

When Ajaan Khao lived in the forests and the mountains, he got the local villagers to lay out three different paths for walking meditation. He walked caṅkama on these three paths at three different times each day.



In the early evening, he began walking meditation on the path reserved for Sangha Pūjā.

Path Three



Sangha Pūjā

Cave of the Midday Drum

Beginning in early 1958, Venerable Ajaan Khao left Wat Pa Kaew Chumpon in the Sawang Daen Din district of Sakon Nakhon province, where he had stayed for several years, in order to wander in solitude. When he reached Udon Thani province, he wandered until he came to Wat Thum Klong Pain in the district of Nong Bua Lamphu. At that time, the whole area was covered in thick jungle. He saw that the place suited his disposition; he felt that he could stay there conveniently and practise the way of the *Samaṇa-dhamma*. So he settled down and remained there continually until the end of his life.

In regard to the name ‘Thum Klong Pain’: a long time ago, before it became a monastery, in Thum Klong Pain (lit. Cave of the Midday Drum), there used to hang a very large drum¹ which was struck to announce the noon hour to people over a very large area in that district. As to where it came from and who put it there, nobody seems to know anything about its origin. It had probably been there a long time — maybe hundreds of years — before it decayed and broke into many pieces on its own, without anyone doing any damage to it. Hunters who searched for game in the area sometimes rested in that cave.

They used to gather some of the bits of wood from the drum that were scattered about to make a fire to cook their meal and boil water. So the villagers who lived nearby gave the cave the name: Thum Klong Pain. Later on, *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* often stayed in this cave while practising the way of Dhamma until it virtually became a Wat, for a Wat just means a place where Bhikkhus stay. So it came to be called Wat Thum Klong Pain, and it still has this name.

Originally there were a large number of Buddha images (*Buddha Rūpa*) in Thum Klong Pain, of many kinds and many different sizes. There were both those hidden out of sight, as well as those placed in full view of everyone. People have placed *Buddha Rūpas* in this cave since ancient times, and over the centuries they accumulated until there were a very large number, so many they were almost uncountable. There were many *Buddha Rūpas* made of gold, silver, 'nāga metal' (gold, copper alloy) and bronze. However, long ago the religion of *Māra* (the evil one) came and took the lot, leaving none behind. All that's left are the ordinary *Buddha Rūpas* made of stone or plaster which are there now.

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE BUDDHISTS understand clearly that the monastery is an important place in the sphere of Buddhism. Normally, devout Buddhists cannot go into a monastery, or travel past one, without having good and exalted thoughts arising within their hearts. This is because 'the monastery' has always been a sacred place since the remote past, regardless of whether it is in the village or in the forest. The monastery is the place where the *citta* and all sacred things come together,

a place where countless Buddhists have been able to realise their highest aspirations. The monastery may be run down and in a state of disrepair, or well appointed and beautiful, but in the hearts of all those people who have faith in Buddhism there will be a constant attitude of respect and homage for it.

For these reasons, whenever Buddhists go into a Buddhist monastery, for whatever purpose, they should be self-restrained, making sure that their behaviour is sufficiently modest and suitable. This also includes the clothes that people wear: they should be very careful to make sure that their dress conforms to their status as ‘children of the Buddha’ who are going into a place which is highly sacred, a place which has been glorified by the Lord Buddha, the Great Teacher of the three worlds.

This dress code is especially important in the forest monastery, where Bhikkhus tend to be a bit like monkeys that have never had the opportunity to see and admire the material progress and the latest cultural developments that have taken place in cities and towns. When they see people coming to the monastery wearing some of the latest fashions, they feel it’s rather frightening and peculiar. It’s almost enough to make them dizzy and feverish – probably because they get a sudden fright from seeing something they have never seen before. They are so used to living in the forest that they have become part of it; and in such an environment it is not easy to imagine such things. So when they suddenly see strange things which depart from the way of Dhamma, an unusual change takes place in their minds and they feel profoundly dismayed.

Most forest *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* say they have a similar kind of reaction; and we should sympathise with them. If someone were to explain to them about the material and cultural

developments taking place in the towns and cities nowadays — telling them that progress is taking place with equal swiftness both nationally and internationally, both within towns and in the countryside, within village monasteries and in the forest ones — they would most likely not believe it. In fact, they would probably just feel disgusted, apprehensive and dismayed about the whole matter. In the end, the person relating these developments would be at his wits' end, unable to relieve the forest Bhikkhus' apprehensions. He would be left feeling sorry for those primitive forest monks who live so far from the progress of modern civilization.

THE MONASTERY WHERE Venerable Ajaan Khao lived is located in the forests and the hills. The natural environment is well suited to the development of meditation and the practice of Dhamma, for it is full of boulders, cliffs and forests with pleasant, shady trees. Ajaan Khao always tried to avoid the excesses of modern society that I've already mentioned. If you were to say that he was uncivilised like most of the *Dhutanga Bhikkhus*, then you would not be wrong. His Dhamma virtue was exceptionally high — he was entirely beyond reproach, in my opinion. But presumably he retained the habit of being very watchful and afraid of dangers in the forest; for even though his Dhamma virtue was at the highest level, he would not have been able to give up all his latent habitual tendencies. This accords with the Dhamma saying of the Lord, which says: the *Sāvakas* cannot entirely give up their original habitual tendencies, for only the Lord Buddha was able to get rid of his latent habitual tenden-

cies (*nissāya*) completely, along with his good characteristics (*vāsana*).

Whenever crowds of people came to his monastery causing a lot of unwanted disturbance, Ajaan Khao would disappear quickly into the forest and hide in a crevice between the rocks until all had quieted down. Only in the evening, or after night had fallen, did he return to his residence. When asked why he slipped away like that, he answered:

“My Dhamma is not sufficient to withstand the strong flowing current of the world, so I have to run away and hide. If I didn’t do this, but stayed and put up with it, my Dhamma would surely break up and disintegrate. So I must go where I can look after myself. Though I don’t have the ability to help these people, I should at least think about helping myself.”

To the best of my knowledge, Ajaan Khao had a lot of *mettā* and generally gave a great deal of help to other people. But on those occasions when he escaped and went into hiding, it was probably because it was beyond his ability to put up with them — as he himself has said. Whether they intend to or not, the majority of people who come to the monastery tend to continually destroy the peaceful atmosphere there. Very few actually try to uphold and maintain *Sīla-dhamma* and virtue at the monastery. In the end, the monks are bound to become frustrated when they cannot put up with the added burden.

Generally speaking, lay people tend to watch the Bhikkhus much more than they observe themselves. When they go to a place where they should have faith and pay respect, their manners and their speech tend to be quite offensive to the eyes and ears. Such behaviour is thought-provoking for those who like to observe how careless and lacking in restraint people can be,

without any interest in themselves or how they might appear to other people. This is what's so frustrating.

Master Hunter Boon Nah

It is the normal practice in Thailand, and other Buddhist countries, for people to pay respect and perform *pūjā* before a *Buddha Rūpa*. Nobody looks at it as in any way being an evil practice that brings harm or suffering to people. So regardless of whether a person has a good nature or an evil nature, when he comes across a *Buddha Rūpa*, his mind tends to become compliant and respectful. He instinctively salutes it with reverence, never looking upon it as an enemy in any way. The *Buddha Rūpas* in Thum Klong Pain also acted in this way. Whenever hunters spent the night resting in this cave, they would pay obeisance to the *Buddha Rūpas* and ask forgiveness for the bad things they had done.

But once, a rather strange and peculiar hunter came to rest in the cave. He made a prayer, asking the *Buddha Rūpas* to help bring him animals whose meat he could take as food, such as barking deer and ordinary deer. “May they be unsteady, their eyes dimmed and their senses dulled, walking clumsily, sluggishly, like an animal that is almost dead near the hunter who is already prepared and waiting so that he can shoot it and then carry it away without further concern.”

This strange hunter did not think and act in the same way as ordinary people at all. His name was Master Hunter Boon Nah, a name his father and mother gave him on the day that he

was born (but in fact, his name should have been changed to accord with what he did that day, when the name Master Baap Nah would be more suitable).² That day he went searching and hunting for game in various places, but nothing came into his hands at all, so when he reached Thum Klong Pain to rest he felt weak and disheartened. In the past he had hunted game in that district, so he had stayed in the cave before, but he never thought in the strange and peculiar way which he did this time.

Arriving at the cave added to his discouragement at not having seen any game, let alone having got any in his hands. He then started behaving very strangely in front of his companions, who were all hunters. He took the *Buddha Rūpas* which were spread about the cave and lined them up in several long rows. While doing this, he spoke in a loud voice, saying: “Today I looked for animals to shoot as game, but in the whole forest not one came into my hands. It must be because of these *Buddha Rūpas*. They must have put a spell on them and driven them far away from danger; that is, far from the hunters who were looking to shoot them. We must make these *Buddha Rūpas* line up military style and train them like soldiers so that they will learn the rules and regulations of hunters. Then these *Buddha Rūpas* will learn a lesson and won’t make a spell to drive out all the animals anymore.”

In his hand he held a stick which he used to beat the backs of the *Buddha Rūpas* that refused to accept his commands, lecturing all the *Buddha Rūpas* which he had set up in rows as though he was commanding rows of soldiers on parade. He ordered them to: “turn right, turn left, back step, march forward”, while beating them on the back from time to time.

Occasionally, he beat one of them on the head, accusing it of not carrying out the orders of the commanding officer. If one of the *Buddha Rūpas* he was hitting fell over and went out of line, he picked it up and placed it back in line, while commanding: “turn right, turn left”. He continued beating the *Buddha Rūpas* and scattering them about, then setting them in line again and giving them orders before beating them again, until the strength of his madness was finally exhausted. Then he stopped.

The other hunters there with him told him to stop right from the beginning, as soon as they saw his bad behaviour. They tried to reason with him, saying that he should not do such evil things. They warned him that he would fall into hell if he went on acting like that. They explained that each one of those *Buddha Rūpas* was there in place of the Buddha. To damage a *Buddha Rūpa* is considered by people to be the same as doing damage to the Lord Buddha – which is a very great evil that should never be done. The Lord Buddha and the *Buddha Rūpas* have a special place both in the hearts of people and in the hearts of *Devaputta*, *Devatā*, *Indra*, *Brahma*, *Yama*, *Yakkhas*, *Nāgas*, *Garuḍas*, *Pretas* and all kinds of ghosts as well, so they should never be desecrated.

But Master Baap Nah would not listen to any of it. He just went ahead and acted out his part. When the other hunters saw that it was no use reasoning with him, they one by one left the cave and ran back to their homes to tell people about that evil madness and the living denizen of hell who perpetrated it. The villagers all felt greatly dismayed, for they had never heard of such a thing happening before.

Before that hunter took the *Buddha Rūpas* and set them in rows to train them like soldiers, he had a normal awareness

of things in the way most people have. In talking with others, he understood matters quite normally, so no one would have thought of him as being crazy. But he did possess the characteristic signs of hatred and aversion (*dosa*), which he displayed quite openly that day when he could not find and shoot any game. Thus he spoke angrily to the *Buddha Rūpas* saying that they were casting spells to drive all the game away. This is why he became angry with them and hit them and beat them in accordance with his emotional situation (*ārammaṇa*) without seeing at that time how his emotional situation was complete madness.

Throughout Thailand, everybody knows full well that *Buddha Rūpas* are not soldiers, nor are they cattle that one can grab them and train them or make them pull a plough or an ox cart. So why did that man dare to take those *Buddha Rūpas* and act towards them in such a repugnant way? He must have been crazier than people normally get in this world. It's something to consider. But if you prefer not to think about it, that will lighten the load on your mind so you won't go mad yourself thinking about that man who opened up the way to madness, thus inducing normal people to go a bit mad as well.

When his hellish madness had run its course, it broke up and disappeared. By the time he returned to his home he had become a good and normal person, but his tendency to lose his temper was still there. Nobody was bold enough to speak to him and question him, because they all knew about the incomparably evil things which he had done. So everyone kept quiet and acted as if nothing had happened, including those who lived with him in his house. But they kept a watch on him to see if there were any changes in him. The man himself wore

a solemn expression but said nothing which would make them concerned or suspicious. So nobody was prepared to offend him by making an issue of what happened in the cave.

That night, as soon as it got dark, the hunter's family heard him complaining that his body was itching all over. They asked him what the problem was, and he showed them various places on his body that he said were so painfully hot that he could hardly stand it. He felt like shouting for help. When he showed them his body, both the parts under his clothes and those which were exposed, it was inflamed and swollen everywhere. It had all arisen quite suddenly in an unusual manner.

What with the pain, the swelling and the stinging heat coming so suddenly all together, he could hardly bear it and he cried out to people to come and help him, bursting into tears like a child. Word of what had happened spread quickly throughout the village, where everybody had heard about the despicable way he had behaved with the *Buddha Rūpas*. Many of them ran quickly to see for themselves, but still nobody was bold enough to speak the truth openly about what he had done to the *Buddha Rūpas* for fear that it may start something which would grow into serious trouble.

