We need, of course, to put moral education into our curriculum and that is what the V-Star project hopes to do. But in order to really understand the history of education throughout the world, we need to understand what the problem is. The conflict throughout the world that we have is simply that we need to look deeply within for the solution to the problem, and looking deeply within will cause many other problems within ourselves because that is where we have to look: within ourselves. And no one wants to look deeply within themselves to solve problems. We want the problems solved for us ... we certainly don't want to work for solutions.

“Look at the difficulties within animals. You need to meditate to find out, to truly understand, that animals are humans who are trying to break free. In order to do this, you need to follow at least the first four precepts. Otherwise we will be self-destructing! We need to change ourselves not the world. To put it another way, in order to change the world, we need to change ourselves.

“Of course, the problem of education is not just an American problem; it is a problem in all educational systems. All you need to do is look at the history of each country in order to understand what has happened to the moral behavior of the people within that country. And education is the primary source for the development of the people. The play of power and economy are also active in education, too. But in order to better each educational system, we must not have bias or prejudice. If so, then trust is lost. All bias and prejudice are based on four factors: (1) love, (2) hate, (3) fear, and (4) ignorance. If we have any of these four factors functioning in our education, we become biased, and the people become biased within the system. And so, it carries forward and we ultimately corrode the very system in which we are functioning.

“When we think about education, we all seem to believe in the equality of opportunity – that is, that all people deserve to be educated equality – but when we apply bias or prejudice, we do not have equality of results. Perhaps we don’t really believe in equality of results! And greed, of course, plays its role in this. Greed is definitely a standard within the system.

“People still do not understand that we reap what we sow. They don’t understand it, of course, because they do not see it in their lives, just as they don’t understand that their economic crisis is because they overspend. We have been taught that credit is easy, and that somehow we will not have to pay. We always have to pay. That is the Law of Karma. The Buddha did not make up the Law of Karma, He simply re-discovered it ... or, perhaps it is better to say, that He saw the Law of Karma in action when He became enlightened, and then was able to teach it. If people meditated, they would see it for themselves and understand that we really do reap what we sow. But the children of today give us hope for the future. Of course, they have to sit down to meditate in order to understand it.

“Poor economic investments lead everyone along the road to ruins. We use intoxicants, we enjoy going out in the evening, we go off to the latest entertainment, and we gamble. Those are all economic problems that distract us from finding out more about ourselves.

We worship money as God and morality is lost. When we do this, we begin to associate with ‘bad’ people, or people who lead us away from the very thing that would help us! And then that leads us to laziness in working and we become parasites on society. This is the common problem of all empires that have been lost: Worshipping money leads to greed which leads to the disintegration of society.

“Ever since I was in high school, I was interested in the downfall of empires and I wanted to understand why they could not unite. But, very simply, the military approach begins with the understanding that we have to kill – and that leads us to become the blight of society. Understanding the Right View, having Right Thought, or Right Philosophy, is the only way to start to change this.

“There are three ‘standards’ that need to be developed: (1) within humanity itself, (2) within the morality of society, and (3) within the economy. How do you develop these so that the population is made up of all moral people, universally, so that we have habitual morals, not just ones that we use on occasion to display our decency when we think it will serve us best? We do this by teaching people about the affect each person has on the six directions: leaders, parents, teachers, family, friends, and colleagues or employees. We need to help humanity develop good habits and use them to influence each of their own six directions!

“Wat Phra Dhammakaya is, in essence, a moral Hollywood, trying to get people to wake up and pay attention to the consequences of their actions. Their actions are difficult to change once their habits have been formed. These early habits are formed mainly through three sources – and in this order: the parents, guardians, or caregivers; the teachers; and the early spiritual leader. Each person has to have clear guidelines and roles that are initially given by the people in these ‘directions’ and it is the interaction of these three sources with us that sets our early habits.

“Added to this, of course, are the historical factors that dictate what is happening around us, whether or not we live in the right time or the right circumstance, and our own kamma. Each of these directions (or the people within these directions) has a role to play in the development of the re-education of the world. The true benefit of this is the development of the self – even though, of course, it may consequently benefit the world. We are attracted together – we actually come together – because of this ‘main product’. But in reality, every person benefits from everyone else even though we should be dictated by ‘I do it for myself’ because in the end run, we have to be responsible for our own actions.

