

line of  
practice  
for mental  
development

Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño

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**WAT SAN FRAN**

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*Written by*

Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño

*Translated by*

Neecha Thian-Ngern

*Cover design by*

Neecha Thian-Ngern and Rungkamol Gunjeakpong

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For information:

San Fran Dhammaram Temple

2645 Lincoln Way, San Francisco, CA 94122

Website: [watsanfran.org](http://watsanfran.org)

E-mail: [watsanfran@yahoo.com](mailto:watsanfran@yahoo.com)

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# Foreword

LUANG POR THOON wrote *Line of Practice for Mental Development* shortly after he attained arahantship. Though the book is short in length, it contains more than enough for one to follow in Luang Por's footsteps. It covers the entire path of Dhamma practice, starting from practicing concentration (samādhi) in order to establish steadfast focus (that which is called "poo roo", or heightened focused consciousness), to using wisdom (paññā) to contemplate the body and mind, to ultimately extinguishing the five aggregates (khandha) of form (rūpa) and mentality (nāma) and attaining enlightenment (nibbāna).

Should you desire more details, you may find them in the books that Luang Por wrote later in his life.

Mae Chee Yo (Saranya Thian-Ngern)  
San Fran Dhammaram Temple  
June 2025

## Translator's Note

**T**HIRTEEN YEARS AFTER he attained ultimate enlightenment in 1969, Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño penned his first book entitled *Line of Practice for Mental Development*. That was translated into English by Mae Chee Liz and distributed as a booklet in the 1990s. Sometime thereafter, Luang Por Thoon overhauled the majority of that text, significantly reorganizing and refining the original concepts. The result was a condensed yet comprehensive guide for Dhamma practice from start to finish. This is a new translation based on the revised version of *Line of Practice for Mental Development*.

In this book, Luang Por Thoon refers to “poo roo”. “Poo roo” literally translates to “one who knows” or “the knower” in Thai. If you were to pinch your arm and zero in on the sensation of being pinched, as if mentally squinting to see it more clearly, while remaining keenly aware as your mind processes the sensations as they shift from intense to dull to

no more pain, that laser-like state of knowing or heightened focused consciousness is what we call “poo roo”. I have opted not to use a translation of the term, but to keep it as “poo roo” so that the reader can easily identify the concept throughout the text.

One could say that ārammaṇa is the main topic of this text. In Thai, ārammaṇa refers to mood, emotion, or temper. In Pāli, ārammaṇa translates to object, sense-object, preoccupation, or focus of the mind at a given moment. It is that which serves as the basis for the mind’s focus when the internal sense-bases (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body) come into contact with the external sense-bases (form, sound, scent, taste, touch). There are six kinds of sense-objects: form or visible object, sound, scent or odor, taste or flavor, touch or tactile sensation, and mind or mental object. The sixth sense-object—mind or mental object—is called dhammārammaṇa. It is the impression left by past sense-objects that may be conjured by the mind even without any external stimuli. After an ārammaṇa, or sense-object, arises in the mind,

the four mental aggregates of vedanā (feeling), saññā (recognition, memory), saṅkhāra (mental formations, volitional thought, fabrications, imagination), and viññāṇa (consciousness) have something to focus on and can begin to carry out their duties. There is consciousness of the object, recognition and memory of the object, and mental formations of the object, ultimately giving rise to a feeling that is either pleasing, displeasing, or neither pleasing nor displeasing (referred to in Pāli as iṭṭhārammaṇa, aniṭṭhārammaṇa, upekkhārammaṇa, respectively). Instead of using the Pāli term “ārammaṇa”, or its English translations of “object” or “sense-object”, which might not evoke any significant meaning for many readers, I have opted to use the term “preoccupation”, which I feel effectively conveys the meaning of ārammaṇa in the majority of contexts.

As for Pāli terms like sati or saṅkhāra, which can often take on more than one definition depending on context, I have chosen to use the English translation whenever it is possible to

pinpoint a single definition and the Pāli term whenever the flexibility of more than one definition provides an advantage in understanding. Sati literally translates to “memory” or “recollection”, but more often refers to mindfulness, awareness, attentiveness, or focusing the mind on an object. Saṅkhāra as one of the aggregates refers to mental formations, volitional thought, fabrications, or imagination, and in other contexts may refer to all the forces that form or condition, conditioned things, or conditioned phenomena.

The terms kilesa and taṇhā appear throughout this text. Kilesa literally translates to “torment of the mind” and refers to defilements or mental impurities that prevent beings from seeing the truth of reality as it is. Taṇhā literally translates to “thirst” and refers to craving or desire, which is the cause of suffering and that which fuels rebirth. In a practical sense, kilesa is the object or embodiment of taṇhā. The terms defilement and desire are used in place of kilesa and taṇhā throughout this text.

Translating Thai into English can be complicated because of the differences in sentence structure and grammar. While English typically requires subjects and pronouns, Thai does not; they may be omitted in Thai, and arahants (fully enlightened ones) in particular tend to do so, perhaps because they no longer cling to notions of ownership. For example, Luang Por Thoon often refers to “the mind” instead of “my mind” or “your mind”. I have attempted to maintain that objective, indirect writing style characteristic of arahants throughout the text, but have added pronouns or subjects whenever Luang Por Thoon does or whenever not doing so creates too much ambiguity. One section in particular, in which Luang Por Thoon describes the results of practice, was impossible to translate in one consistent point of view because there were specifics of Luang Por Thoon’s own experience intermixed with indirect, general statements throughout. However, this is absolutely understandable given that it is customary for arahants to avoid speaking directly

of their spiritual attainments. I acknowledge that switching between first, second, and third person point of views may be off-putting for some readers, and I hope that they can find a way to see past grammatical constructs into the fundamental meaning of the text.

Another stylistic choice is that of intentional repetition. While many sentences would likely sound better condensed, doing so would eliminate the emphasis through repetition that Luang Por Thoon deliberately adds to his words. Consider the difference in what you feel and how you process a phrase like, “once you know suffering and see suffering” versus “once you know and see suffering,” or a sentence like, “birth is suffering, aging is suffering, sickness is suffering, death is suffering” versus “birth, aging, sickness, and death are suffering.” In extended form, you are directed to evaluate each element on its own, and that is crucial if you wish to obtain results from Dhamma contemplations. Luang Por Thoon often taught that contemplating topics summarily is a major reason

practice does not bear fruit, as a practitioner who does this will mistakenly assume that they already understand everything and stop thinking.

Thank you to Mae Chee Yo Saranya Thian-Ngern for working with me on this translation. Much appreciation to Alana Denison, Jason Konik, and John Sum for your thoughtful and timely edits. Anumodanā with San Fran Dhammaram Temple, WSF Saphanboon Foundation in Thailand, and the many individual donors who sponsored the printing of this Dhamma book.

Mae Chee Neecha Thian-Ngern  
San Fran Dhammaram Temple  
September 2025

## Preface

*LINE OF PRACTICE for Mental Development* was the first book that I ever wrote. It was written in 1982 at Wat Pa Nong Song Hong in Khai Bok Wan Subdistrict, Mueang Nong Khai District, Nong Khai Province, Thailand, and has been printed five times since then. This book is an abbreviated collection of methods and models for mental development that make Dhamma practice easy to understand. It includes techniques for conducting meditation (samādhi) as well as techniques for contemplating with wisdom (paññā) that lay the foundation for the development of vipassanā, or clear intuitive insight. Without a foundation of wisdom contemplation, there is no way for vipassanā to arise. It is like how an individual who has earned a PhD must have already learned the basic ABCs. Similarly, individuals who have practiced the Dhamma and have come to know and see the conditions of nature (sabhāva-dhamma) and universal truths (sacca-dhamma) as they truly are must have already learned basic wisdom. Thus,

may you practitioners develop a foundation of right views (sammā-diṭṭhi) and right thoughts (sammā-saṅkappa) according to the causes and conditions of those universal truths as they exist in reality. In that way, your minds (citta) will truly know and see the conditions of nature.

