

Methods of Training Wisdom

Sermon by
Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño

Translated by
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Neecha Thian-Ngern



SAN FRAN DHAMMARAM TEMPLE
SAN FRANCISCO

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Preface

This book, *Methods of Training Wisdom*, was transcribed from a sermon given by Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño at the Jongjin Conference Room at Ramathibodi Hospital in Thailand on January 5, 1998.

San Fran Dhammaram Temple has printed this book for the benefit of all those who hope to improve the quality of their lives. The content of this sermon will be very beneficial for those who wish to learn how to practice in the wisdom (pañña) style. Luang Por Thoon provided detailed examples for contemplation that are easy to follow.

Thank you, Associate Professor Varnee Chalee, for editing the original text. Thank you, Associate Professor Dr. Chaleerat Direkwattanachai, President of the Rama Buddhism Club at Ramathibodi Hospital, who organized the first printing of this book in July 1998.

Mae Chee Yo Saranya Thian-Ngern
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Methods of Training Wisdom

It is the New Year. The new year and the old year are the same year. Only the number changes. The year is merely a number. Before, it was 1997. Now, it has changed to 1998. 1997 is now the past. Before, it was the present. Today, it has become the past. Today, the year 1998 is the present. Before, it was the future.

Now, for people, is there a present? Is there a future? Is there a past? You can make it so that there is. It is an upāya,¹ a method or way of looking it at. It is a way of looking at yourself in order to change. Whatever is bad or unwholesome, leave it in the past. Whatever is good or wholesome, try to do more of it. All of it up to the

¹ Upāya in Pali refers to a means, method, technique, way, metaphor, example, or model.

present—whether matters of the past or matters of the future—come with beneficial aspects and harmful aspects.

You may have heard many teachers say, “Atītaṃ nānvāgameyya nappaṭikaṃkhe anāgataṃ, paccuppannañca yo dhammaṃ tattha tattha vipassati,” which means, “Do not think about the past behind us or the future yet to come. Think only of the present.” For the most part, people take this phrase and use it in their practice. Mostly, people interpret this phrase in terms of tranquility (*samatha*). That is, meditation (*samādhi*). They say, “Do not think about the past behind us or the future yet to come. Think only of the present.” This refers to your present preoccupations (*ārammaṇa*). If you are focused on thinking of a *parikamma*² word, then focus on continuously thinking of that *parikamma* word. This is being in the present. This is the method of meditation in order to maintain one-pointedness of the mind (*citta*) at all times. If it were to be a concentration exercise

² *Parikamma* in Pali means preparatory or preliminary. In meditation, a *parikamma* word or phrase, like “*Buddho*” or “*samma araham*,” is mentally recited to establish concentration.

(kammaṭṭhāna), it would be a calm concentration exercise (samatha-kammaṭṭhāna). This is one method (upāya) of practice.

As for the methods of insight development (vipassanā) that you all have studied in manuals, the difference between meditation and insight development is simply that meditation is a method of prohibiting all thought. Do not think of that matter or this matter that has passed. Regardless of whether it is a good matter or a bad matter, do not think of it no matter what. This is how to meditate. However, the method of training wisdom is the opposite of meditation. That is, it is fundamentally about thinking. You could say that cultivating wisdom or developing insight is like training yourself to think. The phrase, “Atītaṃ nānvāgameyya nappaṭikamkhe anāgataṃ...” is a form of meditation. The principles of insight development, however, are quite the opposite. That is, you can think of the past, you can think of the future, and you can think of the present. This is the difference between the two kammaṭṭhānas. Samatha-kammaṭṭhāna

is a method of prohibiting all thoughts in their entirety while vipassana-kammaṭṭhāna is a method of training thoughts as much as possible. This is how the practices differ.

Mostly, practitioners only train in one of them. That is, samatha-kammaṭṭhāna, or meditation for the continuous one-pointedness of the mind. This is correct; it is one of the methods (upāya). The most important method, however, is that of training thoughts. Why should you train your thoughts? Because, your thoughts are too unfocused and purposeless. Sometimes they are nonsensical, baseless, boundless, aimless thoughts. You think good thoughts. You think bad thoughts. You think irrational thoughts. When you think of matters in the future, what are those thoughts like? How do you think about the future? This is a matter of thinking. You must know how to think. Some matters from the past should not be thought about, so do not think about them. Some matters from the past should be thought about, so you must think about them. This is a matter of knowing how to think.

For instance, you saw people who are old, sick, or dead two or three days ago. That is called the past. One minute ago is the called the past. One day ago, two days ago, one month ago, two months ago, one year ago, or two years ago is called the past. If you can recollect an issue from the past and see it in terms of the Dhamma, or the truth, you will be able to take the various issues and contemplate them. If, in the past, you cultivated merit (puñña) and wholesomeness (kusala) or gave charitably (dāna) by building an ordination hall (uposatha), a dwelling (vihāra), a pavilion, or some other public benefit, you can think of those past deeds. That is, you think of them in order to motivate yourself and strengthen your faith and devotion (saddhā). This is how you can think about the past. Think of the merit and wholesomeness often so that you feel proud of yourself, happy, and content. This is thinking about preoccupations of the past in order to give yourself motivation. This is your wisdom. Simply put, it is the same old pot of soup, reheated. Do not let it go cold. Keep warming it. In other words, warm your merit and

warm your wholesomeness so that it warms your heart at all times. This is the past.