And that's where we close the circle. We do it for ourselves because we have to develop ourselves before we can develop anything else ... but everything about us affects all of the people in our own six directions, who, in turn, affect everyone around them.

“In Western culture, you learn to think of others before you think of yourself. But that is where you lose the sense of self-responsibility. When we are born, when our umbilical cord is cut, we have to think of ourselves – and that is the crisis of our lives. At that very moment, we become independent, so we must learn how to take the responsibility of our own actions. We need to be self-correcting, and self-dependent. And we need to do this step-by-step, one person at a time. We need to help people see the development and progress that have been made with Buddhism and the practice of Buddhism!

“Khun Yai used to say, ‘I never worry because my boon will take care of me,’ and we need to help people understand this idea of boon, or pure energy, that they can obtain through doing three things: (1) doing good deeds, (2) giving up unwholesome practices, and (3) meditating. At the end of the day, it is all about developing our own mind because we are the center of our own six directions. And whatever we do, we should lay down our life for this goal.

“Our responsibility is to do unto others as we would have them do unto us. This principle is from the Buddha's teachings. And this really is all about social responsibility. But the problem here is the greed that we get when we go out into the world; it is our defilement. In order for us to survive, we have to re-fuel, so to speak. Our defilements force us to use harsh speech, so we tend to say, and then to do, the wrong things. We also have defilements simply because we have to live in a society, and the more we live in society, the more our defilements grow. Defilements are really the same thing as [in Christianity] Satan. If people could only understand that they are the same, perhaps they would actually change. But the only way to change it is to see it, and that means that people have to meditate.

“Moral standards are the boundaries that keep us, and our society, in check; holding it all together, so to speak. If we lose our moral standards, then we lose our battle with defilements, with Satan. Buddha wanted us to see the defilements of the mind in order to help us suppress them. But to see them, we must meditate: To see them means that we have to recognize that we need to change and that is not an easy thing to convince people to do.

“Teachers are the equivalent of the knowledge of life. And excellent teachers are so rare because they teach not just academics but life skills, ethics, values. The real hope of tomorrow is threefold: the spiritual leaders, the parents, and the teachers working together in harmony for the benefit of each individual.

“Then we will see change. Then we will see moral progress.”

It is now 11:00pm. Luang Por is not visibly tired, but it is clearly understood that there will be no more questions tonight.

After we bow to the Teacher, we all stand. He comes over to us, looks at me, and smiles. “And you will write a book about this, because that is what the world needs. The best you can do is put it out there and hope that the world is willing to listen.”

# APPENDIX



Suzanne Jeffrey

## DHAMMAKAYA MEDITATION

(Referenced from Luang Por Dattajeevo's book, Man's Personal Transformation, printed 2005. Notes interjected for clarity.)

Dhammakaya Meditation For Beginners:

By deepening your meditation until your mind comes to a standstill, you can unlock the potential and unused ability within.

By maintaining a balance of mindfulness and happiness, you are bringing contentment and direction to life in a way not possible through any other technique.

Before starting, it is necessary to acquaint yourself with the various resting points or bases of the mind inside the body.

The first base: at the rim of the nostril, on the right side for men and on the left side for women.

The second base: at the bridge of the nose at the corner of the eye – on the right side for men and on the left side for women.

The third base: at the center of the head.

The fourth base: at the roof of the mouth.

The fifth base: at the center of the throat above the Adam's apple.

The sixth base: at a point in the center of the body or, at the meeting point of an imaginary line between the navel through the back and the line between the two sides. [NOTE: I have also used the imaginary point which is at the bottom of your deepest breath, in the middle of your stomach.]

The seventh base: at a point two finger widths above the sixth base. This base is the most important point in the body. It is the very center of the body and the point where the mind can come to a complete standstill.