But an old man who was clever, esteemed and well-respected by all the villagers spoke out clearly so that the hunter would hear what he said:

“This kind of thing is something that we have never seen happen before, but is probably caused by some terribly evil occurrence, rather than anything else. You should reflect back on the recent past to see whether you have done anything which was not good and proper. Think back and examine what you have done. There may well be something there, for what has

happened to you is most unusual. It doesn't normally happen to people. We have all seen rashes, and aches and pains, and hot stinging sensations in the body, but we have never seen them in such an unusual manner as you have them at present. Look at your body! This condition has spread out all over it like a fire, and so quickly too. Your body has suddenly broken out in rashes and swellings of a most abnormal kind. There must surely be something which has caused it to happen, for under ordinary circumstances this wouldn't happen. Using the colloquial way of speaking in the village, we would say it was caused by *kamma*. *Kamma* is what has brought this about and nothing else, so you should investigate and review what your actions have been, where you have been and what you have done."

It's normal for people to be careless and make mistakes. So the villagers began asking him questions while helping to look after his sickness, all the while watching the good and bad reactions of the sick person. At the same time, they asked around among the people present; first one person, then another, and so on, one by one. But most of the hunters who were there in the cave and actually saw what he did had no desire to visit his home at all. What he did had deeply disturbed them, so they felt that his evil actions were worse than could be settled by asking questions and making accusations to his face at a meeting of village elders. Even those hunters who did go to his home went quietly and looked on without letting the culprit see them at all, for they were afraid that it might cause some future trouble.

When he had been told about good and evil in various ways and had been questioned many times by people in a roundabout way, constantly bringing up the topics of merit and demerit,

heaven and hell, he began to recall his own evil deeds and he realised the gravity of what he had done. He then told them all about all what he did with the *Buddha Rūpas* in Thum Klong Pain cave. As he spoke he was consciously aware of the moral significance of his actions, in the same way any normal person would be. There was no sign of insanity or anything abnormal concealed in him at all as he spoke. So as soon as the old man, whom everyone in the village as well as the hunter respected, saw a convenient opening, he pretended to be alarmed at what he heard and terrified of the consequences of such evil and the prospect of falling into hell, telling the hunter:

“All *Buddha Rūpas* stand in place of the Great Teacher, the foremost leader of this world, and they are focal points for the hearts of all Buddhists throughout the earth wherever Buddhism is established, as well as for countless numbers of *Devaputtas*, *Devatās*, *Indras*, *Brahmas*, *Yamas*, *Yakkhas*, *Nāgas*, *Garuḍas*, *Pretas* and ghosts. All of them pay homage to images of the Buddha. They cherish them greatly and protect them, preventing anyone from manhandling or damaging these sacred objects in any way. Each of those *Buddha Rūpas* in the cave had *Devatās*, *Nāgas* and *Garuḍas* guarding and looking after them all the time. Nobody can go and mess about with them without coming up against the *Devatās* who look after them, who will punish such a person in many possible ways, depending on the skill and ability in magic powers of those *Devatās*. The punishment will manifest in a manner that is appropriate to that person and to the strength of the *kamma* which that person has made by his aggressive actions.

“If the hunter has told the truth, then none of us need have doubt about what has happened. The ‘fire’ that is burning

his body all over right now must be due to the bad thoughts and actions he directed toward those *Buddha Rūpas* for sure. Oh well, never mind. Now that we know the full reason for this quite clearly, we should be able to correct the situation and relieve this disorder so that he can return to normal. There is no reason why father (the old man) should not bring his son³ to ask forgiveness for his faults from the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, so that they may refrain from punishing him and allow him to quickly recover from this gruesome illness.”

The hunter believed everything that the wise old man explained to him. He did not object at all and he smiled brightly. Everyone present could see that he looked fresh and happy.

The only problem that remained then was the reluctance of the hunter to ask forgiveness of the *Buddha Rūpas* in Thum Klong Pain cave while he remained in such discomfort, with heat rashes and intense itching. If he wasn't able to go to the cave, what should he do? Immediately the old man spoke in a soothing voice, saying:

“Never mind about that. Even though you cannot go there just yet, you can still ask the Buddha to forgive your faults without any problem. You can take any *Buddha Rūpa*, which stands in place of the Buddha, and place it in front of you, along with flowers and joss sticks. Then you must respectfully prostrate to the *Buddha Rūpa* and ask forgiveness for your faults. Do this first. Then, when you have overcome those painful symptoms, you must go and pay your respects to the *Buddha Rūpas* at Thum Klong Pain. Doing it in this way will bring the same result, have no fear.”

After the old man had finished speaking, he told the people to bring a *Buddha Rūpa* and set it up in front of the sick

hunter. Then they prompted him to ask forgiveness for his evil acts from that *Buddha Rūpa*. When he finished, he and everyone else felt quite relieved. The ceremony was done properly in all respects in the midst of hundreds of people from all over the village who had rushed in excitedly to witness this unprecedented event.

It was remarkable how the fact that evil exists, virtue exists, hell exists and heaven exists was so clearly displayed to all those people who knew what the hunter had done. They could see the results of his evil deeds with their own eyes and know them with their own hearts. His strange disorder began to gradually die away as soon as he accepted his faults and asked forgiveness from the *Buddha Rūpa*. After that, it cleared up very quickly; in fact, so quickly that it was most unusual. The hunter seemed to gain a new lease on life after he had battled the great champions, the *Buddha Rūpas* in Thum Klong Pain. He had learned his lesson well. He made a solemn vow in front of the *Buddha Rūpa* that he would never again do anything against the Buddha to the end of his life. He had seen clearly for himself the consequences of his actions, in a way that he would never forget.

In a few days the hunter's symptoms completely disappeared and he returned to normal. So he prepared flowers and joss sticks and went to ask forgiveness of the *Buddha Rūpas* in Thum Klong Pain, which he had previously looked upon as his trained soldiers. He prostrated to each one and asked forgiveness for his faults. He also made a solemn resolve that he would no longer be such a gross, despicable character as he was before. He even resolved to give up completely his occupation as a master hunter. He resolved never to hunt again for the

rest of his life, with the understanding in his heart that: evil exists, merit exists, hell exists and heaven exists; that if one does good, one receives good, if one does evil, one receives evil. This hunter no longer had any doubts about this.

THE KILESAS ARE SAD, GLOOMY, CHEERLESS mental defilements which the wisest people, with the Lord Buddha as the best example, have always censured and decried as bad. They are truly a bane on the hearts of beings in the world, exactly as the Lord censured them. The *kilesas* are what rejects the true nature of Dhamma, making out that it is not true and that it has never existed. They never agree to accept the truth enough to be admired in any way. The *kilesas* share nothing in common with Dhamma, so they can never establish a state of Dhamma in the beings of this world over whom they have control. They deny the existence of good and evil and heaven and hell, just as they deny the existence of *Nibbāna*. So we should never think that the *kilesas* have a good aspect that confirms the existence of the Dhamma that the Lord Buddha taught. Rather, they negate its existence and try to blot it out altogether. Living beings that live in subjugation to the *kilesas* have no chance to believe in good and evil, and thus no incentive to renounce evil and develop virtue so as to work towards a heavenly existence in the future. Instead, they remain submerged in darkness and suffer continuously because the deceptive nature of the *kilesas* completely covers up the truth.

The *kilesas*, regardless of what type, are all descendents of the great master of deception who always deludes living beings, making them dull and stupid so that they remain firmly

under his control. This great deceiver makes them close off their senses and lie down passively while being totally subject to his power. The hunter Boon Nah was an excellent example in this present age. The *kilesas* snuck into his heart and started a fire there. Then they deceived the hunter into plunging into this fire wildly without any restraint, inducing him to take the *Buddha Rūpas*, which are exalted and sacred things in Dhamma, and train them as if they were soldiers while beating them in various ways. This continued until he met up with the good side – in other words, his body became inflamed and covered in swellings which were irritating and hot and visible for all to see. Not knowing whether he would live or die, he was getting ready to fall into hell at that time. Just at that moment, the son of a *Deva* (the old man) came to help him, leading him to see the evil in what he had done. This intervention allowed him to turn back to the way of Dhamma so that he accepted the truth about the existence of good and evil. Thus he escaped that time from the danger of disaster, as he avoided having those sinister *kilesas* drag him down into hell even while he was still alive.

All of us Buddhists should therefore examine and reflect on the truth of the principles of Dhamma which that wise old man taught. As well, we should reflect well on the falseness of the *kilesas* which are always whispering their deceitful words within our hearts. We shouldn't think only of profit, we shouldn't think only of cheating others, we shouldn't always think of ourselves first – for that attitude results in others losing their wealth and property, which damages their hearts and kindles the fires of hell in our own hearts.

The Dhamma of the wise teaches that we should be afraid of those things that Dhamma teaches us to fear, such as evil; and that we should be bold in those things where we should have confidence, such as virtue and merit. This teaching is correct, for it conforms entirely to the truth without any falsehood or error. It contains no deviation from truth such is found in the deceptive tricks of all the *kilesas*. Whoever believes in the *kilesas* will be entirely ruined without any likelihood of recovery or improvement, which only firm faith in the Dhamma can provide.

The wise always feel repugnance and loathing for the *kilesas*; none of them have any love or attachment for the *kilesas*. In contrast to this, those who have faith in the *kilesas* and their deceptive tricks, which teach them to disdain and negate Dhamma, are eventually consumed by fire. As for the *kilesas* which deceive those people, they don't accept any part of the evil *kamma*; instead, the *kilesas* just keep on deceiving people, causing them to sink deeper and deeper all the time.

So I ask you to please examine yourselves well, in a manner which is appropriate to your state as intelligent human beings who are 'children' of the Lord Buddha, who was supremely wise, clever and skilled beyond all the *kilesas* of every kind and was never deluded by any of their tricks. We Buddhists should try to follow in the footsteps of the Great Teacher by being careful and cautious on all sides in every situation, including everything that comes into contact with us through the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. Don't give way and let the *kilesas* grab you and throw you down a chasm, for it will ruin this auspicious human birth of yours. By not admiring what is good, you allow yourself to go to ruin in this life, which is most

inappropriate for all of us who have the teaching of Dhamma ringing loud in our ears to help us all the time. For we have teachers, many environments suitable for meditation, and an abundance of books and scriptures to help us overcome the *kilesas*. So we cannot say that Dhamma is lacking or in short supply.

Dhamma can always keep up with the *kilesas*; it is never at a loss in this regard. It can revolve around every aspect of oneself, successfully resisting the *kilesas* at every turn and in every corner, so you shouldn't be reluctant to use Dhamma to help yourself go in the right direction. Instead, you should be afraid of the *kilesas*, which lead only in the direction of evil and suffering, and never in the direction of happiness. They lead a person to lose all hope even though he is still alive and breathing. This should certainly never happen to us. So don't be complacent! Don't look on dangers as if they were virtues! Don't look on merit and virtue as being bad and evil! From now on you must take a lesson from your past actions and the resultant *dukkha*, and never make those same mistakes again. You will then be a good person who progresses in happiness — *sugato* — without a doubt, in accordance with the Dhamma verse that the Lord taught: “Dhamma looks after those who practise Dhamma, not letting them fall into evil ways”.

This story of Master Hunter Boon Nah became very widely known, both in that district and in other places far distant from it. Many who heard it were afraid. They no longer dared to trample carelessly around that cave as they had before. The cave and its surroundings then became a quiet and lonely place well suited to the practice of meditation and the ascetic mode of living of all *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus*. The villagers

in that district considered it to be a sacred place, so they did not dare to do as they pleased there like they used to.

Pure Moral Virtues

It was then that Ajaan Khao, who was taking his disciples out wandering in the way of *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna*, decided to stop and stay at Thum Klong Pain cave to develop the practice of Dhamma. He saw that it was a convenient and peaceful place well-suited to the needs of the body, the mind and the practice of *Samaṇa-dhamma*. It also had a beneficial influence on the sharpness and subtlety of his meditation. So he decided to stay at Wat Thum Klong Pain continually until the end of his life.

He spent the rest of his life looking after the Bhikkhus and novices at Wat Thum Klong Pain, teaching all of them steadily without ever giving up. The Dhamma which he liked to teach them started off with constant training in the four moral purities — *catu-pārisuddhi-sīla*:

Indriya-samvara-sīla

This means the restraint of and watchfulness over the six *indriya*: the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. Not letting them give rise to pleasure or displeasure which arouses love and hate, loathing, anger, greed and craving for those things which contact the senses, without ever reaching satisfaction and sufficiency. The six internal sense fields — *āyatana* — which are

the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind, together with the six external sense fields, which are: form, sound, smell, taste, things which make contact with the body, and mental objects that come from things which make contact with the mind — form pairs in which the internal and external sense fields act together (as the eye does with form, for example). This contact easily creates problems that are very difficult to get rid of.

