

# **TAILORED HEART**

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# TAILORED HEART

**Transformed to Fit**

By

*Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño*

Translated by

Neecha Thian-Ngern

# Copyright Information

Original Sermon

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Wat Pa Ban Kho

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## Editor's Preface

Throughout his nearly fifty years as a monk, *Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño* gave more than five hundred sermons. Out of those, we have hand selected sixteen sermons, to be transcribed and printed as books, in hopes that they may be of the utmost benefit.

The reader may notice that the subject matter and tone of each book in this series differs. This is because Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño adapted his teachings to fit the situation and audience. A sermon given at a funeral, a celebration, for a group of monks and novices, a group of professionals, or those who desire enlightenment are each unique in and of themselves.

This ten book collection entitled, "The Heart Series," is comprised of sermons given to monks and novices during rains retreats between the years 1994 and 2000. Some may be slightly puzzled by the uncommon name given to this Dhamma



series. We invite those readers to take a look inside and discover the meaningful connection.

We believe these books may provide a benefit not only to those in saffron or white robes, but also to those who desire simple happiness as well as those who seek enlightenment. The doubts that we encounter during each of our journeys can be dispelled with the wisdom contained in this series.

Though Venerable *Ācariya* Thoon Khippanyo is no longer with us, he has bequeathed unto us countless tricks and techniques that can be applied in our Dhamma practice. As such, his disciples and followers have been able to continue and advance their practice, even in his absence.

I would like to thank those involved with this series:

Organization: Phra Nut Taesombut, PhD

Concept & cover designs: Tanawat Pisanu-wongse

Illustrations: Nattawat Naovaratpong

Printing logistics: Soratya Surijamorn, MD

May all those involved, whether expressly named here or not, achieve their aspirations as they contribute to the auspicious merit of realizing *Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño's* intention of providing the Buddha's Dhamma to the world's citizens. May you achieve that which you desire, may your Dhamma progress accordingly, may you be self-reliant, may the path to enlightenment be illuminated for you, and may you achieve final enlightenment in this lifetime.

Mae Chee Yo  
Chief Editor

## Translator's Preface

Some believe Dhamma teachings are complex enough. Not only must a translator understand the language, but also the Dhamma concepts presented in the teaching.

The Thai language style can prove quite tricky to translate. At times, there are two meanings for a single Thai word, posed in a context that isn't readily translated over to English. Other times, English pronouns must take a firm stand in a sentence in which *Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño* never specified the person or object.

Not only is the language a challenge, but the subject matter itself can also prove difficult. With many of the Dhamma concepts presented here, I had to stop and consider which of the various meanings *Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño* intended. For that, I am grateful to have had Mae Yo as my mentor and editor.

To have been a pupil of *Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño* since the age of 16, and to be tasked

with translating his works for the English-speaking public is a honor and responsibility I take very seriously.

For those seeking answers, rest assured that the Buddha has provided us with a path that will lead us there. And our great teacher, the enlightened Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño, has illuminated that path for us during a time in which many of us have lost our way. May the ten books in this series be the shoes you will need as you journey towards your goal.

I would also like to express my gratitude to those who contributed their ideas and helped to edit these sermons.

Neecha Thian-Ngern

# Introduction

A skilled tailor takes one look at you and knows precisely what to trim or hem in order to achieve the perfect fit. Over 2,600 years ago, the greatest tailor of them all, the Buddha, could see straight into our souls and tell us precisely what adjustments in our perception were needed. Consequently, many people achieved enlightenment in that era.

In the age of information, we have ready access to a wealth of teachings that claim to have originated from the Buddha. The challenge today's practitioners face lies in having to sift through and discern which teachings are accurate, as well as which teachings specifically apply to us.