## Step-By-Step introductions for the meditation technique: The Seven Bases of the Mind.

1. The sitting posture, which has been found to be the most conducive for meditation, is the half-lotus position. [Note: If this is not possible, then sit comfortably on a chair.] Sit upright with your back and spine straight, and if sitting on the floor, then your legs should be cross-legged with your right leg over the left one. You can sit on a cushion or pillow to make your position more comfortable. Nothing should impede your breathing or circulation. Your hands should rest with the palms up, on your lap, and the tip of your right index finger should touch your left thumb. Feel as if you are one with the ground on which you sit: Feel as if you could sit happily for as long as you like.
2. Softly close your eyes as if you were falling asleep. Relax every part of your body, beginning with the muscles of your face, then move on to relax your neck, shoulders, arms, chest, body, and legs until you reach your toes. Be sure to check that there are no signs of tension on your forehead or across your shoulders.
3. (This step may take a little practice because for some people it does not feel natural. But remember that we are building an environment around us that is going to help us have meditation sessions that are extremely productive. So give it a try!) Close your eyes and stop thinking about the things of the world. Feel as if you are sitting alone – around you there is nothing and no one. Create a feeling of happiness and spaciousness in your mind. Very slowly, imagine a ball of light going from the first base of the mind to the seventh. Breathe in, imagining the ball of light at the first base, breathe out. Do this three times. Then move on to the second base, repeating the breaths for three times. Breathe in and out for three times at each base until you have reached the seventh base where you will stay during the meditation session.
4. Feel that your body is empty space, without organs, muscles or tissues. Gently and contentedly rest your attention at a point near to the seventh base of the mind and at the center of the body. Whatever experience arises, simply observe without attempting to interfere or react. In this way, your mind will become gradually purer and an inner experience will unfold.
5. If you find that you cannot dissuade the mind from wandering, then perhaps you could try using an inner object as a focus for attention. Therefore, if you would like, gently imagine that a bright, clear, crystal ball, [NOTE: or a star, bubble, cross,

flower or something wholesome that you can easily remember.] is located inside at the center of the body. Maybe you will find you can imagine nothing, but later you will be able to visualize or even see something with increasing clarity. Allow your mind to come to a rest at the very center of the object that you imagined. By using the slightest amount of effort, you will find that this object becomes brighter and clearer. Balance is the key. If you use too much effort, you will find that it gives you tension, or perhaps even a headache. If you use too little, you will be unable to sustain it. So you must use just a small amount of effort on this task.

6. If you find that your mind still wanders from the object, you can bring the mind back to a standstill by repeating a mantra [NOTE: Many practitioners use “Samma-Araham”<sup>10</sup>]
7. Do not entertain thoughts in your mind. Do not analyze what is going on in your meditation. Allow your mind to come to a standstill on its own – that is all you need to do! If you find that you cannot imagine anything, do not be disturbed. Simply try to repeat the mantra, “Samma-Araham” softly, silently and continuously in the mind. If you find that you are not sure about the location in the center of the body, anywhere in the area of the stomach will do. If that is not working, then go to wherever feels right, but remember that the eventual goal is in the center. Do not be disheartened. Persevere, because today’s daydream is tomorrow’s still mind, today’s darkness is tomorrow’s inner brightness, today’s perseverance is tomorrow’s fulfillment. Don’t be disappointed if you find your mind wandering. It is only natural, especially for beginners. Make a continuous effort, keep your mind bright, clear and pure, and in the end, you will achieve your goal!
8. Keep repeating the mantra and eventually the sound of the words will fall away. At that point, if you are continuously still and relaxed, something will arise on its own accord. This stage is called pathama magga (primary path). At this stage the mind is becoming more stable and is seated at the center of the body. Happiness is one of the side effects of this state.. With continuous observation at the center of this object, it will give way to a succession of increasingly more pure and refined sheaths of “being” until it reaches the ultimate one referred to as “Dhammakaya”, where we discover our true permanent selves and the happiness found there.

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10 Samma-Araham or Samma Arahang: Taking the path to freedom from the suffering of life; the Middle Way.

This meditation technique was re-discovered, and then taught, by Luang Pu Sodh Wat PakNam, the Abbot of Wat PakNam in Bangkok, Thailand. This rediscovery happened in 1914. His “best” student was a Master Nun, Khun Yai, who passed it along to the current Abbot of Wat Phra Dhammakaya, Luang Por Dhammajayo. Now, however, they do not always teach this method to Westerners, because they feel that meditation should simply be focusing on stillness. Luang Pu stated: “Stillness of the mind is the embodiment of success in meditation”, therefore, any way in which you can still your mind at the center of the body will lead you to achieving success in meditation.

Because of this, I am including the steps in meditations that the monks taught at the Wat and ones that do not specifically discuss the Seven Bases of the Mind.