I wish to sincerely thank my followers who arranged the printing of this book, and anumodanā with their righteous intentions. May all of you swiftly accomplish results from your Dhamma practice.

Phra Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño

# Line of Practice for Mental Development

*“Samatha bhāvanā and vipassanā bhāvanā are interrelated and have the same aim—that of achieving a calm mind. The only difference lies in the method of practice.”*

## The Two Main Principles of Mental Development

WILL NOW EXPLAIN the two main methods of bhāvanā, or mental development: samatha bhāvanā and vipassanā bhāvanā. These two methods are interrelated and have the same aim—that of achieving a calm mind. The only difference lies in the method of practice. Samatha is a method of calming the mind in order to bring it to a normal state. That is, it is a method of persuading the mind to rest. There are two methods to calm the mind:

1. Focus on a preparatory phrase (parikamma) along with breathing. Be mindful of “poo roo” focused consciousness and coordinate your breathing with the preparatory phrase.

2. Use “poo roo” to focus on a part of your body as a mental image (nimitta)<sup>1</sup> in order to prevent the mind from wandering to external preoccupations (ārammaṇa).

The principles of samatha bhāvanā will be explained hereafter. The principles of vipassanā bhāvanā will be explained at the end. Each time before you practice mental cultivation, you must cleanse your mind and body and prepare a place to sit and practice. This will preemptively remove any disturbances or worries that may disrupt your concentration, thus allowing you to practice with ease. The purpose of mental cultivation is to compose the mind and return it to its normal state. There are no external responsibilities you must attend to and no preoccupations to think about in various aspects because you have already dwelled on them for many hours. It is now time to prevent your mind from being caught up in various preoccupations. Keep your mind

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<sup>1</sup> *lit.* sign; vision; omen; mark; object; meaning; symbol; portent; mental sign; mental image; mental reflex image obtained in meditation.

in the present. Your body is here. Your mind is here. You are practicing mental development.

Next, do some chanting. Whether you chant briefly or at length is up to you. Focus your mind on not being harmful toward any sentient beings. Then, sit comfortably. You may sit cross-legged, with the right leg over the left leg. Place your palms together and raise them up between your eyebrows. Recollect the virtues of the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha, and let them come together in your mind.

Focus on breathing in long, thinking “Bud”. Focus on breathing out long, thinking “Dho”.

Focus on breathing in long, thinking “Dham”. Focus on breathing out long, thinking “Mo”.

Focus on breathing in long, thinking “Sang”. Focus on breathing out long, thinking “Gho”.

Repeat this three to seven times, or more if you prefer. Then slowly place your hands on your lap. Place your right hand on top of your left. Focus only on “Buddho”, and breathe normally. Make your mind cheerful and light. Do not let your mind worry about anything at all.

*“Focusing on breaths and coordinating them with parikamma words is merely a method of establishing mindfulness of ‘poo roo’. It helps strengthen mindfulness.”*

## How to Coordinate Parikamma Words and Breathing

WILL BRIEFLY EXPLAIN how to coordinate “poo roo” focused consciousness with breathing, in order to make it easier for readers to put into practice. First, establish mindfulness and focus on coordinating inhaling with the parikamma word “Bud”. Focus on coordinating exhaling with the parikamma word “Dho”. Your breath is there, and even if you do not pay attention to it, it will continue to move in and out on its own. Focusing on breaths and coordinating them with parikamma words is merely a method of establishing mindfulness of “poo roo”. It helps strengthen mindfulness. You must do it with intention. You must be intently conscious of breath entering of its own accord. You must be intently conscious of breath leaving of its own accord.

Whenever you are not intently conscious of breath entering, that means your mindfulness has slipped. Whenever you are not intently conscious of breath leaving, that means your mindfulness has slipped. Therefore, practice being mindful of breath entering of its own accord and mindful of breath leaving of its own accord. Once you become proficient, it will not be difficult. You will be instantaneously conscious of them. This is the initial intention.

When you have mastered parikamma and breathing, focus on being conscious of whether the breath is rough or subtle. If the breath is still rough, then continue to watch it. If the breath is subtle, your mindfulness has not slipped, and you are instantaneously conscious of the breath, then you can let go of the parikamma. Focus on knowing when breath enters and knowing when breath leaves. Fix your attention only on breath. When your mind and breath become subtle, it will manifest in the body in various ways. For example, certain parts of the body or the entire body may appear to grow or shrink. Sometimes, the body may appear to become

taller or shorter. If this occurs, do not be afraid. It is merely the physical manifestation of the condition of mind. You should immediately focus “poo roo” mindfulness on breath becoming more and more refined. Once it is fully refined, other symptoms will manifest. That is, your breath will appear to shrink smaller and smaller, become fainter and fainter, and shorter and shorter. One who fears death will immediately withdraw at this point. However, if these symptoms manifest, there is nothing to fear. The mind is about to become calm. You are about to see the miracle for yourself. Immediately focus on only knowing breath. If the breath is faint, know it. If the breath is as small as a gossamer, know it. The breath will be short and only in the throat. In the final moment, breath will cease.

When breath ceases, the mind is tranquil and free from the burden of breath. The mind is serene and enveloped in a brilliant radiance, and completely unaware of the physical body. There is only inner light, peace, and happiness. Nothing in this world can compare to the happiness of mental tranquility. As

the Buddhist proverb goes, “There is no happiness other than peace.” This peaceful happiness will not last long before the mind withdraws and normal breathing resumes. The effect of this tranquility will remain. Those who do not possess a foundation of wisdom will wish to continue to abide in that state of tranquility and become attached to it. Those who do possess a foundation of wisdom and have wisdom embedded in their minds will be able to contemplate the body straight away without being the least bit attached to that state of tranquility.

*“When it comes to seeing the body, remember the chosen defect well and keep your mind focused on it. Use that defect as your basis. Do it often and your ability to focus will become more skilled.”*

## How to Focus on the Body and Know the Body During Tranquil Meditation

**N**OW FOR HOW to practice tranquility (samatha) in regard to knowing the body. Your body exists, but when you close your eyes and try to look at it, why don't you see it? This is because you are unfamiliar with it, because you have never practiced before. In order to learn how to know the body, proper training is required. It will make the process easier. Suppose you are sitting right now and there is an object that you can see. What does it look like? Is it near or far? Large or small? With your eyes open in order to see more clearly, focus your mind on the object, then slowly and gently close your eyes. Keep your mind's knowing firmly focused on that object. Even when you close your eyes, you are merely covering your eyes with both eyelids, but the eye's knowing

remains focused on seeing that object. Even with your eyes closed, you can still reach out and grab that object, and do so with precision too.

This is how to train the mind to know the body. When it comes to seeing the body, you must select a part of the body that is easy for you to see and use that as your basis for training. It can be any defect in your body<sup>2</sup> that can be used as a mark. Remember the chosen defect well and keep your mind focused on it. Do not allow your mind to stray. Use that defect as your basis. Do it often and your ability to focus will become more skilled. However, be careful not to let inhaling, exhaling, or parikamma words interfere with this process. Though your breaths are still there, they are insignificant. Do not pay attention to them. Keep your mind trained only on the part of the body that you are focusing on. Your mindfulness isn't strong enough yet, so do not attempt to focus on knowing the body as a whole. At first, you should focus only a small point as big as your thumb. Then, when

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<sup>2</sup> This can be any distinguishing mark like a mole, scar, or birthmark.

your mindfulness becomes stronger, the scope of knowing will expand on its own just as light expands its brightness.