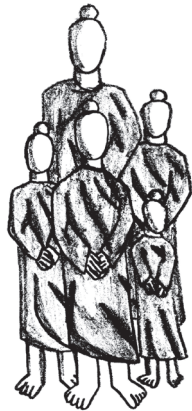
*Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño* recognized the flaws in techniques commonly practiced in contemporary times. In this sermon, he hands us the tools needed in order to become our own tailor. What should we keep? What should we trim? What needs to be completely altered? It is

up to you to transform yourself and achieve the perfect fit.

July 11, 1994  
Wat Pa Ban Koh  
Udon Thani, Thailand

***Transformed to Fit***





**Timeline**

**L**et me explain a little bit about Buddhism, to serve as a foundation for you practitioners. We are lucky to have been born in time for Buddhism, as the religion only arises during certain eras and then disappears completely.

The number of Buddhas to arise in each Buddha-era also varies, but never totals more than five. Our particular Buddha-era is comprised of five Buddhas. Four have already passed and one remains, namely, *Buddha Metteyya*. Within the history of the many Buddhas who have arisen in this world, some live long lives while some live shorter ones.

The first in this Buddha era, *Buddha Kakusandha*, lived during a time when the human life expectancy was 40,000 years. After blessing the people, a long period devoid of Buddhism came to pass. Then,

during a period of a human life expectancy of 20,000 years, *Buddha Koṇāgamana* arose in our world. After he blessed the people, there was another period in which Buddhism did not exist in the world. *Buddha Kassapa* graced our world during a human life expectancy of 10,000 years.

After a time devoid of Buddhism, *Buddha Gautama* emerged in the world. He came at a time when the human life expectancy was 100 years, although he himself only lived to be 80. As *Buddha Gautama* was compassionate towards humans, he established a religion to last for 5,000 years. In some Buddha-eras, there is no Buddha dispensation and no religion remains following the Buddha's passing. As of now, there are only about 2,000 years remaining before Buddhism once again vanishes from this world.

The life expectancy of humans rises and falls, with the floor and ceiling being 10 and 1,000,000 years, respectively. Right now, the life expectancy is at seventy five years. Every one hundred years, the human life expectancy decreases by one year.

#### 4 | Timeline

In approximately 6,500 years from today, the human life expectancy will stand at ten years. People will marry at three years of age and gestation will require three months. In that time, Buddhism will not exist in the world. People during that era will live like animals, roaming and lawless. They will be aggressive and more extreme in their degree of greed, lust, and desire relative to our present era. During that time the life expectancy will have declined to its floor of ten years, and then it will rebound. How will that happen? A group of people who will be born in that era who adhere to the tenfold way of good action will marry and produce offspring.

After one hundred years, the human life expectancy will rise by one year. Every one hundred years, the human life expectancy will increment until it reaches fifty, one hundred, ten thousand years, and so on. Human stature will get larger as a direct correlation to the increase in human life expectancy. During that era, people will become bored and heedless. Consequently, the life expectancy will fall by one year per one hundred years.

When the human life expectancy declines to 80,000 years, *Buddha Metteyya* will emerge in the world. What a long period of time that is. Most people understand that once one Buddha arises, another one will take his place. This is not so. There is a lengthy period in between. In some Buddha-eras, there is only one Buddha, so the period in which the world is devoid of Buddhism is many times longer.

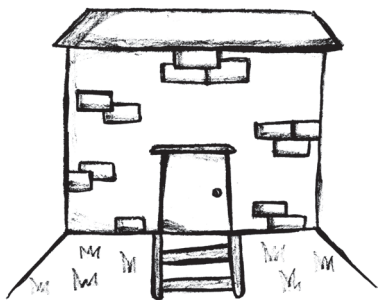
Our current Buddha was compassionate; he saw that people in the future would have the potential to understand the religion, so he left us a religion.

Once *Buddha Gautama* became a Buddha, he assessed the people of the world and determined the proper way to teach them to understand the religion. What did the Buddha use to teach people the ultimate truth (*sacca-dhamma*)? People – the Buddha used stories about people to teach people. Among them were stories about how this person had good virtues, or how that person cultivated merit (*puñña*) and perfections of character (*pāramī*). He used stories about good people as examples of proper conduct. When someone

behaved poorly and reaped the consequences, the Buddha would use that example to teach the world about evil deeds (*kamma*) so that we would fear evil deeds and shy away from committing them.

