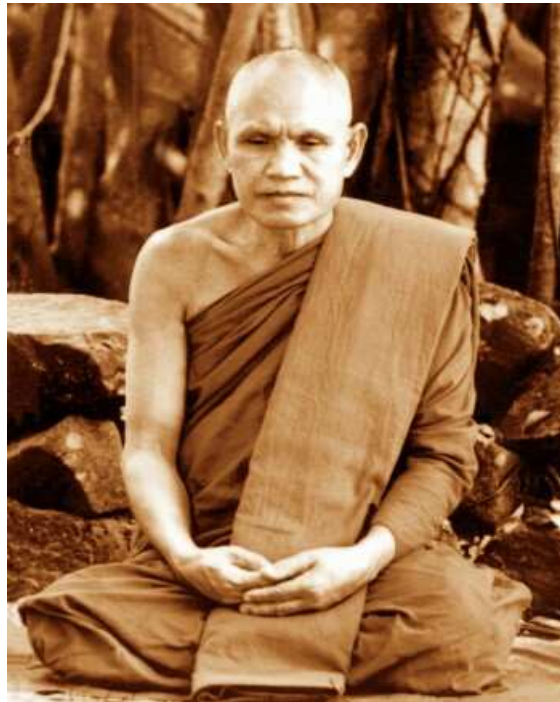


FROM THE DARKNESS TO THE LIGHT

Venerable Luang Por Liem Thitadhammo



From the Darkness to the Light

by Venerable Luang Por Liem Thitadhammo

at Wat Nong Pah Pong (12 September 1996)

in Ubon Rachathani Province, Thailand.

***A Dhammatalk given to monks, novices and nuns
after the ceremony of asking forgiveness***

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“It is the spirit of *dāna*, freely offered generosity, which has kept the entire Buddhist tradition alive for more than 2,500 years.”

Sabbadānam dhammadānam jīnāti

‘The gift of Dhamma excels all gifts’

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The Abbot
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Accepting Ourselves

Since you have come to ask for forgiveness, I don't want to speak about issues from the past, as these are things that lie behind us. Actually there isn't much to settle between us in this ceremony of asking for forgiveness anyway. Still, a ceremony like this is useful on the level of your personal practice. It affects the attitudes that you maintain and carry along throughout the training of your mind as the years go by. A ritual like this also generally helps to strengthen the *samaṇadhamma*, the virtues of a *samaṇa* (a renunciant or contemplative). If you steadily cultivate respect for the *samaṇadhamma* as the basis of practicing the Buddha's teachings, you will establish a conduct that is not heedless or sloppy. Though the circumstances of practice may change, a feeling of constant coolness and ease will build up in you. If you develop interest and sincere willingness, then peacefulness will automatically arise. The putting forth of effort to improve one's conduct goes hand in hand with the maturing of a person. One of the key teachings the Buddha used to encourage us when practicing Dhamma is:

Viriyena dukkhamacceti

(*dukkha* – unsatisfactoriness and suffering – can be overcome by effort).

This applies to each and everyone of us, not only to a small elite.

In our practice we constantly have to remind ourselves that all of us need to begin like children. We can't be like adults right from the start. At first we are not yet purified and keep falling into states of dirtiness. We live in the mud and mire like a lotus that hasn't yet bloomed and still depends on the dirt for nourishment. We are the same – when we are born in the world we are not yet fully mature, ready and complete, but come with the burden of having to fight obstacles of all kinds. There is happiness and suffering, good and bad, right and wrong. To experience this is normal for an unenlightened person (*puthujjana*), who still has dust in his eyes. That someone who has dust in his eyes could experience the brightness and clarity of being unburdened with suffering and drawbacks can not be. In the beginning there are always hardships, there always has to be suffering – this is just normal.

It's like we live in the dark. Living in the dark is not as pleasant as one might wish. There is always a certain feeling of discomfort and uneasiness. In this state we still are not free from dependence, are not yet wholly accomplished. We still experience a bit of happiness and a bit of suffering from time to time, some satisfaction and dissatisfaction. We haven't yet transcended the world of conditions and are not yet in a safe place. We are going back and forth in *saṃsāra*, the round of birth and death. Sometimes the situations that arise are good, sometimes bad. In our lives we are not going smoothly over all the ups and downs. Until we reach the aim of our practice this is just the natural way things are.