If you focus on the body and see the part of the body that you are focusing on, and you see it clearly and know it clearly within your mind, the part of the body that you are focusing on will expand more and more. If it doesn't expand, you can use your mind to make it expand. If when you expand it, you cannot see it clearly, then do not expand it yet. Keep your mind focused on the body part as before. You can sit and focus on it, walk and focus on it, or lie down and focus on it. However, lying down and focusing on it does not yield good results because your mindfulness is weak in that state. You will become drowsy and want to fall asleep. Therefore, focus while in the three postures of standing, walking, and sitting continuously.

The first time you attempt this, you may feel discomfort because you are not used to doing it. No matter how much you try to focus, you will only see darkness. However, keep trying to focus, sometimes with your eyes closed and sometimes with your eyes

open. When you focus on the body part with your eyes open, remember the morphology of that part of the body well. Then, slowly close your eyes while keeping your attention fixed on that particular body part. Do not let your concentration waver. It should be as it is with your eyes open. If when you focus on the body part you are unable to see it, that indicates that your mind's knowing is not quite ready. Once it is ready, the mind will gradually start to know that object. It will be a faint or vague kind of knowing at first, but after practicing it often, this knowing will become clearer.

If you are not skilled in focusing on the body in order for the mind to know the body, no matter what theoretical knowledge you contemplate, it will not be effective. If you were to contemplate any learned knowledge, such as the filthiness of the body (asubha), you will not see it as rotten or decaying. Even if you were to contemplate the filthiness within the body, your mind will not see it accordingly. You will not be able to distinguish between the different parts of the body. Why is this? Because, there is

no true knowing or true seeing within your mind. Thus the ancient adage, “Hit the jungle to scare the tigers.”<sup>3</sup> Knowing how filthy the body is in a casual manner, without knowing and seeing it for yourself, is insufficient to engender disgust within your mind in any way. When you know and see it for yourself, that disgust is bound to arise within your mind. When you focus on knowing and seeing a part of the body as it exists in reality with your own mind, it will give rise to disinterest and lessen your attachment to the body. The term “my body” will fade as the mind comes to see the body as it truly exists. You can contemplate the body by applying the external knowledge you have learned, but will you be able to develop disinterest in the body within your mind? There is no way this will happen. This is because you do not know the symptoms of the body and do not see the characteristics of the body. How could the mind ever become disinterested?

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<sup>3</sup> This basically means making a show of strength to intimidate someone or making an example of someone in order to scare others.

Therefore, focus on knowing and seeing the symptoms of the body with the mind first, then consider those symptoms with wisdom, and make sure the mind knows and sees accordingly. Whichever part of the body you contemplate, your mind sees it accordingly. Regardless of whether it is an external or internal part, the mind sees it all according to the rational truth. Once your mind is truly able to see your own body, you will also be able to see other people's bodies clearly just as you see your own body. When your mind clearly sees your own body and other people's bodies in this manner, lust and desire will lessen. That is, they will not flare up. When the mind sees the body like this, this subdued peaceful state of mind will be a part of the path that leads to vipassanā, which is wisdom.

*“The method of discerning which principle of mental development to start off with depends on your state of mind. If your mind prefers serenity, start with serene meditation and follow with wisdom. If your mind prefers to think about various things, start with wisdom and follow with serene meditation.”*

## How to Discern Which Principle of Mental Development to Start Off With

**I**N ORDER TO discern the proper principle to apply in mental development, you must first recognize your current state of mind. Suppose you are sitting in mental cultivation. Whether you practice tranquil meditation (samatha) or practice contemplating with wisdom (paññā), you must use your state of mind as a guide for mental cultivation. If your mind prefers serenity, you should practice tranquil meditation. It would not be suitable to contemplate with wisdom. But if your mind prefers to think about various matters, you should contemplate with wisdom. It would be futile to compel your mind to be calm. Suppose you wanted to rest and someone was making noise and disrupting you. It would be counter to your mind's needs. Or suppose you

wanted to work or play and someone forced you to rest. You wouldn't want that either. The method of discerning which principle of mental development to start off with depends on your state of mind. If your mind prefers serenity, start with serene meditation and follow with wisdom. If your mind prefers to think about various things, start with wisdom and follow with serene meditation. May you understand this accordingly. I have already written about the methods of calming the mind. One method is that of determining in-breath and out-breath. Another method is that of focusing on the body and knowing the body. I have already explained both previously. Choose whichever method you want, depending on your inclination.

*“When sense-based preoccupations arise in the mind, you must observe and determine from which sense-base that preoccupation originated. Focus on knowing that preoccupation, first. That way, you can teach the mind to recognize the extent of harm that preoccupation may cause.”*

## Contemplating the Relationship Between the Body and Mind

**N**EXT, I WILL explain how to use wisdom to coordinate the body and mind. Using wisdom to contemplate the body and contemplate the mind in relation to the mind's ārammaṇas, or preoccupations, will enable the mind to know and see the harmful consequences of the body and the harmful consequences of the mind's preoccupations. This is because the mind subsists on mental preoccupations. Whatever preoccupations they may be, they all arise in the mind. Evil preoccupations, good preoccupations, preoccupations of love, and preoccupations of hatred all exist in the mind. Preoccupations of greed, anger, and delusion also exist in the mind. Preoccupations of passion and lust

also exist in the mind. Whatever the preoccupation may be, once it arises in the mind, discern what it is in order to contemplate with wisdom in a manner appropriate to that type of preoccupation. Use wisdom to point out to your mind the harmful consequences of that preoccupation, so that your mind knows and sees those harmful consequences each and every time.

Whatever preoccupation it may be, once it arises in the mind, it causes the mind to stumble every time. This is because the mind is like a theatre. Defilements (kilesa) and desires (taṇhā) choose which movie to play for the mind. Whichever movie is selected, the mind will always sway in the direction of that narrative. Suffice it to say that whatever preoccupation arises in the mind, it never goes to waste. There are funny and exciting stories, stories of grief and loneliness, stories of killing with various weapons, and stories of competition and taking advantage of others. Defilements and desires perform all kinds of stories. The mind cannot remain idle. The moment one story ends, another begins, in an endless

cycle. The mind that dwells in these preoccupations is never bored. It spins around and around, not knowing whether the preoccupations are new or old, as they are all jumbled up in the mind. You do not know whether the preoccupations are from the past, future, or present. They are so tangled up, you cannot tell where they start or end.

The mind that is enveloped by ignorance (avijjā) does not know that those preoccupations are suffering, does not know that preoccupations are the cause of suffering, does not know how to extinguish suffering, and does not know how to practice in order to extinguish suffering. That is why it is called a deluded mind. That is, it is deluded by the preoccupations that arise in the mind. These preoccupations cause the mind to worry and struggle. This happens because the mind does not see the harm in these preoccupations and is pleased because it is accustomed to them. This familiarity with those preoccupations causes the mind to become inattentive because there is nothing to point out and warn the mind of the harmful consequences. As a result, the

mind does not know to seek a way to fix itself. Thus, the mind is stupid and foolish. It allows desires to lead it by the nose. It happens so quickly that the mind does not see it coming. It thinks alone, in a vacuum, along foolish lines of thought. Whatever preoccupation arises, the mind runs after it without awareness. This in turn creates the causes and conditions for the mind to experience preoccupations of failure and depravity, because the mind does not know the reality of those preoccupations that arise. This is why it is said that defilements encourage the mind to conform to the various preoccupations that arise.