You can take all of the old people, sick people, and dead people that you have seen in the past and think about it again. You can think about how that person was like such and such and how another person was like such and such. How did they age? How did they get sick? How did they die? You think about these things. Why do you think about these things? It is a way to teach yourself to be afraid of that which being born entails. There is nobody in this world that can escape this aging, sickness, and death. You are the same way. Even though you are still alive, you will have to age just like those people and eventually die just like those people. You compare yourself to those people who have already died and to those people who are sick in this hospital. You can make these comparisons in your mind. You can think about the past like this. Think of it often. Reflect on it often. This is not detrimental. There is only benefit in it. This is called training your wisdom in terms of the past.

You should think about the good things that you have done in the past and contemplate the truth about old people, sick people, and dead people. Why? You think about them in order to teach yourself not to be heedless. You think about how everybody who is born is born in the same way. They are all born from their mother's womb. Each person's being born is dependent on the kalala³ of both parents coming together to create the four elements.⁴ After the four elements have been created, they exist according to their nature. No one's mind (citta) can compel anyone else's four elements to remain one way or the other. They must change according to their nature. Why do you accept this? Because you are born from things that age. If your parents are subject to aging, then you must also be subject to aging just like your parents. If your parents, your grandparents, or your lineage are subject to illness, then you must also be subject to illness just like your lineage and just like your parents. If your lineage

³ Kalala in Pali refers to the human embryo (in the first seven days after conception).

⁴ The four elements are earth, water, wind, and fire.

has people who are subject to death, if your parents are subject to death, since you are born from the same place, you must also be subject to death just like your lineage and just like your parents. You must accept this truth. No one wants to die. But no one can escape it. You must accept the truth. Before you die, you do not know what day, month, or year it will be, but you will definitely die. In that case, you must try to cultivate as much goodness and virtue as possible before your life comes to its end. When you reach that day, if you had not cultivated it today, it is too late to cultivate it on that last day. Many people procrastinate and put off cultivating goodness and virtue for such and such month or when they are such and such age. They have not even cultivated any goodness or virtues when they die first. They wasted their opportunity. You must not be heedless in life. In each birth and each existence (bhava), it is very difficult to be born in an existence in which Buddhism is thriving and prospering.

The emergence of a Buddha is rare. Once it happens, it is rare for people to have the opportunity to hear his teachings. This is the difficulty of being human.

But now, in this era, you have been born with everything ready. The Buddhist religion is thriving and there are teachers who are capable of teaching and disseminating the religion to all of the people. Yet, you are the one who is heedless. You do not practice earnestly. You let yourself be pulled along with the world's currents and trends. If you are like this, you are not taking advantage of your opportunity to cultivate your wholesomeness and perfections of character (pāramī). This is a wasted opportunity.

If you have already wasted your opportunity in this life, consider whether or not you will be reborn into the Buddhist religion again in your next rebirth. If not, where will you be reborn? How will you be reborn? You can see this future with your thoughts. For example, in the future religion of the Buddha Metteyya, he will be enlightened as a Buddha, but he is not coming now, at this time. It is going to take an extremely long time. But you want to be reborn in the era of the Buddha Metteyya. Will you have that opportunity? It is uncertain. Why is it uncertain? Your level of merit and wholesomeness is not yet replete.

You continue to cultivate bad deeds (kamma). This will definitely lead you to be reborn in an undesirable place. Cultivate good deeds (kamma) in this lifetime so that you will qualify to be reborn during the religion of the Buddha Metteyya. Once you are reborn, you will get to listen to the teachings of that Buddha and attain the Path (magga) and Fruit (phala) at a certain level according to the merits and virtues that you have cultivated and according your competence in practice.

Being born into this world, you must focus on cultivating as much perfections of character as possible. As for following the world's currents or trends, do not allow it go too far. Keep it at an appropriate level. Do not be enchanted by the world because this world is the place where those who are bound for the stream of enlightenment cultivate their perfections of character. But it is also the place for fools and idiots.

As for fools, who are those fools? You are. That is why you have been reborn into this world, a place where there is both good and evil. It is good for those who want

to stay here. They see that the world is appealing to live in. However, the Buddha has praised—or criticized—this human world for being appealing live in. Everything you look at in this world is beautiful and attractive, like a royal chariot.⁵ The Buddha said that the world is beautiful. What makes it so? It is beautiful because people like to decorate and improve it so that it is appealing to live in. But in decorating it, the one doing the decorating is the one who becomes enchanted by it. You are captivated by your own handiwork in dressing up the world so that it is beautiful, bright and colorful, enjoyable, and exciting. This is how you create it yourself and become enchanted by your own work. It is as if the world is appealing to live in.

