

New Year's Day



Luang Pu Fun Ācāro

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

Luang Pu Fun Ācāro was born on August 20th, 1899 in Muang Khai village, Phannaa municipality, Phannaa Nikom district, Sakon Nakhorn province. His original name was *Fun Suwannarong*, and he was the fifth child of parents in the ruling family of the Phannaa Nikom area. His family were of the minority 'Phu Tai' ethnicity.

He was raised and groomed to assume positions of responsibility in governance, but he was severely troubled by some of the duties of the ruling classes. The rulers at that time had to take on the responsibility of punishing criminals – and punishment at that time included the death penalty. Seeing fear and danger at the prospect of becoming a killer in the name of performing his duties, he took leave of his intended future and determined to enter the monkhood.

After ordaining at the age of 20 years old, he studied under his teachers for about two years before meeting Phra Ajaan Mun Bhūridatto, sometime in early 1920. That day, Ajaan Mun gave a progressive talk about generosity, virtue and meditation, including a description of the special virtues of the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha. Luang Pu Fun and his teachers were so impressed and inspired that they offered themselves as disciples on the spot.

After several years of training with Ajaan Mun, Luang Pu Fun asked for permission to reordain in the Dhammayut sect, in order to be closer and on more intimate terms with his teacher. He reordained in 1925, with Tan Chao Khun Dhammachedi as his preceptor.

Luang Pu Fun gradually became known as one of Ajaan Mun's great disciples – a very powerful meditator and a great teacher in his own right. One notable characteristic of his teaching and practise was a lifelong concern for the poor and common classes of people in society. This talk, 'New Year's Day', is a good representation of that.

Hāsapañño Bhikkhu
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Luang Pu Fun Ācāro



August 20th, 1899 – January 4th, 1977

Wat Pah Udom Somporn

A. Panna Nikom, Sakon Nakhorn

NEW YEAR'S DAY

A Dhamma talk by Luang Pu Fun Ācāro

Given at Wat Pah Udom Somporn on New Year's Day – January 1st, 1976

Today is considered 'New Year's Day' and so we close up our places of work, not going to work, in order to travel and sightsee. **In truth, in the beginning, closing up our places of work was for the purpose of letting people develop in goodness and develop in wholesomeness – developing in virtuous, beautiful, good qualities.**

Now, people believe it's playtime – having closed our places of work, we go off and have fun – whatever people want to do for fun. We go off and gamble, or play at whatever... **just looking out for things that bring waste and ruin into ourselves. Because of that, the affairs of our country have thus given rise to chaos and agitation.**

In truth, it's a day to take off work in order to search out virtuous, beautiful, good qualities – going to a monastery in order to develop in goodness, to go and safeguard virtue.

Taking a break from the work that we do all year: we set aside one or two days (now) for what reason? We come to the monastery in order to look at the work we've been doing for almost a year – right up until this point – to see whether it's good or not. However it is, we should know.

We come to the monastery to look at everything, and consider what we want to have around us in the future. Really look.

Here, we've taken birth and what have we wanted? To be prosperous. Prosperous in what? Some people are affluent in happiness – they are not people who are deprived and destitute, not afflicted with pain and difficulty. They are beautiful people.



Some people are deprived and destitute, afflicted with pain and difficulty, homely and unattractive, with their bodies crippled and deformed. What is the cause of that?

All of us are the same – four properties, five aggregates and six sense-bases, equally. It is because of what, that some people are thus like that? All of us should investigate and see.

Here, lacking in having done anything, we haven't created any virtuous, beautiful, good qualities for many lifetimes; thus we have been born as an unfortunate person, a poor person.

For developing virtuous, beautiful, good qualities, the Buddha laid out his dispensation to clarify and show the way to do that – there was no other, distant reason for it.