In order to wash and cleanse the mind, you must wash the mind's views so that the mind reverses its manner of thinking. This way, the mind will be sharp and intelligent and know cause and effect, beginning and end. This relies on wisdom to train the mind to know according to the preoccupations that arise within it. These preoccupations arise through many channels. That is, when the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body come into contact with forms, sounds,

scents, tastes, and touch, preoccupations will arise in the mind. These are called dhammārammaṇa, or mind objects. Mind objects are what cause the mind to become obsessed with āyatana-based ārammaṇa, or sense-based preoccupations. When one of these sense-based preoccupations arises in the mind, you must observe and determine from which sense-base that preoccupation originated. Focus on knowing that preoccupation, first. That way, you can teach the mind to recognize the extent of harm that preoccupation may cause, so that the mind will no longer be obsessed with it. It is these sense-based preoccupations that arise in the mind that cause practitioners of mental development to stumble. This is because practitioners do not know how to fix them. Just as the bamboo tree meets its demise because of the seeds that arise from the tree itself, so does the practitioner of mental development meet their demise because of the preoccupations that arise within their own mind.

When these preoccupations arise within the minds of those who are not wise, they will never

disappear from their minds. Tranquil meditation (samatha) cannot be used as the sole basis of practice because tranquil meditation merely calms the mind. It cannot be used to cast off defilements. Even if the tranquility is so refined that it reaches the level of meditative attainments (jhāna-samāpatti), whether it is material absorptions (rūpa-jhāna) or immaterial absorptions (arūpa-jhāna), it will merely suppress the defilements for days at a time. It is like a rock sitting atop grass. It smothers it temporarily, but don't forget that even small roots can creep into crevices within the rock. When the time is right, those roots will be able to push through the rock and cause it to break apart into smaller pieces. The same is true of using tranquil meditation to suppress preoccupations. One day, when you aren't paying attention, those preoccupations will explode within the mind. There will be no good left to be found in the mind, as it will have become a worthless mind, rotting day and night, without any standpoint, awaiting ultimate devastation. In the end, all there is left to do is put down your alms bowl and robes and smile graciously

as you say, “I have run out of ordination merit. Please excuse me. If I remain a monk, I am afraid I will sin and cultivate bad kamma.” If this happens, then may the laypeople prepare a bed, pillow, and a mat to welcome you. They can lay the mat anywhere suitable. It can be outside, inside, or anywhere, it’s up to them. Soon, they will get to escort someone who has run out of ordination merit to seek merit as a layman. Sometimes, by becoming a layman, you might cultivate enough merit to return to the cloth. This is what the author has experienced. I am writing this as a preventative measure, because by writing this, I will be conscious of my writing and more or less ashamed to face the reader should I fall down that path. This way, I will protect myself by not practicing meditation one-sidedly. Instead, I will be wise and contemplate with wisdom in order for my mind to be sharp and able to fix the preoccupations that arise within my mind.

It is this mental sharpness that serves as the path for practitioners to escape from the mouth of the hawk, as in the saying, “Knowing how to dodge

is a wing, knowing how to avoid is a tail.”<sup>4</sup> The mind must be sharp in order to fix the problems that arise and awaken the mind in order to extract itself from its association with sense-based preoccupations. Just as the tip of the needle guides the needle and thread to join together in the fabric, sharp wisdom leads the mind to be intelligent and allows it to have comprehensive and expansive knowledge of the preoccupations that arise within the mind. This knowledge is precise.

Absent this mental sharpness, even if you contemplate with wisdom, it will not bear fruit. It will skip back and forth and you will be unable to establish a foundation of wisdom. Defilements and wisdom each have their turn, but fail to ever meet and confront one another face to face. All that you see are the traces of excrements that defilements have left as a gift for you. Laziness, inactivity, anger, delusion, eating too much, and sleeping too much are

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<sup>4</sup> This saying basically means that knowing what is appropriate and knowing how to adapt to various situations is how you get out alive.

all excrements of defilements.<sup>5</sup> If defilements happen to meet wisdom, it will be when wisdom is careless and not paying attention, so it allows defilements to defecate on the mind and cause a big stink. All of this is due to wisdom not being sharp enough. It is like the saying, “All hat and no cattle,” or the method of, “Hit the jungle to scare the tigers.” This is pointless, rambling wisdom.

Why should defilements be afraid? If it were wisdom stemming from the sharpness of the mind, defilements would cower and find it difficult to make their way into the mind. This is because defilements like to dwell in dark places. Whenever the mind is dark, defilements reveal themselves. If there is wisdom to illuminate the mind and there exists both comprehensive knowledge and expansive knowledge within the mind, it will be as the Buddhist proverb,

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<sup>5</sup> In Thai, the words “laziness”, “inactivity”, “anger”, and “delusion” are all preceded by the word “khee”, which literally means “excrement” or “waste”, but as a prefix refers to a negative tendency or undesirable habit.

“Natthi paññā samā ābhā.” “There is no light like wisdom.” This is what the light of wisdom is like. That wisdom is your own wisdom. The reason it is said that, “One is one’s own refuge” is because one’s own weapons are one’s own wisdom. Wisdom is the ornament of the wise man and is the sharp intelligence of those who will attain release from this world. Just as mirrors are useless for blind people, knowledge is of no use to those who lack wisdom. Wisdom does not exist in those who do not think. Discernment is absent in those who lack sharp intelligence. That is why they call it abundant wisdom or good wisdom. You may understand what abundant wisdom is. However, good wisdom can be good whether there is little or much of it. The sharpness of the wisdom is the key. Practitioners of mental cultivation realize this and endeavor to develop this sharpness within their minds. The term “vicakkhaṇa” refers to this sharpness. It serves as the cause that enables you to be aware of sense-based preoccupations at any given moment.

If you lack sharpness, your mind may easily be distracted and you will not know how to fix the preoccupations that arise within your mind. Consequently, you let defilements and desires drag you along pleasing preoccupations. Suppose a preoccupation that arose in the past gives rise to a preoccupation of the future and that in turn generates a present preoccupation.<sup>6</sup> The mind will sway and swirl according to various preoccupations without any end in sight. For example, the eyes come into contact with some form and a preoccupation arises within the mind. You draw a mental picture of the past or of the present in your mind, and imagine that form in various scenarios. The more you imagine, the more your mind clings to it. The more the mind is attached to that supposition (*sammuti*), the more defilements expand. Mental formations (*saṅkhāra*) immediately

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<sup>6</sup> For example, you were angry with someone over something they did in the past, then you think that they will definitely do it again in the future and cause you to be angry again, so you end up agonizing over it in the present.

begin to work. Mental formations will operate only with supposition at the forefront. If supposition did not exist in the mind, how would mental formations operate? Mental formations merely provide support for suppositions to expand in order to manipulate the mind into attachment. Just as a spider creates a web and gets stuck in it, the mind gets stuck in suppositions and mental formations.

If suppositions have been established and mental formations have not been formed, then those suppositions will gradually fade on their own. If mental formations have been formed and no suppositions have been established, then those mental formations will immediately shrink. Whenever suppositions and mental formations join hands, there is a flare-up of pleasing preoccupations in the mind as a result of that collaboration. This is how ignorance and delusion arise in the mind. The mind that is infatuated with and deluded by mental formations is deluded by this collaboration. The mind revolves around the cycle of rebirth (vaṭṭa)

and inhabits various small and large existences (bhava) because it is deluded by preoccupations stemming from suppositions and mental formations. The mind is pleased by sensual pleasures (kāma-guṇa) because of these preoccupations. The mind experiences sadness, grief, and tears because of these preoccupations. The mind experiences frustration, resentment, lamentation, regret, hurt, and various dangers because the mind is deluded by these suppositions and mental formations.

As the proverb says,

Piyarūpaṃ sātārūpaṃ

Desires arise from that which is tempting  
and pleasurable

Pemato jāyatī soko

From fondness there arises grief

Ratīyā jāyatī soko

From delight there arises grief

Kamato jāyatī soko

From pleasure there arises grief

Taṇhāya jāyatī soko

From desire there arises grief

Piyato jāyatī soko

From love there arises grief

Piyato jāyatī bhayaṃ

From love there arises fear

Piyato vippamuttassa, natthi soko, kuto  
bhayaṃ

For one who is free from love there is no  
grief, how is there fear?

