

The Life and Teaching of The Ven. Chao Khun Mongkol-Thepmuni

By T. Magness

© Copyrighted / All Rights Reserved by T. Magness

Free distribution & download for non-commercial purposes only

The electronic version of this book is created by Pittaya Wong on 1 January 2014

www.meditation101.org

CHAPTER I

It is not uncommon for a great spiritual personality to be born in poverty in remote villages out in the country and to emerge from it gradually into the wider scope of the world at large. In any case, whether such circumstances and nearness to nature deflects such minds to the investigation of life and its meaning, is of no ultimate significance, for a great personality is something more than just the circumstantial background from which he springs, and natural conditions may leave their impress on the character or they may not, as the case may be.

On Friday 10th of October 1885, in the village of Songpinong, Supanburi province, Sodh Mikaynoi, as he was named, was just another bundle of helpless humanity issuing into the world, Nevertheless, the intelligence and strength of character of this helpless bundle manifested itself even at an early age. One day when he was a year old, Sodh [literally means ‘fresh’] started to cry for some cakes, asking for his mother. The relative, in whose charge he was, tried to comfort him by saying that his mother had gone to work in the fields. At this he suddenly stopped crying. His mother (thought he) had to go to work in the fields. This meant only one thing. That he had been born in a family which was poor. From that day forth he never cried for cakes again.

If Sodh had set his mind to achieve anything he would get down to it and not leave off until it had been accomplished. In his chore of helping his parents on the farm, it so happened that the buffaloes often strayed off to mingle with the buffaloes of the neighbouring folk. Little as

he was, he would make off and not return until he had tracked them down, which often enough took him into the dark before he ended the quest, leading them back through the night.

His compassion for animals was great. Another of his chores was to help his folk plough the fields each morn. As it neared eleven o'clock, he would gaze up into the sky to note what time it was. His sister often took him to task for this, accusing him of only waiting for the moment to take time off. However, the old folk knew that this was not in his mind, but rather the old proverb that 'eleven kills the buffaloes', which was for him a grievous crime. He worked according to schedule, and no matter what anyone might say, stuck to his belief, of not working the animals after eleven. If he saw that they had been overworked and were terribly tired, he would lead them off for a bath before he let them loose to graze at freedom in the fields.

In this fashion he helped the old folk until the age of nine. His uncle having become a *bhikkhu* [a Buddhist male monk], his mother sent him to study under him at the village temple of Wat Songpinong. In those days, when *bhikkhus* were the only teachers and there were no public schools, it was customary for a *bhikkhu* not to take residence in one place for long. Thus, after only a few months his uncle moved to another temple, and he followed. The *bhikkhu* next moved to a temple in Thonburi [currently a part of Bangkok], across the river from Bangkok. As this was quite a distance from his native village, the young boy did not follow him, but was dispatched to study at Wat Bangpla in Nakorn Pathom [province] instead.

He was at that time eleven years of age. He remained there for two years, and increased his knowledge of Thai and Khmer. After which he returned to Songpinong. Then, when he turned fourteen, his father died. The responsibility of administering the family business of rice-farming fell on his young shoulders.

The family possessed tow river boats manned by a few labourers, whose task was to float the rice-produce down to Bangkok two or three times a month. Young Sodh displayed efficiency in the handling of his charge, and was loved and respected by his employees as a person of strong character and great energy. Once, when the boat was anchored at Bangkok, an employee of his brother-in-law stole a thousand baht. He went to the police and together they pursued the thief by boat all night until dawn. Sodh spied the thief at one of the windows of his house and the officer was informed. However, before the boat could come to shore the

thief had hid himself. Noticing that the man left races with his wet footsteps, he told the police to wait in front while he himself tracked him down. He found the man hiding in the haystacks, who as soon as he saw Sodh coming dived into them. But the police having been informed, he was pulled out and handcuffed. They then retrieved the cash.

Young Sodh supported his family up to the age of nineteen in this way, without misgiving, until a certain incident occurred. As he was returning to Songpinong with an empty boat, after a successful trip to Bangkok, he came to a spot where the river was in full spate. No headway could be made, and to evade its onrush the boat was forced to turn aside into a side canal. This canal was a small one and short, but it had the reputation of being infested with bandits. Those vessels which could pass through this canal without being attacked considered themselves blessed.

As it happened, Sodh's boat was the only one in sight. Thus, as he turned into this canal, the first intimations of fear began to take possession of him, and as a consequence considered the possibility of making himself scarce. And how? By changing positions with one of his employees, and letting the man steer whilst he went forward. For it was the usual procedure for these bandits to attack the steersman first, it being taken for granted that the steersman was almost always the owner of the boat. If he went forward to the prow he had the opportunity to defend himself and make his escape.

As soon as this idea took possession of him, he loaded his gun with eight bullets and went forward, ordering his employee to steer. During this exchange the boat was floating down into the most secluded part of the canal. It was only then that he began to be plagued with doubt about his project. After all, this man whom he engaged earned only twelve to thirteen baht, whereas he was not only the owner of the boat but the cash as well. Was it fitting, therefore, that he throw the risk of death upon him? It was indeed a bit too much!

These thoughts brought great disgust, even as compassion took its place, for it was only fitting that if anyone was to be slain it was he who should bear the brunt, letting the man escape if he could, for he still had a wife and child to maintain. With this decision, he ordered the man to return, whilst he retired to his former position at the stern, gun in hand.

By that time, however, the boat had drifted on and was approaching the mouth of the canal, where many cargo vessels were anchored, preparatory to crossing down the canal as soon as the waters rose. The vessels were so congested that each one could make little headway, and

the merchantmen were shouting among themselves. The danger of being attacked, therefore, had passed.

Sodh realized that the moment of crisis had been crossed, and was indeed a boon. This business of earning a living, brooded he, was a heavy load indeed. Bathed in sweat just like his father before him. His father had grown ill on such a trip like this, and as soon as disembarked grew worse, and finally died, and no efforts of his could save him from that. And he took nothing with him, his body just died. Not one of them had died with him, he had died alone. That too would be his fate, there was no escape from that. Always looking for money, no time to rest. If one did not hurry up and earn, one was considered a low fellow, without respect in the community. Whenever one associated with others one was ashamed of one's poverty. It was so from of old. His forefathers had lived like this, countless of them, down to his father and himself. And where had all of them gone to now? Dead, even as his father. And what of himself? Also, the same thing would happen without anything to show for it.

Brooding in this way after the strain of his escape, made him grow cold. Until he got so depressed that he lay down in the back and made believe that he was dead. That his ghost was wandering about seeking for his dead forbears and those friends he had loved. But they couldn't see him. And why? Because he was a ghost. So he threw clods of earth and sticks at them. But they thought that a ghost from the forest had come. And why? Because they couldn't see him. Drifting on seeking this one and that, but no one could see and take notice...

He forgot himself dreaming in this style. As soon as he got to his senses, he hurriedly lit incense- sticks. And made a vow: Let me not die. Let me become a monk. Once a monk let me not disrobe. Let me be a monk all my life.

These thoughts were found written amongst his papers.

The responsibility of supporting his family, however, rested on his young shoulders. It was not until three years later, when he was twenty-two, therefore, that he had the opportunity of entering a monastery.

In May of that year, after having loaded the boats with the rice harvest bound for Bangkok, he appointed one of the employees to take charge, while he himself made his way to Songpinong temple to prepare himself for ordination.

The second day after his ordination, he got down to the task of studying the Pali [an ancient Buddhist holy language] scriptures. He memorized the mantras and the *Patimokkha* [monastic rules]. However, while memorizing the scriptures he came to ‘*avijja paccaya*’, and wanted to know exactly what this meant. But he could get no explanation from his fellow *bhikkhus*. Even his teacher could not explain, saying instead:

“Good man, they never translate these things, you know, they just recite them. If you wish to know what it is you must go to Bangkok...”

He returned to his cell, thinking: the *bhikkhus* in this temple are stupid indeed. They can memorize and recite but know not what it is all about. What then is the use of memorizing anything? This is the door to stupidity, not knowing how much there is.

It was thus that he decided to head for Bangkok.

After only seven months in Songpinong temple, therefore, he went to his mother to request for permission to proceed to the capital. She was far from anxious to do so, but he persuaded her in the end, although she agreed with only half a heart. He asked for requisites for the trip, and resolved never to do so again.

He left Songpinong village and made straight for the temple of Wat Bodhi in Bangkok. Taking residence there, he was eager to learn all there was to know. Astrology, occult lore, even alchemy were in fashion, and he experimented with them all, since there was nothing to lose. He did not depreciate others’ knowledge as not genuine, on the contrary recognized that there was some truth in it. But he was dissatisfied. Finally, he abandoned them, giving away his books on the subjects, and devoted himself to *Vipassana*.

He had brought along a younger brother of his from Songpinong to study and practice. But in his fourth year as a *bhikkhu*, Candassaro as he was then called, fell ill and was removed to another temple to be attended to, his brother going with him.

He had a vision. A man appeared and offered him a bowl of sand. He took a pinch. When his brother was offered some, the boy took two handfuls. A few days after this vision the boy grew seriously ill. He himself suffered an attack. However, as soon as his illness died down, he took his brother hurriedly back to Songpinong for a cure. But the boy of eighteen did not recover, and died.

After the cremation, he returned to Wat Bodhi.

During his stay here many obstacles had to be overcome. On his early morning rounds for alms, as is a *bhikkhus* custom, he received insufficient food, sometimes not at all. Once he received only an orange.

The first day of his stay there he received nothing at all. The second day it was the same. Whereupon the thought perplexed him whether on who keeps the 227 rules of morality is to perish for lack of something substantial to eat. If so, then perish he would. Because if he failed to receive any rice at all he refused to eat. Better to starve, for if he died all the *bhikkhus* in the city would have enough to eat. Any why? Because the layfolk hearing of the news that a *bhikkhu* had perished of starvation, would soon feel heartily ashamed of themselves, and out of compassion feed them all.

On the third day at dawn he went out again. After walking for a long time he received only a ladleful of rice and one banana. It was rather late when he returned to his cell, weary after his walk and the empty stomach of two days grace. Without much delay, therefore, he set down to dispose of the meal, discriminating on the food as nourishment for the preservation of life. With his hand on the bowl, he disposed of a mouthful.

Hardly had he done so, however, when he happened to glance up, and saw a dog dragging its steps in the courtyard. Compassion getting the better of hunger, he mashed up the remaining portion of rice into a ball and gave it to the dog, together with half the banana.

Before parting with the food, however, he made an earnest wish. That starvation such as this never cross his path again. Only then did he part with the meal. Although the dog was emaciated and had probably never eaten anything for days, it ate only the rice and left the banana untouched.

Somewhat dismayed at this, he thought of retrieving the banana, but recalled that a *bhikkhu* does not take back something which he has already given away, it was not fitting, therefore, to do so. Unless, of course, someone were to re-offer it, with both hands, as is the rule. But at that time and place no such personage presented himself to oblige.

From that day forth, however, he received sufficient food. Enough even to share with his fellow *bhikkhus*. Besides this, some layfolk offered to provide him with a tiffin-set of food every day from that pay forth.

Nevertheless, as a result of this lesson, Candassaro [Ven. Sodh's Pali monastic name which means 'the moon'] vowed that as soon as it was in his means to do so, he would establish a

kitchen whereby food could be distributed to the monks and novices, without encountering such stringency, saying them all a waste of time going the round for alms when they could devote themselves to study instead.