### Dhammakaya Guided Meditation: Extrapolated From Retreats and What Has Helped Me:

1. Begin your meditation by doing some light stretching exercises. These can include simple neck rolls, gently swinging your arms across your body, easy yoga stretches, standing up and reaching down to touch the finger tips or your palms to the floor, or whatever types of stretches that make you feel relaxed and comfortable, especially ones that open up your back, hips, and backs of legs. Always take your time because the ultimate goal is for you to feel limber and light, stress-free and peaceful.
2. Sit down either on a mat, pillow, rug, or chair. If you sit on the floor, the half-lotus is a preferred position, and that means that your legs should be crossed with your right leg over your left, the sole of your right foot facing upward toward the ceiling. If you prefer using a chair, then both feet should be placed on the floor, and a pillow or cushion might be used for the comfort of your back and to help you sit straighter for a longer period of time. Sitting with your back straight helps you breathe easily.
3. Rest your hands comfortably in your lap or on your legs. At the Wat, there is a preferred position for the hands which is to place your palms up, right palm covering your left palm, with your right index finger touching your left thumb. To help with your posture, you may even put a pillow over your lap with your hands resting on the pillow. This also helps to prevent leaning forward while meditating.
4. Gently close your eyes. This part is extremely important. There is so much tension in and around your eyes that if you properly relax them, the rest of your body becomes much easier to relax. Therefore, when closing your eyes, you want your

eyelashes to lightly touch your cheeks, as though you are falling asleep. (Please do not force your eyelids closed or squeeze them shut because that causes tension in this area, as well as other areas, of your body.) In closing your eyes, you are effectively shutting out all of the stuff that is out there trying to grab your attention. You are, in fact, going to begin looking at your inner space, not your outer space.

5. As you gently close your eyes, begin to smile from the inside. Make an effort to feel this new sensation of relaxation sweep through your body. Do not worry about falling asleep or losing control of your outside. Just smile, knowing that this personal space you have created for yourself is vitally important for your own well-being and that you now have the opportunity to enjoy some solitude.
6. Once you are initially relaxed, your eyes are closed, and you are smiling, take a few deep breaths. Slowly inhale for a few seconds and fill up your lungs really well. Hold that breath and then ever so slowly release it. Try to take your time by using several seconds to release your breath. This deep breathing helps your body truly relax, and it helps you begin to find your inner center, or comfort zone, which will eventually rest right around the base of your deepest inhalation. This center point is the home of the mind. Continue to breathe deeply for a few minutes until you actually sense your physical body relaxing even more. And, then, breathe normally. Focus now on that center point until you gain confidence that you can find that point again when you need to still your mind.
7. This next step I call “Dumping Your Garbage”. You can also call this “Cleaning Your Mind”. Once you are relaxed and beginning to get comfortable, various thoughts or visuals might appear. Most people tend to think and think and think – endlessly – and if you don’t think, you believe that this is a troublesome sign – or that, somehow, your mind will stop working or (even worse) be taken over by something. It’s kind of like the old adage: Idle hands are a devil’s workshop – except this is taken to mean idle minds are a devil’s workshop. So you think, and think, and think. There is nothing wrong with thinking, of course, but you usually think about the wrong things, or things that are not really beneficial. Much of what surrounds you is negative news; i.e., gossip or chatter. This is why Luang Por says that in cleaning your mind through meditation, you are wiping away some of the negative energy that surrounds you as well as cleansing what negativity has already affected you.
8. Right here, I would like to say that IF you need some help because you are thinking too much, then you may need a mantra. A mantra is simply a word or phrase that is

repeated to help you get rid of the monkey mind or that incessant thinking of your brain. At the Wat, they use “Samma Araham” which generally means separating yourself from the bad and concentrating on the good, or taking the Middle Path to Happiness, or Righteous Path. You can also use the Jesus Prayer, or “clear and bright”, or another phrase that is meaningful to you. You simply repeat that phrase until it drops away on its own accord. (And that really will happen, by the way.)