So Ajaan Khao taught that those who are ordained to practise Dhamma to free themselves from all *dukkha* should always be very careful whenever any pair of these *āyatana*, or all of them together, go inward and make contact with the heart. They should not allow the internal *āyatana* — such as the eyes — to make contact with the corresponding external *āyatana* — such as form — without having mindfulness constantly in their hearts.

Those who set up their minds to be restrained and watchful in accordance with the teaching of the Lord Buddha are those who train themselves for the steady process of washing out the *kilesas*. They are not slow and hesitant in walking the path, so they will reach the shore of safety before long. But for all those who practise the way without going through to the end, they will generally tend to remain submerged groping about in *dukkha*. They simply let a giant demon⁴ gobble them up along the way (while they are still practising the way of Dhamma) because they don't have any restraint or any interest in being careful. Although they have little mindfulness and wisdom, they want to see results before doing the work. So they venture out into the demon's territory (the field of the countless emotional problems which are a danger to them). First they lose restraint, then carefulness and mindfulness disappear in the

‘jungle’, leaving such people to fight the ‘tiger’ with their bare hands. Finally, they climb up onto the ‘chopping block’ and let the *kilesas* of *ragatañhā* (sexual craving) chop them up and make a delicious meal out of them. The only thing that stands out prominently is their own incompetence.

For this reason, restraint in the six sense faculties (*indriya*) is an essential task for those who are ordained and practise the way. Those who have already done some of this practice will know about it for themselves without there being any need to tell them. No other task is as arduous as this one. But if it is hard, so be it; if it is difficult, so be it. Setting up an attitude of restraint and carefulness in one’s heart is bound to be a major task in all situations. It means fighting in order to extract the *kilesas*, which are like arrows stuck in the heart. It means battling the strength of the *kilesas* which are pouring into the six internal sense fields, as well as cleaning out and uprooting those *kilesas* that dwell in the heart which are continually creating trouble and restlessness there.

No other task is more arduous than destroying and cleaning out the *kilesas*. There is nothing more difficult than the task of extracting those *kilesas* that fuel the fire which burns and smoulders in the heart all the time. The Lord Buddha, the foremost of all wise men, placed this task at the highest level of importance and value. Whoever learns this task to completion is supreme in a way that requires no confirmation from anyone else, for the supremacy of his virtue exists on its own as a natural principle of Dhamma, which he knows for himself by way of *Sandīṭṭhiko*⁵ – having no doubt what it is.

The task of restraining these sense faculties could, at the time of the Lord Buddha, arouse a sense of competition. This

is because anyone who guards even one of the fields of sensation finds it difficult. It is as if they don't have any other fields of sense, so it seems to them as if guarding any of the other fields of sense could not be as difficult as the one they are guarding. For example, the *Pañcabhikkhu* – the five Bhikkhus who each guarded one of his fields of sense. The first guarded only his eyes whenever they came into association with any visible form. The next guarded only his ears whenever they heard any sound. The next guarded only his nose whenever he smelt anything. The next guarded only his tongue whenever he tasted anything. The last one guarded only his body whenever anything cold or hot, soft or hard made contact with it. None of them guarded all the fields of sense. When they got together to discuss their experiences, each of them boasted that the field of sense that he was guarding was more difficult to guard than any of the others. This led to arguments and disagreements, because none of them were ready to concede that the others could find it as difficult to do as they themselves did, and none of them would accept that all the fields of sense were equally difficult to guard. In the end, the Lord Buddha came and expounded the Dhamma to them, teaching them that each of the fields of sense was equally difficult to guard, saying:

“The eye likes to see beautiful and attractive forms. The ear likes to hear sounds that are beautiful, melodious and pleasing to the heart. The nose likes to smell things that are pleasantly scented, making one feel joyful. The tongue likes to taste things that are delicious. The body likes to touch and feel things that are soft and smooth, which produces a state of absorbed fascination all the time without ever having too much of it.

“All of this originates from the heart, which is the ‘overlord’ of all these fields of sense. The heart is the one that wants to play about with them all the time without being the least bit concerned to consider what is right or wrong, what is good or bad. All the heart wants is what fulfils its desires. This makes all the fields of sense, including the eye, ear, nose, tongue and body, whirl about according to the emotional dictates of the heart (that is, the emotional dictates of the *kilesas* force the heart to struggle).

“When guarding each sense field, we must keep a guard on the heart at the same time. The heart is the ringleader which constantly creates the desire to see sights, to hear sounds, to smell scents, to taste foods and to feel contacts. The heart is the one that desires, that craves, that is hungry and thirsty, the one that goes searching for sensations. So the heart uses its instruments, which are the eyes, ear, nose, tongue and body, as the paths by which it travels out to search for all sorts of *ārammaṇa*.

“So you must guard the heart with mindfulness and investigate it carefully with wisdom. Don’t let it roam about getting involved in things which are dangerous. Use mindfulness to control the heart; use wisdom to investigate and examine the *ārammaṇa* that arise from making contact with forms, sounds, smells, tastes and things which contact the body, so as to learn the truth of such things. Then the heart will remain detached and indifferent. It will not love some things and hate others, and so become angry. It will then easily enter into a state of calm and peacefulness without being burdened or troubled by external matters. When the *citta* is replete and satisfied in that calm state, it will withdraw from it and examine the internal

sense fields of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body as being merely instruments of the heart. It will then examine those *ārammaṇa* in relation to the heart, seeing that they both become intimately blended together, as though they were one and the same thing.

“The examination of the physical body may be done in whatever way you find most suitable: either by examining its repulsiveness (*asubha*), or by seeing its impermanence (*anicca*), its unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), or its lack of any self-principle (*anattā*), or by dividing it up into the elements (*dhātu*) or groups (*khandhas*), whichever one finds most suitable and easiest to do. The examination of the body is important because initially the *ārammaṇa* of the heart tend to be bound up with external things such as visible forms. So you must analyse this relationship, going back and forward to see how it works until you understand all about *ārammaṇa*. You will see that they are things which infiltrate the heart, and so are not one and the same thing as the heart. Go on investigating until you gain an understanding of how the external and internal sense fields work, using mindfulness, wisdom, faith and effort relentlessly without weakening. When you have completely examined all aspects of it, whatever is false will drop away from the heart and whatever is true will be a trusted companion of the heart that supports it and enables it to do its work with ease and skill right through to the end of the road so that nothing will be able to obstruct it anymore.”

When the Lord Buddha finished giving this teaching about guarding the sense fields, all five of those Bhikkhus attained the level of *Arahantship* directly from the Great Teacher. They

finished the task and no longer needed to act like convicts in prison watchfully guarding their sense faculties all the time. All quarrels and arguments between them also stopped at the same time.

Thus it is that the sense faculties in association with the six sense fields are things which are always very difficult to guard. In fact, nothing can compare with it, because these are the avenues by which all the most powerful *kilesas* push their influence and get their own way. If you don't have mindfulness to thoroughly look after yourself, and wisdom to skilfully sort out what is happening when the *kilesas* pour out through one of these pathways, you are bound to fall flat on your back every time. Nobody can rightly boast that they have gained the exceptional ability needed to attain 'Buddha purity' by letting go of all bodily restraint and letting the mind go where it will. For that reason, the four moral purities (*pārisuddhi-sīla*) are essential *dhammas* that are very important amongst Buddhists, especially amongst those who practise the way.

I myself don't dare to act so boldly with the *kilesas*, for I lack these *dhammas* as weapons to fight with them. Without these *dhammas*, no amount of bravery can defeat them. Those who have freed themselves from the *kilesas* are the most persistent and resolute of warriors who have reached the goal of the religious life (*Brahmacariyā*) by using these *dhammas*. In doing so, they have become the most exalted of individuals whom the world bows down and pays homage to as the highest examples of spiritual attainment.

Paṭimokkha-saṁvara-sīla

This moral purity involves being self-controlled and guarded with respect to the moral behaviour expressed in the *Paṭimokkha*⁶. It means not transgressing or resisting any of the rules, whether minor or major. This ensures that the manners and the behaviour of those who are ordained shall be good and seemly.

There are 227 rules in the *Paṭimokkha*, but there are also a large number of minor rules that the Buddha established from time to time that appear outside the *Paṭimokkha*. In fact, those rules in the *Paṭimokkha* are a small proportion of the total number of rules, which altogether number in the thousands. Those who are good pupils, following in the footsteps of the teacher – which means the Great Teacher – will have a reverent attitude to the moral precepts which are to be found in the *Vinaya*, for the *Vinaya* stands in the place of the Great Teacher.

Avijjā-pārisuddhi-sīla

This moral purity entails the livelihood of a Bhikkhu who is a follower of the *Tathāgata* (the Buddha). For example, a Bhikkhu walks on the alms round, going on foot to the village each day to receive his food. He does not use tricks, fraud or deception to get his food. A Bhikkhu also obtains all of his four basic requisites in a pure way, meaning that the one who gives does so with a pure heart knowing that the one who receives has come looking for it in a pure manner, not with some ulterior motive as is done in the world at large. He searches for it in the manner of a Bhikkhu, partakes of it in the manner of a

Bhikkhu, lives in the manner of a Bhikkhu, and uses the four requisites in the manner of a Bhikkhu, fully and completely, without extravagance, pride, vanity, intemperance or arrogance. He dwells in the Dhamma of contentment, which is the basic level of living and progressing of a Bhikkhu who has the *sīla* of pure livelihood as the ornament that decorates his status.⁷ Whether he is in want or he has plenty, he is seemly in his status and never goes beyond the bounds of what is proper for a Bhikkhu. It is this Dhamma of right livelihood which adorns the mouth, the stomach and the status of a Bhikkhu, making his behaviour always pleasing and attractive.

Paccaya-sammissita-sīla

This moral purity means that a Bhikkhu must be self-controlled and restrained in respect to the four requisites⁸ which he depends on. He must not be capricious or whimsical in his choice of food or any of the other requisites, which opens the way for other baneful blemishes to flow in.

The requisites that a recluse depends on are of four kinds:

1. The robes which he wears in his status as a Bhikkhu. They should be the right size for him and dyed with a yellowish-brown colour which the Lord called *kāsāva* (the 'yellow' robe). A Bhikkhu must always have three robes without fail. They are the *Cīvara* (the main robe), the *Saṅghāṭi* (the outer robe) and the *Antaravāsaka* (the lower robe). Apart from these there are various other auxiliary pieces of cloth such as the 'angsa' (a kind of under shirt), the bathing cloth and various other pieces used for certain necessities.

2. *Piṇḍapāta* is the category concerned with food. This means basic foods that people everywhere rely upon for sustenance to keep them going from day to day. It includes all those foods that a Bhikkhu is allowed to eat according to the *Vinaya* rules.

3. Bhikkhus must depend upon a dwelling place (*senāsana*) much as people in the world do. It is the place where they live, lie down to rest and sleep, and practise the way of *Samaṇa-dhamma* in all activities. That place should suit the temperament of someone who is not restless and agitated, such as living at the foot of a tree, at the mouth of a cave, under an overhanging cliff, in a forest, on a mountain side, on a mountain ridge, at the foot of a mountain, in a charnel ground or in a small hut in the thick jungle – any place which is sufficient to give some cover to rest, sleep and practise Dhamma by day and night. These are what are meant by a ‘dwelling place’. In other words, it is a suitable place to live for a Bhikkhu whose purpose in ordaining is to practise meditation for the sake of Dhamma, for the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna*, and for gaining true freedom. For a Bhikkhu who has these purposes in mind, the above dwelling places will provide a suitable place to live and practise well.

If we were to hold a competition among various kinds of dwelling places, making the Lord Buddha the judge instead of the *kilesas*, dwellings would surely be rated according to the principles of Dhamma, not according to how expensive, opulent, well-built and lasting they are. Beautiful and expensive dwellings with many floors, many rooms and many passageways would not get high marks. For the dwelling places which were

favourably rated in the time of the Lord Buddha were those listed above. Beginning with the Lord Buddha and continuing through all the *Sāvakas*, there has never been any disagreement on this issue, which has been displayed in the Dhamma teachings for all to see. All subsequent generations have read these teachings, studied them and put them into practice, following on from teacher to pupil, right up to the present day.

In most cases, the refuges (*saraṇa*) that Buddhists gain within themselves arise from those dwelling places that are replete with qualities which promote only Dhamma, like the ones described above. Such places are suitable for the life and daily practice of someone who truly sees the danger in the round of *saṃsāra* within his heart. Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha are likely to arise in those places, for they can arise more easily there than in places that cause restlessness and agitation. Disturbing, restless places are almost certain to be fertile ground for the cultivation and promotion of the *kilesas*, for the development of the ‘round of *kamma*’ and the ‘round of *vipāka*’ (the results of *kamma*), which like a wheel spins round and round in a circle with no apparent way out – like a red ant circling around the outer edge of a winnowing basket.⁹

To summarise, the dwelling places which the Lord Buddha recommended, of which dwelling at the foot of a tree is an example, are places that are fully appropriate to the present day. They support and encourage one’s efforts to drive out the *kilesas* by pushing them into a corner, destroying them and quickly dispersing them from the heart. Therefore, when a man is being newly ordained as a Bhikkhu, his preceptor is required to teach him which dwelling places are suitable for the life of a monk. This has always been the case with every Bhikkhu who

is ordained, from the time of the Buddha to the present day. Never in that time has dwelling at the foot of a tree been considered out-of-date. Except, perhaps, in cases where Bhikkhus are overwhelmed by the *kilesas*, which drag them along and force them to consider it old-fashioned.