This was fulfilled much later, after he became Abbot of Wat Paknam, where he established a kitchen and refectory at a cost of 360,000 baht, feeding monks, novices, *upasakas* [laymen], and *upasikas* [laywomen] of about 900 strong. The *upasikas* were detailed to run the kitchen. In the beginning rice had to be shipped from the family farm in Songpinong. Later, however, help came from layfolk and continues down to this day.

In this respect, he was the first *bhikkhu* of this sort to achieve such a project, fulfilling his old vow. There is this anecdote to throw into focus his ability as a provider of food.

Once, the rice supply in the store had reached its dregs, and there seemed no prospect of a fresh supply for the meal next day. The *bhikkhu* in charge of the store was at his wits end, and went to inform the Abbot. He was told not to worry and to be calm, there would be rice. The *bhikkhu*, however, had his doubts and returned to his cell to brood on the problem.

That evening, boats filled to the brim with rice came to anchor right in front to the Wat, and sackfuls of rice were unloaded and carried to the store, filling it up, to the amazement of those in charge.

But this was years later. At Wat Bodhi he continued his studies, and did translations of the scriptures. But he did not finish his course. He failed in his examination, and did not continue. He later recalled, that if he had passed it and attained to a high degree of scholarship, the *Sangha* [community of *Bhikkhus*] authorities would have recruited him to work along those lines, to the loss of *Vipassana*. As it was, whenever he could find time off from the Pali courses, he was practicing *Vipassana* at this centre or that.

At one of these centres (the fifth he visited), he managed to perceive a bright and lucent sphere, the size of the yoke of an egg, perceived right in the centre of the diaphragm. Which showed that his teacher's method bore results. His teacher testified to his attainment and elected him to teach.

But he was dissatisfied. If he himself knew only this, was he in the position to teach? He, therefore, taught no one. He also abandoned his Pali course.

Considering that it was about time that he become a wandering *bhikkhu*, he requested his aunt for a forest umbrella under which to sleep, and refused to take one from anyone else, wishing her to receive the merit arising from the gift, due to her past services rendered him.

He left for the provinces, returned after a short period, and gave away the umbrella to another *bhikkhu*. Later, he made a second trip, and got another umbrella from the same aunt. He walked as far as his native village and took up residence in the ruins of an abandoned temple there. As he was there he saw village boys letting buffaloes stray into the temple precincts, and warned them to refrain, because of the sacrilege incurred in stamping over sacred ground. They, however, refused to heed. He therefore told them to dig up the place, and they discovered numerous Buddha images. Which brought him into great respect.

He, however, returned to Wat Bodhi.

By now he had been in the monkhood for eleven years. He had stopped his Pali course because he had already attained proficiency in the translation of the scriptures, and was satisfied. As for Pali, there was no end to the translation of it. It was enough that he could read and understand. He had fulfilled his wish which he made in the beginning of his studies at Songpinong temple, to be able to translate the Mahasatipatthana Sutta, which he had been unable to do. Now that he had achieved his aim, it was best to devote all his time to *Vipassana*.

Looking around him, he considered Wat Bodhi with its wide terraces a fit place for meditation. However, recalling the good services of the Abbot of Wat Bangkuvieng, who had provided him with many scriptures, he thought it only fitting that he take residence in that temple for a while, and discourse to the *bhikkhus* and layfolk there as part of repaying his debt.

It was thus that he went there to reside.

After the season of rains, he recalled that his real purpose in becoming a *bhikkhu* was to seek the truth, and to remain a *bhikkhu* till the end of his days. Now twelve years had elapsed, and that truth, that reality, which Buddha knew, which Buddha beheld, he had failed to attain, neither knew nor saw. It was time indeed to devote himself to meditation once and for all. If he perished in the process, then he perished. At least it was better than dying whilst he had been a layman.

It was thus that on the full moon day of September of that year, he retired to the *Uposatha* [Buddha Hall or Buddhist chapel] with the purpose of meditation. It was already evening and there was no one around. Before commencing, however, he invoked for aid and light. If not complete insight, at least a little portion of the truth which Buddha had beheld, had known. However, if adversity for the *Sasana* [religion] should result from this, then let this opportunity pass from him. But if it should be beneficial, then let this boon be his, for he would be a witness to it for the rest of his days.

It was only then that he prepared himself to meditate in the regular posture, determined that if once he sat down thus and failed to attain to vision, he would not rise.

At that moment, however, he recalled the ants. Which were crawling back and forth in the crevices of the stone slabs. Picking up a kerosene bottle, therefore, he wet his finger with it to draw a circle round him and thus prevent the ants from disturbing his meditation. As his finger touched the slabs, he recalled that only a moment ago he had made certain vows, and here he was already thinking of the ants. The thought of which made him ashamed, wherewith the bottle was put away.

Once having settled himself down to meditate, he forgot the time, and many hours must have passed, although there was no clock to tell. But although all was still and dark in this lonely place, the hours had not passed in vain. For it was during this session that he perceived the truth, the reality, the path his Master before him had trodden.

Nevertheless, this realization was not without disturbing thoughts. For the Dhamma was indeed profound. If one wished to penetrate it, one had to sink all perception, memory, thought, and knowledge right down into the diaphragm and stop at just this point. But as soon as stopped, it died. As soon as died, again rose. That was the truth. The truth was centered right at this point. If concentration did not sink exactly to centre here, right into the void of the sphere which appeared, then for certain nothing could be seen, nothing at all.

It was only for a time that these thoughts disturbed him. Apprehensive that what already had been gained would vanish by thinking on it thus, he applied himself again.

After a certain interval, a temple came into his vision. He remembered it at once as Wat Bangpla, the temple in which he had studied long ago when a boy of eleven. At that moment he felt himself already inside that temple. Which made him realize that perhaps in this temple there might be someone ripe for this path.

From that night forth, he delved deeper into this technique of concentration. The deeper he delved, the more profound it became. Thus he continued for more than a month. Until the season of rains had passed.

After receiving the *Kathin* gifts of robes and requisites, as is the custom, he took his farewell of the Abbot, and proceeded to Wat Bangpla, the temple he had seen in his vision, with the purpose of instructing any *bhikkhu* anxious to learn.

After four months there, three *bhikkhus* attained to a degree of insight, together with four layfolk. He then took one of the *bhikkhus* with him to Wat Songpinong.

At Wat Songpinong one *bhikkhu* attained to a degree of insight.

After the season of rains, in his thirteenth year as a *bhikkhu*, he proceeded to Wat Pratusarn, the Abbot of which had ordained him. But his old master was dead. He stayed there for four months, and during that time many were the layfolk who came, requesting him to discourse on the Dhamma. He did so once, to the great satisfaction of all. Again he was invited to deliver a sermon. But he knew that if he did so the present Abbot would be displeased. So before delivering it, he packed his things ready for departure, delivered the sermon, and then went to the Abbot to take his farewell. He then departed immediately, to avoid unwholesome repercussions, making his excuses that he had already arranged to take some *bhikkhus* to the capital.

He returned to Songpinong and took four *bhikkhus* with him to Bangkok to study Pali at Wat Bodhi.

Wat Paknam, of which the Chao Khun [literally means Monk-Lord] later became Abbot, was erected during the period of Ayudhya was capital of Thailand, some five centuries earlier. Forty years ago, when the Chao Khun first arrived there, it was deteriorating in neglect. Discipline among the resident monk and novices was lax, after the decease of its Abbot, and also because of lack of student facilities. Due to this state of things, the Chao Khun was detailed to go there and take over. Thinking at first that he would reside there for only three months and then return, he, however was ordered to hold fast and warned that unless the earth quaked he had better not return. Which was tantamount to a sentence.

As soon as he took over, he saw to it that the resident monks and novices did not remain idle, but that they either study the scriptures or meditate. By his stern measures he thereafter became unpopular, not only among the *bhikkhus*, who came from families in the district, but

also among the layfolk, who began to spread unwholesome gossip. The layfolk who respected him were in the minority.

The situation deteriorated to such a point that drunks got intoxicated in the temple precincts and misbehaved, even going so far as to think of plunder and murder, as the *bhikkhus* were meeting in conclave.

Then one night eight men came along with the intention of disposing of the Chao Khun altogether, even as he was in the meditation room. One of the *bhikkhus* on watch went out in defense. Hearing of the disturbance, the Abbot went out to prevent him, saying:

“We *bhikkhus* must never fight, nor run. This is the only way to win at all times.”

The ruffians seeing that things were not so good, backed off into the dark.

These obstacles did not dismay the Abbot, because he considered them to be occasions for the augmenting of merit and *parami* [perfection]. Despite the obstacles the teaching spread. And as he divided his time to administering to the affairs of the temple, he continued to delve deeper into *Vipassana*.

The news of his activities spread to the ears of Somdech Vanarat (the late) who had once been his teacher. One day the Somdech [a term used to address a high rank Thai Buddhist monk comparable to a cardinal] called him to task, saying:

“Don’t be crazy, old fellow! Don’t you know that nowadays there are no more *Arahattas* [the fully enlightened persons] in the world? Better come along and help us to administer the *Sangha*!”

That his old teacher wished him well he knew. But this Dhamma was profound, and if one did not perceive its profundity it was only natural to be without faith. Thus he listened in respect. And continued his *Vipassana*.

This brought him into great disfavor with the Somdech. When the old man fell ill, however, the Chao Khun dispatched some of his disciples to cure him by meditation techniques. It was only then that the Somdech thought it worthwhile enough to read the Chao Khun’s sermons on the ‘Dhammakaya’ meditation, which had been compiled and published by layfolk. In his study of this meditation he was assisted with advice from the Chao Khun himself.

As a result, the Somdech began to believe and in fact became rather keen. So much so that he sent for the authority in charge, and ordered him to prepare the necessary papers for

electing the Chao Khun as an ordainer of *bhikkhus*. To which the authority replied: Sadhu! Signifying his good wish.

Regarding his healing powers, the Chao Khun was always being implored to heal layfolk, who did not have to do anything, not even come in person, but just post a letter stating name, time, date of birth, and the illness, and that was enough. There would be long distance healing by mind. No trouble and no fuss.

When he first came to Wat Paknam, there were only 13 *bhikkhus* and novices, together with a few nuns. Keen, however, that all should do something, whether it be the study of Pali or *Vipassana*, the temple was soon established as a seat of learning. Until in 1939 a three-storied edifice, 60 metres long and 11 metres in width, costing about 2.5 million baht, was built up as a Pali Institute. Which up to this day about a thousand *bhikkhus* and *samaneras* [novice monk] frequent, not only the resident monks and novices but from other temples.

In 1955 the Chao Khun was bestowed the title and ecclesiastical rank of Phra Mongkol Rajmuni [literally means the auspicious royal sage], which was later followed by Chao Khun Phra Mongkol Thepmuni [literally means the auspicious deity sage].

As the teaching spread, *bhikkhus* and nuns carried the message out into the provinces. Among the hundred thousands who at some time or other practiced the method, a few thousands attained the ‘Dhammakaya’ degree of insight.