Everybody has goodness, everybody has perfection and purity right inside himself. Surely everyone of us possesses at least some personality traits which could be brought

to consciousness in a way that is useful for oneself. Make these complete and perfect them. It is like with the flames of a fire: in the places where the flames light up there wasn't any fire before. But once they are ignited and kindled, the flames appear out of the darkness – and eventually the fire and flames are burning right there. With us it's the same as with the flames: everyone of us has to come from dark places, come from being a child, being someone who has no strength, is not yet ready. Naturally, of course, this brings disorientation. That a state at this level could give rise to full confidence and clarity just can't be.

Seeing Ourselves

Usually our mind likes to get carried away with having fun. If we find ourselves infatuated with amusement, take it as important and hold on to it, the Buddha recommends to ground ourselves in an attitude of alertness. Hilarity is a tie. It can drag us onto the path of foolishness. When we are infatuated and crazy about something, we can go wrong anywhere. Whether in the hidden or open, it's all the same – it's really like when one is drunk.

People get drunk with their bodies through the illusion that the body doesn't have illnesses, afflictions, pains and fevers threatening it. They think they won't die, won't degenerate and wear out. They don't consider the possibility, but it happens. Because in reality our material body (*rūpa-khandha*) is a conditioned phenomenon, it always will follow the nature of its material constituents. Nevertheless we like to see the body as permanently powerful, tough and strong and not afflicted by disease and pain. We want to see it under this perspective, the way we are used to it, just as if the body was fit for all circumstances. But the Buddha said, if there is light, there will be darkness. If there is hot, there will be cold. It has to be like this. So in this very way, any state of strength, agility or ease may degenerate in just a single day or just a single moment into a state of decline and ruin, becoming deteriorated and worn out, following its nature. But if we cultivate an attitude of seeing the disintegration of the body as natural, we won't be upset by the decline. We won't take the body as something important, keep holding on to it or attach feelings of self to it.

The Buddha called the illusions we create around the body *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* – the view that the body is self, that we and other people are our bodies, that the body is our possession. The Buddha reminds us to keep recollecting that whatever thing there may be – it is not ours, not our self. Nothing really belongs to us. Through thinking like this we won't start holding on to things. Attachment (*upādāna*) is the root of all self-importance.

The more we take ourselves as important, the more we are prone to drifting away towards unwholesome feelings, towards suffering, until we finally follow the path into the realms of darkness. In this way we float along the round of birth and becoming. The Buddha saw this as the source of all suffering. States of anger, greed or delusion come to be; they are born. Desire, aversion and ignorance arise. All of these states of being entail suffering and unhappiness.

Analyzing and observing our personality we see that it consists of what is called *nāmadhamma* (mental phenomena). Mental phenomena, too, are not ours, not self. Our personality is not “we” or “they”, but simply consists of certain states out of all the possible mental states (*dhammāramanā*). Don’t see it as “this is me” or “this is mine”. See it in the light of *dhammāramanā* which arise naturally on their own and then cease on their own. Just like the darkness comes to be naturally, it goes naturally as well. As brightness is born in its own natural way it likewise ceases. These states arise and vanish.

Mental states arise and cease, whether they are states of happiness or suffering, *itthāramanā* (agreeable states) or *anitthāramanā* (disagreeable states). The states of *itthāramanā* and *anitthāramanā* are what we call the *lokadhammā* (worldly *dhammas*), attributes that dominate the hearts and minds of beings living in the world. Seeing the *lokadhammā* simply as elements of *dhamma*, we won’t make the assumption that we are happy whenever we feel happiness, or that we are suffering, whenever we feel suffering. There is nothing like *our* goodness or *our* badness either. We see these attributes, but they are just an aspects of Dhamma. Each one is just one of all the possible states of Dhamma. There is nothing special about it.

Feelings are just feelings, happiness is just happiness, suffering is just suffering. Only that. Having arisen, it all ceases. We don’t *have* happiness and suffering. We don’t take interest in them. They are just attributes of the mental objects that come up – just that much. The *lokadhammā* appear and vanish according to their own logic. Finally, if we don’t show interest in them, don’t support and give importance to them, they lose their existence.