So there has never been any objection to the ‘well-taught Dhamma’ (*Svākkhāta dhamma*) by those who aim to know and see Dhamma in the heart by means of the practice of *citta bhāvanā*, following the path of the Great Teacher and what he taught. For the practice that he taught tends to blend in well with their preference for dwelling at the foot of a tree, in a cave, under an overhanging cliff, in a charnel ground or in thick forest. These places are suitable because they encourage the putting forward of effort more so than any other type of place. This includes those costly places which worldly people consider good, such as city centres and shopping malls. This is because Dhamma and those who search for Dhamma are different from most people in the world, even though they may come from the same social background, because their thinking and their understanding are quite different. Therefore, the places that are favoured by followers of Dhamma — such as those mentioned above — are places that are always suitable for the steady and continuous practice of Dhamma. They are not old-fashioned or out-of-date; rather, they are battlefields of victory where people can constantly do battle with the various kinds of *kilesas* until the sky and the earth disintegrate (until faith in the *Sāsana dhamma* disappears completely from people’s hearts).

4. *Gilāna-bhesajja* means medicines which people throughout the world normally use for curing sickness. The nature of a

Bhikkhu's body is similar to that of people everywhere — they both have the same requirements so far as food and medicines are concerned. At the time of the Lord Buddha, however, they had few medicines, unlike nowadays when we have many. Even the diseases probably weren't as strange and unusual as the ones people have nowadays, since they arose mostly due to natural causes found in their immediate environment. So in the early teachings of Buddhism, the only medicines recommended for Bhikkhus were pickled urine and a few herbal remedies. There were not many medicines then, like nowadays when they have become goods which flood the market. Today the population is very high, so there are many diseases, many doctors, many medicines, and many people who die of diseases that the medicines and the doctors cannot cure. In past ages, there was a low population, people had little and there was less disease, so there were few medicines, and deaths due to unusual and strange diseases were rare. Because of that, people were not concerned about medicines and doctors like they are nowadays.

According to the ancient Buddhist scriptures, Bhikkhus at the time of the Lord Buddha showed little concern or anxiety for dangerous diseases and painful fevers. There is no indication that they took medicines along with them when they travelled. The most that they took along, if they took anything at all, was yellow myrobalan and emblic myrobalan¹⁰ to cure the feelings of physical weakness and tiredness that occasionally arose. But they always considered the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* to be the surest remedy of all. Their minds were more likely to go in the direction of Dhamma in order to transcend the world, rather than succumbing to the fear of dangerous diseases, painful fevers and death, and then searching for medicines to cure

them. They had little fear of death, but they had great fear of failing to get free of the *kilesas* and the great mass of *dukkha*. Day and night, in all their activities, the Bhikkhus of that day were fully engaged in the practice of Dhamma. Their faith, their effort, their mindfulness, their *samādhi* and their wisdom were all fully engaged in the practice of Dhamma. Then if a dangerous and painful fever arose in them, those Bhikkhus would be most likely to examine it in the light of Dhamma truth which, in effect, turns into a medicine that both cures the fever and destroys the *kilesas* at the same time. They did not weakly depend on medicines and doctors as their main life support. They used them only as was reasonably appropriate for a Bhikkhu who has faith in Dhamma, faith in *kamma* and faith in the Dhamma truths as being always true and unchanging. Under normal conditions, those Bhikkhus were calm and pleasing to look at. When they had a painful illness they did not suddenly lose their composure and start writhing about in pain uncontrollably, discarding that exemplary behaviour that is seemly and appropriate for a recluse. Instead, they had mindfulness as their companion, so they were not heavy-hearted or depressed. They never forgot the Dhamma they had in their hearts.

Even today, *Dhutanga Kammatṭhāna Bhikkhus* practice in the same way as those Bhikkhus at the time of the Lord Buddha when they are afflicted with painful ailments. They are less concerned about their sickness and whether it will be cured or not, or whether they will live or die, than they are about their investigation into the Dhamma truths. They are more interested in understanding the true nature of the body, the painful feeling, memory (*saññā*) and imaginative thought (*sankhāra*), which deceive the *citta* at that time. By this under-

standing, they destroy the *kilesas* at the same time. In doing so, they entrust their health and well-being to those Dhamma truths that appear in connection with the illness and the pain at that time. At the same time, they consider the deceptive tricks of their minds which have been instigated by *kilesas* to be very important. In the investigation, mindfulness and wisdom must take note of those deceptive tricks, and also maintain contact with the pain, with the body and with the heart, all of which are interrelated. The purpose of the investigation is to use wisdom to know and understand clearly the true nature of all these factors in order to gradually let go of attachment to them as mindfulness and wisdom discover the truth.

Bhikkhus do use medicines to cure sickness, but they prefer to use the ‘Dhamma remedy’, which is the one that attacks and destroys the *kilesas* at the same time. They do not merely lie down keeping a watch over their pain as they wait for medicines to cure them, or weakly call out for people to help them recover. Instead, they call on faith, effort, mindfulness, *samādhi* and wisdom to help cure their sickness, and help destroy the *kilesas* at the same time. The result is the realisation that sickness is merely something which arises in the body, and not something which should be allowed to pierce and enter their hearts. So their hearts remain strong in their faith in the Dhamma truths, which they see clearly in themselves. Mindfulness and wisdom are then fully proficient within them and they are not afraid of suffering or death, so they are contented and free from anxiety and concern. This is what is meant when we say that present-day *Dhutanga Kammatṭhāna Bhikkhus* treat illness with the ‘Dhamma remedy’, which is the way it’s usually done in the sphere of the Dhamma truths.

Benefiting the World

Venerable Ajaan Khao had many followers including Bhikkhus, novices and lay people from many areas of Thailand. They came continually to learn and train in moral behaviour with him. But when he grew old, he tried to look after himself by being quiet and calm more than he used to do when he was younger. In that way, his mind and body would last as long as reasonably possible, so that he could give value to the world in the many places which needed to receive it.

Normally, after having eaten food in the morning, Ajaan Khao went to his *caṅkama* path and walked in meditation for one or two hours. Then he returned to his hut to rest, after which he sat in meditation until two o'clock in the afternoon. If he had no other business to attend to, he again went to his *caṅkama* path and continued walking meditation until it was time for him to sweep the ground in the open areas of the monastery. Following sweeping, he had a bath, after which he again walked *caṅkama* until ten or eleven p.m. He stopped then and returned to his hut, where he did some chanting and meditation until it was time for him to lie down and rest his body. He normally rose at about three a.m. and continued doing meditation until dawn, when it was time to go out for *piṇḍapāta*. After *piṇḍapāta*, he ate food to support his body, a result (*vipāka*) of his past *kamma* which he still had to look after. That is the daily routine that Ajaan Khao always maintained, unless some other essential business forced a change; such as, being asked to participate in various functions, causing a break in his routine.

Even in old age he still refused to allow his declining health to curtail his customary zeal. Some people have asked me why he continued to put such strenuous effort into practice when in truth he had nothing further to accomplish. They could not figure out why he remained so active and energetic. I tried to explain to them that someone who has completely eliminated the *kilesas* has no debilitating lethargy left to entrap his mind in a web of delusion. Meanwhile, the rest of us have amassed such a debilitating mountain of laziness that it virtually obscures us from view. As soon as we get started on some worthwhile endeavour, we become apprehensive lest the fruits of our efforts overload our capacity to store them. We worry ahead of time about how exhausted we will be when the work becomes difficult. In the end, having failed to gather those wholesome fruits, we are left with an empty basket; that is, an empty joyless heart, drifting aimlessly with no hard-earned store of merit to fall back on. Instead, we fill our empty hearts with complaints about all the difficulties we face. So laziness, this blight in our hearts, keeps throwing up obstacles to block our way. Those who have cleansed this blight from their hearts remain persistent, persevering in times of hardship. They never worry about overloading their capacity to store the fruits of their efforts. Those individuals whose hearts are pure, unblemished Dhamma, cleared of all worldly defilements, stand out majestically in all situations. Sombre, sullen moods never arise in their hearts, making them perfect examples for the world to follow.

People with Dhamma virtue as high as that of Ajaan Khao never expect to get happiness from any source other than from the Dhamma within their own hearts. Their lives are fulfilled

by the Dhamma within them. Whatever their circumstances of life happen to be, their hearts have an unvarying happiness that neither increases nor decreases, unlike worldly people whose happiness fluctuates, having ups and downs that go together as a pair. The reason for this difference is that those *ajans* have only one state of heart, one that is entirely pure throughout, having only Dhamma as its one state (*ekibhāva*) without any duality present to vie for recognition. This is a state of peace and happiness that is quite impossible to compare with anything else. The *citta* which is entirely pure throughout has peace and happiness that is sufficient in and of itself. It has no desire for any additional support, which would only be a useless disturbance that would be of no value at all to that *citta*.

For that reason, those whose *cittas* are pure like to live alone without distractions or disturbances. Disruptive conditions interrupt the calm and happiness in their basic nature, which is totally satisfied within itself, by causing the mind to stir and acknowledge the sensations that enter through the sense doors. So the *ajans* prefer to seclude themselves in those places that are best suited to their natural dispositions. Those people who don't understand their reason for doing this, tend to think that the *ajans* don't welcome visitors, or that they dislike people, or that they are only interested in saving themselves and are not interested in teaching and training others. But the fact of the matter is what has been explained above.

It is very rare to find anyone like these *ajans* who can teach and train people with a completely pure heart full of *mettā*, without any thought of worldly gain or recompense. They teach people of every social status and every age group after having truly realised the truth within themselves. Teaching

Dhamma with *mettā* that is completely blameless, they aim to benefit those who accept the truth from them. The exception is those people who go to them and cause trouble by acting in ways that go beyond what is reasonable. When this happens, the *ajaan* will probably not welcome them or teach them. It's simply impossible for a Bhikkhu to do what is unreasonable by acting in accordance with the request of someone who knows no bounds in what is good and correct. Such a disturbance might cause him harm as well, which would be a shame.

WHILE VENERABLE AJAAN KHAO WAS STILL ALIVE, he kindly gave encouragement to large numbers of Bhikkhus and novices, as well as to lay people from many districts of Thailand. They came in a steady stream to pay homage to him and listen to his teaching. The Bhikkhus in his Wat saw that it was becoming increasingly difficult for him because he was getting old and his body was weak, so they arranged it so that visitors could only pay homage and receive his teaching at suitable times each day. This enabled him to get enough rest so that he could give benefit to the world for a long time, ensuring that his life would not be cut short before reaching its proper time.

For the most part, the meeting and receiving of guests for a Bhikkhu who is an *ajaan* involves meeting many lay people from many different backgrounds who have many preconceived ideas. The *ajaan* is usually the one who gets 'battered and bruised' the whole time while these people are with him. Most visitors are anxious to unload what is in their hearts on him, without considering whether they are making difficulties for him, or whether he has other duties which he should be

doing at that time. So he tends to be disturbed more often than well water. If he doesn't meet their expectations, they become sullen and think that he's conceited and has an aversion for people because he refuses to receive guests in the way that one who is ordained as a Bhikkhu for the purpose of cleansing the *kilesas* of 'conceit' and 'aversion' should. Besides this, they also set up an attitude of dislike within themselves, which they spread out to others in many places, bringing harm to themselves and others all the time. Then, a Bhikkhu who should be revered, respected and beneficial to other people may become one who has a charge against him without any court that is capable of clearing him.

In truth, Bhikkhus are ordained for the purpose of bringing benefit to themselves as well as to the world to the best of their ability without being complacent. They do one kind of work at this time and another kind of work at that time, so they rarely have any spare time day or night. They must find time for helping the world, and time for helping the Bhikkhus and novices whom they look after, and all the rest of those who associate with them. They must also find time for the needs of their bodies and their minds so that they can live a long time and continue to bring benefit to the world. Every day and night their bodies and minds whirl round like a flywheel, giving them no time for rest and relaxation. When we think about it, even machines like motor vehicles are given time for rest, or for repair and maintenance, to extend their useful life. Otherwise, they would soon break up and be scrapped.

Bhikkhus are not bags of bricks or cement which can be used as building materials for constructing a house or a shop, wherever the master builder sees fit to use them. If it's like that,

Bhikkhus are bound to become exhausted and need a rest so they can put down the burden that makes them feel tense the whole time, giving them time to physically and mentally relax.