And what did he use as a foundation to teach people? He saw that people had wrong viewpoints and did not understand how to practice such that they could reach enlightenment. They held wrong views about how to practice. So how would he teach them so that they would understand the proper way to practice? How could he cure their wrong views? With the truth.

The truth was used to teach people about reality. We are born, age, and die. We must part from one another, and then there is anxiety and crying. Attachment and clinging lead to suffering. Even clinging to our five aggregates (tangible form, feeling, memory, volitional thought, consciousness) is painful.



**Temporary Abode**

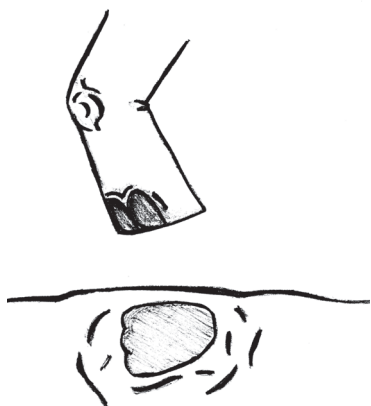
**T**he Buddha created a map to teach people, in which changing perception was at the core. He changed their perception with the truth and helped them realize that nothing truly belongs to anyone. We are born, make a living, and die. Despite being happy with sensual pleasures, those things only fool us into being trapped in this world.

Everything that we believe is ours is not. Nothing in this world belongs to us. No possessions truly belong to anyone. But everyone has a right to acquire these belongings in order to survive. We use them on a daily basis and for convenience. In the end, once you die, these items remain in the world. They are left to our relatives and kids. Then when they die, they leave them to their kids. All of it remains in this world.



The Buddha taught that nothing belongs to us. So why should we continue to be reborn? Survival is suffering. Our bodies do not belong to us. The mind forms this human body and resides in it. It is like a house. Once the house is built and deteriorates, a new one is built and we move on. Similarly, the body is born, ages, and dies.

The mind does not die. It is constantly finding new bodies and being reborn. We only temporarily reside in these vessels. While in this vessel, understand the truth that nothing is truly ours. The Buddha corrected wrong perceptions so that people would see the truth. It is called right view, or *sammā-diṭṭhi*.



**Elephant's Footprint**

**T**he Buddha left us with a grand inheritance, a path that leads to the end of suffering. This path starts off with right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) followed by right thought (*sammā-saṅkappa*). Meaning, if our understanding corresponds to the truth of reality, right thought will follow automatically. The Buddha taught this so that people could understand correctly, whether it be about internal or external matters, or in detailed or coarse contemplations.

Another tenet is the Three Common Characteristics (suffering, change, cessation of existence). If something were to be permanent, it would not change. When we desire for something to be permanent and it is not, we experience suffering. The only definite thing we can depend on is death. Right view is very important. The Buddha's religion begins with right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*)

## 12 | Elephant's Footprint

and all teachings in Buddhism are encompassed by it. In the Buddha's time there was a saying: "Just as all animal footprints are encompassed in an elephant's footprint, likewise, all Dhamma is encompassed in *sammā-diṭṭhi*."

Of the Noble Eightfold Path, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration are all encompassed in right view. Likewise, the Four Paths of Accomplishment (*Iddhipāda*) and the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*) are all encompassed in right view. The latter involves contemplations on the body, feeling, the mind, and Dhamma.



**Uncover the Truth**

**H**ow does one contemplate the body? There are two methods: meditation (*samatha*) and wisdom (*vipassanā*). In meditation, it involves realizing the current state of your body and being mindful in all postures. Know that you are sitting. Know that your arm is extended. Follow every movement of your body.

To practice the wisdom method you first need to understand the connections and differences between the two methods. There are many differences in the way the practices are carried out. In meditation, all types of thought prohibited. This includes those that are imaginative, contemplative, or related to the past or future. You must solely be mindful of your body.