9. Additionally, if you have difficulty with visualizations popping up in front of your eyes, you can create your own visualization of a ball, star, flower, cross, or a favorite object, that remains fixed and still in your center. If you visualize a bright, clear ball, then allow yourself to feel that ball right at your seventh base. If it goes away, or you have become distracted, do not chase after the visualization. Just start over, if necessary, until you have a visualization that wants to stay with you. Eventually, as you stay with that visualization and become more calm and neutral, it will transform on its own.
10. Center yourself. This means that you will have to settle yourself at the most comfortable point inside (your personal inner comfort zone), which could be the deepest part of your breath or just an inner space that you feel like saying, “yeah, I could stay here for a long time!” to yourself. (This is generally, as I have said, in or around, your tummy area. The Center is the eventual destination point.) So you want to focus on that and keep it going.
11. Now you want to allow your mind to enter into stillness. (Remember that your brain is NOT your mind.) At this point, ideally, you have relaxed, dumped your garbage, gotten your mantra together, and hopefully stopped the incessant thinking, daydreaming, and visualization. You can now totally relax into that deep stillness that you are naturally and automatically achieving simply through letting go and doing nothing. Somehow, by experimentation mostly, you will gradually learn what works best for you, because, after all, meditation is really an individual pursuit. It may take some time, but once you start to practice the correct technique, you will be so happy that you will want to continue. Remember that the technique is “right” when it feels easy and you feel increasingly happy, clean, and clear. The total trick, of course, is that you will not make yourselves still: You become still by doing nothing. And, because you are not stressed, you are sabai: cool, calm, and comfy, or, said another way, naturally still.

12. Now you just need to keep going! And this means keep going. Every day. Whenever you can: Standing up, sitting down, waiting in line, taking the commuter train into work, riding the bus, brushing your teeth. Wherever you are, when you have a moment, just lower your lids, breathe, and be still.

[NOTE: Even though there are Ten Steps in this technique, they usually fall into a few groups: Relaxing is a serious step so you need to take your time with this and really get into a comfortable position. Closing your eyes, smiling, and breathing usually come all at once – pretty much at the same time. Dumping your garbage, or cleaning your mind, which can take a long time for some people, is essential and happens together with Centering. All of this leads you into deeper states of Stillness, which is the total objective that you want to achieve in your meditation. And the last, Keep Going, is the practice that helps you always be centered.]

In the beginning, you might have trouble with what is called “monkey mind” and what the meditators say can be stopped by repeating a mantra, hence the importance of an easily remembered one. Mine happens to be Samma Araham, or Samma Arahang, which means to me that I am trying to walk on the path to righteousness. In reality, it means a whole lot more than that, but when I use it, it brings me back into my center.

You might also have problems with visualizations, or seeing things, when you close your eyes. This is because you are used to focusing externally due to the construct of your physical anatomy (your eyes direct your attention to the outside world). So, it presents you with all kinds of pictures that you see when you close your eyes. What you need to do, of course, is to ignore the interruptions by simply being non-reactive. In Thai, this is called “cheuy” and is an essential part of reaching stillness. It just takes practice. Or, you can invent your own internal visualization, like a bubble or a ball or a star or a favorite object, and focus your attention on that. Use your visualization and mantra continually until they stop automatically, by themselves, and you are still.

Both the mantra and the visualization will gradually fall away – simply disappear on their own accord – and you will be centered in stillness when this happens. It is a natural process and one that you do not need to worry about. Remember to merely observe what happens when you meditate, but try not to direct or create any action. Just let everything BE: Do NOT get involved.



When you are sabai and still, you are creating boon or good, pure energy. Therefore, when you come to the end of the time you have set for your meditation session, you have the opportunity to put all of that good energy out into the universe! (I call this “spreading the love” and it happens to be a great ending to your meditation session.) After you have meditated for awhile, and are feeling really good (that is, you have a sense of contentment or calm joy), gently gather up those good feelings and allow them to move through you and surround you. You may begin to feel as if every part of your body, as well as everything around you, is getting light and bright and calm. Simply allow those feelings to permeate the surrounding space, seeping automatically into every crack and crevice of the room where you are sitting without you even trying ... and then your house, or apartment, or wherever you are ... and then your town ... and your country ... and your continent ... and the world ... and the universe. Just allow all of that good energy to flow all around, on its own, and it will naturally be sent out to every living thing regardless of who they are, where they come from, or what religion they are. Take your time with this because it is going to make you feel great. It’s like one long exhale ... just release all of that good stuff and you will eventually see it coming right back to you.