When lay people visit a Bhikkhu, they tend to bring along their usual temperament and their emotional problems as they please. Then they load it on him and make a lot of trouble for him, hoping he will make allowances for them. They never consider whether what they are doing is right or wrong, because fundamentally they have never been inclined to consider their behaviour in terms of right and wrong or good and bad. When they want a Bhikkhu to help them out with a problem, they rarely consider that Bhikkhus have customs and standards of behaviour that are different from theirs. Bhikkhus have the principles of Dhamma and *Vinaya* as the basis of their behaviour and their way of living. So the manners they display are those of the Dhamma and *Vinaya*, which require them to think in terms of right and wrong, good and bad all the time. Thus they must always consider carefully whether what they are asked to do is something they should or should not agree to.

Lay people are not likely to have Dhamma and *Vinaya* ingrained in them as their guiding principles, so generally they tend to believe in what they like and then practise accordingly. When they go to a Bhikkhu with this attitude, they are likely to disturb and trouble him, and perhaps do him some harm, even though they have no intention to do so. Or maybe they harm him indirectly by, for example, asking him to tell them the winning number of the state lottery, which violates the Dhamma and *Vinaya* of a Bhikkhu; asking him to make up magic potions to make a man and a woman love each other; asking him to tell them the auspicious time when their luck is

good for becoming wealthy, or for any one of a thousand other desires which they may have; asking him to predict their future by astrology; asking him to tell them a magic saying or mantra to protect them so that they can withstand anyone who comes to mug them, or so they can't be shot, stabbed or clubbed; or asking him to make 'holy water' to ward off misfortune, distress, evil and dangers. Such actions are contrary to the traditional values of the Dhamma and *Vinaya* that Bhikkhus uphold, so they should not go along with such requests.

In addition, the more revered an *ajaan* is, the more he is troubled by things like the foregoing requests, and many others of the same sort; in fact, so many that it would take all day to describe them. *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* in the lineage of Venerable Ajaan Mun whose aim is the attainment of liberation have no interest in the above things and consider them to be enemies to their progress on the path of the right Dhamma. They are the kinds of activities that lead people to develop very bad principles in themselves, ones that can even openly destroy Bhikkhus and the religion they practise. For example, they may call a Bhikkhu the 'lottery Bhikkhu' or the 'magic potion Bhikkhu'; and Buddhism they may call 'the lottery religion' or 'the magic potion religion'. This becomes a stain and a blemish on the Bhikkhus and on Buddhism that steadily reduces its value. It's an inevitable consequence of agreeing to requests such as those mentioned above.

I have no intention to blame those faithful people found everywhere who go to meet Bhikkhus out of a love of Dhamma. Rather, my intention is to inform people about the situation so they may know the right and proper way of doing things between Bhikkhus and lay people, who can never be completely

separated. When each side knows how to behave properly in relation to the other, their relationship becomes harmonious and straight-forward. This conforms with the concern for virtue and for the welfare of the religion which both sides share as they entrust their lives and their well-being to each other.

The Burden of the Khandhas

Beginning the 18th January 1967, Venerable Ajaan Khao became very sick. It started out as a cold and a fever. But the characteristics of the fever changed and fluctuated in a variety of different ways which caused other diseases to get in and develop and gain strength until he was unable to eat any food. In the beginning, when it was only a cold with a fever, he continued to make the effort to eat food with the other Bhikkhus and novices at the front of the cave in Wat Thum Klong Pain. People who saw him there may have thought that he was simply suffering the effects of old age, as is common with old people. But because of the increasing complications brought on by the changes in his disease, the strength of his body deteriorated day after day until eventually he could not go and eat food with the others in the cave. He continued to put up with the difficulties, forcing himself to eat a little food in his hut each day, until finally he was unable to eat anything at all. Gradually his strength became visibly weaker until he had to rely upon the Bhikkhus who were looking after him to help him every time he wanted to move.

When news of Ajaan Khao's condition reached the surrounding area, waves of lay people and Bhikkhus from that district rushed to the Wat to see him. In their hearts many people firmly believed in him as a refuge they could confidently entrust their lives to. So when they heard that he was seriously ill, they were very perturbed — as if the sky and earth had collapsed and their hearts had been torn from their bodies. After the news had been broadcast, people came in hoards from all directions, lay people as well as Bhikkhus and novices. They came to visit Ajaan Khao to see how he was. They were very eager to meet him and to pay their respects to him.

For that reason, it appeared as if there was some large function taking place at Wat Thum Klong Pain while Ajaan Khao was sick. So many Bhikkhus and lay people came from so many different places that the Wat was unable to look after them all. There was not enough bedding or food and other necessities to go around. So they just had to help themselves and each other as best they could to make up for what was lacking. A Wat is a place to live for Bhikkhus, who rely on the local villagers for the food they receive on alms round. It is not a place where wealthy people live, which most people already know. One advantage of Wat Thum Klong Pain is that it is very large, with lots of forest and hills and plenty of shady trees. There are also a number of overhanging cliffs. It is all together quite a good place to stay if one takes the forest, the hills and the shady trees in the Wat as one's accommodation, where one can just rest and sleep, relaxed and unconcerned.

Even though there were large numbers of people to feed, there was always plenty of food given to the Bhikkhus on their daily alms round. From the start right through to the end of his

illness, a period of over four months, amazingly there was never insufficient food. Probably this was largely influenced by the protective power of Ajaan Khao's great virtue. All the many lay people, Bhikkhus and novices who gathered together there seemed to be like children of the same parents or members of the same family. They stayed together quietly and peacefully, without anyone controlling them and without any untoward incidents occurring. They were all cheerful and smiling when meeting one another, talking together in a mild and pleasant manner, as if they had often met together and known each other for a long time.

When Ajaan Khao first became ill, several senior *ajaaans* met to discuss the possibility of a disturbance to the peaceful atmosphere in the Wat with so many monks and lay people staying together. They were also eager to maintain discipline among the Bhikkhus and novices who came into the Wat so as to promote peace and harmony in their association with each other and to foster an attitude of carefulness among all of them. The whole occasion passed off peacefully and harmoniously in every way, which deserves the highest praise. I don't think I or any of those present will ever forget that occasion.

Since Ajaan Khao could not eat food, his condition steadily worsened. Meanwhile, more and more people kept pouring in from every direction. When I saw his condition begin to grow worse I began to stay with him regularly to help look after the situation. Only occasionally did I return to my own Wat for one or two nights before hurrying back to be with Ajaan Khao. I was very concerned about his health, but also I wanted to keep the atmosphere inside the Wat as peaceful and proper as possible. But the power of his great virtue (*pāramī*) looked after

and protected the whole situation, maintaining peace and good behaviour.

When Ajaan Khao could no longer eat, his physical condition deteriorated rapidly, which was quite visible to everyone around him. When asked about how he was and whether he would depart from the world, he gave the most impressive exposition of the nature of his condition, saying:

“What is there to this body? When it dies, I’ll feel no concerns and no regrets at all. All I can see in this body is a lot of earth, water, air and fire, which are the constituent elements that make up the physical aggregate. That’s all there is. When the ‘one who knows’ – which is the heart – departs entirely, this body will immediately start to break down into its original elements of its own accord. If I were not concerned for the welfare of my Bhikkhu disciples and for the lay people who have come here, I would have no qualms at all about dying at this moment. I would then come to the end of all acknowledgement¹¹ and responsibility straightaway, so there would be no further burden for me to carry on my shoulders.

“The word *Anālayo*¹², which has been my name since my ordination, would then represent the truth, for the ‘true-one’ would arise then perfect and complete. At present my *Anālayo* is not perfect because the conventional aggregates (*sammuti khandha*), the five groups which form the body and mind (*pañcaka khandha*), require my attention, so I must take full responsibility for them. In other words, I must constantly direct them in living, in eating, in sleeping, in urinating, in excreting, and in changing bodily postures and moving about, like an electric fan spinning constantly round and round. Since when did *sammuti* (the relative world of supposition) ever be-

come peaceful, still and satisfied? It's bound to whirl around all the time. Both the external world and the internal world are constantly whirling. How can we ever hope to gain happiness and harmony from things which are always whirling about? Anyone who hopes to gain happiness and harmony from these *khandhas*, which are a deep well of suffering and anxiety, will always be disappointed, for none of the *khandhas* will ever fulfil his desires. I have been carrying these *khandhas* about for eighty years already and I haven't seen anything truly satisfying coming from them. What stands out all the time is just *dukkha* – discontent – that's all; both minor discontent and major suffering, which in one way or another are there all the time. I've never seen calm and happiness arise in the *khandhas* in a way that I could experience it clearly. Even at normal times, when I don't have fever or sickness, *dukkha* still appears throughout the *khandhas*, such as the aches and pains occurring throughout the various parts of the body. I have never experienced pleasure (*sukha*) in the *khandhas*.

“What people like to call ‘pleasure’ is just a false concept, a common phrase that people like to use. In truth, this body and its various parts never clearly display anything pleasant for us to see. Instead, they only display the burden of suffering that we must bear – which can make us almost faint and die if the pain doesn't stop. We should not deceive ourselves about the *khandhas*, thinking that they will bring enough pleasure and happiness to please us. Instead, they are almost sure to bring endless suffering, which they load onto us so we have to carry it about wherever we go.

“I myself acknowledge that I have been dragging these burdensome *khandhas* around for eighty years already. How

much longer will I have to go on shouldering this burden? What is left for me to search for that should make me want to carry about this load of fuel and fire with the view that these *khandhas* will bring me something wonderful? I have no doubts about these *khandhas*, both those which I am still living in and those which have broken up and gone in the past. I am I; the *khandhas* are the *khandhas*. What's the point of mixing them up together? Simply let go of the *khandhas* entirely — *anālayo* — then one is complete, as one should be.

“I freely admit that my heart is full of *mettā* and compassion for my fellow Bhikkhus and all the lay people. So, although I know that the *khandhas* are nothing but suffering, I can see the value of going on with this life for the sake of those people who need my help. For myself alone, I am always ready to let go of these *khandhas*, which indeed are a burden (*Bhārā have pañcakkhandhā*). They were truly a well full of tears for me when I used to covet them.

“But now I no longer covet them, I no longer worry about them, so I am prepared to release them to go naturally according to their basic nature. I shall not resist or oppose the truth. When I resisted the truth in the past, all I got was a lot of suffering, until I learnt to dread it. So this time I shall not resist, but instead let the *khandhas* go their natural way, which is the way of Dhamma — the unshakeable truth.

“Those who have accepted responsibility for rescuing themselves by way of the principles of nature were never compelled to do so by anyone. Rather, it was their own necessity that compelled them. Thus it is necessary for all of us to take responsibility for ourselves. We must not be negligent. We must accept that the *citta* is the fundamental basis that determines

our way of living and all the good that we do. It also determines the characteristic modes of behaviour that we display externally, for which we must take responsibility by being constantly aware that we are the ones who do good and evil, so we must be responsible for our own external behaviour. In other words, we ourselves are the ones who receive the results of the good and evil of whatever work or actions we do. We know that the results of what we do are not lost anywhere, but that they will flow back to their original cause: we who did them in the first place.

“The ‘we’ I’m referring to here, which is the chief principle in people, means the ‘heart’; and the heart does not die, nor has it ever died since the remotest antiquity. But it has gone astray, wandering about to become involved in birth, being born into all sorts of states both good and bad under the overriding influence of the results (*vipāka*) of the good and bad *kamma* which we have done.

“Especially important is the idea which some people have that after death there is just voidness, nothingness. This view is fundamentally wrong. The heart of the Lord Buddha and those of all the *Arahants* who have got rid of the *kilesas*, which would otherwise lead them into birth and death, have not been annihilated and reduced to nothing. They simply do not go wandering about searching for a place to be reborn; in contrast to the hearts of all others who have *kilesas*, which are the seeds that lead them to further birth and death. The hearts of the Lord Buddha and the *Arahants* are still their hearts, but they are in the state of *Nibbāna* without remainder (*Anuṣādisesa-nibbāna*) of those who have completely got rid of all their *kilesas*.

“There are various ideas such as: after death there is just nothingness; there is no such thing as evil; there is no such thing as merit; there is no such place as hell; there is no such place as heaven; there is no such state as *Nibbāna*. All of these are doctrines taught in the textbook of the *kilesas* that rule the Triple Universe. Having mastered these doctrines, the *kilesas* use them to govern the hearts of all living beings. No matter how severely they oppress living beings, they are not in the least afraid or concerned that anyone will dare to challenge their authority. Because their schooling is good and up-to-date, people accept it fully without reservations. All the knowledge that is learned from the textbook of the *kilesas* is bound to be knowledge which wipes out the truth of Dhamma. For example, the truth of Dhamma shows us that after death one is born again, whereas the knowledge which comes from the textbook of the *kilesas* teaches the opposite, that after death one is annihilated. In a similar way, Dhamma teaches that evil exists, merit exists, the hells exist, the heavens exist and *Nibbāna* exists, whereas the teaching of the *kilesas* immediately denies all of them by teaching that the opposite is true.