We have been born in this world, and we all have three aims and aspirations:

1. We want a lot of property, food and wealth – we are all searching for it these days.
2. We want a beautiful physical appearance, and a long life without diseases or dangers.
3. We want mindfulness and discernment – intelligence and skill: once we have been born, we all go to study and become schooled, internally and externally.

But many people try and don't achieve their aims and aspirations.

The Buddha realised the reason for this. He investigated: beings don't achieve their aims and aspirations because **they are lacking in their conduct and in their practise.**

Because of that, the Buddha thus laid down this dispensation. The dispensation that he laid down – he laid it down right here; he didn't lay it down anywhere else. **He laid it down with regard to our bodies and selves.**

In declaring the Dhamma, the Buddha didn't declare it anywhere else: he declared **the aggregates, the sense-bases, the properties,**



the faculties, and (types of) **individuals**. There! In declaring his dispensation, in declaring Dhamma, the Buddha declared it right here. He didn't declare it anywhere else.

Declaring the aggregates – the declaration that arose from the aggregates: he declared **bodily form, sensation, perception, mental fabrications and cognisance**. Here, these things that we depend on. We take them as a person – they're just (composed of) four properties. This here is the five aggregates.

Now, the **six sense-bases**: the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and heart that the Buddha declared as Dhamma. We depend on these things – the eyes for seeing, the ears for listening, the nose for smelling, the tongue for tasting, the body for tactile impressions, and the heart as the counterpart of moods and preoccupations... The Buddha declared these things like this. **That which arises as pain or pleasure arises from these things.**

The **four properties**: earth, water, wind and fire all come in and meet together. The **earth property** is head-hair, body-hair, nails, teeth, skin, flesh... these things... bones... here, the liver, kidneys, the small intestine, the large intestine, excrement, undigested food – that which is dense and solid within us is called the **property of earth**.

The **water property**: bile, phlegm, sweat and perspiration, snot, saliva... these things which are fluid within us are called the **property of water**.

The **wind property**: inhalation, exhalation, the movement upwards or downwards that flows throughout our entire body (our circulation) – this is considered the **property of wind**.

The **fire property**: that which warms and regulates our body temperature, or burns up food in digestion, or burns out the body in (aging and) deterioration, is called the **property of fire**.

This here, when these things all come together, it is called an individual – oneself. When it is 'oneself', with everybody having **four properties, five aggregates and six sense-bases**, how is it that



everybody isn't the same? Some people are short, or dark-skinned, or light-skinned. Some people are big. Some people are small. They're not the same. There's no regularity. What is the cause for that?

The cause is like this: that is, people are different in virtuous qualities and in their endowments. Here, we are lacking in our conduct.

Those who are affluent in happiness, those who are rich and beautiful, are those who have given donations and built up virtuous, beautiful, good qualities. They already have generosity, virtue, and mental cultivation. That is, they have built these up, performed them, and made donations. They have built up and accrued them already for many states of being and many lifetimes – not just in this life.

In coming to this life, some people don't go to the monastery, they don't have any respect for monks, on days for keeping virtue they don't give up anything, they don't recognise the observance day... in taking time off from work they just travel and roam about for fun and pleasure – they don't cultivate virtuous, beautiful, good qualities.

That all of us have come here in this way – this is called 'developing oneself', supporting and fostering oneself. The results and benefits of this are that we take birth as people without hardship and deprivation. It stays with us and leads us on for many lifetimes and states of being. Here, it becomes a part of our character.

The results and benefits of this lead individuals into becoming people who are affluent in happiness, people without hardship and deprivation – because we have done these things already.

As a comparison, it's like a farmer: a farmer who has done his farming already will not have to do without food. If he wants his granaries filled with rice, he will fill them. If he hasn't done his farming and he wants his granaries filled with rice, there won't be any.

Here, all of us, having been born, want affluence and prosperity, though we haven't conducted ourselves in *pubbe kata-puññatā*.