The fantasies our mind spins, the *saṅkhāras*, can be seen in a similar way. *Saṅkhāras* are states of proliferation. They come and disturb us all the time, because, giving importance to them, we keep feeding them. So of course they continue to provoke and challenge us. Naturally, then, we are constantly subject to feelings of up and down and states of confusion. We don’t have freedom. We are not even refuge to ourselves for a second, only because we give importance to these states of mind.

The Buddha teaches us to be aware that *saṅkhāras* are states that aren’t permanent and enduring. We shouldn’t build up the perception that they last forever. It’s their characteristic that having arisen they cease. Concerning material form again, see that conditioned phenomena are just states of the elements, nothing but nature in the end.

Watching Ourselves

For the goal of our practice we aspire to be accomplished in our understanding of Dhamma and feel fully up to ourselves. But in the time now, we need to train to be fully up to what we feel. This means to develop *sati*, mindfulness and clear awareness. Usually, in our behaviour we start off with our emotions, letting them lead us, just like the people out in the world who think their moods are what count. But emotions and

moods are illusions that swindle. They are tricky. Sometimes they take us on a good path, sometimes on an evil one. Following our moods easily turns to our disadvantage. We should take superior states of mind rather than moods and emotions as our guide. Why not let being the One who is called “Awakened” and “Blessed” lead us? Let “Buddha” walk in front of us. Let “Buddha” be the essence to take us along. Let “Buddha” be our guideline. Whatever we come to do, there will always be moods, but our practice is to let “the One who knows”, the qualities of awakening and knowing lead us. In this way eventually there is no danger. There are no drawbacks with these mind states. We are on the watch.

Having Peace in Ourselves

Let the various moods and emotions that come up simply be as they are. In this way we train really to be with ourselves. We train this very self to sit and really be there, to stand and be really there, to walk and really be there, until always, in whatever changing posture, we can be called fully aware. We are fully there through our peace. It’s different from being on top of our experience through getting carried away with pleasures and having fun. Instead, being fully up to life comes from peace of heart. If there is peace, we are in a state where we can adjust to anything that comes up, so we can always be in the appropriate mode. We see things correctly and have right understanding because the mental impulses (*sañkhāras*) are quiet. There are no proliferations. We feel the *sañkhāras* at peace. With all the kinds of opinions that could come up, we won’t start arguing.

When relating to the world and society, those who are intelligent, understanding and have a feeling of peacefulness will praise us. But should they praise us, we don’t get happy because of it. We don’t get infatuated with it. Ultimately, the praise of someone is just a product of the delusion of the one who expresses it. Just that much. We don’t have feelings of like and dislike. Praise is just what it is. We don’t feel that we need to foolishly run after it. We don’t want to get on the track of being a slave. If we maintain peace, there is nothing that can do harm to us. Even if others should blame, criticize or condemn us, making us subject to suspicions out of enmity, we nevertheless have peace. We have peace towards the *anīthāramanā*, the mental states we don’t wish to have, which don’t go according to our likes. Even they can’t cause us harm and be disadvantageous. Should someone criticize us, it’s just that much. Eventually it all dissolves by itself. It flows away in its own specific way. This is where the *lokadhamma* can’t dominate us, since we have nothing but peace in our hearts.

When standing, when walking, when sitting, when sleeping and when getting up, this is it. If we deal with society, and with things in the world around us, we can relate in a way that is of benefit for all. We don’t go astray and drift away. We behave like one who can let things be. We behave like *samaṇas*, like *anagārikas* (homeless ones), who are not bound up. This is the way we train. Training ourselves like this is really peaceful. We make peace arise all the time. Whenever we are in society, we will always have smoothness and tranquility.