Parallel to this activity, open to the public at large, the Chao Khun supervised day and night relay meditation teams comprised of *bhikkhus* devoted to *Vipassana* research. Another team of nuns, walled off in a separate recess, did their own meditation, also in relays, twenty four hours, day in and day out. The Chao Khun once in a discourse exhorted the *bhikkhus* thus:

“You *bhikkhus*, try hard to attain the Dhammakaya in the first place. Then I will teach you for another twenty years, and still there will no end to that which can be learned.”

CHAPTER II

The personality of a great man has its reflection in the attitude of those who come into his orbit and are influenced by his conduct. It is therefore informative to see him through their

eyes, because their close contact preserves details which a distant survey fails to note. Thus, a judge in the high court for thirty two years, a Pali scholar and a one-time *bhikkhu*, observes:

“The occasion whereby I came across the Abbot and his teaching was of special significance to me. For at that time Thailand was in the throes of war (1945), with bombs falling out of the skies upon Bangkok and its environs, with the purpose of ousting the Japanese. Because of this I found it wise to retire for the time being and retreated to the suburbs. I took the opportunity at that time of visiting various *Wats* (temples) so as to increase my knowledge of the Buddha *Sasana*. I received much fresh and peculiar knowledge in this way.

“However, it struck me as also something strange that when I displayed my desire to get down to active practice of *Vipassana* and asked for light on this matter, the information I received was not made clear and failed to appease me. It was as though such knowledge was top secret. So it seemed to me when in some temples I saw boxes full of books labeled in Cambodian letters outside ‘*Vipassana*’. I could make out the lettering because I had studied Cambodian, I wished indeed to know what the boxes held but dared not open them without permission. Receiving no satisfactory reply to my questions I received instead the impression that *Vipassana* was something to be found only in ancient books, as something antique.

“One day as I was seated talking to an old lady, a neighbor of mine, who had also retreated to the suburbs to evade the bombs, a man came along and started talking about how he had once learnt *Vipassana* from a nun. I pressed for more information on this point, expressing the view that *Vipassana* was the practice of meditating on dead corpses. The old lady cut in at once, saying that was not *Vipassana* but only meditation on impermanence. I therefore asked her what *Vipassana* was. And was told that it was the investigation and perception of the realms of heaven and hell and *Nibbana* [Nirvana].

“I was confounded. The man who was present was also amazed. Never in my days of learning the written Dhamma had I heard it expressed like this before, in such a casual tone. It is true that in the scriptures there was mention of Moggallana Thera [one of the two most prominent disciple monks of the Lord Buddha] and others visiting such places, but there was no mention of that being *Vipassana*. As for *Nibbana*, it was beyond thought or speech, as far as I was concerned. Nevertheless, the old lady persisted in her view, saying that she would give me a book to read, concerning the teaching of the Abbot of Wat Paknam.

“However, it was much later that I came across a book dealing with the Abbot’s meditation techniques. Again I was astounded. Especially when at the end of the book it said that there

was much more knowledge to be gained, but only for the advanced student. It is needless to say that I was in a dubious mood. However, thinking to myself that no matter how much knowledge one may already possess there was always still more to learn, and to think one already possessed all knowledge was the conceit of a fool. I decided to find out for myself if there was indeed something to be learnt from the meditation methods advised.

“One day I availed myself of the opportunity and visited Wat Paknam. The Abbot was at the eleven o’clock meal, and there were many seated around awaiting his good pleasure. I went forward to make my obeisance, expressing also my desire to learn. He bid me wait a while and went on with his meal in silence.

“Eventually, opportunity was offered me to come closer and converse. He began to discourse on the virtues of the Buddha, explaining as he went each virtue. As I listened I was impressed by the profundity of his exegesis, expressed in a manner which I had never heard before.

“With the memory of this discourse ringing in my ears, I in the days which followed pursued my intention of getting to know his teaching more in detail. He discoursed on the Dhamma on every full moon and quarter days, as well as Sunday. His discourses leant heavily in the direction of concentration practice. Listening in the temple on these days I realized that if the teaching was not recorded it would soon be forgotten, which would be a waste, not to mention tiring him out by constant repetition, I therefore came up with the suggestion that these oral addresses should be recorded. He agreed to my suggestion, and I started to jot down the teaching.

“As far as I know, *bhikkhus* who practice meditation seldom possess the happy gift of expression. Those who preached well were more often than not scholars of the written word. However, I learnt later that the Abbot was himself once a Pali scholar, and it was due to his early training that he was able to express all *dhammas* in the light of his broad background. He would announce his subject in Pali and deliver the sermons in relation to concentration practice, interlarding the discourse with a supporting amount of Pali terms. In this way he never expounded at random but always substantiated his meaning from the Pali text. He relied with special emphasis on the Maha Satipatthana Sutta for this.

“The manner in which the Chao Khun regulated his days, was as follows: (1) leading the *bhikkhus* and *samaneras* twice a day, morning and evening, in paying homage to the Triple Gem in the Uposatha, and ending with a sermon. (2) sermons delivered to the public

at large on each full moon, quarter moon, and Sundays. (3) meditation practice both night and day with the *bhikkhus*, the nuns in a separate section. (4) every Thursday at 2 o'clock in the afternoon a meditation class open to the public. (5) supervising a Pali Institute where qualified teachers taught the scriptures.

“Unless absolutely necessary, the Abbot never moved outside the precincts of the Wat, his efforts and time being devoted exclusively to the teaching of meditation. If laymen invited him out to partake of meals at their homes he would evade the invitation by enquiring if another *bhikkhu* could go in his stead. Nevertheless, he received guests at certain regular hours. Once after the eleven o'clock meal, and again at 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Other than these times he was usually to be found supervising classes of meditation among the *bhikkhus*.

“Luang Por (which means father, and was the name by which he was referred to by his disciples) stressed meditation, and his teaching leant heavily in the direction of ultimate truth. I have heard him discourse week after week on the various modes of conditionality (*paccayas*) as found in the Abhidhamma [high Dhamma].

“As far as I have observed from close contact, despite the false and unwholesome rumours spread about him, he was free from blemish in all these respects. Besides possessing a broad and profound knowledge of the scriptures, he was a master in discourse, and without an equal in meditation techniques...”

What follows is the account of a layman who after overhearing some remarks of the Chao Khun's was moved to some heart-searching, ending in his request to be ordained.

“Gathering from rumours and the newspapers that a foreigner was soon to be ordained at Wat Paknam on Visakha day [Lord Buddha's birthday], I hastened to pay my yearly visits there and to be present at the ordination rites. Accompanied by a friend, I went to pay my respects to Luang Por on Visakha's eve.

“Many guests were present, and as he talked to them I listened with an attentive ear. Some of the anecdotes he told stimulated profound emotions, so that I was often carried away. Others were tinged with sadness, so that I find it difficult to express. One thing, however, which stuck in my mind was his air of melancholy resignation as he spoke of the ordination ceremony to take place next day. Said he:

“Tomorrow, a foreigner is going to be ordained. He has sacrificed his personal happiness, and leaving his people crossed the seas to seek that which is good and true. To speak the truth, we Thai are Buddhists, who pay homage to the *Buddha Sasana* [Buddhist religion]. Is it not fitting that we should seek some opportunity to live with that which is good and true, and not let the days pass by to our loss?”

“That night as I lay sleepless in the meditation room, his words continued to echo in my ears. That these foreigners came from far off places to seek that which is good and true. We are Buddhists, so close to the *Sasana*, and should not we be interested enough to go in search, as they, of that which is good and true?...

“My thoughts were in bad shape, and as I reflected on my life up to now I knew not on what to stand. What had I which could serve me as a stay, steadfast and true? Nothing at all. Each day muddled up in work and a household life, always on the go to build up prospects for the future, just each day ahead. It was all right so long as I could use it all. Other than that there was nothing that this worldly life could do for me. If I went on at this rate there would be no end to all the heartache. There would be no escape from the daily round, and leading such a life without meaning I would simply grow old in vain.

“Thinking in this somber strain I remembered the saying that those who know the taste of the Dhamma even for one day are better than those who know it not, even though they live up to a hundred years. At this turning point in my life this saying seemed only too true. I was going on fifty-nine, and if I didn’t take the opportunity now, then when? I would surely grow old and die in vain.

“It was a sleepless night for me. Neither had I a friend in whom to confide to ease my distress, or from whom to receive advice. I had no one but myself. I was my own true friend. But how could I warm or console myself? I brooded over the thought of giving up the household life, full of vexation and pain as it was without a break. How long was I going to wait? Even a foreigner wished to be ordained. I was much closer to the *Sasana*, almost like an owner, and could I remain indifferent and fail to receive some solace from it after all?

“The result of these deliberations with myself ended in my decision to leave the household life for good and be ordained. This decision once taken gave me relief, as though a great load had been lifted and pushed away from my mind.

“At dawn the next day, Visakha day, I went to Luang Por and expressed my desire, saying: I have been learning this Dhamma with you for five to six years now, but still I haven’t attained the Dhammakaya teaching. Now I think I possess sufficient faith and courage to be ordained, so that I may have the opportunity to practice in real earnest once and for all.

“He ordained me, according to my desire, and I began to practice in earnest for the sake of that which is good and true...”

Here follows the account of a *bhikkhu* who considers his ordination to be a special one, of honour, unique in this respect.

“You would not think that by looking at his broad face and nose, but failing to notice a wrinkle here or there, that this man was going on for seventy. His penetrating eyes and bearing showed him at once to be one accustomed to command, and one did to fail to gain the impression that although his living was plain, his plane of consciousness was not.

“For all the austerity of his appearance, however, in the depths of his eyes as he put forth both his hands to accept the robes I presented, after I had recited the Pali formula requesting ordination, I looked carefully, and saw compassion.

“This of whom I speak is no other than my venerable initiator Phra Khun Bhavanakosol (as his title then was), who began to address me:

“You have now had the faith to present the robes in regular seamed condition, which is the symbol of the *Arahatta*, as prescribed by the Blessed One, in the middle of this assembly of monks, requesting to become a *bhikkhu* in the *Buddha Sasana*, as a sign of your goodwill and wish...”

“He delivered this in a plain clear voice, and as he paused for a little breath, lifted up his eyes for a moment to gaze deeply into mine. Eyes which struck me with its strength. And then continued:

“ ‘In an ordination such as this, the first thing of importance is to stimulate faith, belief, keenness, firmness, rooted in the Triple Gem, which is the Buddha, Dhamma, and *Sangha*. This is so because the Blessed One is the owner of the *Sasana* and has granted permission that *bhikkhus* be ordained. It is necessary, therefore, that you as a first step study the virtues of the Blessed One...’

“He paused, and gazed at me with his penetrating eyes, as though to read whether I was in earnest enough to take in all that he said. He continued to expatiate on the qualities of wisdom, purity, and compassion of the Buddha, impressing me with emphasis of depth.

“He kept looking at me over and over again, as though he would impress my image in his memory, However, whenever my eyes met his I quickly slanted them aside, unable to take the power of his.

“He continued to dissert on the merit of meeting and entering the *Buddha Sasana* at all, becoming its heir. I had to shift myself a little to ease my foot, for it was rather numb and I was tired, not having been accustomed to such positions before for so long. But I was determined to fulfill my part of the bargain, and bore up. Luang Por seemed to understand my distress and gazed at me with compassion, as he continued.

“ ‘A *bhikkhu* has to understand what *kammatthana* is, because meditation is the means whereby restlessness may be controlled, is the way whereby Samadhi arises and the base for wisdom hence forth..’