The sea is not satisfied with all rivers, nor is the mind with its preoccupations. This is because the desires within the heart are infinite. Whenever there is a flare-up of any preoccupation in the mind, there must be a method to restrain that preoccupation. Those who are awakened do not see fanciful preoccupations. Just so, the mind that is sharp, possesses mindfulness and wisdom, and is self-aware does not see precious preoccupations that have already passed. Just like an ant stuck in honey, so is the mind stuck in preoccupations.

*“Supposition-based preoccupations are the weapon of choice for defilements, desires, and ignorance.”*

## How to Know the Mind and Its Preoccupations

**P**RACTITIONERS OF MENTAL development should understand how to know the mind's preoccupations and how to know the mind. The method is a subtle one. Practitioners who are unfamiliar with it may not understand. Keep trying to do it continuously until you become skilled and capable. Do it with great intention. The truth cannot escape the truth and at some point, it will appear.

Each time before you practice mental cultivation, be mindful and pay close attention to the mind's preoccupations. Make your mind light like when you are practicing tranquil meditation. However, the focus of knowing will be different. Tranquil meditation relies on either the body or breath as the point of focus. However, this method of knowing the mind's

preoccupations does not have the same objective. That is, you will not be focusing on watching the body or watching breath. Even though the body and breath are present, you do not pay attention to them. Even if you do know them, it is merely knowing them in a general or vague manner without intending to see. Be mindful only of knowing the mind's preoccupations. It is somewhere in the middle between the body and breath. The mind's preoccupations are not always the same. Sometimes it is different and sometimes it is the same, sometimes it is exciting, sometimes it is a preoccupation of love and lust. Whatever preoccupation it may be, take note of that type of preoccupation.

Do not try to search for the source of the preoccupation. This is very important. If you search for the source of the preoccupation, within a blink of an eye, the supposition that caused the preoccupation will immediately surface. During this period, keep the mind composed and steady. If you send the mind out to find the source of the preoccupation, it will flare up within the mind and the supposition that

ignited the preoccupation will eclipse the mind. This is a special warning to practitioners. Do not think to bring the cause of the preoccupation into your mind, even if it is a preoccupation about love, lust, pleasure, or anything else that is agreeable. These preoccupations are the result of a cause, that of supposition. This is because suffering results from craving or desire. Once you know suffering and see suffering, you will then be able to find a way to extinguish the cause of suffering. Once you know and can pinpoint the supposition-based preoccupation, you will be able to find a way to counterbalance and eradicate that supposition thereafter. This method is merely a method of knowing supposition-based preoccupations. If you do not catch them, they will flaunt themselves with vigor in the mind, and it is these supposition-based preoccupations that are the weapon of choice for defilements, desires, and ignorance. Once you have successfully seized the weapons from defilements, desires, and ignorance, they will be without a weapon, making it easier for you to use wisdom to attack them.

Therefore, once you are able to seize the supposition-based preoccupations, the preoccupations that are seared by sati, mindfulness or focused attention, will gradually shrivel and shrink until sati can no longer perceive them in the mind. No preoccupations can resist sati. Regardless of whether they are preoccupations of lust or preoccupations of love and sensuality that are considered extreme and dangerous, if they are seared by sati in the right spot, they will gradually fade away. This is why sati is considered *tapa-dhamma*, that which burns like fire that dries up water. Sati burns supposition-based preoccupations in the same manner. Let me reemphasize, when sati sears the preoccupation, you must be especially cautious not to allow the mind to focus on the supposition that is the source of the preoccupation at all. If you focus on or draw an imaginary picture of that supposition, it will be like pouring gasoline onto a fire.

When you use sati to sear the preoccupation until it subsides, do not assume that it has been

extinguished or has vanished. It has merely been weakened. Next comes time for wisdom. You must have a method to teach the mind to see the harmful consequences of the mind's delusions. You must point out to your mind the harmful consequences of the mind's preoccupations. You must point out to your mind the harmful consequences of being overstimulated so that the mind knows it, hears it, sees it, and receives the teachings of wisdom. You must use wisdom to teach the mind so that the mind receives the teachings of wisdom. In this way, the mind will see the harm in being mentally overstimulated. It is just like how a mischievous child must be taught by parents repeatedly in order to become smarter and know how to take care of himself. The mind that is under the control of defilements and desires does not know its own faults and is dazed and subject to that which is pleasing, satisfying, or that which defilements and desires dictate. Just as those who have gone astray and repented and rejoined the governing party, so is the mind that has gone astray

and gotten lost in the world and lost in rounds of rebirth within the Three Realms of Existence that surrenders to wisdom.

Thus, practitioners, let me reiterate once more, each time before you practice, focus on using this method as a basis for wisdom. Whenever preoccupations do not flare up in the mind, focus sati on knowing the preoccupations of the mind every time.<sup>7</sup> If the mind's preoccupation is rough, then know that it is rough. When the mind's preoccupation is subtle, then be conscious of it and keep being aware of that subtle preoccupation. If the mind has a preoccupation of lust, then let it be known. If the mind has a preoccupation of anger, then let it be known. If the mind has a preoccupation of any kind of suffering, then let it be known. If the mind has a preoccupation of happiness, then let it be known. If the mind does not have any preoccupations of suffering or any preoccupations of happiness, then

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<sup>7</sup> In other words, if there are no preoccupations that flare up and require active attention, just sit back and monitor the preoccupations that enter the mind.

let it be known. If the mind has a preoccupation of indifference, then let it be known. Keep the mind focused on knowing the various preoccupations of the mind. Or, if the mind has a preoccupation of emptiness, then let it be known, but do not become too attached to this preoccupation of emptiness or else it will turn into meditative attainments (jhāna-samāpatti). Always come back to using wisdom to contemplate the body and the preoccupations that arise within the mind.

*“Before your mind becomes pleased with external forms and sounds, your mind must first be pleased with your own self without realizing it. This is called upādāna-khandha.”*

## Contemplating the Body and the Mind's Preoccupations

**N**EXT, I WILL suggest ways to use wisdom as a guideline. Wisdom to contemplate the body and to contemplate the mind's preoccupations fall under the same system. That is, the mind. When it comes to contemplating the body, you must use your body as the basis. That is, you must see the changes in the state of the body, the suffering in the body, the insignificance within the body, and the filthiness of the body. When contemplating, you must start with birth. You can start from conception or from the moment of initial awareness of your surroundings up to the present time or into the future. For example, when contemplating the birth of the body, though you cannot see it, you must imagine it in a way that is consistent with the principles of change according

to reality. Conception relies on a drop of fluid from each parent. Namely, that which is called kalala. Then it transforms into a lump, then into blood, and then clumps together into a blood clot called ghana. Thereafter it splits into five branches: two arms, two legs, and one head. Then there are fingers, toes, eyes, ears, a nose, a tongue, and a body. Other organs develop and rely on the warmth within the mother's body. The child's physical body matures and when it is time, it will emerge from the mother's womb. During the period when it is in the mother's womb, there is no breathing. There are three types of people who are alive but do not breathe:

1. A child in the mother's womb
2. A diver
3. One who has entered nirodha-samāpatti<sup>8</sup>

When the child emerges from the mother's womb and is exposed to outside air, the body continues to transform until it reaches childhood and adolescence.

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<sup>8</sup> The temporary suspension of all consciousness and mental activity, following immediately upon the eighth jhāna of neither perception nor non-perception (nevasaññānāsaññāyatana).