Seeing it like this, I would say, gives us an understanding of the way to let things be Dhamma – it gives us a sense for the state where we are Dhamma. If we truly are Dhamma, external things, the realm of forms (*rūpa-khandha*) and conditions (*saṅkhāras*), our living in society, and objects around us are no problem – they won't make us struggle. There is no confusion, no happiness, no suffering, no delight, no sorrow. There is nothing which can give rise to feelings of opposition or aversion. Everything flows naturally following the force this state of peace has. Everything dissolves through the power of peacefulness. Nothing really matters, there is nothing to gain. It's not essential, it's uninteresting. We don't find all those things that we were interested in when we were children attractive any more. There is nothing about the world that can overwhelm us, there is nothing that can make us go wrong. Not to fail is really a good thing. This is indeed something we could rightly accept praise for – but there is no one to praise. It just praises itself, just like the name and the qualities of the Lord Buddha that we recite together in the chant on the Nine Qualities of the Buddha. The praise is intrinsically there through itself.

Being Pure in Ourselves

People who have no problems, who don't have *dukkha* can be said to be free from having *kilesas* (defilements of the mind), but actually they live together with them, only that there's nothing to them. This has to do with one's delusion. The attention one gives to the *kilesas* comes from delusion. If one isn't deluded, one couldn't care less about the *kilesas*. *Kilesas* are just what they are. This doesn't mean that one doesn't have to relate to the world or society or use language in order to speak. One still has to relate to others. But one doesn't let dangers and drawbacks arise, since one's whole attitude isn't one that would allow anger to come up.

There is no anger, just like water that doesn't have any dirty particles in it. The water is free from dirty particles until we agitate it by mixing something in to make it muddy. Even though we may be challenged or provoked, we don't feel stirred up, since the water of our heart is clear. There aren't any particles of dirt inside us, which could be agitated. We keep the goodness of our heart. Praise can't provoke it, criticism can't. There is always the feeling of purity in it. That this purity exists, we can only know individually by ourselves.

We sometimes wonder and ask ourselves where this purity actually comes from. Well, purity comes from impurity. This is exactly where it comes from, just like peacefulness comes from agitation and happiness comes from suffering. If there is suffering, then there must also be happiness. Darkness can only come to be because there is brightness. Brightness can arise because of darkness. This is the way we see it.

So, to see ones own mind, to protect ones own mind, will bring about knowledge and vision in accordance with reality. Knowing the mind, we see the mind. We see the mind in the mind. We can see the mind in the mind just as we recite in the third part of the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* concerning *sati*. The Buddha points out that the mind

is just the mind, and directs us to always see the mind, as it says in this sutta:

atāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijhādomanassam

(with a feeling of being ardent, resolute and fully aware, having put away sense desire and grief for the world).

Being mindful we can't be ruled or rolled over by the *lokadhammā*. Living our lives mindfully, we feel we are always ready and prepared, possessing perfection and a place of purity, free from provocation.

Opening Ourselves

Unluckily for most of us, what easily can arise is the feeling that we are still in a stage where we haven't yet established these new qualities. Well, if they aren't habitually there yet, we can make them become habitual. It's not that this is something difficult, it's not much of a problem to get a foundation in order to get started.

For example in relating to social problems around us, we build up an attitude that is ready to tolerate, or at least we maintain an attitude of relinquishment (*cāga*) and generosity (*dāna*). Maintaining generosity, giving and tolerance supports our mindfulness, since whenever discontent arises, we think: "Well, living together has just got to be this way!" You can compare it to my tongue here. It's normal that it sometimes gets hit by the teeth. We just admit that being together sometimes doesn't go hand in hand.

Of course life is always a bit like this. But we know how to forgive, we know how to give up, we know how to open up to invite criticism (*pavāranā*) from others. When we live together in a community, we have to find ways of expressing ourselves to others, so that our living together leads to peacefulness and goes into the direction of harmony. We call this *pavāranā*. *Pavāranā* is to give those with whom we live together the chance to criticize us, granting them the freedom of speech, as we say in modern terms. This creates the ability to open oneself up. It also involves the ability to listen in an open way, to accept the opinions and feelings of other people. Whether their views are right or wrong, we can always see them as something to learn from. If we can contribute this openness of *pavāranā* to our living together, we don't have anything anymore that stimulates self-importance or holding on tight to ourselves. When we have these qualities it is possible to go one's own way and nevertheless create a community feeling of living together in peace and happiness.