One of the most difficult things to stop doing is expecting or anticipating things to happen. Once you have had a good meditation experience, you will want that to happen again and again, and so you try time and again to repeat that experience. That is not how it works. You should not focus on the result, just the technique. There is no need to rush into your meditation, thinking of getting anywhere. Just forget about it. Really. It simply does not work like that. There are different governing laws operating here. What you are or have experienced is something that is already inside of you, and you don’t really have to do anything in order to experience it! Just remember the technique and not the result. Each time you start to meditate, relax. De-stress. Be sabai, or calm, and jai yen yen, or soft and comfortable. Be happy you are alive and breathing and smiling – because in creating boon, or pure energy, through your meditations, you are able to effectively, and subtly, change your life. So go on and throw the boon into the world for everyone else to enjoy. Then sit back and smile again because it is all good.

# GLOSSARY

Suzanne Jeffrey

## Glossary

**Arahant** – Someone who has attained enlightenment (or no longer has defilement). This person is free from greed, delusion, ignorance and such things as that.

**Baap** – The bad stuff that's floating around in the galaxy – and probably around your neighborhood as well, because you are getting caught up in the external, and not focusing on the internal good stuff that you have inside of you.

**Boon** – Pure, clean, excellent energy that just acts as a rejuvenator because once you start accumulating it and putting it out there, it just comes bouncing on back to you! You can create boon for yourself by meditating – that's the obvious way. But you can also create boon by giving up bad habits, or by doing something good for someone... like helping the little old lady (that's me) across the street the next time we run into one another.

**Cetiya** – (Sanskrit/Pali) A monument and symbol for Enlightenment which often contains relics of the Buddha.

**Cheyu** – The art of doing nothing; Being non-reactive, even impartial about something; Not wanting or desiring a certain outcome; to not rush, hasten, push, or stress about something we desire to come about more quickly (i.e., a good meditation experience); to not eagerly look forward to, expect, or anticipate something; to not stare at, or overly concentrate on (to the point where we receive physical discomfort).

**Defilement** – Mental pollution or personal bad stuff that has infused itself into our mind and affects our mental make-up thus actions. It accumulates, particularly if you don't meditate regularly to clean the mind. For example, if you have the wrong view and only behave poorly toward others (and treat yourself badly as well), then your defilements build up and your mind gets dark. The more you behave this way, the darker your mind.

**Deva** – Literally, a bright or shining one. It correlates to what we would call an angel, yet not just with wings. Devas come in many shapes, sizes, and forms. Yet another definition could be a god or supernatural being, normally residing in one of the numerous heavenly realms, who, on occasion, come down to earth, particularly to help good people and listen to the Dhamma, particularly if the Buddha is teaching. Many people appeal to them for help or protection, which is why people hear so many miracle stories about them. Yet, they respect us more when we practice good teachings, live a wholesome

life, and depend on ourselves. They usually live for a really, really, really long time (like hundreds of thousands of years) until they deplete their good kamma.

Dhamma – (Sanskrit: Dharma) Pure Nature to be found within ourselves through the practice of meditation. Some people call it Truth; the teachings that lead you to Pure Energy, Pure Boon. It will not be found by being a couch potato and sitting in front of your TV eating chips and salsa. Nor, I'm afraid, will it be found by going to the bars and drinking your fine self under the stool, or table. Its purest form is found within. And that is the secret of life.

#### DMT – Dhammakaya Meditation Technique

Eight Precepts - (1) No killing – and that means anything, flies, mosquitoes, etc. (2) No stealing, (3) No sexual activity at all, (4) No lying, (5) No drugs or alcohol, (6) No make-up, perfume, or anything that distracts people from your natural beauty, (7) No sleeping on high, luxurious beds, and (8) No eating after noonday meal.

Eightfold Noble Path – Beginning with Right View or Right Understanding, the circuitous path includes: Right Thought or Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. Right View is seeing the reality of the world and differentiating between good and bad, so you can understand why you need to start out with this one. The more you concentrate on going around the circle, and improving each area, the more enlightened you become! And Saatu to that!

Farang – Thai people refer to “outsiders” as Farangs... and, although they usually mean Westerners, they really mean any international person who comes to Thailand.

Five Rooms – These are the rooms in our lives where we learn all of our habits. Those rooms are: the Bedroom, the Bathroom, the Kitchen/Living Room/Office/Dining Rooms, Dressing Room, and the Workplace or School. We learn all of our good and bad habits while inhabiting these rooms.