Pubbe – formerly; **puñña** – that which is good and wholesome; **katam** – activity, that we haven’t engaged in; **paṇidhi ca** – we haven’t established ourselves correctly in things that are good. This is not a blessing at all.

Those who have **pubbe kata-puññatā** – they have engaged in good and wholesome activities in former times; **paṇidhi ca** – they have already established themselves correctly in things that are good; **etaṃ maṅgalam-uttamaṃ** – they thus experience a supreme blessing.

Here, investigate and look into this! This is **one point**.

A **second point**: wanting a beautiful appearance and a long life... whoever wants this should safeguard virtue.

How is it safeguarded – virtue? We safeguard our bodies, safeguard our speech, and safeguard our hearts to set them in order. When we haven’t acted on faults, whether large or small, by way of our body, by way of our speech, or by way of our heart, when we take birth we are people who are set in order. Our bodies are in order, our speech is in order, we aren’t crippled or deformed, we are people without diseases or dangers; and so we are people who are beautiful and attractive. Make sure that you understand it like this.

In what has been said here about coming to safeguard virtue, we safeguard ourselves – we don’t safeguard anywhere else.

Here, this kind of wholesomeness has brought forth its results to us for many lifetimes, many states of being. People who are wicked and ugly because of not safeguarding virtue – you can look in the present here and see them.

The people who have come to this monastery are how many hundreds, or how many thousands, or how many people? And then people who are out sightseeing, have a look... Oh ho! Count them and there’s ten thousand at least – we don’t make up even a quarter of them. Think this over and have a look – here, the people that have come to the monastery in this way can be counted as how many people? Take this as something you should know and understand.



Another point is the benefits of **being born with mindfulness and discernment**. Everyone wants to be born with mindfulness and discernment, but for those among us who haven't meditated, it isn't possible. The Buddha taught us to meditate. When you take birth, you will have mindfulness and discernment, skill and intelligence.

The Buddha taught to meditate. '**Buddho**', '**Dhammo**', '**Saṅgho**'. Here, bring recollection into the heart. Investigate and single out our heart. There are many kinds of hearts – there are good hearts, evil hearts, easy hearts, long-suffering hearts, 'hellish' hearts, 'ghost-like' hearts, 'animal' hearts... there are dumb, silent hearts, crazy hearts, hearts that have a ruined character...

The hearts of people like us are many and varied – there are hearts like a deva's son, hearts like a deva's daughter, hearts like Indra, hearts like a Brahma, hearts like a great, noble king, hearts like a millionaire, and certainly, the heart of a person who is affluent in happiness.

There are 'Captain' hearts, 'Colonel' hearts, 'General' hearts, 'Supreme Commander' hearts...

Which one do you want? Choose one! Ow! Now, will you pick one? I've been talking a lot here – all day.

Ow! Assume the seated posture. Sit in meditation. Sit and make yourself at ease. Let go of your posturing, let go of your predilections; make the mind dignified and majestic, delighted and clear.

When you have let the body go to a state of ease, recollect the refuge we have. What is our refuge? It's the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha. This is our refuge.

Recollect the Buddha in the heart, the Dhamma in the heart, the Saṅgha of Noble Disciples in the heart.

Having become confident and firmly believing in the heart in that way, recollect your meditation-words: '**Buddho, Dhammo, Saṅgho**', '**Buddho, Dhammo, Saṅgho**', '**Buddho, Dhammo, Saṅgho**' – three times – and then bring things in together on the single word '**Buddho**', '**Buddho**'.

Close your eyes. Close the mouth. Recollect in the heart. The tongue is not wiggling and fidgeting.

We want to know what is lacking within ourselves. What's not good, what's good – however it is, know it. We want to know if it's good or bad. Whatever level or plane we're at, whatever state of being, what are we doing that is not in accordance with our aims and aspirations? What is the cause? Here, we have to look.