Wisdom practice is different because it requires thought. It involves organizing, thinking, and analyzing the things that you understand. You

are to think about the past, present, and future. Think according to the truth of reality.

For example, a wisdom contemplation about filth (*asubha*) could involve reflecting on the unattractiveness of hair, skin, and each of the other parts of the human body. This style of practice is called *vipassanā*.

*Vipassanā* really means wisdom, but in more common terms it simply denotes thought. In Dhamma terms, we call that wisdom. *Vipassanā* is its higher-level equivalent. But we are not at that higher level yet. We are only at wisdom, which is just thought that corresponds to reality and the truth.



**Unequal**



**T**o understand the impermanence of our bodies, we can ask ourselves how the past relates to the current state of our lives. When we look at our lives now, it is not only the product of this present life. The results from past lives manifest in this life, as well. Our lives are different because of our past deeds (*kamma*). Some are born and live shorter or longer lives because of these deeds. Some die early because they killed other beings in past lives. Killing, adultery, stealing, lying, and intoxication have consequences which the Buddha saw and taught to people.

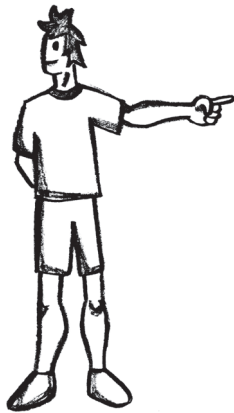
The Buddha taught us how to directly train our minds, because our minds are difficult to train. Nothing is more difficult. In fact, we have been pulled by the currents of the world into countless rebirths because of being so hard to teach. If we

do not use wisdom to teach ourselves, there is really nothing else.

The mind is infatuated with the world, infatuated with our own minds and with external things, both inanimate and animate. Once infatuation occurs, clinging and misunderstanding that they are both part of us and that they belong to us arises.

This is what the Buddha taught us, that being born in this world is suffering. Starting with coarse level contemplation, we can see that bodily suffering is definite. Then, how do sensual pleasures (scents, flavors, sounds, etc) cause us to suffer? Once we believe that they belong to us, there is no way that suffering will not arise. Suffering is rampant in the world.

The Buddha taught these truths. He did not teach non-truths. The Buddha taught things that people could understand. He didn't pull topics out of thin air; he taught about people.



**Guide**

**A**fter hearing a teaching from masters, we must teach ourselves again. We must internalize the external lesson. To teach oneself requires wisdom. Where exactly does wisdom come from? Everyone is born with wisdom. Religion is irrelevant. All people in the world, of all religions or no religion at all, have wisdom. But this is worldly wisdom. They are incapable of understanding Dhamma.

The Buddha had people use the wisdom they already possessed to think. No matter where the Buddha was, once people gathered around and the Buddha was going to teach, he did not say, “honor the precepts.” They did not know the precepts, they could not recite them. Nor did they know meditation.

So what did the Buddha teach? He taught the truth. In the Buddha’s era, according to holy peoples’ (*ariya-puggala*) accounts, it is evident

that people in that time did not know about precepts.

So what did the Buddha's teaching start with? Meditation or wisdom? Which did he teach first? In the Buddha's era, he taught wisdom. According to history, he never taught meditation first. He taught people to understand according to the truth.

The first person the Buddha taught was *Aññā Koṇḍañña*, and he taught him wisdom, not meditation. The Buddha taught him that we shouldn't tolerate physical pain like sages and ascetics. That's missing the point. Don't be fooled by sensual pleasures; know the suffering, consequences, and perils that come with them. See how suffering arises as a result of being pleased by sensual delights (*kāma-guṇa*).

People have wisdom, but simply lack both direction and the right teacher. With a teacher to point out the right way, people can use their wisdom and follow along.