“This being so, we Buddhists must examine these matters thoroughly and choose well, otherwise we are likely to be overwhelmed by the teaching of the *kilesas*, which will lead us over the chasm and down towards the great *Avīci* hell. All because we are deceived into believing the tricks of the *kilesas* to the point where nobody can help us, since a birth in hell gives us no chance to remedy the situation. To remedy and wash clean the *kilesas* and their teaching that are buried deep in our hearts, we must do so by means of the Buddha-Dhamma, beginning now while we are still alive and the time is right. After we

have died, the opportunity to do something about it will have passed. All that will be left then is the experiencing of the results of the good and evil actions we ourselves did as human beings.

“In the saying: *Attā hi attano nātho*¹³, the Lord Buddha taught us to depend on ourselves, and not to expect to depend on anyone else in all the worlds of existence. He also taught that, from this moment onward, we should do good deeds for our own sake, which will make us feel comfortable and secure in our hearts for the rest of this life and after we die as well. We will then have Dhamma virtue to guard and protect us, which is very different from those who have little merit and little Dhamma in them. When they die, they are reborn in a realm which is disturbed and troubled accordingly. The *kilesas* that are *Māra* the enemy of Dhamma, must also be *Māra* the enemy of living beings everywhere, without a doubt. They show themselves by misleading beings and directing them only towards the fiery pit – which is the boundless mass of suffering where they find nothing that they can trust or hold onto as a refuge, even for a moment. The result is a combustible mixture of fuel and fire found in every nook and cranny, with no safe haven where beings can relax and breathe freely. The wisest of men in every age have always censured the *kilesas*; never have they claimed that the *kilesas* make the world a peaceful place, or that the *kilesas* are things which bring equality and justice to the world. They have always been full of tricks and deception in every age and era. They have never lost their ability to cheat and deceive beings in the world who are so stupid that they are to be pitied.

“On the other hand, Dhamma possesses the gentleness of love and compassion to help beings in the world to get free from ignorance, to get free from suffering and torment of all kinds. It supports their self-development, gives relief and alleviates their suffering so that they gain peace and happiness. The difference between the *kilesas* and Dhamma is so enormous that it is almost impossible to make comparisons. They are always working at cross-purposes. The *kilesas* are always deluding people, enslaving them and immersing them in the round of *dukkha*. Dhamma always gives support to people, drawing them up and out of the round of *dukkha* bit by bit, until they can reach *vimutti* – complete liberation. So, as you can see, there is a great difference between the *kilesas* and Dhamma.”

I myself was the one who asked Ajaan Khao how he felt about his physical condition on that occasion. In response, he gave this powerful discourse, delivered in such a way that it appeared as though he had no serious illness, painful fever or weakness in his body at all. The way in which he spoke out quite startled those who were listening. The tone and tenor of his voice, his manner and appearance, and the intensity of the Dhamma flowing out from his pure heart all belied his physical condition. Nobody could have imagined that he would be able to defy his frail condition to deliver such a strong and forceful exposition on the nature of the *kilesas* and Dhamma. Those listening were all smiling and cheerful, their ears sharp and their eyes bright. But for myself, I'm the kind of character who is never satisfied, so I felt I could never hear enough of the Dhamma which he had kindly expounded. I wished to hear even more of it, so I squeezed in a special kind of Dhamma question at the end:

“Ajaan Khao, after this you will get better day by day until you are completely recovered. I have no doubt about this, because the Dhamma which you have kindly given us just now is the kind of Dhamma that burns out and cleanses diseases from the *khandhas*, so this illness is bound to break up and disperse. No kind of disease can withstand that kind of Dhamma. Even the *kilesas*, which are more robust and resistant than diseases, are bound to be destroyed by this powerful Dhamma.”

Ajaan Khao answered in an impressive, unforgettable way that was wonderful to hear. He said:

“*Khandhas* are *khandhas*, sickness is sickness, *kilesas* are *kilesas*, Dhamma is Dhamma — each is of a different kind. Medicines are appropriate for treating and overcoming sickness. Dhamma is appropriate for counteracting and destroying *kilesas*, but it is unsuitable for overcoming some kinds of illness. There are forms of sickness which should be curable by means of Dhamma, and there are others which cannot be cured in that way. Those who practise the way should take good note of this. Don’t let your ideas, your beliefs and your actions be in excess of what is right and reasonable.

“What I said today was pure Dhamma delivered for the purpose of arousing the joy of Dhamma in those listening, while also getting rid of their *kilesas*. It was not connected with the *khandhas* or with treating and curing this disease in the way you understand. It’s not important whether the *khandhas* live or die. What is important is whether any *kilesas* died and left the heart of the listener due to the power of the Dhamma I expressed. That is truly the most appropriate result for those who practise the way of Dhamma. So we must use wisdom to examine and think about that Dhamma teaching, for it will

encourage us to promote the methods of mindfulness and wisdom that enable us to continuously extract the *kilesas* that are within us.

“In the time of the Lord Buddha, they listened to Dhamma with *Opanayiko*¹⁴ – steadily bringing the Dhamma which they heard into themselves – and didn’t let it leak out and drift away, passing through their ears and hearts uselessly, which is how most of us listen to it nowadays. So the results of counteracting and uprooting the *kilesas* that we should expect to get while listening to Dhamma, hardly ever occur these days. In fact, people just as often accumulate *kilesas* while listening without being interested to consider whether they listen for the sake of Dhamma or for the sake of accumulating *kilesas*, which laugh at Dhamma.

“When the Lord Buddha or the *Sāvakas* gave a talk on Dhamma, what they said came from the pure and simple truth of Dhamma in their hearts. They didn’t give talks based on what they had committed to memory like we do nowadays. Their practices and the way they went about doing things of all kinds, from the most ordinary to the most subtle, were all done to the best of their ability, with full knowledge of both the Path and its stages, as well as the Fruition in its various levels from the lowest up to the highest, which is *vimutti* – complete liberation. Their discourses, which were absolutely pure Dhamma, were given without any hesitation or uncertainty. This Dhamma poured out from the flow of the heart, blending in with the flow of the sound of their voices so that those who heard it with a sincere intention to realise the truth were able to help themselves to the true Dhamma to their heart’s content. They never failed to gain some benefit from listening to

Dhamma. No matter how many *kilesas* there are, or how deeply ingrained they are, when mindfulness and wisdom shake them up and harass them without ceasing, the *kilesas* will be loosened up and uprooted bit by bit. In the end, the heart becomes an empty house void of all *kilesas*. Then the heart becomes filled with Dhamma in a way that is impossible to imagine.

“For that reason, we should make a determined effort to listen to Dhamma and to practise *bhāvanā* wholeheartedly. When we are sincere in the practice of Dhamma, then the *kilesas* will gradually be loosened up and uprooted without any doubt. This is as true now as it was at the time of the Lord Buddha. Those who practise the way truly are able to reach the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* in the same way as they used to then. This is what we should expect, for Dhamma is that ‘nature’ which is timeless and unchanging. The Middle Way of Practice, *Majjhima Paṭipadā*, has always been the most appropriate Dhamma for destroying the *kilesas* so that they vanish from the heart. There has never been anything more superior in any age. So guard against the *kilesas*, they are antagonistic to Dhamma. Don’t let them climb up on your head, or else Dhamma will immediately lose out. You must be very careful.

“There! I’ve said enough to act as a timely reminder to those loyal devotees who have made the effort to come and visit me following the custom of those who have respect for their teacher.”

VENERABLE AJAAN KHAO REMAINED SICK in the manner described above for more than four months. All the doctors who attended him, including Professor Ouay Ketasingh and several

other doctors and nursing staff from Udon General Hospital, were instrumental in helping him to recover. They did everything possible to help him from the start, treating him to the best of their ability until his health returned to normal due to the skill of the doctors and those who looked after him. After his recovery, he seemed to have a new lease of life, as though a new person was there in the place of the old *ajaan*.

I must ask the reader to forgive me for dealing so briefly with Ajaan Khao's lengthy illness. I realise how inadequate a description this is of what actually took place. But I am also old now, my health is not so good and I'm kept busy dealing with a lot of different matters, which is like trying to keep up with the hoof prints of oxen inside a pen.

The Great Kilesa Family

One strange thing about Ajaan Khao was that when he thought about a certain animal, that animal tended to come to him. For example, he might think about an elephant that he knew and had not seen for a long time — maybe years — wondering if perhaps a hunter had shot and killed it. Then, in the middle of the night, that elephant would come looking for him and walk right up to the hut where he was staying and stand there. It gently played with some of the trees and plants nearby to let him know that it had come, after which it disappeared into the surrounding forest and never returned again. The same sort of thing happened when he wondered if a tiger that he had seen often in the past might have been killed. Having thought

about that tiger in the middle of the day, that same night it came and roamed around the Wat where he was staying, before disappearing never to return again. He said that it was strange and unusual how whenever he thought about a specific animal, that same animal came looking for him almost every time. It was almost as if something went to tell them to pay him a visit. It seems likely that a Bhikkhu of such internal excellence as Ajaan Khao may have had a guardian *Deva* to watch over him and help him in various ways. At least, this is how many people believed it to be with Ajaan Khao, for whenever a thought of anything arose in him, it always seemed to illicit a response from the object of that thought. Otherwise, why should it come and search him out directly almost every time after the thought occurred to him?

As for the rest of us, we can think about such things time after time without receiving enough of a positive response to our thoughts and desires to let us know that we have the kind of superior virtue that Ajaan Khao possesses. Our thoughts tend to be so empty of real substance that they are more likely to trouble our hearts and make us suffer than anything else. Hardly anything truly good can be found in them at all. It's really disgraceful how our thoughts tend to bring us such a mass of *dukkha* every day that our brains become too dull and too weak to do any work.

VENERABLE AJAAN KHAO had a very resolute character; he always put forward great effort in doing the practice. He was very capable in walking *caṅkama*. Every day he used to walk in meditation from just after finishing his morning meal until

midday. Then he would rest to let his body recover before sitting in *samādhi* for one or two hours. After that, he would again return to the *caṅkama* path to do walking meditation. He did not set a specific time, but would continue walking until it was time to sweep the ground around the area where he was staying, usually alone in a secluded place. After sweeping the ground and taking a bath, he usually sat for awhile reflecting on various aspects of Dhamma that intrigued him at that time. Following that, he tended to prefer walking *caṅkama* to sitting in *samādhi*. He walked for three to five hours, or sometimes six hours, before resting for the night in what, during the dry season, was usually no more than an open bamboo platform. In the rainy season he would stay in a small thatched-roof hut that was enough to give him protection from the elements without being at all fancy. In fact, his hut would have appeared quite inadequate and pitiful in the eyes of most people who are used to the usual luxuries and amenities of life.

Before sitting to practise *samādhi bhāvanā*, he would bow down and pay homage to a *Buddha Rūpa* and do some chanting. He often chanted *suttas* for many hours at a time. After finishing chanting, he then sat down in *samādhi bhāvanā* and continued on for several hours before lying down to have some sleep. When walking *caṅkama*, he walked for long periods; when sitting in meditation, he sat for many hours at a time; and when standing still, he often stood for a very long time.¹⁵ When necessary, he could stand still on his meditation path and contemplate the meaning of Dhamma for hours until he had cleared up all the questions that arose from the aspect of Dhamma that he was investigating. Then he would go on walking *caṅkama* as before. When he was younger, he often

sat in meditation continuously from dusk until dawn – though even then he was no longer a youth, for he ordained after the age of thirty years. But he was truly a warrior and a fighter on the path of Dhamma.

He often gave Dhamma talks to Bhikkhus which were strong and forceful. Often he would tell them:

“You must understand that the *kilesa* family which has ruled over the hearts of all living beings in the three worlds of existence for countless ages is very tough and tenacious. Its members are very powerful and extremely clever at using so many deceptive tricks to turn living beings upside down and inside out that it is almost impossible to describe all of their deceitful ways. The family of the *kilesas* is larger and more widespread than the heavens and the oceans, and all the territory of the three worlds is within the range of its techniques and its power, for it casts an influence over everything. There is nowhere, no nook or cranny – even the size of a grain of sand – where its ingenious techniques and tricky methods do not permeate. It pervades all things large and small: homes are full of it, towns are full of it, countries are full of it, the world is full of it and the whole universe is full of it. There is no corner anywhere where this *kilesa* family is not lying in wait ready to overpower living beings. The whole universe constitutes the kingdom ruled by the extended family of the *kilesas*. Their rule is so well-established that it is very difficult for anyone anywhere to escape from their iron grip. In fact, only the Lord Buddha and the *Arahants* have been able to do so. If you are still unfamiliar with the magic spells they use to hypnotize all living beings, then please learn about them here and now. You

will gain mindfulness to warn you not to be complacent like you have been, and still are.

“What I have told you about the *kilesa* family comes from the indignation I felt for them at the time when I was struggling to defeat them. In the beginning, I was badly beaten by them. I often could not see any way to fight against them. But I would bounce back and attack them again each time. This went on in fits and starts, setting up mindfulness anew to fight them again time after time, only to lose out to them, back and forth continuously. As soon as I could raise my head again I would start to fight anew with the heart of a warrior, staking my life on the outcome. Fighting without retreating, I engaged the *kilesas* in battle while sitting, while walking and while standing. When I lay down, I would keep on battling them until I fell asleep. Every posture became a fighting posture. And although I lost out to them time after time, I never gave up, because I had yet to reach that point which I had determined to reach from the beginning, which was undisputed and complete victory. Only then could I stop fighting.