“He then went on to discourse about the four elements and the 32 constituent parts of the body, which the novice had to scrutinize and regard as unwholesome. He reduced the formula to only five, giving the Pali words, *kesa* (hair), *loma* etc, and telling me to repeat them after him, by direct order and reverse.

“Then all was silence. I waited for him to place the yellow scarf around my neck, and order me to retire to robe myself, as is the usual custom. For as far as I had observed from ceremonies of ordination, at this moment this was always the normal procedure. But he did nothing of the sort. Instead he coolly went on:

“ ‘Do you recall the hair which was shaved off your head before you came here requesting ordination? Did you not take up a little in your hand and scrutinize it?’

“ I replied in the affirmative, but at heart remained perplexed. For I could not comprehend the drift of all these questions. Completely in the dark I nevertheless hurried in my mind to anticipate if there was anything he was testing me with. But before I could discover a solution, he continued:

“ ‘All right, then. Close your eyes and place the image of that hair in the centre of your body, two finger-breadths above your navel. Sink it down right in the centre there, in the cross-

section as of a string strung from right to left and front to back, at the point of intersection there. Do as you are told.’

“ I did as I was told, but my doubts did not decrease. He continued.

“ ‘Sink all your thoughts and memory down into the centre there, and observe carefully.’

“ But all was dark as far as I was concerned. After all, what did he expect me to see with my eyes closed? Waiting to see what was next, I became more dubious with each minute. I was tired already, and if his intention was to try me out then the test had failed, for I saw nothing at all. Nevertheless, he persisted.

“ To his question whether I saw anything, I hastily replied in the negative.

“ ‘ Stop your thoughts, keep them still. Think of your hair, let it arise, see it, right there in the centre. Try and think of it alone. Do so and you will see’.

“ I did as I was told. I do not know exactly for how long I struggled with the thoughts which troubled me. And as I struggled for control, I consoled myself with the thought that all this must have some meaning after all, otherwise, he would not be wasting all our time.

“ Strange indeed, but after a time I did begin to see something. Slowly it arose in the dark of me, a mere blur. Gradually, however, it grew clearer. It became so clear in the end that it was as though I was gazing at it with my eyes open wide. But my eyes were shut. What was it that I saw? The hair which had been shaved off my head. At this I began to grow rather excited, unable to suppress myself.

“ I see, I see! Said I in a trembling voice.

“ To his question what it was that I saw, and whether it was hair, I replied at once in the affirmative. At the same time I felt relieved, thinking that all was settled and now I could go out and robe myself. But no, it was not to end as fast as I thought.

“ ‘ Look carefully. That hair which see, in what direction are then ends of it pointing? Which way is the shaven portion pointing? In what manner is the middle portion curved?

“ I sharpened my sight so as to be able to answer him. And as soon as I saw clearly, I replied. This, thought I, is the end of the matter. But again I was wrong. He was commanding me to look on. I obeyed, though not without perplexity. After all, hair was hair, and I had already seen it. What then?

“ I sat on trying to do as I was told. To the doubts which arose, I consoled myself with the thought that when he said I would see hair, I saw hair. No doubt, in a moment I would be seeing something else...

“ As I sat there for I know not how long, I gradually began to experience strange sensations of bliss. My body was growing lighter and lighter in a peculiar way. Despite the buoyancy of my body, however, the heart of me seemed completely at ease. So at ease, fact, that I find it difficult to express. The hair which in the beginning I had seen, gradually eased away from my vision, until it vanished. And in its place a circle of light gradually appeared, and I felt more at ease than ever.

“ At first I saw only a circle of light. Gradually, however, it seemed to condense itself. Then it began to expand.

“ It was like this for some time, with the circle as large as a gold coin. Radiance, spread out from this circle, and as I gazed on my attention was drawn towards centre. Then I observed that it was really like a clear crystal sphere, in appearance as large as the moon when it floats up in an empty sky. Apprehensive that this vision would disappear, I fixed my gaze thereon. I had lost my sense of weariness in the legs, and could not exactly say when and how it had left me.

‘ ‘ Do you see anything else?’ The soft voice of Luang Por came to my ears.

“ ‘ I see light, a sphere the size of a lime, returned I.

“ ‘ All right. That is enough for today. Remember this sphere. Whenever you close your eyes you will see it, whenever your eyes are open you will see it. At no matter what time of the day you will see it. You will always see it. In fact, be careful, and never lose it.’

“ Having opened my eyes, I saw that he was pleased and satisfied. Said he:

“ ‘ That clear sphere is the beginning. It is the path of the Blessed One whereby he attained Nibbana. It is the only path, the straight, path there is no other path. Remember this Never let it perish from your sight.’

‘ With this, he gradually extracted the yellow scarf from the folded package of robes and placed it round my neck, as I bent down to receive it.’

“ ‘ Go now and robe yourself, and return to receive the Triple Refuge...’

“ When I lifted my eyes to the clock on the temple wall, I blinked. For to my surprise it was 3.36 p.m. I had been seated there in the centre of this venerable assembly for a complete hour and a half. I half kept the Abbot, the *bhikkhus*, my relatives and friends who had come to share in the merit of my ordination, waiting for all this length of time. I alone had caused all the difficulty and delay. Luang Por had gone out of his way to show me how to concentrate, to show me the path whereby the defilements are shed away, to enter the coolness and shade, to the wisdom that is the *Buddha Sasana*. Was it possible? Had this honour really been bestowed me? It had. For there they were. The old Abbot, the *bhikkhu* assembly present as witnesses ushering me into the brother hood, and all those layfolk who were my relatives and friends. And they were tired. But Luang Por had not seemed to trouble himself with it at all. He had ignored his own tiredness, and left those folk in their tiredness, just to show one person the way to the happy shade. This was a great privilege, and is it any wonder therefore that I consider my ordination to be one of honour, a great boon?...”

CHAPTER III

On every Thursday afternoon at 2 o'clock, the Chao Khun would come into the three-storied building which served as the Pali Institute, and teach concentration to the assembled *bhikkhus*, *samaneras*, *upassakas*, *upasikas*, and public at large.

Before commencing, it was his fashion to inquire whether in the general census, or on any other occasion requiring biographical data, those among the gathering recorded themselves as upholding the Buddhist faith. If so, then the duty of those who uphold the faith is twofold. Namely, scriptural learning (*gantha dhura*), and insight concentration (*vipassana dhura*).

As for *Vipassana*, it was most important, because it was the way to release. That which was to be taught that day was the method of release. But first of all, it was most important to know clearly about the self.

“ The Blessed One has taught all those who know not that the self is the island and refuge, to know that it is the island and refuge. Since no refuge can be found elsewhere, we have to help ourselves and become as islands. This is called ‘*attadipa*’. If we make self the refuge of self then we can be said to know ourselves. After the Blessed One delivered his first sermon to the five ascetics, converted Yasa and the fifty five, and then went on to convert the 1,000

ascetics in Gaya, he met on the way 30 young nobles looking for a woman, and asked them which was better, to go in search of a woman or to go in search of their self...

“ So we see that it is most important to know about our self. How we came to be born, how we will be reborn, and when we sleep and dream what is the cause and condition for it. And again, when our thoughts flash here and there each moment, what it is all about.

“ Now that which flashes here and there in thought is called the ‘heart’. Before coming here, when still at home, your thought had already flashed here, is not that correct? And the next instant, did it not flash off to other things elsewhere? Now you are seated here, your thoughts flash back home, and elsewhere...

“ The purpose of Samadhi is to control these flashings of the ‘heart’. If we were able to control these flashings and keep the mind still, then the mind will attain to great power, to great utility, to great purity, and able to achieve whatsoever the mind intends. The mind which is uncontrolled, flashing here and there, is as a force which is being wasted in all directions, like a river flowing from the heights, which channeling off into other streams and tributaries loses its original impetus and force. If this force were to be dammed up, the power would be indeed great and could turn a great machine. So it is with the concentrated and controlled mind...

“ What is that when we sleep and dream, drifting here and there, doing this and that, seeing this and that? That is the inside or ‘ghost’ form. And where is the ghost form? If is even in this body. That which we dream is the ghost from drifting out from the body as it sleeps. This body which we see with our eyes, the outside body, is called *manussa kaya*. Inside it we have its refined counterpart, and then again we have the celestial form, the Brahma form, the *Arupa-Brahma* form. And after that the Dhammakaya form...

“ Now this body of ours exists through Dhamma. Were it not for this Dhamma the body would not be able to exist at all. It is this Dhamma which makes it exist. And where is this Dhamma? It is inside our body, two finger-breadths above the navel [level]. If this Dhamma dies then the body dies. If this sphere of Dhamma is clean and clear, then the body shines forth clean and clear. This Dhamma is the life of human beings. It is the life, the perception, the memory, the thoughts, and the knowledge of human beings. They are centred in this sphere, and emerge from this sphere. This is the same for all. This Dhamma gives rise to eighteen forms. These are the human form and its refined counterpart, the celestial form and its refined counterpart, the Brahma form and its refined counterpart, the *Arupa Brahma* form

and its refined counterpart, the Dhammakaya *Gotrabhu* form and its refined counterpart, the Dhammakaya *Sotapanna* form and its refined counterpart, the Dhammakaya *Sakadagamin* form and its refined counterpart, the Dhammakaya *Anagamin* form and its refined counterpart, the Dhammakaya *Arahatta* form and its refined counterpart.

“ The first eight forms represent the self in this world of becoming, and are selves by common usage (*sammuti*). From the Dhammakaya *Gotrabhu* form up to the Dhammakaya *Arahatta* form are ten forms. They are selves by release (*vimutti*). They are all selves. These selves are the islands, these selves are the refuge, for long durations or for short, as the case may be.

“ Now in these forms it is necessary to establish a path. First of all there must be mindfulness. This is the sphere of *dhammanupassana satipatthana*. In its centre is established the sphere of morality, which is *sila*. In this centre again is the sphere of concentration called Samadhi. And again in the centre of this sphere is established the sphere of wisdom, which is *panna*. When the sphere of this is penetrated, in its centre another sphere arises, which is the sphere of release called *vimutti*. And in this sphere again is the perception and knowledge of release called *vimutti nanadassana*.

“ All these forms must be penetrated in the same style, from the human form up to the *Arahatta* form. There is no other way to release. This is the only way, which is called *ekayano maggo*. From the human form up to the *Arupa-Brahma* form is the domain of *Samatha*. From the Dhammakaya *Gotrabhu* form up to the Dhammakaya *Arahatta* is the domain of *Vipassana*. The scope of *Samatha* includes the 40 subjects of *kammattthana*, and the scope of *Vipassana* includes the investigations. These are the investigation and comprehension of the 5 *khandhas*, the 12 *ayatanas*, the 18 *dhatas*, the 22 *indriyas*, the 4 Noble truths, and the 12 links of dependent origination.

“ There is no end to what can be learnt from *Vipassana*, but for the present you have first to ‘stop’. Because if you do not stop the mind, no matter if you practice concentration for fifty, sixty, or a hundred years, there will be no result. This is because the way is not correct. You have first to stop the mind. In the world, whenever you wish to go quickly you take a plane, or car, but in this Dhamma it is just the opposite. You must stop. As soon as your mind has stopped, it has great power and can flash anywhere at will in a moment, right up even to Nibbana itself.