However, there is something that the Buddha added to the end of this, “Fools flounder, but the wise have no attachment to this world.” This is as if the person who has created this world and dwells in it is enraptured and

⁵ This refers to the verse: “*Etha passathimaṃ lokaṃ, cittaṃ rājarathūpamaṃ; yattha bālā viśidanti, natthi saṅgo vijānataṃ,*” which translates to, “Come, look at the true nature of this world, which is like a decorated royal chariot. Fools flounder in this world, but the wise have no attachment to this world.”

mesmerized by the pull of the five sensual pleasures (kāma-guṇa). The fools flounder, but the wise do not. Now, you realize that you have been a fool for many aeons. Even up to and including this lifetime, you are still a fool. Being a fool means being dull and ignorant enough to still be captivated by the world's currents and trends up until the present. This is adorable, that is pleasing. You are always pleased by and revel in whatever you take in. Training your mind in pleasure is like binding your mind to endless rebirths along the world's currents. The Buddha said that those people are fools. From here on out, will you train yourself to be a fool or a wise one?

Just a few days ago, it was the year 1997. You were a fool. But this year, can you be wise? You must train yourself anew so that things will be different. Admit that, in 1997, you were a fool. That is, you left your mind to drift along the world's currents. But in 1998, can you change? That is, change so that your mind is wiser. Fix the problems so that you are wiser. That is, do not be so impressionable and enraptured with the world. Do things according to your duties, but do not get lost in what you are doing.

Training in the Dhamma or practicing the Dhamma is training your own mind. Strive to change your views and thoughts. Whatever it is that you are attached to, try to detach yourself from it as much as possible, or entirely. This is how to practice. You must be able to think about the future. Will the future be good or bad? It can be a double-edged sword. If someone does bad deeds (kamma), they will be reborn in a future existence that is bad. If someone does good deeds (kamma), they will be reborn in various existences that are good. You have to believe in the effects of kamma. If someone does not believe in the effects of kamma, the kamma that they do will not produce results that are as good as they should be. If you believe in kamma—that doing good kamma leads to good results—everything that you do will be infused with more diligence and effort. You will not wait for anyone. You will not wait for friends or family. You will not wait for anyone at all. You will tell yourself to stand out and get ashore. This is the practice aspect.

If you do not practice and you continue to allow the days and nights to pass by, your life will pass by. You will

not have cultivated any goodness or virtue. It is a waste of time. It is a wasted opportunity of this rebirth. If you can do more good, you will have an opportunity to profit. It is valuable, it is beneficial. It is not wasting a rebirth in which you have encountered Buddhism in its completeness. Thus, strive to accumulate a little bit more merit each and every day. This is Dhamma practice.

In most cases of practicing Dhamma, people wait for the right time. This has to happen first, that has to happen first. But actually, practicing does not require a certain time or circumstance. It can be done at any time, any second.

There are many who say, “Where did you go?” “I went to enter kammaṭṭhāna at such and such place.” When people enter, they talk about it. But when they leave, they do not talk about it. This means that they are always leaving. If there is entering, there must be leaving. Leaving is evidence of entering. But if you entered, why did you leave? It has to be continuous. They entered kammaṭṭhāna for two days, three days, or six to seven days, and then they leave. It hasn’t gone anywhere yet. They leave and return

to following the world's currents. There is no improvement. Actually, they should not have left. It would have been better to remain in kammaṭṭhāna.

This kammaṭṭhāna that we are talking about is samatha-kammaṭṭhāna. It is training the mind to be unwavering in virtues at all times. Unwavering is being steadfast. Steadfastness in your own kammaṭṭhāna is called samādhi. Samādhi is steadfastness—steadfastness in the Buddha, steadfastness in the Dhamma, and steadfastness in the Saṅgha. That is, steadfastness in cultivating goodness and virtues at all times. This is kammaṭṭhāna. Why leave it? Look at them, entering for six to seven days. While practicing, it seems like they have established kammaṭṭhāna. Their mind is steadfastly set in Buddho, Dhammo, and Saṅgho. But when they leave, that is the end of it. They do not think of Buddho, Dhammo, and Saṅgho again. This is what it means to leave kammaṭṭhāna. It is leaving the steadfastness of the mind. There is no understanding what it means to enter or leave kammaṭṭhāna.

After you leave kammaṭṭhāna, you must be more steadfast. In other words, develop kammaṭṭhāna as your mind's refuge. Develop the beginning stage of kammaṭṭhāna in the mind, or concentration (samādhi). If it is steadfast focus, strive to make it continuous. As for tranquil meditation (samādhi), it is very difficult to accomplish. If you have never cultivated the character of ascetics and hermits in the past, it will be difficult to achieve tranquil meditation. However, it will be easy to develop steadfastly focused concentration (samādhi). People of all statuses—all people—can do it, if they are going to do it. Thus, steadfast focus and tranquility are different.

It is like sleeping. Two people are sleeping in the same manner, with their eyes closed. But one person is asleep and the other is not. The person who is asleep cannot think about anything. But the person who is not asleep can think about this or think about that. It is like they are asleep, but they are not. This is called samādhi. Steadfast focus is just the same. That is, it is calm, but borderline and only minimally. It is steadfast focus.

There are two methods of generating steadfastly focused concentration:

1. It arises from mental recitation of a parikamma word. You can think of any parikamma word in order to focus the mind. Focus on mentally reciting the parikamma word so that you do not slip. That is, stay in the present. This is one method.