“When we fight and strive without drawing back or weakening, the strength and agility of our mindfulness and wisdom gradually grow and increase. The heart, which is used to being high-spirited and playful like a wild horse, can then gradually calm down. The heart, which up to this point has only memorised the meaning of *samādhi* as being ‘firm and unshakeable calm’, then gradually comes to experience *samādhi* as a firm and unshakeable calm arising within it. It then becomes quite clear that the *samādhi* which they wrote about in the ancient texts is true: it exists, it’s real and it arises in the heart. When you have actually experienced *samādhi* in

your own heart, all doubts about the *samādhi* described in the ancient texts will be cleared up. Then your heart will be peaceful and bright, open and free, where it had previously been so clogged up and constricted that your way forward had long been blocked.

“When this happened to me, it was an enlightening experience that led to the firm belief that I would surely be able to attain the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* in this lifetime. Just the calm experienced in *samādhi* was satisfying enough to make sure that I did not lack contentment in my life as a human being. The initial capital that I invested to amass the personal wealth which led to the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna*, which I was certain I would attain one day, was the resource of *samādhi* – calm and peace of heart. Once I had attained this and seen it quite clearly, I was optimistic that by striving in the same way I could gradually gain greater and greater wealth in the practice of Dhamma.

“By that time, the four *Iddhipāda* were becoming apparent. These four are:

1. *Chanda* – a sense of satisfaction in the practice of meditation; and a sense of satisfaction in the results of meditation that arise in the heart continuously like spring water constantly seeping out of the ground, making the heart feel refreshed and happy all the time in all situations.
2. *Viriya* – ceaseless effort. All activities should be accompanied by the effort to eradicate the great family of *kilesas* and all its members.
3. *Citta* – a genuine interest in maintaining the wonderful taste of Dhamma within the heart at all times. Try to

make sure that no dangerous poisons penetrate to spoil the taste of Dhamma.

4. *Vimāṃsa* – internal contemplations and investigations that diligently search out and probe into causes and their results in connection with matters concerning the heart.

“We must try to train the *citta*, which the *kilesas* have rendered stupid, in order to improve it so that it grows and develops in the direction of Dhamma – which is the skilfulness of mindfulness and wisdom. Then the heart will not be down and confused like it was before. The four *Iddhipādas* will also gain increased strength day by day, causing the four factors of *chanda*, *virīya*, *citta* and *vimāṃsa* to blend together into one and so gain the power needed to confront the *kilesas* any time at any place, with the sole aim of destroying them completely.

“When *samādhi* has been developed enough to become well established within the heart, and can be set up at any time, you should then make haste to go in the direction of wisdom by investigating all *dhammas*¹⁶, both internal and external, so they all converge into the *Ti-lakkhaṇa* – *annica*: impermanence, *dukkha*: discontent, *anattā*: void of any self essence. Then the four *Iddhipādas* begin to closely coordinate their work, until they become automatically functioning paths to power, following the lead of mindfulness and wisdom.

“From that point on, it would not be wrong to say that the struggle turns into hand-to-hand combat against the *kilesas*. Our fervent desire to gain freedom from *dukkha* gains strength with each passing moment, as we strive relentlessly for final

liberation. If it means dying in the struggle, then let death come on the field of battle; in other words, let death come while fighting with the spirit of a warrior, just that! If death is avoided, then may the *kilesas* clearly succumb to the onslaught and fall dead all around every time they are attacked by those most up-to-date of weapons, mindfulness and wisdom.

“At the beginning of meditation practice, before the *citta* attains a calm state of *samādhi*, even the meditator who strives boldly, putting his life on the line, will tend to end up badly ‘bruised’. The results that he gets will not seem commensurate with the effort he makes. This is because he is still not as skilled at fighting the *kilesas* as he should be. So it is necessary for someone who practices the way to accept the fact that he will be subjected to quite a lot of ‘bruising’ to begin with. Through experience he begins to understand the reasons for this, and he learns to adjust the nature of his effort and the methods that he uses to make them more suitable in the future. I’ve been through the same kind of experience myself. I nearly died before I was able to grasp the principles of meditation properly.

“When the practice for the development of wisdom dissects the body into its various parts, separating them out and examining them in terms of their true nature as being loathsome (*asubha*), unsatisfactory (*dukkha*), impermanent (*annica*) and without self-identity (*anattā*), until these truths gradually become quite clear, then our efforts at striving can be said to have ‘taken off’ and become bold and venturesome. The results will be evident in the development of mindfulness and wisdom, which step out to work in the field of the five *kammaṭṭhānas* – hair of the head (*kesā*), hair of the body (*loma*), nails (*nakhā*),

teeth (*danta*) and skin (*taco*), right through to the nature of phenomena (*sabhāva-dhamma*) everywhere. This is done with rapt attention to the examination, which allows us to see the truth of the physical body and its various parts until it has gone throughout every part and linked up with external phenomena such as exist everywhere — at which point we see that they are all of the same kind. This gets rid of all doubts and uncertainties about the body and leads steadily to the breaking of all attachment to it.

“The type of mindfulness and wisdom used to examine and analyse the physical body is very bold and venturesome, in fact, more so than that normally used in other areas of meditation. But it is appropriate to the task at hand — which is quite gross and needs bold and venturesome mindfulness and wisdom to succeed. It’s rather like an untrimmed lump of wood that requires heavy-handed methods to get it into shape. In a similar way, the mindfulness and wisdom used to examine the nature of the body, which is the grossest aspect of the *khandhas*, must act in accordance with what is appropriate to the task at hand. When mindfulness and wisdom finally know this *khandha* as it should be known and all attachment to it is broken, the examination will drop away of itself. It is similar to the work of a skilled carpenter who shapes up a piece of wood in whatever way he deems necessary. When a skilled carpenter who is shaping up a piece of wood reaches the stage where all the rough work is finished, he simply stops doing that kind of work without the need for anyone to tell him when to stop.

“The mental *khandhas*, which include: feeling (*vedanā*), memory (*saññā*), thought and imagination (*sankhāra*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*), are more subtle *khandhas*. So the way

that wisdom investigates them must also be correspondingly more subtle. The mindfulness and wisdom used to examine these four *khandhas* must exhibit a refined and subtle nature, much like water that permeates everywhere. The examination of the four mental *khandhas* leads directly to the *Ti-lakkhaṇa*. Any one of the three (*annica*, *dukkha* or *anattā*) may be used, depending on which one is the easiest to use in the investigation. But there is no scope for using the method of seeing loathsomeness (*asubha*) as there was when examining the body – which is the gross *khandha*.

“Any one of the four mental *khandhas* may be chosen for investigation. For instance, the *vedanā khandha* in which painful feeling occurs. There you must examine the relationship between the body, the *citta* and the painful feeling. Separate these factors out, and compare the nature of the physical body with the nature of feeling to find out what is what. Are these one and the same thing, or are they each of a different kind? Look at them, analyse them and see them clearly with true wisdom. Don’t merely go over them half-heartedly and then pass on – which is the way the *kilesas* do work, by bringing up laziness and feebleness to defeat us. This is not the way to progress in Dhamma, for Dhamma means going forward with true mindfulness and wisdom. You will never get to see the truth in any other way. You must investigate in the pattern of mindfulness and wisdom, until you fully understand the truth in every case.

“When investigating painful feeling, don’t wish for the pain to go away, because the more you want to get rid of it, the more you increase the Cause of *Dukkha*, the factor that creates more and more suffering. Rather, you should desire to know

and understand the truth of painful feeling that displays itself in the body and in the heart. This kind of desire is the Path (*Magga*) on which you trample all over the *kilesas*, which in turn gives rise to the Fruition of the Path (*Phala*) when you see the truth about bodily feeling very clearly. The more the *citta* doing the investigation desires to know and understand the truth at that time, the more its efforts to that end will increase in strength.

“So, when investigating painful feeling, you should be interested only in gaining insight into the true nature of pain, while at the same time pushing any desire to get rid of the pain out from the field of that investigation. Don’t let a desire for the pain’s disappearance obstruct your progress, otherwise that negative desire will destroy the positive desire for the Path and its Fruition without you being aware of it. Then you will fail to find what you are looking for. Instead, you will meet with only the fear of death, and a weak attitude that seeks dependence on other people. This is a matter of the *kilesas*, the causes of *dukkha*, doing their work in the field of your striving. That’s why I’m in a hurry to warn all of you who practice meditation, fearing that otherwise the *kilesas* will make a fool of you. The *kilesas* tend to move too fast for us to keep up and see through them. Only those who practice *citta bhāvanā* will be able to clearly understand the deceptive tricks of the various *kilesas*, and then drive them all out from their hearts completely.

“When examining painful feeling in the *khandhas*, especially in the body, don’t think about the severity of the pain or its possible consequences for your health. Instead, think about realising the true nature of the body, the feeling and the *citta*. All three of them are ready to display the truth to those prac-

tising the way with the boldness of a warrior who settles for nothing less than a clear and comprehensive understanding of the Buddha’s Noble Truths.

“The fear that causes us to want the pain to go away is the commander in chief of the *kilesa* family, which saps our energy and reduces our strength to resist until nothing is left. Please be aware and keep firmly in mind that we must not be deluded by his tricks, for he is waiting in ambush at the entrance to the path, ready to block our way and oppose our progress in Dhamma whenever there is a chance for us to go forward. Keep in mind that none of the *kilesas* are ever weak, or careless or clumsy in the same way that those who practice *bhāvanā* tend to be. We tend to simply roll over and allow the *kilesas* to drag us off and pound us to mincemeat, then cook us up as a tasty treat for the whole family.

“So, when you reach a crucial point in the battle between strong painful feeling and the mindfulness and wisdom that is investigating and analysing them so as to reach the truth, you must turn your mindfulness and wisdom to confront and to penetrate the pain. In other words, mindfulness and wisdom spin around and go down to that point in the body where the pain seems to be most severe. Mindfulness focuses the mind as wisdom disentangles the feeling, the body and the *citta*, which are all mixed up together, to find out whether these three are one and the same thing, or three separate entities. Analyse the situation between the body, the feeling and the *citta*, looking at them in precise detail, going back and forth and reviewing them over and over again with mindfulness and wisdom. Don’t be concerned about the severity of the pain, whether it will disappear or whether you will live or die, or anything else, like

the place where you're staying or the time of day. At that time you must be concerned only about the investigation you are doing to realise clearly the true nature of the body, the feeling and the *citta*, and nothing else. Mindfulness and wisdom must constantly keep the mind in the present moment and take precise and detailed note of the work that's being done. Don't allow the mind to deviate from the task at hand. Don't expect any particular result and don't speculate about the nature of the cause of *dukkha*, the path leading to its cessation, or its cessation, assuming that they must be like this or like that. All such thoughts merely open a door for the cause of *dukkha* to get in and do its work in the sphere of your efforts to practise the way. They do nothing but increase the amount of suffering you experience.

“Those of us who practise the way must constantly be very wary of the *kilesas*, so we cannot afford to relax and lose focus. At the same time, we should set our minds to do the investigation I've described, approaching it as though it were hand-to-hand combat. Whatever is good will survive to unite with the truth of Dhamma that is the true nature of freedom; whatever is bad will be destroyed. But don't let yourself be overwhelmed and destroyed in the struggle. You must battle courageously so that only the *kilesas* are destroyed. Any other result would be wrong and inappropriate for someone who practises the way like a warrior in battle who is determined to win unconditionally.

“When examining bodily pain in conjunction with the *citta*, you should separate it into three categories to realise its true nature by relentlessly using wisdom. Then you will come to know the truth of the body, the pain and the *citta* quite

clearly without any doubt remaining, which will gradually, one battle at a time, lead you to victory over the *kilesas*. Not only will you become fearless in the face of severe pain, but you will also be fearless in the face of death, which will be seen as a natural truth in the same way as the body, the feeling and the *citta*. Then you will gain freedom from the fear of death, which is one of the great deceits that the *kilesas* have perpetrated to delude us.

“Once the truth of them is clearly understood, each is seen to be true in its own sphere. The body is true in accordance with the conditions that apply to the body, the feeling is true in accordance with the conditions that apply to the feeling, and the *citta* is true in accordance with the conditions that apply to the *citta*. Each of them is true in its own way without influencing or disturbing the others. Even death is a true natural principle, so why get so shaken up about it and give the *kilesas* a reason to laugh at you?

“When mindfulness and wisdom investigate without retreating until they understand clearly the truth of the body, the feeling and the *citta*, one of several things happens:

1. All painful feeling vanishes in an instant at that moment.
2. Even if the pain does not disappear, it does not make contact with the *citta* as it used to.
3. The *citta* becomes profoundly calm and wonderful beyond belief.