“ How to do this? You stop right in the centre of each sphere which appears, right into its void centre, centre in centre, stop-still. This brings great power and depth to the mind. This is the teaching of the Blessed One, and he who stops his mind lives according to the teaching of the Blessed One. The mind which has stopped can project itself anywhere and at all times, dependent on the qualities and character of that mind which projects, whether it be crude or refined. If crude its projection will be crude, if refined its projection will be refined. And so it is also with regard to scope. Some minds possess wide scope, and others a narrow one, in proportion to their basic build-up of *parami*. And this is also why some attain quickly, and others the reverse.

“ Now birth and death. Human beings who are born come from the refined form as base, which is called *sambhavesi*. The physical eye cannot see this form. This takes rebirth by first entering through the right nostril of the father-to-be, and then entering the left nostril of the mother-to-be. Then it descends into the womb and takes fusion there. It is then called *kalala rupa*. From this *kalala rupa* the body develops and grows, and is born. At first it is as small and round as the seed of a Bodhi tree. It then divides into five parts, which become two legs, two hands, and one head. This is what is called birth.

“ Now that which is called death. This implies that the refined form has departed from the body. If there is no refined form to nourish and uphold the body, the body decays and dies. As for the refined form, it departs to be reborn again, and is called *kaya sambhavesi*...”

After discoursing to the gathering in such terms, the Chao Khun would tell someone to light candles and incense-sticks before the Buddha shrine. He would then lead them together in worship, reciting *Namo Tassa* thrice, and explaining later that the first time was homage addressed to all the Buddhas of the past, the second time to all the Buddhas of the present, and the third time to all the Buddhas of the future. Then there would be the request for forgiveness of sins committed by body, speech, and heart, against the Triple Gem. He would explain that since they had cleansed their hearts, their consciences were now clear. Then there would be the invocation to all the Buddhas, Dhamma, and *Sangha*, for spiritual aid. After that he would tell them to dispose themselves in the regular concentrated posture.

He would then explain from a figure drawn on a chart where and how to concentrate the mind. There were two aids involved in concentration practice. The exercise of impulses on a word (*parikamma Bhavana*), and the exercise of impulses on an object (*parikamma nimitta*). The word used in the first instance was *Samma Araham* [pronounced to be ‘*Samma*

Arahang' in Thai dialect]. The object was a sphere. The Chao Khun would take up a crystal sphere and display it, telling all to concentrate each for himself, beginning by concentrating attention on the sphere as positioned at the nostril (right nostril for men, and left for women). This was called the first position.

As the mind's eye was concentrated on this first position, they were to recite silently *Samma Araham* thrice, fixing attention on the crystal sphere as centred at the nostril point. Then, mentally shift the sphere down to the second position at the eye socket. Then slowly with ease of breathing mentally recite *Samma Araham* thrice. Then descend to the third position, at the centre of the skull base, reciting the formula thrice. Then down again to positions four, five, and six (as in the diagram), with recitations of the same procedure. The attention was not to be shifted to right or left, back or front. The mind was finally to settle at centre of the body in line with the navel.

Then, after repeating the formula thrice, to shift the sphere up two finger-breadths above the navel. This was the seventh position. There are five elemental centres at this position. The earth element to the right, the water element in front, the air element to the left⁶, and the fire element to the back, whereas the space element occupied the centre. In the centre of the space element rested the cognitive element (*vinnana dhatu*), and the sphere called the first step (*pathama magga*). The mind was to be concentrated right there at centre thereof, and the formula of *Samma Araham* mentally recited there is sustained style, without flashing off here or there. If it flashed here or there, to bring it back to centre at once.

To concentrate in this fashion until light appeared. When light appeared to keep it still, the mind as still. If any other mental object, whether it be leaf, flower, or cloud appeared, to scrutinize it carefully and not to leave off. The object would change itself, no need to hurry, not desiring to see this or that. If nothing is seen, not to despond, because eventually extra-sensory perception would arise. No need for doubt, not to be excited at any vision, to be still and gaze at things evenly and in a detached way.

After witnessing things change according to conditions, a small sphere would eventually be seen floating in the centre, translucent and bright. This was the sphere of *Pathama Magga*, the commencement of *Magga, Phala, Nibbana*. Control the mind to centre thereof. After a 5th time a refined form would appear. And, later, the celestial form, the Brahma form, and the *Arupa-Brahma* form.

One thing it was necessary to state. As one shifts position of concentration from the third centre at base of skull down to the fourth, one has to involute the mind's eye and slide it gradually down, like the eyeballs of one who is about to die. This is to aid perception, by sinking the perceptive faculty down into the pit of the body. On no account to shift concentration outside the body, always to keep inside.

Another thing. Not to let the eyelids flicker, or press them closed. Just close lightly without unnatural pressure, as one does in sleep, and keep it thus for the whole duration. Even if anything is seen, do not flicker, or open the eyes, just leave it to proceed casually, seeing casually. Whether seated, reclining, standing, or walking, to keep the mind concentrated in this wise. That is, at the centre of the seventh position. To sit in any position so long as comfortable. To sit in the regular position, with right leg crossed upon the left, right hand on the left turned up, right index finger just touching the left thumb, was of course the best and most perfect posture...

After delivering all this at length in sustained style, the Chao Khun would tell the gathering to carry on by themselves, and he would continue to speak in low tones, aiding them, until eventually his voice died away. And all was silence.

This lasted for about half an hour.

Then the Abbot's voice, rising, would bring the sitting to a close, invoking aloud in Pali:

*Sabbe Buddha balappatta
Paccekananca yam balam
Arahantananca tejena
Rakkham bandhami sabbaso.*

*Bhavatu sabba mangalam
Rakkhantu sabba devata
Sabba Buddhanubhavana
Satta sotthi bhavantu te.*

*Bhavatu sabba mangalam
Rakkhantu sabba devata
Sabba Dhammanubhavana
Satta sotthi bhavantu te.*

*Bhavatu sabba mangalam
Rakkhantu sabba devata
Sabba Sanghanubhavana
Satta sotthi bhavantu te...*

Calling on the Buddhas and devas to protect and bless the gathering.

CHAPTER IV

The Chao Khun delivered sermons by the dozen during his long life, only few of which were recorded and preserved. This which follows is a condensed version of one expatiating on the virtues of the Triple Gem delivered to a large audience gathered at Wat Paknam.

“ Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Samma Sambuddhassa. Itipi so bhagava, araham, samma sambuddho, vijjacarana sampanno, sugato, lokavidu, anuttaro purisadhamma sarathi, sattha devamanussanam, buddho, bhagava ti...

“ Now we are about to discourse upon the virtues of the Buddha, Dhamma, and *Sangha*, so as to augment the mindfulness, wisdom, and devotion of all those gathered here with faith in the *Buddha Sasana*... This discourse will lean heavily in the direction of meditational practice, so that it shall be to the profit of the many...

“ The Blessed One was honoured by devas, brahmas, and men not because he longed to the nobility, but because he sacrificed his noble heritage and wandered out as a beggar in search of the priceless gem which is truth, leading a life of purity and earnestness, until he finally was enlightened under the Bodhi-tree. From that day forth he was endowed with certain special qualities, numbering nine...

“ *Araham*, This implies worthiness and freedom from defilements and wavering. Even as inside the human form there arise levels of personality, such as the refined human form, the deva form, the Brahma form, the *Arupa-Brahma* form, which are detached from the crude human form at death, even so whatever defilements which remained in the Blessed One were detached in this way, removed level after level in successive style.

“ What were these defilements? In the human form the defilements which were left aside were covetousness, anger, and false beliefs. In the deva form the defilements which were left

aside were greed, hate, and delusion. The defilements in the Brahma form which were left aside were passion. The defilements in the Arup-Brahma form which were left aside were sensuality, malice, and ignorance...

“ Having detached these forms and their perspective defilements, the Blessed One emerged into another form, which is the Dhammakaya form. This was the transition – of – lineage which he made, by which he became a *Gotrabhu puggala*. Then he accomplished *jhana samapatti*, and investigated the Four Noble Truths by direct order and reverse. Thereby he abandoned the defilements of belief in a permanent self, doubt, and pernicious rites.

“ Then, sinking to void centre, his consciousness flashed into the stream-enterer form, which is called *Sotapanna*. He then accomplished *jhana samapatti* by direct order and reverse, and as a consequence abandoned sensuality and malice. Whence he flashed into the once – returner form, which is called *Skadagamin*.

“ Then he accomplished *jhana samapatti* again in this form by direct order and reverse, and as a consequence abandoned desire for form and formless states of the Brahmās. Whence his consciousness flashed into the non-returner form, which is called *Anagamin*.

“ Then he accomplished *jhana samapatti* once more in this form by direct order and reverse, and as a consequence abandoned pride, wavering and ignorance. Whence his consciousness flashed into the emancipated form, which is called *Arahatta* and is free from all blemish.

“ Now the reason why the Blessed One became emancipated in this wise was because of *Vipassana*, practiced with great energy of mind. Wherefore he in the first watch of the night attained to the recollection of past births, In the second watch attained to the knowledge of others’ destinies. And attained to the knowledge of abandoning the defilements in the third watch.

“ It was with the Dhammakaya eye, not the human eye, that all this was seen and known. Surpassing the human world, the deva world, the brahma world, Nibbana was attained and seen.

“ This is what is implied by the first virtue of *Araham*.

“ *Samma Sambuddho*. This implies that the Blessed One attained perfect knowledge by himself, in perfect style. That is to say, five qualities in him arose. Vision arose, insight arose, wisdom arose, knowledge arose, light arose. Added to this, it implies tranquility and zeal. Not only did the Blessed One know, he saw both saw and knew, not with the human but

with the Dhammakaya eye. And this he achieved not because any one taught him to see or know, but because he achieved it on his own, alone.

“ The Blessed One saw all things in their true perspective, without a vestige of doubt. This was achieved through the power of concentration, purged of defilement, free from blemish, motionless, translucent. Because of this motionlessness, things arose clear in his mind, making him know. Just as if a stone were at the bottom of a jar of water. If the water is churned the stone cannot be seen. But if the water is left to settle, then even a needle at the bottom can be seen.

“ Now when it is said that The Blessed One saw things in their true perspective, what is meant is that he knew things in the light of cause and effect. And this again implies that he knew the cause of happiness, the cause of suffering, the cause of neither happiness nor suffering. Knew their cause, and knew their effect.

“ What was the cause of happiness that he knew? Non-greed, no-hate, non-delusion. This was the cause of happiness. And the cause of suffering he knew to be greed, hate, and delusion. In this world we all know that the man who does evil is punished. But to know that is not enough. We must go deeper, and know why he did it. Because his mind was filled with greed. But that again is not enough. Why did greed fill and overwhelm him at all? Because his mind was unclean, because he never listened to the teaching of morality, because he never observed morality, and so on.

“ Now we must drive on in cause and effect back to the roots. This is the relinquishing of suffering, the pursuit of happiness, and the way to the cessation of suffering. This is why when Assaji Thera [one of the first five disciple monks of the Lord Buddha] was asked by *Sariputta Thera* [one of the two foremost prominent disciple monks of the Lord Buddha] what the teaching of the Blessed One was, Assaji Thera replied that the teaching consisted in knowing all caused and their cessation. The Blessed One in his ultimate teaching taught that the mind in its normal state is clear. However, when swayed by passion or greed it absorbs the nature of that passion and greed, and becomes red in hue. Hatred makes it black in hue, and delusion makes its hue like mud. This was observed by the Dhammakaya eye.