2. Focus the mind through wisdom. That is, use mindful wisdom to shape the mind's steadfast focus. In other words, use wisdom to shape or engender concentration. The wise say that wisdom supports concentration and concentration supports wisdom. The concentration that supports wisdom is steadfastly focused concentration. Tranquil concentration cannot support it. It is past that point; they cannot work together. Steadfastly focused concentration, however, can work together with wisdom. The concept of, "Where there is concentration, there is wisdom. Where there is wisdom, there is concentration," refers to working together. Training in steadfast focus is training the mind. Whatever you do,

do it with focus. If you write a book, write it with focus. If you think about something, think about it with focus. If you think without focus, you can forget and lose your way. If you write without focus, you can similarly lose your way. That focus is called concentration (samādhi). You do not have to think of a parikamma word or phrase. Simply focus on doing it. This steadfast focus of the mind can be developed in various tasks. For instance, when doing housework, there is concentration because you are focused on doing that work. The steadfast focus in doing that task is where the concentration lies.

Suppose you want to combine concentration with wisdom. Whatever you are thinking about, think about it in a focused manner. This manner of focused thinking is what is called combining concentration with wisdom, having them work together. The thinking aspect refers to wisdom (paññā). The focused aspect refers to concentration (samādhi). If there is focus in the thinking, concentration and wisdom are working together. Concentration and wisdom constantly support each other. This concentration is important. This focus does not require having to mentally

recite a parikamma word. Simply do it with focus. It is like driving a car or boat. If you focus on driving it well, the chances of an accident are very low because you do it with focus, you drive with focus. In every job, if it is done with focus, everything will turn out fine. This concentration innately exists within all of us when we work, only people do not recognize it as concentration.

When speaking about samādhi, people only speak about the tranquil type. They do not know how to practice the steadfastly focused type. There is steadfast focus in every country, in every language. It is doable. Whatever it is you think about, if thinking it results in the mind feeling clearer and lighter, that means that concentration has effectively supported wisdom. If you think in a directionless, erratic manner, that is scattered thinking. When there is scattered thinking, samādhi cannot arise. When concentration cannot be established, the mind (citta) and the thinking are scattered. There is no harmony or teamwork. When steadfastly focused concentration cannot be established, the thoughts will drift and eventually become scattered and biased.

Try to study what scattered means. The term, “scattered” takes many forms. The term, “scattered thinking” is a form of mental frustration. When someone feels frustrated, their thoughts aren’t clear, they are disorganized. There is no anchor or topic to set the stage for thinking. When thinking, there is not as much rationality as there should be. This leads to frustration and annoyance. Whatever task it is, if it is carried out with frustration or displeasure, it will be completed with difficulty. If you were to write a book, you would not complete it. If you were to write a letter, you would not complete it. Or if you were to do any other task, you would not complete it because you are already frustrated. These are the characteristics of scattered thinking. You must understand this.

Another form is thinking along mental formations (saṅkhāra). With mental formations, there is no frustration. The more you think, the more you fabricate and dress up the thoughts, the more happy and cheerful you feel. If you think about worldly things, it engenders worldly happiness and contentment with worldly things. You smile as you think about these things. This is pleasure from thinking.

When you think about these things, you feel comforted. You are able to construct scenes in your mind. This is thinking in a worldly manner. There are also volitional thoughts about displeasing preoccupations (*ārammaṇa*) like jealousy, envy, and exploitation.

Are mental formations (*saṅkhāra*) considered scattering? They are also scattering, only scattering along the lines of worldly conditioned things (*saṅkhāra*). If this happens, you must train in the Dhamma to replace it. What can you do to prevent the mind from scattering too much along the currents of worldly conditioned things? You must try to think in terms of the Dhamma instead, in order to counterbalance it. Simply put, use thoughts to counterbalance thoughts. Or in other words, like cures like. Thoughts can be either good or bad, wrong or right. You must know how to discern this. There is supposition (*sammuti*)⁶ in your thoughts. After supposing something,

⁶ *Sammuti*—construct; social constructs; convention; conventional reality; general opinion; consent; pretend, assume; appointment; supposition; election; anything that is conjured into being by the mind; there are two types of *sammuti*: 1. the world in which nothing truly exists, 2. *sammuti-paññatti*, or that which is given labels so that they can be referred to for the sake of communication.

you continue to think along the lines of your own suppositions. After thinking along your own suppositions, you are deluded by them. Simply put, you are deluded by your own preoccupations (*ārammaṇa*). You are deluded by your own thoughts and pleased by your own thoughts. This is being deluded by the world and the endless cycle of rebirth (*saṃsāra*). The delusion is right there on your lips, it is right there in your mind. You are deluded by your own thoughts. This is *moha*, or delusion. You create the suppositions (*sammuti*) yourself and are deluded by your own thoughts. You are the one who creates the thoughts that scatter along the lines of the mental formations (*saṅkhāra*) and you are the one who is deluded by them. This is what *moha* is like. This is where the enchantment and delusion lie. This is what must be fixed.