The body continues to change at each stage of life until the present time and ultimately the final stage of death. This is just a cursory explanation, only enough to provide a general storyline. Contemplate with wisdom according to the sequence of events I have explained above. I would like to reiterate the principles of wisdom and the principles of the present so that you may understand the events of the past, present, and future. I have provided a brief example for practitioners of mental development to use as a model for contemplation. I would like for practitioners to rely on themselves as much as possible. From birth to childhood, it is only necessary to know the changes in the body to see that it is all impermanence and suffering in various ways continually up until the present time.

Practitioners must use this present existence as the main basis. Start from the present existence of the body in order to understand how the body came into being, how the body continues to exist, and how the body expires. This is so that you do not cling to the body. As for the mind's preoccupations, whether

they are preoccupations of lust, desire, greed, anger, delusion, or any other type, they all exist in the mind and converge in the mind. They are expressed according to age and in different magnitudes. A child expresses their preoccupations in a certain magnitude. Young men and women express their preoccupations in another magnitude. The middle aged and elderly express their preoccupations in yet another magnitude. It is *santati*,<sup>9</sup> continuous up until the present. As a result, the mind is deluded by the preoccupations that arise in the mind. It is these mental preoccupations that make the mind wander and get stuck in various existences without ever being bored. The mind is pleased to be reborn again and again because it does not know that birth is suffering. It believes one-sidedly that birth is happiness. It is like how a near-sighted person cannot see far. If only when danger nears does that person reach for a weapon to protect themselves, how can they do so in time? Likewise, the mind is short-sighted and the

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<sup>9</sup> *Santati* refers to continuity, or the rapid arising and ceasing of phenomena in succession that creates the illusion of continuity.

consequences are bound to manifest as tears. As for inside the mind, that goes without saying. It's obvious.

Thus, practitioners must use wisdom to contemplate the mind's preoccupations that arise from the external environment—that is forms, sounds, scents, tastes, and touch—as causes, in order for the mind to observe and know according to the causes and conditions. Before your mind becomes pleased with external forms and sounds, your mind must first be pleased with your own self without realizing it. This is called *upādāna-khandha*.<sup>10</sup> Preoccupations of lust and desire already exist in our minds, so the mind draws in those forms and sounds in order to weave them into the mind. Forms, sounds, scents, tastes, and touch are things of this world. Regardless of whether or not you are born into the world, or whether or not you are dead, forms, sounds, scents, tastes, and touch still exist. The fault is in our clinging to them. It is this not knowing that gives rise to delusion and gives rise to the belief that we

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<sup>10</sup> This refers to clinging to the aggregates.

are the cause. Thus, we must extinguish the cause, that is ourselves. Wherever a cause arises, there you extinguish it. If the cause arises from yourself, you must find a way to extinguish that cause within yourself. When putting out a fire, if someone were to extinguish the smoke, the light, or the heat of the fire, they would be extremely foolish. This is because they are failing to extinguish the cause of the fire. Just so, when extinguishing the flames of the mind's preoccupations of lust and desire, it would be impossible to use meditation (samādhi) or meditative attainments (jhāna-samāpatti) to completely extinguish the flames of lust, anger, and delusion from the mind.

You must use wisdom to fix the root cause in order to change and undo the clinging to the notion that form (rūpa), feeling (vedanā), memory (saññā), mental formations (saṅkhāra), and consciousness (viññāṇa) are self-identity. Form must be separated into parts, small and large. As for feeling, memory, mental formations, and consciousness, they are symptoms of the mind, not the original mind. The

original mind shines radiantly within the mind itself. The term *viññāṇa* is not the mind, but it is the halo of knowledge that comes from the mind. This knowing of *viññāṇa*'s is imbued with misery, that is to say delusion and ignorance. Though it knows, that knowing is credulous and impressionable when it comes to defilements and desires. That is, it is knowing in a way that digs your own grave. It is like lights of different colors. The neon light that glows red, white, or green does not depend on the light, but from the coating on the bulb. Similarly, the way in which *viññāṇa* knows depends on its environment and is constantly in a state of flux, arising and falling away in an irregular and inconsistent manner. That is, there is no conscious restraint. *Viññāṇa* is knowing, that is knowing how to create existences and rebirths. It is only skilled in knowing how to bind itself to this world. However, it does not know the Four Noble Truths nor does it truly know the conditions of reality. If *viññāṇa* knows and sees wrongly in this manner, then other wrong knowing will follow. For example, knowing with *saṅkhāra*

will result in wrong mental formations. Knowing with *saññā* will result in memory being erratic and unreliable. Knowing with *vedanā* will result in savoring preoccupations of happiness, suffering, and neither happiness or suffering. Knowing with *rūpa* will result in knowing in a way counter to principles of reality. This wrong knowing gives rise to delusion, love, lust, and satisfaction over the world's various sensual pleasures. This is the cause of darkness that obscures reality. This is what is called *avijjā*, the absence of knowledge, and *moha*, delusion.

To put it more simply, the term *avijjā* is not knowing the truth of the Four Noble Truths, that is the truth of *sabhāva-dhamma*, or the conditions or principles of nature. Use wisdom to contemplate according to principles of reality in order for the mind to develop *vijjā*, true knowing from wisdom in accordance with the truth of reality. *Vijjā* within the mind will consequently be luminous, comprehensive, and expansive within the mind. This is precisely how wisdom is used to train the mind's preoccupations so that the mind becomes illuminated. It is like turning

on a light in a dark place. The darkness will disappear by itself. Likewise, when knowledge and brightness arise within the mind through wisdom, the mind's darkness will disappear by itself.

Use wisdom to contemplate the symptoms of the body, the characteristics of the body, and the arising, remaining, and passing away of every part of the body, both inside and out, for both yourself and others so that they fall under the same conditions of being. That is, being subject to change from conception to old age, being subject to suffering that arises within the body from the very start up until suffering in the present time. Use wisdom to reject the notion that this body belongs to you. It is only a temporary residence. After some time, you will go separate ways. These are the basic and simple principles of mental development. As for wisdom that is more comprehensive and wide-ranging and the methods that are to be used, I will leave that up to each practitioner. Most crucially, whatever part of the body you contemplate, it must become clear to you. Whether you contemplate at a slow or fast pace is up to you. If a practitioner's

mindfulness isn't fast enough and isn't strong enough, they should contemplate with wisdom slowly in order to focus on knowing and seeing the characteristics of each part of the body. Let the mind concentrate on knowing accordingly, and the mind will not be disturbed by other things and will instead remain with the body and know it at all times. This is how concentration (samādhi) implicitly supports wisdom. If you contemplate the body for a long time and the mind becomes bored of contemplating, then stop contemplating and instead focus the mind on being calm. Make the mind light and focus on being mindful of knowing breath so that the mind can rest. The mind will get to recharge and have the energy to support wisdom in its future contemplations.