“ In concentration it is necessary to wash away all these defilements and their hues. When the mind is purged of these it becomes purely functional (*kiriya citta*) and is neutral (*avyakata*). In this state it is flexible and able to achieve anything. In the beginning of his ministry, the Blessed One leant heavily on cause and effect in explaining the

Dhamma. Taught us how to perceive all component things as having their origin through ignorance, and so on. And then taught that their cessation came about through relinquishing ignorance, and so on.

“ It will be seen, therefore, that ignorance is of first importance, because if it is put away, then all else is put away. Because of this the Blessed One taught us to banish ignorance so that we may be freed from the round of birth and death which goes on and on. Because of this the Blessed One as he became enlightened exclaimed aloud that he had searched many a life for the maker of this bodily palace, which caused so much pain, without end. Desire was the maker. Now he knew the maker, no more could it make him defiled and ignorant, he was free.

“ This is what is implied by the second virtue of *Samma Sambuddho*.

“ *Vijjacarana sampanno*. This implies that the Blessed One possesses eight knowledges and fifteen qualities of conduct.

“ Knowledge here means the way of dispelling darkness. What darkness? The darkness of personality, which is the five grasping groups, Namely, form, feeling, perception, impressions, and consciousness. And this also implies not only the human form but the deva form, the brahma form, the *arupa-brahma* form. These are all in the darkness of personality because they do not know the way to release of mind.

“ Now the first knowledge necessary for emancipation of mind is *Vipassana vijja*. *Vipassana* means seeing clearly, seeing comprehensively, seeing tangibles, seeing intangibles, seeing impermanence, seeing suffering, seeing not-self. The human eye, the deva eye, the brahma eye, and the *arupa-brahma* eye do not see comprehensively. And why? Because like a chicken in its shell clearly, they cannot break free, are bounded by their shell. This shell is their personality, which is made up of the five grasping groups.

“ Nevertheless, *Vipassana* has first to depend on *Samatha*, which is tranquility. This is done by sinking the mind to two finger-breadths above the navel, in the sphere of Dhamma there which is called *Pathama Magga*, meaning the first step. It is there that the refined human form, the deva form, the brahma form, and the *arupa-brahma* form, are seen. By investigating at this centre will be seen the elements (*dhatu*) and essences (Dhamma) which go to fashion these forms like shells.

“ But we have to break away these shells. If our mind is restless it will see nothing. The mind perceives only when it is calm. Crudity cannot see, it is only refinement which perceives. Therefore to see a human corpse with the human eye is not enough because the human eye is crude and even when it sees the corpse the mind is not thereby released from attachment thereto. At the most, it serves only as a condition for future reference. And so it is if a corpse is seen with the deva eye, the brahma eye, or the *arupa-brahma* eye.

“ What we must do is to see with the Dhammakaya eye, like the Blessed One. See that these are not the true self, see them arise, see them perish, see them made up of elements and mental substance. If you put soft soap in a basin of water, the water still remains clear. But if you were to stir it up, then it turns to foam and takes on shape and form. Look closely and you will see bubbles in the foam. So numerous as to be beyond count. This continuous collection of small bubbles we call foam. We look closely and we see that these little bubbles as they arise are bursting all the time...

“ So it is with the five groups of grasping personality, they arise and they burst all the time. This is how the Dhammakaya eye always sees. Suffering belongs to the five grasping groups. If we are attached to them we suffer. We suffer because we grasp at them. If we let them pass, then nothing will arise. Things which by their very nature are impermanent we want to be permanent. Things which are not our self we want to make our self.

“ And what is the reason for this? Sensual desire, desire for life, desire for extinction of life. Detach the refined human form from the body, and body has no more base, no more pain. Detach the deva form, detach the brahma form, detach the *arupa-brahma* form, in this same way, and there is no more base for pain. Detaching all these shells only the Dhammakaya will be left.

“ The Blessed One saw and knew what he saw and knew, because he broke the shells of self, even as a chicken breaks open its shell at last. Why did the Blessed One so often teach impermanence, suffering, and not – self? Because leaving aside impermanence he wished us to seek permanence. Leaving aside suffering he wished us to seek happiness. Leaving aside not-self he wished us to seek self.

“ Attachment, detachment. These are the two chief modes. He who leaves aside is not called one who is attached. He who clings is not one who is called free. But you must first see the five grasping groups as they really are with the Dhammakaya eye. Only then is it called *Vipassana vijja*.

“ This is what is implied by *vipassana vijja*.

“ *Manomayiddhi vijja*. This implies the power of performing supernatural things. If so desired, a certain thing happens according to wish. Just as when the Blessed One descended from the Tavatimsa heaven and so wished that humans and devas see each other, it happened according to his wish. This was achieved by the Dhammakaya of the Blessed One...

“ *Iddhivithi vijja*. This implies the power of building supernatural things out of nowhere. Whether it be the magical display of forms, palaces, and so on. Which the Blessed One performed so as to convince people and bring them round to the truth...

“ *Dibbacakkhu vijja*. This implies the power of seeing things with the divine eye, whether they be near or far. To attain this you level and interpenetrate the human, deva, brahma, *arupa-brahma* forms together, and then penetrate them all with the Dhammakaya eye, Then you will see things so clear, as if through a great magnifying glass, level upon level...

“ *Dibbasota vijja*. This implies the power of supernatural hearing. To attain this do the same as for the divine eye. That is, level all the mundane forms of human, deva, brahma, and arupa-brahma together, and then penetrate them with the Dhammakaya ear. Then, whether near or far, all things can be heard if so wished...

“ *Paracitta vijja*. This implies the power of knowing others' minds. Just as when the Blessed One read the minds of the giant demons who thought of offering him a problem to solve, and if he could not do so, to throw him across the seas. But before they could do anything the Blessed One had already told them their thoughts...

“ *Pubbenivasa vijja*. This implies the power of remembering past births, what you were, when, and so on. Just as in the case of the Blessed One's past life, where in he was Vessantara...

“ *Asavakhaya vijja*. This implies the power of knowing the way of destroying the defilements. That is sensuality, desire for existence, false views, and ignorance...

“ Now as for the fifteen qualities of conduct whereby the Blessed One is known. The first is *Sila samvara*. This implies the quality of restraint as to morality.

“ The second is *Indriya samvara*. This is the quality of keeping the six senses in restraint. This quality is the Blessed One’s by nature, and there is no need for him to exert himself, as with the ordinary human being, in this respect.

“ *Bhojanemattannuta*. This is the quality of observing the proper amount of food sufficient for sustenance, and no more, otherwise instead of being a boon the eating of food becomes a bane.

“ *Cakiriyanyoga*. This is the quality of vigilance, of always being awake. This was the Blessed One’s by nature, whereby no hindrance could overwhelm him at any time.

“ *Saddha*. The quality of faith. This quality was exemplified in the Blessed One’s past life as Prince Vessantara, who through faith disposed of his belongings, bore with hardships, and lived like a hermit.

“ Sati. The quality of mindfulness, as taught in the *Mahasatipatthana Sutta*. Whether walking, standing, sitting, or reclining, to be mindful at all times. To be mindful of the body, feelings, consciousness, and intangible dhammas.

“ *Hiri*. The quality of modesty.

“ *Ottappa*. The quality of aversion towards evil.

“ *Bahusacca*. The quality of attentiveness in hearing the dhamma.

“ *Upakkamo*. The quality of dutifulness, as the Blessed One preserved in his daily routine, numbering five. Going round at dawn for alms. Teaching the dhamma in the afternoon. Discoursing to the disciples in the evening. Answering the problems of the devas at night. Meditating before dawn on whom to convert.

“ *Panna*. The quality of wisdom, of knowing things on a broad scale, their causes and effects, without a doubt.

“ *Caturupajjhana*. The four *jhanas* of form. The Blessed One made use of these four *jhanas* so as to transform mundane wisdom to supramundane. This method the Blessed One discovered for himself without external help.

“ These comprise the fifteen *caranas*. And together with the eight knowledges, this is what is implied by the third virtue of *Vijjacarana sampanno*...

“ *Sugato*. This implies one who has gone well, fared well, to a happy destiny. This is because the Blessed One practiced the qualities of morality, concentration, and wisdom, in body, speech, and thought.

“ These qualities are condensed and distilled in the clear sphere called *Pathama Magga*, in the centre of the body two finger-breadths above the navel. The Blessed One proceeded into this sphere, and remained calm. This proceeding, or faring into, is called *Sugato*. As the Blessed One’s mind remained calm and clear as crystal glass, no passion, hate, delusion, greed, or anger stirred up the pure pool of his mind.

“ With this calm, concentration arose, knowledge arose, wisdom arose. In this fashion he penetrated forth, to the deva form, the brahma form, the *arupa-brahma* form, and the *Dhammakaya Gotrabhu* form.

“ Now as the *Dhammakaya Gotrabhu* form stopped still, the consciousness which issued forth was Path consciousness (*magga citta*), the knowledge which issued forth was Path wisdom (*magga panna*). The Dhammakaya of the Blessed One then accomplished *jhana samapatti* and investigated the Noble Truths. Whence the sphere of Dhammakaya sank to void centre was transmuted into *Sotapanna* status, into *Sakadagamin*, into *Anagamin*, into *Arahatta* status, respectively. This proceeding forth is called *Sugato*, One who is well gone.

“ Also is it said *Khemamtisamgacchamano*. Which is to say, gone to the sphere of bright purity, that is Nibbana. For when then Dhammakaya is concentrated style sank to void centre, a sphere of existence called *Ayatana Nibbana* absorbed the Blessed One as his consciousness sunk, and pulled it up into *Nibbana*, even as the physical body sat still on earth. This is called *Sugato*, One who is well gone.

“ Again, after laying aside for the last time the five groups of personality without residue, the Blessed One accomplished *jhana samapatti*, the Dhammakaya sank to void centre, and the *Ayatana Nibbana* absorbed it up. This is called *Sugato*, One who is well gone.

“ Again, as the Blessed One was walking on his way to preach his first sermon to the five ascetics at *Isipatana*, the splendor of his radiance attracted creatures of two legs and four legs to witness his passage and they stopped still in amaze, unable to move. Such a radiant passage is called *Sugato*, One who has gone well.

“ Again, wheresoever the Blessed One moved, there it was well. As when cholera plagued the city of Vesali, so that those who died littered the streets because there was no place or time to bury them, the Licchavi princes held a meeting and decided to invite the Blessed One for aid. As the Blessed One arrived late in the afternoon at the river bank, he therefore took up his abode on the bank without crossing. That night, devas knowing that the Blessed One would cross the river to Vesali next morn, and seeing that Vesali was not a fit place for him to visit because of its corpses strewn about, held a meeting and sent rain clouds pouring down their rain until the heavy streams of water washed away all the rotten mess. So that when the Blessed One arrived in Vesali the next day all was clean. The Licchavi princes offered him alms, and the Blessed One recited the *Parittas* and told Ananda to bless the place with lustral water, and the disease was quelled.

“ This is what is implied by the fourth virtue of *Sugato*. One who is well gone.