When we live in society and with the objects in the world around us, of course there is unevenness. There is unevenness, but we can still live together in harmony. Because of this unevenness we have to live with the attitude of not taking anything for sure. We have to live in accordance with the underlying principles of reality. We live in uncertainty but we create a feeling of certainty. There is change (*aniccam*), but in this there is stability (*niccam*). There is suffering, but there is non-suffering in there as well. We have a feeling of not-self (*anattā*), but right in there we have a feeling of self (*attā*).

The deathless (*amata*), the Dhamma that doesn't die, lies right here as well. When we see impermanence (*aniccam*) and live with a feeling of being prepared for it, we can see permanence (*niccam*) coming up as a reality. It is like death having the deathless in it.

We observe. Seeing things in this light, the feeling of peacefulness will arise. There will be stillness. Total peace in all aspects – peace from all sensual pleasures, peace from wanting, peace from all mind states, peace from praise, peace from blame, peace from happiness and suffering.

Training Ourselves

In our practice, since we have just planted our tree, we can't make it grow flowers and fruits right on the spot. We have to rely a little on time. That's natural. It is impossible for the feeling of perfection to arise instantly. It is natural to depend on the working of time. This is where we come to the principal difficulties that occur when we start to wear the yellow robe. At first we don't know anything at all. We don't enter the monkhood with the understanding that we need to see our practice in relation to the big picture. Even after having been here a while, the tendency to go back along ones old tracks will appear, since actually one still is a layperson in ones mind.

Although with the status of a monk in the yellow robe one is paid respects from all sides, one still thinks like a layperson. But when our thinking is impure and unclean, it still is only thinking. To transform our ways isn't possible until we build up new habits. Even after four or five years the old way of thinking is still there. It's like having dust in one's eyes. When we live in the sensual world, it feels like being in the midst of constant challenge and provocation. Sometimes one can't see the possibility of this clearing up. But we know that we can overcome this state. We need to make the effort, otherwise, when people come and bow and pay respects to us, we feel we are not worth it. We start doubting, "What are we really worth? Why are we so low and vulgar, why are we as coarse as this?"

Well, all this is normal. We can say that our situation is still one of not yet having strength, and not being beyond training. It is still a weak state of being. That's very normal. But do strive, try to strive. Look out for means to help yourself through using the guidelines the Buddha recommended us.

One skilful means is to recall the life of the Buddha or his disciples. This is very inspiring. Just remember that it wasn't easy for the Buddha to leave his worldly laylife. He had to face many hindrances until he could finally change his old views. His striving and dedication to practice asceticism took quite a long time. So, if we sometimes fall back to acting like a layperson, that's okay. Sometimes this happens to me as well. We think, "Oh, we're so hopeless?". Sometimes we start to hate and trample on ourselves and put ourselves down. But actually, when we think this way, this too, is nothing else but thinking. It is *saṅkhāras* coming up. So why should we give way to hatred and anger in this manner?

Another practice the Buddha recommended is to take up the reflection of death through sustaining the image of a corpse in ones mind. If we have access to a charnel ground we should go to see dead bodies from time to time. Already when I was a novice I tried to go to contemplate corpses. At this time they frequently brought corpses to bury or cremate. The place was said to be full of ghosts. So I tried to face this. Of course I was frightened. To persuade oneself to go to a charnel ground is not easy. It is really difficult. At the time I went, there wasn't anything to rely on, because I would choose a time when it was tranquil and lonely, oftentimes in the dark. When I went, I always felt a mixture of courage and dread. Sometimes there were dogs searching for leftover food. If the dogs saw me, they were scared too. They would immediately run away. All my hair would stand on end, and I would feel like screaming out, but I couldn't. I would have to go through this. My whole body was on fire – I just couldn't believe it. In the end, I would think, if I have to die, I'll die. I would keep thinking this over and over. Though I told myself there weren't any ghosts, just dogs searching for some food, I was still scared. Everywhere there was fear. If I stayed long enough, I thought the fear might recede, but it was not that simple. Just when the fear would be about to dissolve, it would come back even more. In this type of experience one dreads everything. It's obvious that one is deluded, but in an unknown situation like this the *saṅkhāras* take over easily, tricking and cheating one to the point of real fear.