**True Beauty**

**T**ake *King Udayana's* wife, *Māgandiya*, for instance. *Māgandiya's* parents had an incredibly beautiful daughter. They wanted to find her a husband whose looks were comparable. One day, as the father went to run errands, the Buddha saw that, despite holding wrong views, the parents' virtue was ripe. So, he appeared before them.

Instead of prostrating at the Buddha's feet, the father only saw that the Buddha was handsome and deserving of his daughter. He only thought, "oh, what happiness my daughter would have to be with him." The father told the Buddha that he should stay put as he would return shortly.

The Buddha knew the father would come back with the daughter. The father told the mother and daughter to get fully dressed, with all bells

and whistles, to go and see this equally attractive man.

When they showed up, the Buddha had already moved aside twenty meters using his supernormal powers. The mother saw that the marks left by the Buddha were not those of a commoner. She told the father this, yet he still insisted on comparing the beauty of their daughter with the Buddha.

The Buddha proceeded to explain the truth to them. He did not say, accept the precepts first, sit and meditate, or repeat a meditative phrase. Rather, he taught the truth. As they listened and thought along with the Buddha's teachings, the father and mother realized the truth in his words. The truth about what? The truth about the body.

The body does not possess a single part that is beautiful. All parts are filthy and loathsome. No fragrant or attractive parts exist. The Buddha explained the filth in the entire body. He expounded all 32 parts, like the morning chanting verse. Once born, we age and all attractiveness wanes.



With wisdom, both the father and mother became non-returners (*anāgāmi*, third level of enlightenment). This is called *vipassanā*, or wisdom, and it is what the Buddha used to teach people. So many people in that time did not know the five precepts but could become holy individuals.



**Lotus**

**B**ack in the Buddha's time, the Buddha knew the personality, virtues, and perfections of character (*pāramī*) that each person had cultivated. In this era, no one is capable of knowing these things. That is why masters cannot teach their pupils appropriately. Only the Buddha possesses this knowledge.

Venerable *Sāriputta* for example, had sharp wisdom. In fact, he was the wisest of the enlightened (*arahant*) disciples. Even so, he could not use his immense wisdom to teach his own pupil. *Venerable Sāriputta's* pupil desperately wanted to forsake his robes and leave the monastic order. *Venerable Sāriputta* brought him to the cemetery to contemplate filth. He had tried everything and was at the end of his rope. So, he brought his pupil to the Buddha.

The Buddha told *Venerable Sāriputta* that the Buddha alone could get through to this pupil. The Buddha conjured up a lotus and told the pupil to contemplate the lotus according to his teachings. The lotus is representative of tangibles or the body. How is the lotus born? How does it grow to be in this state? Now it is a bulb. When it blooms, it will then wilt and die. Similarly, internalize your body. Your body follows the same impermanence. The pupil considered this as he followed along with the Buddha's words. At the end of the sermon, the pupil became enlightened. See that with a single lotus and wisdom, he could figure it out. But one thing that was of consequence was that the pupil, in past lives, was a sculptor of gold and silver lotus flowers for the king. And his pleasure in dealing with lotus flowers had carried into that rebirth.



**Elimination**

**T**he Buddha did not teach meditation during that era. Meditation existed before the advent of Buddhism. When the Buddha was an ascetic, he practiced meditation to no avail for five years. The Buddha knew that meditation would only hinder Dhamma practice. That is why he put meditation aside and focused on wisdom and right view.

With right view in place, all remaining seven steps on the Noble Eightfold Path follow as a consequence. But with wrong view – truly believing that things exist – you will find yourself a far way from being a holy individual (*ariya-puggala*).

We must first correct this wrong view. To meditate or contemplate anything from a wrong view will result in wrong consequences. All corresponding thought, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, concentration will all be wrong.

The wrong path stems from the wrong beginning, namely wrong view. This is a thorny barrier that needs to be removed from the start. Without eliminating this wrong view, meditation will still appear to be silent and tranquil, but it will be entirely wrong meditation.