*“Every time you contemplate, use the Three  
Common Characteristics as the guiding principle  
so that you see impermanence (aniccam), suffering  
(dukkham), and not-self (anattā).”*

## Using Wisdom to Contemplate the Three Common Characteristics

**W**HEN IT COMES to contemplating with wisdom, you can do it while sitting, walking, or in any posture that is convenient. This is because when contemplating with wisdom, the mind does not stay in one place. When using wisdom to contemplate, the mind knows and sees according to the conditions and characteristics that are contemplated. Every time you contemplate, use the Three Common Characteristics as the guiding principle so that you see impermanence (aniccam), suffering (dukkham), and not-self (anattā). This is because the physical or bodily formations (rūpa-saṅkhāra) and mental formations (citta-saṅkhāra), whether external or internal, near or far, coarse or refined, or superior

or inferior are all things that exist within this world. Contemplate them so that they correspond to the same characteristics of impermanence, that which is difficult to tolerate, and how there is nothing that belongs to us even in the least bit. This is how to destroy the cause. When you examine the cause, you should know it and see it in order to prevent the mind from clinging to the notion of “me” and “you” any longer. This is because wherever there is “me”, there is “you”. If there is no “me”, then where would “you” come from? It is because “me” is the cause, that “you” results like a shadow of yourself. Whatever is a ghana, or clump, produces a shadow. If there is no ghana, then where would the shadow come from? Thus, destroy this clump with wisdom. Once it has been destroyed, *santati*—the rapid arising and ceasing of phenomena in succession that creates the illusion of continuity—of that clump will disappear. The illusion of continuity immediately becomes a non-issue. It is like with the heat of the fire and the fire itself, once you extinguish the cause of the fire, the heat and the fire itself will immediately become a

non-issue. Similarly, once ghana has been destroyed, the continuity in asaṅkhata-dhātu and asaṅkhata-paccaya<sup>11</sup> will also become a non-issue. Therefore, it is completely akuppa-dhamma.<sup>12</sup>

Practitioners, initially, there will be some confusion in practice, just like when making a path to a certain destination. It isn't that you can just pave the road straightaway. You must clear a path and have vehicles tear down the forest and mountainside. It is just as we see in various places. In order to pave the road so as to have a convenient route, there must be a great investment of money and labor. The initial stages of practice are the same way. There will be both wrong and right, you will stumble and fall and get back up again, and you will have to persevere and fight hard with the utmost intensity. This is up to the practitioner to do. Otherwise, you will fail or miss

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<sup>11</sup> Asaṅkhata-dhātu refers to an unconditioned element; the unconditioned or immaterial element or principle. Asaṅkhata-paccaya refers to unformed conditions. Both refer to nibbāna.

<sup>12</sup> Akuppa-dhamma refers to the unshakeable state; "unshakable" is one who has attained full mastery over the absorptions (jhāna).

because mental cultivation is not limited by time, nor does it depend on sitting meditation or walking meditation according to a schedule. Rather, it depends on the determination to always be conscious and aware. When you wake up in the morning, be mindful. When you go on alms rounds to and from the temple or when you are arranging alms meals, you must be mindful. Wherever you may be, whatever posture you may be in, you must be mindful at all times—use wisdom to contemplate to know and see the arising and ceasing within the body and mind at all times, or know and see the arising and ceasing in external things at all times—in order to prevent defilements and desires from entering the mind. Focus on being mindful at all times so that you are ready to face defilements, desires, and preoccupations that arise in a timely manner.

One thing to be cautious of is conversation, as it is a scheme of defilements and desires. Aside from when discussing the Dhamma, people tend to be careless and talk in a way that sets fire to themselves and others without realizing it. By the

time they do realize it, they've exhausted themselves. Some groups lack the wisdom to be conscious of themselves at all. They say they want peace, but keep talking to this person and that person. This is not how true practitioners behave. It wouldn't be wrong to call them bad practitioners. They do not have any consideration for others whatsoever. Others wish to put forth effort in sitting meditation and walking meditation and dwell in serenity in private, yet these so-called practitioners make various sounds that annoy others. "Katham-bhūtassa me rattin-divā vītipatantīti; kacci nu kho'haṃ suññāgāre abhiraṃāmiti?" "What am I becoming as the days and nights fly past? Is there an empty dwelling in which I delight?" If you prefer peace and quiet, then others are bound to prefer the same. When you do or say something, consider how others would feel about it.

Those who hope for the greatest benefit should be reserved, should not be arrogant, and should behave like a sword in a sheath. It is like Mahā Kaccāna said, "One with eyes should be as if blind, one with ears as if deaf, one with wisdom as if mute." You should

isolate your body and mind from noise and any disturbances. Practitioners should be aware of how to isolate themselves and retreat in order to hide away and facilitate self-healing. This way, practitioners will not be heedless in various situations nor draw attention to themselves no matter what society they find themselves in. Just like a measly crow living among a flock of swans, there is no one guarding or protecting you, so you have time to yourself and may practice mental cultivation wherever and whenever you so desire. In this way, your mental progress will creep forward quickly.

This technique can also be used on a more personal, internal basis in order to retreat from preoccupations that arise in the mind from sense contact. Even if you see forms or hear sounds, you will know how to be as if blind, deaf, and mute, and not cling to those forms or sounds. When those forms and sounds disappear, the mind does not have preoccupations of attachment to them. The mind's focus isn't diverted or assured by those forms and sounds at all. If there aren't any preoccupations of

forms, sounds, scents, tastes, or touch to disturb the mind, mental cultivation practice will flourish. It is like planting trees for the benefit of fruit. If you prevent caterpillars and worms from hiding in and eating the trunk; prevent fungus, mold, ants, or insects from destroying it; and plow the soil, add fertilizer, and water it frequently, the tree will thrive and produce fruit. Practitioners must keep the mind in a normal state and not allow preoccupations, which are the enemy of the mind, to hide within and destroy the mind. The mind should always be at the ready. No matter where you are or what posture you are in, apply mindful wisdom to keep the mind composed. Do this continuously, non-stop, day and night. When you wake up from resting, you must be mindful to keep the mind composed in order to prevent it from going out and drawing external preoccupations into the mind. If you slip up, use mindful wisdom to eradicate those preoccupations right away. Otherwise, those preoccupations will accumulate little by little, day by day, and the mind will become dreary and miserable

without realizing it. Ultimately, those preoccupations will become toxic in the mind.

Therefore, endeavor to keep the mind from clinging to those various preoccupations from the get-go, so that those preoccupations do not arise in the mind ever again. Be watchful and maintain the mind continuously and steadily. Do not be heedless. Do not allow the mind to become intimate with those preoccupations and do not allow the mind to become accustomed to those preoccupations ever again. By deliberately practicing mental cultivation in a consistent manner every day, uninterrupted, the fruits of practice will result. It is like a mango fruit that comes from a mango tree. At first, it has a sour taste. When it is ripe, it will have a sweet taste without anyone having to inject sugar into it. Just as the taste of a single mango can change, so can the results of practice change if a practitioner practices continuously. You will experience the fruits of practice directly. Miraculous calmness, understandings, and realizations will occur within

your mind, unexpectedly, without advance notice,  
and unprecedentedly.

*“The five aggregates (khandha) and sense-bases (āyatana) will become insignificant. Knowing that results from the link between the aggregates and the internal sense-bases are no longer connected to external preoccupations. Knowing through the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body is disconnected from forms, sounds, scents, tastes, and touch. Basically, they cannot connect. The physical aggregate of rūpa as well as the mental aggregates of vedanā, saññā, saṅkhāra, and viññāṇa, all exist separately and peacefully. None of the aggregates operate.”*

## How to Practice in Accordance with the Path to Noble Fruitions

THE AFOREMENTIONED MIRACULOUS calmness will radiate from the mind within a short period of time and you will know that the mind has achieved complete calmness. This calmness will be quite different from any other type of calmness. All preconceived notions and attachments (upādāna) will become null and void. There is not even the slightest bit of power in the mind. The five aggregates (khandha) and sense-bases (āyatana) will become insignificant. Knowing that results from the link between the aggregates and the internal sense-bases are no longer connected to external preoccupations. Knowing through the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body is disconnected from forms, sounds, scents, tastes, and touch. Basically, they cannot connect.