So there I was, full of fear – no way out, until I finally said to myself, “Here we are, fear – so what? I'll go for it, it's just fear! Death? So what, I'll just die!” That's how I finally faced it, many times, over and over. The fear still didn't subside completely though – it was still there, but you can't say that it's a bad thing to have fear like this. It's good in a way since it makes you alert. “Okay, I'll fully feel the fear, be with the fear. I don't have to be anywhere else, except fully with this feeling of fear.”

Sometimes I would go to very lonesome places which were secluded, silent and still, where there was no one around to be a friend. Then the thought of death would come up, since there were dangerous animals around. Thinking that something might harm us takes away the desire to sleep, because we always need to watch out for dangers. To be frightened is very good, all you can do is sit and observe it. Observe how the body heats up and breaks out in sweat.

These are experiences of the *saṅkhāras* arising and building up the illusion of a certain feeling. We face them using patient endurance. We don't need to give way to them. Actually, they aren't much of an enemy for us. The *saṅkhāras* delude us because we are in an unfamiliar situation which we aren't used to. Experiences like this are simply symptoms of the unknown, so we need to try to understand them over and over again. For understanding a phenomenon it doesn't make sense to wish it away. If these experiences go, they go. If they come, they come. We see these experiences as particular states of our existence, that have to be just the way they are. All living beings have to face death and fear death. There is no way around these experiences. We accept them as something natural for beings living in this world.

No other feeling is as difficult to handle as the desire for the opposite sex. It can

dominate everything. We shouldn't think that we don't have this problem. Of course we do, with all its implications. But we try to look at it, asking, "Hmm?, what's the reason for my desire to be like this?" See it as a biological fact for all living beings. Although sexuality is a natural instinct, this doesn't prevent us from having to look for means to deal with it. Could we make our feelings in this area change? We might think, "No, that's completely beyond our capabilities." But that still doesn't mean that we shouldn't be careful with it.

Sometimes when we suddenly get into contact with desire, we are completely taken by surprise that strong feelings such as these are possible. In a situation like this we are taken back to the state where worldly feelings can dominate us. We need to take hold of these feelings and relate to them in a new way. We can change our perception by seeing things in terms of the four elements, taking up the reflection that they are not beautiful in themselves, not self-sufficient, not durable, and that there is not a personality or a self in them at all. You can bring to mind the images of dead bodies which are going to be buried or burned. In former times in central Thailand, corpses would be kept very long, and there were no preservatives injected in those days. Sometimes the corpses were kept over a fortnight. Really, this was something worth seeing. The coffin would be opened and you could go and have a long look. All the colours were dull and pale, the corpses were swollen up and bloated, stinking and oozing. Where all the flies came from, I don't know.

Take images from dead bodies to counter the perception of the body as attractive and beautiful. Reflect on these images, but don't expect sexual desire to vanish completely. It can change, one can say, maybe to the point where you can breathe again. Just like when you can come up and take a deep breath after having dived under water for quite a time, you are strengthened again. To take up reflections on death can diminish sexual desire and the delight in external things, but it won't make it disappear completely since the seeds for it are still in us. This practice is strengthening, so don't give up. Don't forget to build up a solid foundation. Be determined to know, be determined to see.

Being a Refuge to Ourselves

Over time we will be able to sustain awareness steadily. Finally, with full mindfulness and clear comprehension, both of the bodily and mental formations (the *rūpakhandha* and the *saṅkhāras*), we will arrive at what we call *paccupana dhamma*, the nature of the present moment. It will steadily grow in our mind. The mind won't go astray into past and future times, it won't pay attention to things that are already gone or yet to come. It won't care whether a situation is going to be like this or like that. All there is is the present moment. Our mind-state is like a flame when the winds are stilled. The flame is unmoved and upright in itself and radiates light into all directions, just like ourselves, when we are fully present.

It doesn't matter whether we have our eyes closed or open, whether we are in a particular posture – we are always in the state of feeling that we are refuge to ourselves.