Namely, the Ten Defilements of Insight should be understood by all practitioners. These arise as a result of wrong concentration and are quite dangerous. Take luminence (*obhāsa*) for example. Without understanding this luminance, people will think it is supposed to appear and they will lose themselves in that state. People will withdraw from meditation whenever they don't encounter it.

Further, contentment (*piti*) in meditation makes us feel so pleased with ourselves and so overcome with happiness that tears fall. Meditators incorrectly understand that this bliss is a positive quality that will result in pleasure. They feel content and believe that it is supposed to happen. Another danger lies in meditative happiness (*sukha*), which persists regardless of location,

posture, or duration. This happiness arises for no reason. Little things fool us into believing we are happy and we are infatuated with this happiness. We want this happiness to remain with us forever. Yet another peril of meditation is when insight (*ñāṇa*) spontaneously arises and we suddenly know the answer to any question. Through wrong perception, we believe these answers arise from within us and we will come to believe that we are truly great.

Due to having wrong view as a foundation, regardless of where you are, you will be in the wrong. That is why these dangers should be known before embarking on meditation.

These defilements of insight arise from wrong concentration, and wrong concentration arises from wrong view. Wrong view is a perception that is inconsistent with reality. Once we eradicate these wrong perceptions, any Dhamma can be practiced. The meditative phrase itself does not change. The goal remains to be tranquil and mindful and to possess comprehensive wisdom.





**Ultimate Bravery**

**S**o how do we follow the Buddha's teachings of how to teach ourselves? If we cannot teach ourselves, we are hopeless. We are accustomed to using our wisdom in a worldly sense. Now, we must train our wisdom in a Dhamma sense in order to teach ourselves the truth of reality.

The main goal of practicing Dhamma is to eliminate ignorance in both the present and future. We aim to understand through reason and rationality. As we form an understanding of smaller points, we can apply this foundation towards more contemplations in our Dhamma practice.

The Buddha taught wisdom (*paññā*), followed by precepts (*sīla*), and then concentration (*samādhi*). But in contemporary times, people think that wisdom arises from concentration or meditation. Though it is written in some books, it is not true.

There were no instances of this in the Buddha's era. Wisdom always came first.

There are many things that people understand incorrectly in this day and age, and that is why practice is difficult. Meditation is a minor part, or a support, but the main tool is wisdom. We must change our wrong perceptions. The true teachings from the Buddha's time still exist, but people do not follow them. If people followed these teachings, many people would become holy individuals. But most people walk in the wrong direction. Wisdom does not burst out of meditation like a geyser. That concept is entirely ludicrous.

People have wisdom, but need to set their compass so that it points in the right direction. Without wisdom as a foundation, meditation will be for the wrong purpose. So change your perception and understanding, as the Buddha taught.

The Buddha set meditation (*samatha*) and wisdom (*vipassanā*) as two topics. Once both techniques are mastered, wisdom arising from mental

development (*bhāvanā-maya-paññā*) will arise. This wisdom will be able to eliminate mental intoxications and defilements.

Once a practitioner possesses right view, then right concentration and wisdom arising from mental development (*bhāvanā-maya-paññā*) will arise. Soon after, that individual will attain a level on the path to enlightenment (*ariya-puggala*).

This prominent wisdom that wipes out defilements arises and does not wane until that person becomes established on this path. It does not occur easily in this day and age. All prerequisites must be complete in order for it to happen. People in this era do not understand this correctly.

The truth is, if you build a strong enough foundation with wisdom through learning (*suta-maya-paññā*) and wisdom through reasoning (*cintā-maya-paññā*) such that right view arises, insight of wisdom (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) will follow. Wisdom from mental development (*bhāvanā-maya-paññā*), insight of wisdom (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*), and knowledge of wisdom (*paññā-ñāṇa*)

are types of wisdoms that are strong, brave, and are used only to eliminate defilements (*kilesas*). People want these wisdoms to arise within them but they have wrong understandings. If they have not cultivated the right view, how are they to reach their goal? They must first wipe out all of these wrong views before wisdom can arise.