Avijjā means ignorance of the truth. That is, not knowing according to the suppositions (*sammuti*) that you have set up. You become more and more deluded by this. That is why people say that the method of practice is like “a strand of hair hiding a mountain.” However, if it is done right, according to the right principles, it is not a big

deal—it is easy to practice. But currently, you neglect to see yourself. That is why you do not know what you are doing. When you do wrong, you do not know. When you do right, you do not know. That is why there is so much fumbling and what seems like too much random guessing. Practicing to shed greed, to shed anger, to shed delusion—these are merely theoretical principles. As for the actual method of shedding them, what is that? You must know the method. Doing it is not an easy matter. Greed, anger, and delusion are not material things. Rather, they are symptoms of the mind (*citta*) that have accumulated and are deeply entangled, or that which is called mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*). When it comes to shedding them, they must be shed according to their respective formulas.

As for greed, why does it arise? It arises because suppositions (*sammuti*) arise first, then greed arises after. Money is not greed. Money is merely the object of greed. The same goes for all possessions. None of those possessions are greed, they are merely the objects of greed. Greed itself is in the mind. This is where you have to fix it. The mind is deluded by its own *sammuti*. This is

what you have to fix first. As for this *sammuti*, how did you get deluded by it? As for all of the possessions that you have in your home—money, riches, and treasures—these supposed material possessions that you have rights to and power over, you acquired them, and that is why you suppose that they belong to you. Legally, they are yours. This is *sammuti*, or a conventional reality. In actuality, it is not true. Once you die, the *sammuti* that you hold onto cannot go with you. There are no objects in this world that you can carry with you. Only merit and wholesomeness go with you.

You created these conventional realities (*sammuti*) and are deluded by them. You must know how to fix these *sammuti*. Practicing is about fixing problems. If you cannot fix your own problems, it is difficult to practice. You can meditate, but after you do so, can you fix your own problems? You cannot. Only mindful wisdom can solve your problems. If your mindful wisdom is lacking, there is no chance; you cannot fix anything. You are able to create your problems, but you are not able to solve your problems. This is characteristic of someone who does not

know how to fix their own problems. In practice, you must develop wisdom in order to fix them.

Your thoughts are like a pass or a ticket. If the pass opens up a good path, that is good. But if the pass opens up a bad path, that is not good. Thoughts are like a pass. That is, they open up the path for the mind (*citta*). If they open up the path to someplace often, the mind will go there often. If it goes there often, it will become attached often and deluded often. This is a bad path. Your thoughts and wisdom are like a pass. Think about the truth often—the truth about the Three Common Characteristics of impermanence (*aniccaṃ*), suffering (*dukkhaṃ*), and not-self (*anattā*). Think often, deliberate often, and reflect often. If you think often, it is like opening up the path for the mind (*citta*) to know and see according to these truths. Some day, month, or year, you will believe and see according to these truths. You have to find a way to teach yourself. You must train your wisdom well. If your wisdom is not good, you will not be able to effectively teach yourself. The principles of wisdom are about teaching yourself at all times.

There is nothing in this world that truly belongs to us. This is a basic postulate, an assumption to consider. “There is nothing in this world that belongs to us.” Is this true? Work it out, evaluate it. Is it true as this phrase states? The Buddha taught this so clearly and extensively, yet you refuse to consider or deliberate it. You go against nature by continuing to think that things belong to you. This is despite the Buddha’s stating that they do not belong to you, but are merely for you to rely on for day-to-day survival. They are the four requisites,⁷ that is all. But they are not truly yours. While you are still alive, you can acquire them. After acquiring them, you use them to make a living and to survive. But this is only momentary, while you are alive. Once you are no longer alive and have ceased to exist, your possessions will continue to remain with the world. Your descendants will have the right to inherit them. You are done with those requisites at that point. You must contemplate all material possessions in this manner.

If you are able to contemplate like this and understand according to the principles of the truth in this way, your

⁷ The four requisites are food, lodging, clothing, and shelter.

greed can be lessened or shed. This is using wisdom to open up the path so that the mind can know the truth. In other words, wisdom is what exposes the truth to the mind. It exposes everything. It exposes whatever is held secret or obscured in the mind. “Natthi loke raho nāma,”⁸ wherever the world’s secrets that the mind is still deluded by may be, they must all be uncovered. This is uncovering the truth. If wisdom does not reveal the truth for the mind to know, it will continue to be deluded—deluded that “this belongs to me,” or “this is who I am.” You must reveal the truth to your mind.

Anger is the same way. Does anyone like anger? No one likes it. Yet, people like to get angry and scold others. Do others like that? No, they do not like it. If someone were to be angry with you, you would not like it. Yet, you get angry with others. Do you think about how after you have gotten angry with others, whether or not they will like you? They will not like you. Yet, you keep getting angry. People do not thoroughly understand anger. Anger exists within

⁸ The Pali adage, “Natthi loke raho nāma” translates to “There are no secrets in the world.”

all of us. Just try to keep it inside of you. It is not good to let it out and scold or disparage others.

This is what anger is like. You must try to practice that which can cure anger. That is, train yourself to love more. This is a cure for anger. You cannot go and try to shed anger in other ways. You must try to practice love as a substitute. If you have love in your heart for your friends or animals, then your anger will lessen. This is called goodwill or loving-kindness dhamma (*mettā-dhamma*).