The physical aggregate of rūpa as well as the mental aggregates of vedanā, saññā, saṅkhāra, and viññāṇa, all exist separately and peacefully. None of the aggregates operate. There is no savoring of preoccupations or mental fabrications within the mind. There is no knowing of external arising and ceasing. Consciousness of knowing exists deep in the mind, but it is consciousness that is isolated. It is like living in a different world, completely unrelated to the world that you used to live in. When the mind cannot think, knowing through viññāṇa completely ceases. It is a state of consciousness absent worldly meaning. I will leave it to you practitioners to consider this for yourselves. What that state of being is like is difficult to find an analogy for the reader to understand, or it will be beyond the reader's scope of understanding. May you readers get to experience this calmness for yourselves, then you will experience what the calmness is like and what the state of mind is like. Only when you know it and see it on your own will you be certain of it. Thereafter, this state of calm will remain for some time, then it will change in another way. It won't matter what posture you are in.

After only a slight change in the state of calmness, courage will be expressed in the mind with all its might. In which way will that courageousness go? What brings about this courage? This will be known by the practitioner. When the courage arises, whatever posture you find yourself in, whether you are contemplating or cultivating serenity, that courage will be such that the Three Realms of Existence no longer seem to be significant. That courage will remain for a carimaka-citta;<sup>13</sup> it will pop up in the mind and in a split second it will be immediately known. These words will be of the utmost importance, “Virāgā vimuccati. Vimuttasmim vimuttamiti ñāṇaṃ hoti.” “Through dispassion, he is released. With release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released.’” “Khīṇā jāti, vusitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ, kataṃ karaṇīyaṃ.” “He discerns that, ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done.’”

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<sup>13</sup> *lit.* the last citta; last thought moment; last conscious state; final mind, final consciousness; the split instant before becoming an arahant; an acute mental moment immediately preceding the attainment of enlightenment.

In that moment, you realize how amazing the Buddha is and you want to go and pay homage to him despite knowing that he has already passed into final enlightenment (nibbāna). It is just like with the Buddha's disciples who attained enlightenment. No matter how far they were, they still traveled to pay their respects to him. However, there is no desire to share what you have known and seen with the Buddha. Simply getting to bow to him would be enough. If the Buddha were to ask about your experience within the Saṅgha, you would be able to relate the truth to him without the slightest bit of embarrassment toward the Buddha or the Saṅgha. Some are confident enough to speak among the Saṅgha, even in the presence of the Buddha, and speak according to their truth. If they were accused of bragging, it wouldn't matter. Wherever they go or whatever Saṅgha they find themselves in, they will be confident enough to say, "Yassa magge va phale va kankha atthi so mam pucchatu." "Should there exist doubt either in the noble path (magga) or its fruition (phala) let him ask me." If someone were to say this

in this day and age, even if it were the truth, what would happen to them? Who would be the judge?

After the understanding and realization of the truth has passed, the courageousness gradually fades until it is no longer. The wisdom used to contemplate various aspects of physical phenomena or mental phenomena, or the past, present, or future in to order attain release from the cycle of rebirth has achieved its purpose. All that remains is a feeling of repleteness. This feeling can last for seven days. At first it is in full bloom, then it gradually fades day by day. In approximately seven days thereafter, the physical body will operate as normal. The knowing and seeing from before will revert back to knowing and seeing as normal. Knowing and seeing will become *ekarattim*,<sup>14</sup> there is no day or night, there is no ceasing or arising, there is no up or down. It is not shaken by any worldly flow.

Thus, it is as the words, “*Kataṃ karaṇīyaṃ.*” “The task is done.” There is no work to do. There is no need

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<sup>14</sup> Everlasting knowing without deterioration and suffering.

to go looking for water to put out the fire anymore, because the fire has been completely extinguished. This is the final result of practice. I have explained it in brief, just enough for the reader to use as a guide.

If you read this and still don't understand how to practice mental development, the author is ready to explain further. The principles of practice have been condensed and explained in brief in some parts in order for the practitioner to more easily understand the methods of practice. Upon practicing, the results of calmness or of that which is known and seen may not be entirely the same. This is because each individual's nature or personality is different. Before the mind enters a state of calmness, it may initially express itself in different ways. Some may experience various nimittas, or mental images, while some may not experience any at all. I would like to issue a warning to those who experience nimittas—if you experience nimittas that are adorable or scary, or hear sounds from near or far, whether they be sounds of humans or animals, pay attention to your mind and understand that it is happening because

you are being deceived by defilements and mental fabrications (saṅkhāra). Do not be so confident that it is being caused by anything else, and do not be afraid of that nimitta. Even if you are afraid, do not get up and leave. If that thing can destroy your life or eat you, then so be it. If only you dare to sacrifice your life, that vision will immediately disappear. If an adorable nimitta arises, do not allow your mind to reach out and conform to it, for it is merely saṅkhāra deceiving you. If you do, it will keep coming back and pull you out of meditation. No matter what occurs, do not pay any attention to it. Focus only on knowing the mind. Pay no attention to the nimittas. If you possess wisdom, you will be able to take those nimittas and contemplate them in terms of the Three Common Characteristics. For those who have the wisdom to be instantaneously conscious of saṅkhāra, saṅkhāra will not express or show itself.

May you practitioners of mental cultivation understand accordingly. May you all be successful and reap the fruits of mental cultivation.

## About the Author



Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño (Thoon Nonruecha) was born on 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 at 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 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, and Hong Kong, as well as the 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 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. As only happens with arahants, Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño's relics formed on the day of his cremation ceremony.



Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño's cremated remains transformed into sacred relics resembling pearls, gems, crystals, and beads of various colors and sizes.

## About the Translator

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 of Science in Electrical Engineering from University of California San Diego and a Master of Science in Business Administration from San Francisco State University. Neecha was ordained as a Buddhist nun at San Fran Dhammaram Temple in 2017.

Venerable Ācariya Thoon  
Khippapañño's English Dhamma  
Books

Line of Practice for Mental Development

Going Against the Stream

Beyond the Stream of the World

Encountering the Stream of the World

Cutting off the Stream

Buddho

The Buddha's 16 Prophecies

Paradigm Shift

Natural Disasters

Spark: Igniting the Flame of Wisdom

The Autobiography of Venerable Ācariya Thoon

Khippapañño

Ariyapuggala: The Liberated Ones

Wisdom Crafting

Die Weisheitserstellung (German)

U-Turn

Treasure Trove

Methods of Training Wisdom

Tailored Heart  
Two of Hearts  
Lucid Heart  
Devoted Heart  
Inseparable Heart

Dhamma books by Luang Por Thoon Khippapañño  
available for free download at:  
[luangporthoon.net](http://luangporthoon.net)

# Contact

San Fran Dhammaram Temple

2645 Lincoln Way

San Francisco, California 94122, USA

Tel. +1 415 753 0857, E-mail: [watsanfran@yahoo.com](mailto:watsanfran@yahoo.com)

Website: [watsanfran.org](http://watsanfran.org), LINE: @watsanfran

Facebook: [watsanfran](https://www.facebook.com/watsanfran), YouTube: [watsanfran](https://www.youtube.com/watsanfran)

WSF Saphanboon Foundation

LINE: @wsfsaphanboon, Facebook: [wfsaphanboon](https://www.facebook.com/wfsaphanboon)

Wat Pa Ban Koh

1/1 Moo 7, Khuea Nam Sub-district, Ban Phue District

Udon Thani Province, 41160, Thailand

Tel. +66 85 453 3245, E-mail: [watpabankoh@gmail.com](mailto:watpabankoh@gmail.com)

Website: [watpabankoh.com](http://watpabankoh.com), LINE: [watpabankoh](https://www.line.me/tv/watpabankoh)

Facebook: [watpabankoh](https://www.facebook.com/watpabankoh), YouTube: [Wat Pa Ban Koh](https://www.youtube.com/WatPaBanKoh)

This is the first book that Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño wrote after he attained arahantship in 1969. It lays out the path of Dhamma practice from start to finish and serves as a valuable guide for practitioners of all levels, from newcomers curious about meditation to seasoned practitioners striving toward ultimate enlightenment.



**WAT SAN FRAN**