#### Four Noble Truths –

1. Dukkha: Some form of suffering or pain exists for all of us. Life can be difficult because nothing lasts forever even though we attach ourselves to “stuff”: Dukkha includes the idea that both good and bad things are transient. This is both physical and mental.
2. Samutaya: There is a reason why suffering exists. When we attach ourselves to our stuff, all we think about is (once we have it) how to hold onto it; how to protect it;

and how to get more of it. This is a vicious cycle.

3. Nirodha: The way to end suffering exists; we need to end the cycle of craving.
4. Magga: The way to do this? Through following the Eightfold Noble Path (please see above). And if you meditate, you will totally understand how this concept is applied.

Jai Yen Yen – Cool mind. Translating this word into English is challenging. It means taking it easy, staying calm, and slowing down, all while being at ease and comfortable. If we are jai rawn, or hot-tempered, hasty, impatient, or rushed, then our mind becomes more and more coarse and rough, hard and solid almost like ice; difficult to work with and handle. Things like conflict, business, catching a flight on time, seeing a doctor – all of these issues make our state of mind coarse and rough. If our mind is refined, it is jai yen yen; it is cool, soft, “rolling with the punches” and on its way to being harnessed. Yet, if we become slightly excited or have some wanting, then please do not get frustrated. Just be jai yen yen and do nothing!

Kamma – (Sanskrit: Karma) Unfortunately, this word is bounced around in the west and people never understand its true meaning. It simply means “Action with Intention.” In an initial understanding of the Law of Kamma, you need to have intention in order to create it. Different actions with different intentions have different effects. In other words, if I kill a mosquito while he is biting my arm, it is not quite as bad as killing a rabbit for sport. In the end, it simply reminds us that we are responsible for our own actions, and that we really do reap the consequences of all of those actions.

Khun – A polite designation for both men and women. It is also the word in Thai for virtue, which is kind of cool because we are assuming a lot when we call people this, right?

Kilesa – The super bad stuff that is really just garbage floating around waiting to grab your attention when you are not in your center. You’re going along thinking everything is just nifty, when, WHAM! You see an advertisement or billboard that seizes your attention. BAM: A diamond ring in the Tiffany window display and you feel the urge to buy. In fact, it is the only thing you think about for the rest of the week. Well, that’s kilesa at work, grabbing your attention away from where it should be, in your center, cleaning yourself up and making the real life currency boon.

Luang Pi – Brother Monk.

Luang Por – Father Monk.

**Luang Pu – Grandfather Monk.** In this book, I use the designation for the re-discoverer of the Dhammakaya Meditation Technique, Luang Pu Sodh Wat PakNam, who was the Abbot of Wat PakNam and the consummate teacher of the technique. In actuality, there are many Luang Pu designations for various Abbots and monks of Wats throughout Thailand.

**MaeChi – Female Buddhist Nun.** There are no MaeChi's at Wat Phra Dhammakaya but there are lots of them at Wat PakNam. There are, however, Upasikas at Wat Phra Dhammakaya. (See below)

**Mara –** Mara personifies the Tempter, the Destroyer, the pull to externalities, the decline and death of our pure spiritual life. Mara distracts us by pulling us to the outside: by making “stuff” so beautiful that we have to notice it. It turns the positive to negatives and creates a glorious distraction so that we do not achieve our true life purpose. Regarding meditation, there are many “tools” Mara uses so that we do not meditate on the inside, particularly at the center (which is how it tricks us to not be inside so we can see what we already have right there in our center). Mara, of course, is not a good thing to be around, but is inevitably met on the inner battlefield of meditation. The good news is that in recognizing Mara and Samsara, we can learn to avoid the circumstances that lead us to get involved in the first place. We can also learn to recognize Mara by being mindful, persistent in our meditation, and vigilant.

**Pi – Older Brother or Sister**

**Saatu –** Well said. For example: you say, “Boy! This food is fantastic!” And, if I agree with you, I respond with “Saatu!” If I don't agree with you, then I just keep my mouth shut.