Mettā-dhamma is training yourself to love. *Mettā* does not come from chanting, “*Ahaṃ sukito homi, avero homi.*”⁹ This is just chanting. Chanting does not shed anger, because anger must be shed through wisdom. Use wisdom to think and evaluate what is good about anger and what is bad about anger. You have to study and know how to teach yourself. Use the various harmful consequences and suffering that come from anger to teach your mind to know cause and effect. “Do you like this?” “I do not.” Whether others are angry with you or you are angry with others,

⁹ This is from the *mettā*, or goodwill, section of the Sublime Attitudes chanting verse.

teach yourself. It is not just humans that do not like anger. Even animals do not like it. Cats, pigs, and dogs do not like anger either. Now, if they do not like anger, should you be angry with others? You should not be angry. You should not do it. You should continue to suppress it. Teach yourself constantly. Practice cultivating love to replace anger more and more. If someone trains their mind to love, then anger will be lessened or eliminated. This is how anger is shed.

What about delusion? How is it dealt with? There is a method. That is, whatever it is that you do not truly know the truth of, you must analyze and examine it so that you truly know it. What does “truly” mean? It is truly knowing according the Three Common Characteristics—it is truly knowing according to impermanence, it is truly knowing according to suffering, it is truly knowing according to not-self. It is truly knowing that there is nothing that belongs to you. It is truly knowing that you must separate from all that you hold dear. You must truly know all of this. This is how to train yourself not to be deluded. Because this world is where all sentient beings cycle and revolve. This is where we cycle. We are constantly cycling. You are one

of those people cycling and changing. The reason that you have been endlessly reborn in this world is because of your delusion. What are you deluded about? You are deluded that “this is me” and “this is mine,” and this gives rise to clinging and attachment.

This clinging and attachment is what creates your rebirths and existences. What causes you to be reborn? You are reborn because of attachment. Whatever it is you are attached to, that is an existence and that is where you are reborn. Endeavor to train yourself, “From now on, I will not be too attached to anything. If I own it, it is only in a conventional sense.” Understand that there is nothing that is eternally yours. Understand that they are merely to be relied on in daily life, that is all. Train your mind not to be enchanted by these things. This is how to train in regards to delusion so that you develop knowing, or that which is called vijjā.

Vijjā means correct understanding, clearly knowing, clearly seeing, and truly seeing. Develop vijjā as a replacement. Avijjā means not truly knowing and not truly

seeing. Developing true knowing and true seeing of these things is what directly destroys avijjā. Strive to develop true knowing and true seeing through your own wisdom more and more.

Whether it is greed, anger, or delusion, it can only be shed through wisdom. You cannot use parikamma meditation to shed them in any way. It can only suppress the mind. Now, suppressing the mind can only be done for a short time, only during meditation. After the mind withdraws from meditation, you go back to the same delusions and greed. That is all you can do. It does not endure. Try to train so that it endures in the future. You must develop your wisdom. What is it that creates problems? Defilements (kilesa). Defilements and desires (taṇhā) are what create problems for the mind. They create them every day, many times a day. Over the course of however many hours or days, they continue to create them. Once defilements have created all of these problems for you, wisdom must resolve them. Wisdom must resolve them every hour and every day as well. That is, do not leave it for another day.

Thus far though, it appears that you have left them for another day. It is procrastinating, leaving it for this day or leaving it for that day until it has become practically untenable. It is never resolved. It is like a mirror. Dust has accumulated day by day, so much so that you can hardly make out your face in the mirror. Why is this? Because you have not been diligent in wiping or cleaning it. You have left the mirror cloudy. Your mind is the same way. If you do not wipe or clean it, if you do not possess wisdom, your mind can become obscured. Not knowing and not seeing can arise. Delusion can arise, as well. Therefore, defilements have created problems for you today, so you must solve them today. It is just like a mirror. You wipe it every day, countless times a day. You continuously wipe it. If you do this often, there is no opportunity for the mirror to become dirty and filthy. The mind must also be wiped or cleaned often. Wisdom is what disciplines the mind so that it is clean and clear. Do not allow defilements to create problems for you. You must constantly solve the problems. Defilements create them. Wisdom must be the one to solve them in time. When it comes to practicing, do

not just wait to do it another day. That will not do. It must be done every day.

This is what entering *kammaṭṭhāna* means. There is no need to leave. Do it every day. Enter it every day. As for *samatha-kammaṭṭhāna*, or steadfast focus, do it every day. It does not have to be this day or that day. As for *vipassana-kammaṭṭhāna*, or that which concerns mindful wisdom, it does not have to be this day or that day. You must think every day. You do not need to leave. This is entering *kammaṭṭhāna*. You must train your mind to be ready at all times. This is because your mind is surrounded on all sides by dangers and perils. Each day, you must overcome the dangers and perils around you. This is training yourself how to practice. It is not doing other work without purpose and losing yourself in it. That is not it.