4. The *citta* which has become calm manifests an amazing state of ‘just knowing’¹⁷, and nothing else is associated with it.
5. While the *citta* is fully in this state of calm, the body disappears entirely from awareness.
6. If the *citta* has investigated thoroughly until it has severed its connection with the pain, but has not become fully integrated and dropped into a state of oneness, it simply knows everything all around; while the body simply exists without any direct connection to the *citta*.

“These are the results that come from the investigative methods I have described. They are only found within the circle of practice. If you want to experience these results for yourself, you must practise following the methods outlined above. Then the explanations you have read will surely come true in your own practice.

“The remaining three mental groups (*nāma khandhas*), which include memory, thought construction and consciousness, are sometimes investigated in connection with the body in the same way as feeling. This point has been brought up for those who do the practice to think about and investigate on their own according to the circumstances that arise in their meditation. After the *citta* has seen into and let go of the *rūpa khandha* completely, the investigation of these three *nāma khandhas* becomes the main task. But as long as the *citta* still has not let go of the *rūpa khandha*, the investigation is bound to be inextricably linked with the physical body. It is the duty of each individual meditator to know this for himself.

He may know within himself that he should do an investigation that covers all the *khandhas*, or that he should focus on one particular *khandha*. Only the meditator himself will understand which investigations will be most conducive to letting go of his attachment to the *khandhas* at each level of practice.

“The *rūpa khandha* requires a very broad, sweeping kind of investigation. The human body is a very extensive and complex subject, so techniques used in the investigation cannot be fixed; they must be flexible. It depends on the individual to devise his own methods. You can mentally dissect the human body into its constituent parts, until all that remains is pieces where previously there was a person. You can investigate to see the body’s repulsive nature (*asubha*), focusing on its disgusting aspects. You can investigate the body in terms of any one of the *Ti-lakkaṇa* (*annica*, *dukkha* and *anattā*), or in terms of all three of them together. You should go on doing this until the *citta* becomes skilled and adept in both the field of *asubha* and in the field of the *Ti-lakkaṇa*, and further until all doubts have been alleviated. Then letting go of your attachment to the body will take place automatically on its own.

“When the *citta* has let go of the *rūpa khandha*, it will turn its attention to the three *nāma khandhas*, which are memory, thought formations and consciousness, pursuing them relentlessly with the absolute maximum of whatever mindfulness and wisdom it has. Because they are already at the stage of being fully proficient, mindfulness and wisdom will go about this work on their own without having to be in any way forced to do so. This adeptness of mindfulness and wisdom began displaying itself at the stage when the investigation of loathsomeness in

the body was practised. By the time the body had been completely let go of, this proficiency was already fully developed.

“When the *citta* then turns its attention to memory, thought formations and consciousness, it is already skilled and fully proficient at investigating into every corner and from all angles. The *citta* no longer shows any signs of sluggishness and apathy; rather, its incessant activity must be restrained when it becomes so absorbed in the investigation that it does not want to take a rest — which means resting in *samādhi*. At this stage, the terms *mahā-sati* and *mahā-paññā* that we have read about in the ancient texts will come to life in the mindfulness and wisdom that revolves ceaselessly around the *nāma khandhas*, investigating each and every aspect of them. There is no need to ask anyone else about it.

“From the point where the true nature of *asubha* is realised quite clearly by means of investigation, all laziness and weariness disappear entirely. They seem to be completely absent from the *citta*. For this reason, it becomes obvious that laziness and indifference are both just members of the *kilesa* family. They bind the legs and bind the hearts of living beings all the time so that they cannot step onto the path towards what is good and right.

“But as soon as they are torched by the ascetic fire of Dhamma (*tapā dhamma*), led by mindfulness and wisdom, they are burned to destruction. After that, laziness never appears in the *citta* again. All that remains is an intense concentration on all aspects of striving the whole time, except only in sleep. Even though the *kilesas* are still lurking in the heart, they don’t dare to obstruct one’s efforts in meditation. Then it’s only a matter of time before the *kilesas* are laid to rest for good. An

investigation of the three *nāma khandhas*, done by someone who has already developed superior mindfulness and wisdom when dealing with the *rūpa khandha*, will progress both quickly and proficiently. No other level of mindfulness and wisdom anywhere in the relative world of convention acts so quickly.

“The *citta* which has already let go of the *rūpa khandha* still has to train mindfulness and wisdom using the visual images of the physical body that arise in the thinking mind as their object. Mindfulness and wisdom track these images as they constantly arise and then cease, arise and cease, time after time until the images of the body appear and disappear as quickly as flashes of lightning. After that, the *citta* becomes empty of all bodily forms, and empty of all material forms, both external and internal. All interest in investigating these things dies away from then on.

“The mind’s full attention then turns to examine one or the other of the three *nāma khandhas*, or all three of them together at the same time. Since all three of these mental factors arise in the *citta* and cease in the *citta*, the *citta* itself now becomes the main target of the investigation. These conditions of the *citta* are observed as they arise and cease and are probed into with wisdom. When mindfulness and wisdom finally penetrate to the true nature of these *khandhas*, memory, thought and consciousness are seen to be transitory phenomena that continually appear and disappear without any actual continuity.

“The *citta* at this stage of investigating the *nāma khandas* is empty of everything from the external world. But it is still not empty of the three mental *khandhas*. So the *citta* must scrutinize all three carefully, seeing them as *anicca*, *dukkha* and

anattā time and time again until the *citta* is satisfied about the nature of the *khandhas*. Then all that remains is the *citta* on its own, which is the exclusive home of *avijjā* (fundamental ignorance). The investigation continues to focus on the association between the *citta* and the *nāma khandhas* until mindfulness and wisdom clearly understand the harmfulness and deceit of the *nāma khandhas* together with *avijjā*. Then the *avijjā* in the *citta* disintegrates, completely disappearing from the heart at that moment.

“When *avijjā* — which is the essence of the *kilesas* — vanishes from the *citta*, the *khandhas* — which are the tools of the *kilesas* and *avijjā* — do not disappear along with *avijjā*. Instead, they turn into tools of the pure *citta*, continuing on as undefiled *khandhas* without any *kilesas* getting in and taking charge as they used to. The pure *citta* and the pure Dhamma do not coerce the *khandhas* or cling to them in the way the *kilesas* did. The *citta* merely relies on the *khandhas* as its instruments in an impartial way.

“This is the work of cleansing the charnel grounds of birth and death from the heart so that they completely cease to exist. The wisest of people always cleanse themselves in this way. Please remember this well and strive to put it into practice so that all of you may realise the nature of the true Dhamma. At the moment the *citta* realises that Dhamma is pure throughout, it will also realise the true nature of all the Buddhas. Then all doubts about the true nature of the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha will vanish as well.

“The war between the *kilesas* and Dhamma that was waged on the battlefield of the heart then stops right there in the heart of the meditator, which becomes completely pure

after the *kilesas* are destroyed and disappear. At that point, all problems cease. So I implore my followers, both Bhikkhus and others, to get to know the Dhamma that shakes the world and wakes up all beings from the sleep of the *kilesas*. Get to know it right now while there are *ajāans* still teaching the way. Then you won't continually fall prey to the *kilesas* like you have in the past, which is a pitiful sight in the eyes of those wise men who are far more clever than the *kilesas* in every way. We who are lulled to sleep by the *kilesas* even while we are still awake are likely to see what is worthless as being valuable. We tend to see what is harmful as being good and what is meritorious as being evil. The heavy burden we bear is worn as a beautiful, shiny ornament that gives us great satisfaction. When we try to do something virtuous, we tend to do it casually in a careless manner, just going through the motions, so the results are hit-and-miss. We can't find any consistency or standard that we can rely on. Like a stick stuck into a pile of buffalo shit that's just waiting to fall over, we can never find any firm ground in ourselves. All that's left is a heart lacking any essential meaning, so all of our actions tend to be harmful to us. This happens because we neglect to train our habitual tendencies to act in the ways which are right and proper.

Because of this neglect, Bhikkhus become worthless monks and lay people become worthless persons. They are scattered among the good people of this world, whom they greatly outnumber. If we are to choose between the righteous and true Bhikkhus who are 'practising in the right way' (*suṇaṭṭipatti*) – or the righteous and true lay followers who are practising *dāna*, *sīla* and *bhāvanā* – and the worthless Bhikkhus and lay people, which path will we choose? We must examine this matter well

and decide quickly, for once we are dead, it will be too late. The virtue that we should expect to gain does not come simply from wearing the yellow robes, or from inviting Bhikkhus to chant the *kusala-mātikā* and accept *pāmsukūla* robes at our funeral. It depends solely on us training ourselves to have *kusala dhamma* – which means to be skilled at removing all bad things from our hearts while we are still alive. Don't say I didn't warn you!

“Please take note of this warning and remember it in your hearts; then always try to put it into practise by following the way of *attā hi attano nātho* – always try to rely on yourself as you walk the path, allowing Dhamma to light the way. Then you won't be an old-fashioned Bhikkhu or an old-fashioned lay person, behind the times in regard to goodness and virtue and the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* which the Lord Buddha taught in a fresh, contemporary manner with supreme *mettā*.

“I myself am growing older and older every day, and it is no longer easy for me to lead and teach my followers. Meanwhile, Bhikkhus and novices keep flooding into the monastery in larger and larger numbers to receive training and teaching. When you come to study and train with me, you must commit yourselves to the practice with real determination. Don't bring along a half-hearted attitude, damaging yourself and your friends who have set their hearts on the practice of Dhamma, for this will ruin both you and the others.

“The *kilesas* do not spare anyone, no matter who they are. We Bhikkhus and novices must understand that the *kilesas* have always been our enemies. They are not afraid of anybody, even monks. You must not think that they will bow down and offer their services to you, attending on you and taking care

that all the conditions for meditation practice are comfortable and convenient so that you, their great teacher, will not be troubled in any way. Although you have been ordained as a Bhikkhu, the basic nature of the *kilesas* in your heart has not changed – they have been squatting on your head since long before you ordained, and they will never agree to come down on their own. Because they have always been tyrants which bully Bhikkhus and lay people alike, they are not afraid of anyone anywhere in the world. And they will continue in this way endlessly if you don't hurry to get rid of them completely from this moment on, so that they are utterly destroyed and dispelled from the heart.

“Today I have opened my heart and explained to you everything I know about the path of practice. I have described the causes, which are the rigorous methods that are effective for fighting the *kilesas*; and the effects, which are the various results brought about by diligently following these methods. All of these I have disclosed to you without holding anything back. Nothing, however small, has been left hidden or concealed.

“So now each of you should take these methods and use them to the best of your ability to straighten out the onerous, unruly *kilesas* within yourselves. But be careful not to let the *kilesas* straighten you out – by making you lie prostrate before them – instead of you straightening them out. This is something which concerns me greatly, so I don't want to see it happen to you. I myself have been flattened by them in the past. I learned such a powerful lesson from it that I cannot help but warn all of you to avoid the same pitfall.”

VENERABLE AJAAN KHAO'S LIFE AND PRACTICE is a truly amazing story. It clearly illustrates the Dhamma teaching about the effectiveness of stubborn determination and anger when directed against one's own *kilesas*. He was strongly imbued with both of these factors in his practice of Dhamma. Ajaan Khao possessed a remarkably resolute character and liked to put his whole strength into whatever he did. He had been like that since he was a lay person, and when he was ordained he carried these characteristics over with him. The longer he was ordained in Buddhism, which is a true religion that teaches people to act truly in whatever they do, the more he felt impressed by the principles of Dhamma.

Both Ajaan Khao's mode of practice and his level of spiritual attainment are worthy of the utmost respect. He always preferred to practice in remote, secluded locations with such single-minded resolve that his diligence in this respect was unrivalled among his peers in the circle of *Dhutanga Bhikkhus*.

Ajaan Khao had a streak of very strong determination in his character, which may be seen from what has been written about him. He had no difficulty in sitting in meditation from dusk until dawn — he could sit all night whenever he chose to do so. Sitting in meditation practice from dusk to dawn is no small matter. Unless one is the kind of person who has a heart so full of courageous determination that it could cut through a diamond, one cannot do it. So we should give him our heartfelt praise and admiration. In ways such as this he was fully capable of being an inspiration to his disciples, enabling them to gain peace and happiness by following faithfully in his footsteps. When he was alive and still possessed the five *khandhas*, he had absolute certainty in himself that he had reached the

end of becoming and birth – this was completely self-evident to him. When it came time for him to let go of the *khandhas*, he attained the state of ultimate happiness (*Paramarū Sukham*) in all respects, totally free of all responsibilities and concerns.

May good fortune and blessings come to all of you who read the biography of this truly amazing spiritual warrior. As long as you do not give up your striving in the practice which leads to Dhamma, one day you will surely admire the pure treasure of Dhamma to your complete satisfaction, just as Ajaan Khao has in his own heart. This is bound to be the case, for Dhamma belongs to everybody who practises in the Right Way.



Ajaan Khao passed away on the 16th of May, 1983. He was 94 years old, and had been a monk for 64 years.