This state comes by itself, we didn't force it. The feeling that arises is similar to what is called *obhāsa*, a part of the *vippassana uppakilesas*, which can be misleading. We experience a bright light or radiance while we are within the feeling of being a refuge to ourselves, and we experience happiness, but not one that takes us off the path, though. It is happiness in itself, that doesn't care when it's time to rest or go to sleep, it doesn't care when or what to do – this feeling is just always present. It is a feeling of uninterrupted wakefulness that sustains itself the whole day, the whole night. Even if the body falls asleep, it falls asleep in this state.

An experience of bliss like this can last for one or two days, and then it may change. But the change doesn't take place in the usual way, since the happiness in this experience isn't the usual happiness of liking and disliking. It is the rapture and gladness that the Buddha calls *pīti*, an ongoing joy throughout day and night whether sleeping or awake. There is nothing to compare this happiness with. The happiness comes from seeing how things naturally arise and cease. If we practice this over long periods of time, the present moment can also change to the extreme of incomparable, heavy suffering. But we still keep up our mindfulness, saying, "Oooh..., this suffering is really suffering". This is how we are mindful of it. We see and watch, knowing that having arisen the suffering must also cease. Seeing suffering in this way is actually quite fun. We keep seeing it, "Suffering all day, suffering all night, Oooh". We want to cry, but there is no point in crying. We want to laugh, but there is no point in laughing. There is only suffering in its genuine form.

This is what we can feel when we really observe ourselves. After a while things will change anyway. Some time our experience will go towards happiness again, maybe after one or two days. So it's happiness again: standing, walking, sitting – happiness – even when we do the chores, that are just another part of our practice. When they are done we can use the posture of sitting again – sitting in meditation and establishing ongoing mindfulness. Things change by themselves, yet there is peace, there is coolness and tranquility. We aren't concerned with our body, we experience a feeling of lightness of the body as if there was not a "me", not a "self". The self dissolves into complete lightness. This is a refreshing and cooling experience. The *saṅkhāras* are stilled, all the proliferations have ceased. The continuous changes of ups and downs and liking and disliking have disappeared.

Experiences like this are not something that we have forced into being – they are the natural course of our training following the stream of what the Buddha taught. He taught us to observe, to know about ourselves and to know ourselves. To keep up this feeling of knowing day and night, awake or asleep and to know for ourselves ongoingly until we really see, just as expressed in this little Thai saying:

*Know how to
Look and figure it out
Try and speak it out
Go and carry it out*

So, today, as you have come to show your respect to me, I'd like to say that I don't take these ceremonies too important for me as a person, but still they are a very nice

expression of our relationship towards each other when we are living together. As for now, I don't have any more points of reflection for you for our journey together. May this be useful to your understanding in some way or another. Your listening is a chance for us to get in touch with each other – may we also work on our practice in the same way.

About Luang Por Liem Thitadhammo

Luang Por Liem Thitadhammo was born in Sri Saket Province in the Northeast of Thailand on Nov 5th, 1941. He ordained when he was twenty years old, practicing in several village monasteries throughout the Northeast, until he joined the Forest-Tradition in 1969, when he first arrived at Wat Nong Pah Pong. He became one of Luang Por Chah's closest disciples. After Luang Por Chah started becoming severely ill in 1982, he was appointed by the Sangha of Wat Pah Pong to take over the abbotship. He fulfills this duty up to the present day keeping the heritage of Luang Por Chah's Dhamma and characteristic ways of monastic training available for both monks and nuns and laydisciples of the monastery. Even though Luang Por Liem had been entrusted this extraordinary task, he would never consider himself as anybody special amongst the followers of Luang Por Chah. He always points out that Luang Por Chah wanted each and every one of his disciples to continue practicing the teachings he left behind. If all of Luang Por Chah's followers do follow him by taking up their duties together in the way he wished them to, this will be for the benefit and happiness of everybody.

Shortly after his 60th birthday, almost 10 years after Luang Por Chah's death, Luang Por Liem was given the honorary title of Tan Chaokhun Visuddhisamvara Thera by His Majesty the King of Thailand. For the Sangha in Wat Pah Nanachat Luang Por Liem is not only a dearly repected teacher and guide; for the last six years he also conducts every ordination ceremony as the preceptor.