When it comes to solving all of these problems, you cannot study texts and manuals and use them to solve your problems. As for knowledge from texts and manuals, if it is not managed well, that knowledge can create problems. A lot of knowledge creates a lot of problems. A lot of

knowledge gives rise to conceit (*diṭṭhi*) and arrogance (*māna*), unwittingly creating problems for yourself. This is the nature of knowledge. Knowledge that comes from comprehensive mindful wisdom, however, will lead to good results. That is, you will be able to use that knowledge to solve your own problems. However, those who do not possess wisdom and only possess knowledge allow that knowledge to give rise to conceit and arrogance, making them aggressive and disrespectful. Some of them, or many of them, are aggressive and disrespectful toward teachers. There are even some who believe that they know better than their teachers. They are known to exist in Thailand and their numbers are increasing, both men and women. There are even monks that are like this. They believe themselves to possess substantial knowledge and substantial Dhamma. Some laypeople even boast that they are superior to monks. This is studying and cultivating knowledge to foster arrogance and conceit. These people are foolish, not wise.

During the Buddha's time, all of the knowledge that they studied was studied in order to solve the mind's

problems. These were wise people. They studied the Dhamma in order to solve the mind's problems. However, these days, this is not the case. Fools possess knowledge and create problems for themselves by developing conceit and arrogance. It is not enough that they are aggressive and disrespectful toward their peers, but they are also aggressive and disrespectful toward their teachers. As they say, every ass likes to hear himself bray.

Take the Dhamma that you have and strive to use it to teach yourself. If you are able to teach yourself effectively, it will be even more beneficial and valuable. This is how to practice mental development (*bhāvanā-paṭipatti*). Try to practice in this way. It is not necessary to mentally recite a *parikamma* word all day and night. That is not necessary. That is only one aspect of it. You must know the proper time, or *kālaññutā*. When is it proper to meditate? When is it proper to use wisdom? You must know how to select the time.

If you are working, like nurses who care for sick patients every day, at a time like that, should you do

parikamma meditation? No. You must use wisdom. A time like that is a time for using wisdom. It is not a time to meditate. It is not a time to mentally recite a parikamma word. Wherever you go, you continuously contemplate in order to radiate love to all patients everywhere and conduct yourself in a way that allows the patients to see how kind and considerate you are toward them. It is not that you recite a parikamma word and close your eyes and meditate. This is part of *kālaññutā*, knowing what is proper at what time. What time is proper for parikamma meditation? What time is proper for training wisdom? You must be smart about this. This is wisdom. At this point in your life, you must study and practice the Dhamma at its proper time. This is what is called *kālaññutā*.

Attaññutā is knowing oneself. *Parisaññutā* is knowing the society. You have friends, or society, everywhere. You have friends within your work group, like nurses and doctors. That is one friend group. Another friend group is that of patients—all of the sick people in the hospital are your friends. This is called *parisaññutā*. Within your group of friends, there are people who are sick and people

who are not sick. You certainly know what a sick person's character is like. You must know what time is proper or appropriate for them, you must know your own nature, and you must know their nature.

Consider the nature of sick people. Who can sufficiently understand or know what kind of suffering each of them experience? You must know how to study their lives. Once you have studied them, you must try to adapt yourself to the patients in order to bring them happiness. Thus, whether it is practicing in a worldly sense or practicing in a Dhamma sense, you can adapt it and put it to use. Wherever the world is, that is where the Dhamma is; it is the same place. This is how to train in wisdom. When it is put into practice, it is easy.

Now, I have provided methods of training yourself. For the 1998 New Year, take old issues and apply them in practice. Try to polish or refine those issues in order to make them better and cleaner. Your mind is an old mind, but the year is a new year. The new year and old year are the same. It is like rice. It is the same old strain of rice. If you

sow the grains and harvest them anew, they are still that old strain. Only, you have newly harvested them. In a short time, that new rice will become old. The rice is sown and harvested again. When it is newly harvested, it becomes new rice. It keeps being new. It is new for a short time and then it becomes old.

You are the same. You are new for a short time and then you are old again. For instance, the year 1998 is new for a short time and then it will become old again. Then the year 1999 arrives and is new. You must keep being new. That is, you do not need to become old. How can you be old, but like new? By being wary and vigilant at all times, by being someone who is not spellbound or credulous, and by not binding your mind to the currents of the world too much. That which you do every day are merely outward actions (*kiriya*). As for inward actions or that which is kept inside (*akiriya*), that is your ultimate secret. It is each man for himself. This is how you should practice. You do not have to go around informing people of it. If the wise were to discern whether someone practiced the Dhamma or practiced well, they would not pay heed

to the knowledge that is put on display. Rather, they would pay attention to actions and manners. All kinds of actions and all kinds of speech are the direct representation of the Dhamma in the mind. It is not necessary to ask, “Is this person a practitioner?” It can be discerned from the actions. It can be discerned from the speech. For some people, when an issue arises or when they become angry, they still go around telling people that they have been practicing the Dhamma for a number of years. When they speak, their face is ablaze with fire as if they could strike or kill someone. It is worthless to say that they have been practicing. There is no Dhamma within them.

Whether you have been practicing the Dhamma for ten years or twenty years, it does not matter. What is important is whether you have been able to embed the Dhamma within your mind. This is where it is at. Some people say they have been practicing for many years, but their outward actions show that they have not been able to embed the Dhamma within their mind. They still allow greed, anger, and delusion to operate. How many of them have slipped up and done all kinds of things, causing a

ruckus all over the hospital? Is this the Dhamma? Not at all. This is not being able to embed the Dhamma within the mind. It is practicing not in accordance with the Dhamma. When the wise evaluate Dhamma practitioners, they do not need to ask, “How much knowledge does that person have?” They look at the actions and manners instead. They look at whether their actions and manners are refined, humble, or eloquent and whether the speech is appropriate and void of malice towards any individual. This is how the Dhamma manifests itself. Dhamma comes out of physical actions and speech. This is what they look at. The wise do not consider the length of time that people say they have been practicing as a determining factor. That is unnecessary.