“ *Lokavidhu*. This implies one who knows clearly the world. The world has three divisions. *Sankhara loka, satta loka, okasa loka*.

“ *Sankhara loka*. This implies the world which lives on nutriment for sustenance. Nutriment here has four divisions. Normal food, contact, mental volition, and consciousness.

“ All creatures exist on food, whether physical or astral. From devas up to brahmas, *arupa-brahmas*, up to Nibbana. But the refinement of the food differs according to plane. All this is not in the books, but can be investigated if one so desires to know more about causes and effects. Of course, the way the food is consumed differs from that of human beings, in that it is just as though we were to consume food when we dream. These devas are filled by just eating in this way, but the duration of each meal extends for a longer period than this mundane. Food is the condition which begets body and is eightfold in scope, partaking of the earth element, water, fire, wind, colour, odour, taste, and refreshment, elements.

“ Sense-contact is the next. Contact through the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind is food. When any shape or sight contacts the eye it is called *cakkhu samphassa*. And it is in the same fashion for all the other sense contacts. Sense-contact is food because it serves as the base for the arising of feeling, which is threefold: happy, painful, and neither. As when Sariputta Thera held an umbrella over the Blessed One (Buddha Anomadassi aeons ago) for seven days without feeling hunger, this was because of *phassa ahara*. Those in hell are there because of their evil contacts of sense. Those who sleep live on that kind of nutriment which is neutral in scope.

“ Mental volition is the third kind of food. It is so because it carries creatures to either a happy or unhappy destiny. Volition is that which acts and is *kamma*. It is because of nutriment that one is born in this world of humans, the deva world, or the brahma worlds.

“ Consciousness is also food. Consciousness is that which exists on the matter derived from the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind, and in turn consciousness serves as the base from which name and form arises. Therefore also is it food.

“ *Satta loka*. This implies the world of creatures. The Blessed One knew clearly about this world of creatures, knew well that it is from dhamma that all creatures arise. Creatures look at the world from various viewpoints. Some consider this world to be permanent and believe that when one dies one will be reborn human again. Others again believe that when one dies nothing is left, and whether one does good or evil it does not matter because everything dies with one’s death and there is no retribution.

“ All this is not knowing how the world is run. The Blessed One knew how all things come to be, through *kamma*. Good done bears good fruit, and evil done bears evil fruit, even as a shadow follows a shape. He knew the seven defilements, of sensuality, of desire, for existence, of malice, of false views, of doubt, of pride, and of ignorance. He knew the six natures, the passionate, the angry, the delusive, the worryful, the faithful, and the wise. He knew the characters of low and high, of merit and demerit, and the proportion of defilement present in each. He knew the five potential faculties, whether strong or weak, of faith, of energy, of mindfulness, of concentration, and of wisdom.

“ Now if the Blessed One saw that the five potential faculties were developed and ripe in any one, he would look for the means for converting him. As in the case of Vakkali, who had great admiration for the beauty of the Blessed One, and thus became as *bhikkhu*, to be near him. The Blessed One waited until Vakkali’s faculties were ripe and then found the means of converting him. He asked Vakkali what was the use of admiring this rotten body of his? He who sees the dhamma body sees the true Buddha. But Vakkali was displeased and went to throw himself off from a precipice in remorse. But the Blessed One sent forth a radiant image of himself so that Vakkali was overwhelmed with bliss, and immediately attained the supernatural faculties, flying through the air to pay his respects to the Blessed One.

“ Again, the Blessed One knew how some have good inclinations and dispositions and others adverse. That some can be corrected and others cannot. That some have faith and wisdom

and some have not. Knew that some can be converted and others cannot. Only those with right understanding can be converted, not those with false beliefs.

“ *Okasa loka*. This implies the world of elements, which the Blessed One knew clearly. That is, knew how space bore up water, bore up earth, bore up all the six planes of heaven, bore up the sixteen planes of the brahma world, and the four planes of the *arupa-brahma* world. Knew that from the earth up to the first plane of heaven the distance of 42,000 *yojanas* [1 *yojana* = 16 km], and the life-span in that plane nine million years at the most. Knew that each plane up the distance was the same, that is 42,000 *yojanas*. But from the sixth plane to the first brahma plane is 5,508,000 *yojanas*, and so on for each plane up to the highest *arupa-brahma* plane. He knew that the life-span of each plane differs, right up to the highest plane where the maximum span is 80,000 *kalpas*.

“ As for the extent of the elements themselves, the Blessed One knew that the extension of the earth element is 240,000 *yojanas*, the water element 480,000 *yojanas*, the fire element 960,000 *yojanas*, the air element 1,920,000 *yojanas*, and the consciousness element 3,840,000 *yojanas*. As for the space element, there is no end to measuring it because it reaches out to the other world spheres all around, downwards to *Lokanta*, and upwards to *Nibbana*.

“ Now these elements are only those which belong to the world sphere which is called *Okasa loka*. As for the elements which go to form the five grasping groups of personality, they are refined a thousand times and more, and come from a different source.

“ The elements which go to form the five groups of personality are distilled from a force which is established in the centre of the six elements of which the world-sphere consists, commensurate in scope. There are seven stages or forces at work here. The first centripetal force distills the crude elements and leaves only the refined residue. The second force distills the refined residue a step more, until its refinement augments. This goes on until the seventh stage is reached, the refined residue of which is pushed down into the threefold world-sphere by the centripetal force itself as it wheels around. This refined residue collects in the world-sphere accordingly and serves as the material form which the five aggregates of personality are formed.

“ The rebirth entity first enters the father and then the mother, and is attracted to the *ayatana* of the womb by the centripetal force active there, after which the elements are left to do their work, until the child is born. It is from this human base that the other forms,

of deva, of brahma, of *arupa-brahma*, and *Dhammakaya*, are through a refinement technique processed.

“ All this and more the Blessed One knew about the world. And this is what is implied by the fifth virtue of *Lokavidu*. One who knows the world.

“ *Anuttaro purisa dhamma sarathi*. This implies that the Blessed One was a tamer of the untamed. That is, knowing the natures of people he was able to teach them accordingly, and bring their understanding into the right path. As in the case of Uruvela Kassapa, whom the inhabitants of Rajagaha respected as a great ascetic.

“ When the Blessed One, after having preached his first sermon at Isipatana and converted others there, made his way to Gaya and to the grove of Uruvela, he came into Kassapa’s camp where there lived the leader and his five hundred disciples. The Blessed One requested permission to stay with them for the night, but was told by Kassapa that a dangerous serpent lived in those parts. The Blessed One said that it did not matter and retired to the spot to sleep. In the middle of the night, however, the Naga serpent began to spout its poison at him. The Blessed One subdued the serpent and displayed it to Kassapa. But Kassapa, however, was not impressed. This was because Kassapa considered himself an *Arahatta*, which the Blessed One told him he was not. The Blessed One continued to display a great number of miracles. He told Kassapa that his ascetic practices were not the way to Nibbana. Eventually, Kassapa was converted, and his two other brothers with their following, numbering 1003 in all.

“ This is what is implied by the sixth virtue of *Anuttaro purisa dhamma sarathi*. One who is the tamer of the untamed.

“ *Sattha devamanussanam*. This implies that the Blessed One was a teacher of gods and men. For not only did the Blessed One teach men but it was also his custom to teach devas at night. This is noticed in the *Mangala Sutta*, which he delivered after the devas asked him what was the best (to be done in the world) and offering the highest bliss.

“ This is what is implied by the seventh virtue of *Sattha devamanussanam*. One who is a teacher of gods and men.

“ *Buddho*. This implies one who is awake like a lotus in full bloom. The Blessed One before his enlightenment, as he was developing insight with great vigour of mind, was like a lotus which had yet to bloom. It was only on *Visakha* day, the day of his enlightenment, that the

lotus met the dawn in full bloom. Also, in the beginning of this world cycle, five lotuses appeared on the newly risen earth. The great Brahma of the *Suddhava* plane when he saw this, immediately realized that in this world cycle five Buddhas would arise on earth to teach. This is why he exclaimed: *Na, Mo, Bud, Dha, Ya... Namo Buddhaya*. Which signifies the Buddha Kakussandha, Buddha Konagama, Buddha Kassapa, Buddha Gotama, and Buddha Metteya.

“ This is what is implied by the eighth virtue of *Buddho*. One who is awake like a lotus in full bloom.

“ *Bhagava*. This implies One who breaks the wheel. The Blessed One broke the wheel, of birth and death, of ignorance, of desire, of attachment, and of causation. These turn like a wheel flinging all around to birth and death, unable to escape the threefold world, which is the sensual sphere, the form sphere, and the formless sphere of life. The Blessed One broke this wheel, and attained release.

“ Again, *Bhagava* implies dispensing. That is, with the enlightenment, full knowledge became his. With full knowledge such as this he dissected and analyzed all elements and dhammas into categories in detail, and made them known.

“ This is what is implied by the ninth virtue of *Bhagava*, One who breaks the wheel...

“ *Svakkhato bhagavata dhammo*
Sanditthiko akaliko ehipassiko opanayiko
Paccattam veditabbo vinnuhi ti.

“ Now we come to the virtues of the Dhamma. This Dhamma was well preached (*svakkhato*) by the Blessed One. Those who practice it receive the greatest benefit, in this world or the next. The teaching is divided into three, as study, as meditation, and as insight knowledge. The teaching is one which when practiced is observed to bear the same results for all (*sanditthiko*). It is timeless (*akaliko*) and bears fruit at all times. It is good and those who practice it may call others (*ehipassiko*) to practice it for themselves because it is good. It is a teaching to be realized by oneself (*opanayiko*)...

“ *Supatipanno bhagavato savakasangho*
Ujupatipanno bhagavato savakasangho
Nayapatipanno bhagavato savakasangho
Samicipatipanno bhagavato savakasangho

Yadidam cattari purisayugani

Atthapurisapuggala esa bhagavato savakasangho

Ahuneyyo pahuneyyo dakkhineyyo anjalikaraniyo

Anuttaram punnakhettam lokassa ti.

“ Now the virtues of the *Sangha*. The Order of disciples is twofold. That is, ordinary disciples, and noble Ones. Ordinary disciples differ from the Noble Ones in that they do not possess the dhamma eye, which the Noble Ones do. Here, therefore, only the virtues of the Noble Ones are implied. There are four pairs, eight in all. The stream-enterer path and fruit, the once-returner path and fruit, the non-returner path and fruit, the emancipated path and fruit.

“ Now the Noble disciple concentrates his faculties, and sinks them into the centre of his body, where a bright sphere appears clear as crystal glass. He proceeds into the centre of this sphere, and passes the deva, brahma, and the *Arupa-Brahma* spheres of consciousness. Then he attains the Dhammakaya form and consciousness. Then he concentrates on the sphere of dhamma which he first saw, which is the sphere of dhamma that serves as the basis for the human form. He reviews this sphere, and converts it into a disk about four metres in diameter and fifteen centimeters thick, clear as crystal glass. He seats himself upon this flattened disk, which is called *Pathama Jhana*.

“ He then concentrates on the sphere of dhamma which serves as the basis for the deva form. He reviews this sphere, and converts it into a disk the same size as the first. The first disk vanishes, and he seats his Dhammakaya form upon this disk, which is called *Dutiya Jhana*.