**Sabai –** This word means an accumulation of being relaxed, comfortable, at ease, and without any worries or concerns. When we are at ease, everything is easy! When our mind is sabai, it will be in a conducive state for stopping still with cheuy” more easily and for a longer period of time. As Luang Por Dhammajayo, frequently says: “Sabai is the heart of the practice of meditation”. To truly be sabai there are four areas in life that have to become sabai. They are: the place or location/setting; the food; the surrounding people/company; and the teachings or system/curriculum. When we get all of these things to be sabai, both our body and mind will naturally adjust themselves to be sabai and inevitably be clear or free from all of life's concerns, problems, and worries. Sabai helps us remove ourselves from the outer world to return home to our own inner world.

**Samma Samadhi – Right Concentration.** A refined state of mind in which you become focused in single-pointed concentration but with a sense of ecstatic joy and feelings of vast openness, softness, and brightness. Kind of like when a mother sees her child for the first time, only better.

**Samsara –** This is the endless cycle of suffering that people experience that is caused by birth, death, and re-birth. The only way to beat Samsara is to become enlightened, so start meditating today, ok?

**Sangha –** An association or assembly. Generally, people think of the word only connected to the monastic order, but in reality, it could be the congregation of people who associate with one another in a common bond; specifically, in Buddhism.

**Saphaa –** A super large building or space in which to meditate or conduct a ceremony; a Meditation Hall.

**Six Directions –** Your very own personal sociogram: your social-networking unit that is already built in and surrounds every individual in the world since birth. Every action that we do has an effect on everyone around us. If we forget to wash the dishes, they sit in the sink for the day and someone else has to do the work that we should have done. Likewise, if you make your bed, then you Mother or the maid or the guardian, doesn't have to do it. Every one of your actions, then, affects people in the following six directions: your parents or guardians, your teachers, your spouse or partner and family; your friends or your schoolmates or the people you work with, your employees, and your "moral guide". What does this really mean? Well, it means that the more you meditate, the more good vibes you put out there, and the more good stuff will return to you from all of the people in those directions. Likewise, the more bad stuff you put out there, the more you're totally screwed because who wants bad stuff coming back to you. Trust me. You really do reap what you sow.

**Upasika –** A female member of the Wat who lives, is a part of, and helps serve the Sangha as a whole. Many upasikas have been there since the Wat was founded, or for about forty years. They are, more or less, nuns, although they do not shave their heads as do the Maechi's.

**Upasok –** A male member of the Wat who lives, is a part of, and helps serve the Sangha as a whole. They help the monks with their "outside" activities like driving them here and there because it is frowned upon for females to be alone with Theravada monks.



Wai – A Thai greeting, and sign of respect, done by placing the hands in front of the body, at about chest high, elegantly pressed together like a lotus flower. The higher the placement of the wai, the higher the sign of respect. So, when you bow to someone like the Buddha, most people place the tips of their forefingers to their forehead, keeping their hands in the lotus position, and bow – deeply.

Wat – A Thai Temple or Monastery.





Suzanne Jeffrey is a teacher, writer, and lecturer for Dhammakaya Meditation. Having taught and counseled in international schools for the past twenty-five years, she now lives in New York. She continues to travel to Bangkok in order to study with her teacher, Luang Por Dattajeevo. Her website is [www.suzannejeffrey.com](http://www.suzannejeffrey.com).

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“When I first met Luang Por Dattajeevo, Vice Abbot of Wat Phra Dhammakaya, it was in the summer of 2008. I had gone to visit my son, Luang Pi Joshua, during his first year as an ordained monk living at Wat Phra Dhammakaya in Bangkok, Thailand. I must say that my initial meeting with Luang Por Dattajeevo was a bit intimidating for me, but that was simply because I had no experience meeting with, and talking to, a Buddhist monk who knows me better than I know myself.

*Meetings With A Dhamma Master* includes twenty talks that I have had with Luang Por Dattajeevo over the course of a two year period. We have talked about everything from The Nature of the Mind, to Core Values and how habits relate to those values, to the definitions of words like Kamma and Samadhi and Kilesa. But most of all, of course, we talk about meditation: The What? Why? And How? of the Dhammakaya Meditation Technique. I have included all of these talks, as well as the general instructions on the Seven Bases of the Mind, as taught by the re-discoverer of the technique, Luang Pu Sodh Wat Pak Nam.

Luang Por Dattajeevo is the consummate teacher. My hope is that your ears, eyes and mind are open, and that I have written these teachings in such a way that you listen and understand their significance so that you can use them in your own life. I think these teachings are a gift he gave to me and I would like to give them as a gift to you.”

Suzanne Jeffrey

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