You all have established this club for many years now. Many people have told me that things have been improving here, incrementally. Everyone is practicing every day and the Dhamma is continuing to embed itself, but it has not fully embedded itself yet. For some, it is regressing. They continue to become infuriated with one another. This

shows that the Dhamma has not settled in yet. It has not managed to embed itself. That is why they still become infuriated with one another.

This shows that the Dhamma has not embedded itself sufficiently. Keep training yourself, train more. When the Dhamma has embedded itself, your behavior will be seen as favorable by your peers, favorable by your patients, favorable by your teachers, and favorable by your superiors. This is what you want from the Dhamma. If you have Dhamma, no matter where you go, you are humble and graceful. This is what is used to discern Dhamma practice, not whether someone knows a lot. They do not ask, "Is this person good? Have they been practicing for a long time?" They do not ask this. They ask whether or not you have experienced the fruit of Dhamma practice. Look, if that person says that they have been practicing for many years, you would just laugh. It does not seem to correspond to the Dhamma. What kind of Dhamma leads to scowling at one another? This is not the Dhamma. A person who does not have the Dhamma within their mind is a person who

can only speak of the Dhamma. I have provided models of Dhamma which I believe have been suitable for the time. Thus, in this way (evam).

About the Author



Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño (Thoon Nonruecha) was born May 20, 1935 at Nong Kho village, Bua Kho sub-district, Mueang district, Maha Sarakham province, Thailand. He was the fifth of Uddha and Chan Nonruecha's ten children.

At the age of twenty-seven, he left his family to ordain as a monk in the Dhammayut Order. On July 27, 1961, he took ordination at Wat Photisomporn in Udon Thani, with Phra Dhammachedi (Joom Bandhulo) serving as his preceptor.

In his early years, Venerable Ācariya Thoon set out on dhutaṅga in various forest destinations and practiced the Dhamma until he profoundly realized and understood according to the truth. He studied under Venerable Ācariya Khao Anālayo of Wat Tham Klong Phen in what is now Nong Bua Lam Phu province. After having been ordained for eight vassas, Venerable Ācariya Thoon attained arahantship in Pa Lun village, Doi Luang district, Chiang Rai province.

Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño dedicated his life to the proliferation of the Buddha's original teachings, both in Thailand and abroad. Venerable Ācariya Thoon's teachings are distinctive in that he emphasizes the importance of starting Dhamma practice with right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*). His style of Dhamma practice is unique in that it enables laypeople to effectively practice in everyday settings and achieve a level of enlightenment, as he himself had attained the first level (*sotāpanna*) as a layperson. Venerable Ācariya Thoon also stressed the importance of developing both a comprehensive understanding and a true realization of

the suffering, harmful consequences, and perils associated with each issue.

In 1975, Venerable Ācariya Thoon established Wat Pa Ban Koh in Ban Phue district, Udon Thani province. Today, the temple serves as a Buddhist landmark for devotees to honor and venerate the Buddha's teachings and holy relics housed in the majestic pagoda. The temples founded in Venerable Ācariya Thoon's name in the metropolitan cities of San Francisco, New York, Hong Kong, as well as the countless Dhamma retreat centers in America and throughout Thailand that train in Venerable Ācariya Thoon's style of cultivating wisdom continue to grow, to this day.

Over the course of his lifetime, Venerable Ācariya Thoon authored over twenty books, including his own autobiography, and produced various forms of media (mp3, VCD, DVD, etc.) so that Dhamma practitioners from any walk of life could easily access the Dhamma. In 1990, Thai Royal Princess Phra Thep Ratanarachasuda honored Venerable Ācariya Thoon with the Sao Sema Dhammacakka

award for his outstanding literary contributions to the Buddhist religion. In 2006, King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand conferred upon Venerable Ācariya Thoon the clerical title of Venerable Paññāvisālathera.

On November 11, 2008, Venerable Ācariya Thoon passed away at the age of seventy-three due to pneumonia and lung tumor complications. Unique to only the greatest arahants, Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño's relics formed the day of his cremation ceremony.

About the Translators

Anandapañño Bhikkhu (Phra Kru Palat Arnold Van Thian-Ngern) ordained as a Buddhist monk in 2009 and is currently the abbot of San Fran Dhammaram Temple. He regularly gives Dhamma sermons in English and Thai and is the director and scriptwriter of the popular Animated Buddhist Stories series (on the watsanfran YouTube channel) that presents Jataka and Dhammapada stories in English, Thai, and many other languages.

Born and raised in San Francisco, California, Neecha Thian-Ngern has been a devoted student of Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño since the age of sixteen. She earned a Bachelor's of Science in Electrical Engineering from UCSD and a Master's of Science in Business Administration from SFSU. Neecha ordained as a Buddhist nun at San Fran Dhammaram Temple in 2017.

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