“ He then concentrates on the sphere of dhamma which serves as the basis for the Brahma form. He reviews this sphere, and converts it into a disk of the same size. The second disk vanishes, and he seats his Dhammakaya form upon this third disk, which is called *Tatiya jhana*.

“ He then concentrates on the sphere of dhamma which serves as the basis for the *Arupa-Brahma* form. He reviews this sphere, and converts it into a disk of the same size as the other disks. The third disk vanishes, and he seats his Dhammakaya form upon this fourth disk, which is called *Catuttha jhana*.

“ Then from these four *jhanas* of form he proceeds to formless *jhanas*. He concentrates the Dhammakaya eye in the fourth *jhana*, and knows that there is something more refined to come. A fifth *jhana* appears, which is the infinity of space.

“ He proceeds in this manner, and the *jhana* of the infinity of consciousness appears, the *jhana* of voidness appears, and the *jhana* of neither perception nor non-perception appears.

“ This is attaining the *jhanas* from one to eight by direct method. Then the Dhammakaya proceeds back from the eighth *jhana* to the first by inverse method. He proceeds thus for seven times, accomplishing what is called *jhana samapatti*. As he proceeds from first to the eighth *jhana* he penetrates the Noble Truths of suffering, of the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the way to the cessation of suffering.

“ Then the Dhammakaya (*Gotrabhu*) sinks to void centre, and a sphere ten metres in diameter appears in its place. The Dhammakaya transforms itself into the Dhammakaya *Sotapanna*, which observes the Noble Truths again with the *Sotapanna* eye. After which this Dhammakaya sinks to void centre, and a sphere twenty metres in diameter appears in its place. This transforms itself into the Dhammakaya *Sakadagamin*.

“ The Dhammakaya *Sakadagamin* penetrates the Noble Truths with the *Sakadagamin* eye. After which it sinks to void centre, and a sphere thirty metres in diameter appears in its place. This transforms itself into the Dhammakaya *Anagamin*.

“ The Dhammakaya *Anagamin* penetrates the Noble Truths with the *Anagamin* eye. After which it sinks to void centre, and a sphere forty metres in diameter appears in its place. This transforms itself into the Dhammakaya *Arahatta*.

“ Clear as crystal is the Dhammakaya now. First the *Sotapanna* was able to abandon the defilements of belief in a permanent self, because it observed the body to be only a temporary abode, in no time breaking up, consisting only of elements fused together making name and form; that if grasped as self then the self was destined to pain. It was impermanent, painful, and impersonal. The Dhammakaya form was the form leading to permanence, happiness, and selfhood. Because of this penetration into truth, the *Sotapanna* passed from false beliefs. No doubt remained because the Dhammakaya had already been attained, disposing of the lower mundane forms. No doubt remained regarding the Triple Gem, because the Dhammakaya was itself the Triple Gem. And since it was itself the Triple Gem, there was no more need for

pernicious rites outside the Triple Gem, because such rites bore no wholesome fruit. Thus the *Sotapanna* abandoned pernicious rites.

“ Then the *Sakadagamin* disposed of crude sensuality and malice after penetrating the Noble Truths. The *Anagamin* disposed of refined sensuality and malice. And the *Arahatta* disposed of attachment to form and formless *jhanas*, pride, restlessness, and ignorance.

“ This is what is implied when it is said that the Noble One has accomplished well (*supatipanno*), neither too loose nor too taut, but proceeding along a middle path avoiding both extremes. And accomplished uprightly (*ujupatipanno*) and straight, straight, along the path to Nibbana, not faltering aside. And possessing the knowledge (*nanapatipanno*) whereby release is attained. And accomplished to the best of the ability (*samicipatipanno*).

“ Because of this, not for other reasons, are these Noble Ones worthy of our attendance (*ahuneyyo*), worthy of our offerings (*dakkhineyyo*), worthy of our salutations (*anjalikaraniyo*), the most excellent field of merit (*punnakkhattam*) in this world in which to sow.

“ This ends the virtues of the *Sangha*...

“ Now that we know the method of practice, it is our duty to ponder on what we are to do. Are we to only repeat the words ‘*Itipiso bhagava araham...*’ and nothing more? The Blessed One has said that there are two ways of paying respect due: the way of burning incense sticks and prayers, and the way of concentrating the mind. And the Blessed One has given honour to the second rather than to the first. This implies clearly that he wished us all to meditate rather than to burn incense sticks.

“ Even in this period, so long after the departure of the Blessed One into Nibbana, there is no clause which forbids that those who practice in his footsteps shall not receive the same results, for it is said ‘*akaliko*’, which means that the practice of the dhamma bears results at all times. All those Noble Ones in the beginning were only ordinary human beings, even the Blessed One himself, not devas or brahmas from elsewhere. That they could raise themselves up to be Noble Ones was because of practice alone. The way has clearly been shown by the Blessed One. The only thing left for us is that we practice or that we do not. It is not enough that we recite with our lips ‘*Itipiso bhagava*’ or just recall the virtues of the Blessed One. It is our highest duty to follow in his footsteps. And this is achieved by the four roads to power

(*iddhipada*), by zeal (*chanda*), by energy (*viriya*), by reflection (*citta*), and by investigation (*vimamsa*).

“ It is necessary to practice meditation until the Dhammakaya is attained. The Dhammakaya is in hue like crystal glass. Because of this is it called the *Buddha Ratana*. All dhammas distilled out of this Dhammakaya are called the *Dhamma Ratana*, being its heart.

The mental field of this Dhammakaya is called the *Sangha Ratana*. All these three are not separate but are a unity, because those who attain the *Buddha Ratana*, at the same time also attain the Dhamma and the *Sangha Ratana*.

“ It is with the Dhammakaya, not the normal eye, that the Triple Gem is realized. It is the way by which it is reached. It is the only genuine way by which the Triple Gem is reached. And this practice and this attainment is not beyond the ability and nature of human beings, because even in this period of time many are those who have attained to this Dhammakaya. Those who have so attained are filled with bliss of body and mind. You may ask them for yourselves, so that you may understand what the result is once you have reached the Triple Gem...

“ Now it is not enough to penetrate to the Dhammakaya, because there is much more to be done. We must proceed deeper and deeper, void into void, on and on. We are looking for our self, remember? There is no end to delusion until that purity is reached which no *mara* [the evil] can disturb, having passed beyond. Therefore proceed from the crudest to the most refined of Dhammakaya forms, deeper and deeper, beyond counting. From base, nucleus level, moment, part, seed, and offshoot. As long as there remain seeds of defilement, Mara can perturb the mind. As long as the end of these selves has not been reached one remains a slave, neither a master nor free.

“ Therefore, on an don, into the centre of the voidness. Not only into the void centre, but right into the sphere of mindfulness (*satipatthana*), of morality (*sila*), of concentration (*Samadhi*), of wisdom (*panna*), of release (*vimutti*), and the perception and knowledge of release (*vimutti nanadassana*). This is the middle way avoiding both extremes. This is *magga* and *phala*. The way of path and fruition accomplished by all Buddhas and *Arahattas* of old. Causal void into causal void, cause and void, void and cause, cessation of cause. Right in the centre, void into void, without residue. Void into void, the end of cause, the causal limit. Deeper and deeper into the deepest limits of voidness to be reached, extinguishing the crude, entering the refined, to the limit. Remember, we are looking for our

self.. We pay homage to the Blessed One and his Noble disciples because they accomplished this. This is *nirodha*, cessation. This is the genuine, the refuge of the world. Those who know this know true, have won through. This is *magga citta, magga panna*.

“ It is said in the *Mahasatipatthana Sutta : Idha bhikkhave kaye kayanupassi viharati attapi sampajanno satima vineyya loke abhijjana domnassam*. Which is to say : *Bhikkhus*, a disciple in this dhamma and discipline dwells in this contemplation, penetrating form in form, earnest and aware, and puts an end in this world to frivolousness and grief. And not only penetrating form in form, but feelings in feelings (*vedanasu vedanupassi*), consciousness in consciousness (*cite cittanupassi*), and mental essences in mental essences (*dhammesu dhammanupassi*)...

Perceive and know. Seeing is not knowing, knowing, is not seeing. Do not mix them up, each has its separate use. See form in form, from the human form and its refined counterparts up. See the deva form, the Brahma form, the *Arupa-Brahma* form, the Dhammakaya form up to the most refined *Arahatta* forms. This is seeing form in form.

“ Perceive feelings in feelings. Happiness, suffering, neither happiness nor suffering. How to see feelings? Happiness is seen as a clear sphere, as big as the moon, as small as a seed. Suffering is seen as a dark sphere, the same in size, big as the moon, small as a seed. Neither happiness nor suffering is seen between the two, neither clear nor dark, big as the moon, small as a seed. See with the Dhammakaya eye, from the human up to the Dhammakaya form. This is seeing feeling in feeling.

“ Perceive consciousness in consciousness. How to see consciousness? Consciousness is also seen as a sphere, big as the moon, small as an eye, from the human up to the Dhammakaya. This is seeing consciousness in consciousness.

“ Perceive dhamma in dhamma. How to see dhamma? Dhamma is also a sphere, the sphere of dhamma which goes to form the human form, the sphere of dhamma which goes to form the deva form, the Brahma form, the *Arupa-Brahma* form, the Dhammakaya form. Sphere in sphere, dhamma in dhamma, big as the moon, small as a seed. This is seeing dhamma in dhamma.

“ Perceive with the Dhammakaya eye. *Kaye kayanupassi... ekayano ayam bhikkhave maggo* : which is to say, this is the only way, O *Bhikkhus*, which leads to the purification of

creatures, to passing beyond sorrow and lamentation, to the destruction of grief and despair, to the attainment of the Method, to the realization of Nibbana...

“ Let us use this as our formula and guide. When we have heard this dhamma, do not think it is easy to hear it. Ever since we became *bhikkhus, samaneras, upasakas, upasikas*, have we ever heard this dhamma? Therefore practice what you have heard, do not lose the opportunity you have had in being born human beings, the opportunity of being born in the *Buddha Sasana*...”

This was his exhortation, concluding by calling down blessings on them all.

CHAPTER V

It was in recognition of his vigilance and the signal service he rendered the *Buddha Sasana* that the Chao Khun earned from the late Lord Patriarch of the Thai *Sangha* the posthumous praise of being the finest teacher in both *Samatha kammattana* and *Vipassana kammattana*, as being without peer in this respect, combined with the personality of a great and compassionate sage.

That his personality is still a living force has expressed itself in evident forms. For one thing, even four years after his decease, the disciples and layfolk have refrained from cremating his remains, and his coffin is still displayed on the top floor of the Pali Institute in the temple precincts, where the faithful pay their respects whenever they wish.

The *Uposatha* itself has been completely renovated, a project which cost almost a million, funds for which were supplied by disciples and layfolk. It still remains a matter for surprise to many a high-ranking ecclesiastic that the Chao Khun, even after his decease, should exert such an influence on the minds of the faithful that they still continue to donate funds in support of the activities which he initiated and established. Wat Paknam with its hundreds of resident *bhikkhus, samaneras, upasakas, and upasikas*, is probably the only temple of its kind in Thailand where the *bhikkhus* are fed regularly each day without their having to go the round for alms. One high-ranking ecclesiastic expressed it as the influence of just one thing, summing it up in a word. Namely, compassion.

The Chao Khun died on the 3rd of February 1959, after teaching for almost forty years.