How will we be able to know these things? Recollect '**Buddho**', '**Buddho**'. Wherever there are feelings, establish mindfulness and focus in on that knowing. The ears are listening right there, the eyes are focused right on that – don't go looking anywhere else.

Know how our mind is. Is it good or is it evil? How is it good? Know this.

It is good in this way: our mind is peaceful; there is pleasure and ease, with a cool heart – not afflicted and agitated, not scattered and chaotic. '**Buddho**' – the heart is expansive and awake; with a heart at ease there is a lightness within ourselves, a lightness in the physical body.

'**Buddho**' – when the heart is expansive and awake continuously, our hearts are at ease. Doing anything, we are at ease. Lying down, we are at ease. Walking, we are at ease. Standing, we are at ease.

It's certain! With the ceasing of the aggregates, we will continue within a state of pleasure and ease.

If the heart is not good, with affliction and hardship, scattered and chaotic, agitated, beings fall into suffering. We receive hardship both in the present and in the future.

When the heart is not good, nothing we do will be good – our work is not good, our ventures are not good, our business is not good, anything we do is not good. See for yourself!

Our family is not good. Our brothers and sisters are not good. The townsfolk and market vendors are not good. Our country and nation are not good.

How should I say it? Do you want things to be like this? When we don't want it, where does this come from? **It arises from our hearts right here.** Once our aggregates cease, we will take birth in a place that is not good.

However anyone is, we have to experience loss at this moment. We have to know loss at this moment, see loss at this moment. I don't have to lie to anybody – we all go according to our own ways and our own perspectives. Thinking that we haven't gotten things like *those* people, or we aren't like *this* – really have a look. See things clearly and truly with your own eyes.

When we say '**it's my bad kamma, the stars aren't aligned for me**', **where are the stars that aren't aligned** – the stars in the sky?

The 'stars are aligned'... have a look. The stars that are aligned are when we sit and our mind is peaceful, with pleasure and the heart at ease. This is the 'alignment of the stars'. Anything we do will be good. This is the stars in alignment.

The 'stars aren't aligned' – how is that? The heart is scattered, chaotic and agitated. Just when the heart is not good is when the 'stars aren't aligned'. When the heart is not good, anything we do will not be good. Whatever we look for will not be good. Whatever we want will not be good.

When it is like this, quickly contemplate '**Buddho**' and cut things off. The Buddha thus talked about **cutting off bad kamma, cutting off ill-will**, washing away evil, washing away bad kamma. It's not cutting off with a knife or a sword – **we use our mindfulness of 'Buddho' to cut them.**

Washing away evil, washing away bad kamma – how is that done? It's not washing away with water and soap. **We rely on sitting in meditation and our mind is thus peaceful.** When our minds aren't inclined towards bad kamma, where will bad kamma come from? It is certain! That is, I've already explained it to you.

Kammassako'mhi – kamma belongs to oneself; **kalyāṇaṃ vā**



pāpakam̐ vā tassa dāyādā bhavissanti – whatever kamma we do, whether it’s good or evil, good or bad, we will receive the results of that kamma in an ongoing way. Have a look. We will receive the results of kamma in an ongoing way.

How are we to know good kamma? *Kalyāṇam̐* means good kamma. Taking everything I have said together in brief, it means our hearts are good, with pleasure and ease in the heart. This is called ‘**good kamma**’ – we receive the results of goodness.

Pāpakam̐ – bad kamma – the heart is not good: afflicted and troubled, scattered and agitated. This here is evil. It’s not something that arises from the sky, or from trees or mountains. It arises from the **sphere of our hearts** right here. When you see that it is like this, quickly make it cease!

We go into *vipassanā*, seeing the place where fabrications arise, seeing the place where fabrications cease, seeing the suffering and the harm in fabrications, seeing the danger in fabrications – and make them cease. Why do you want to keep them with you – things that are no good for sure?! Know and see this.

This here is an important point. This here – you should all know this, should all see this from now on.

If we perform acts of goodness in this way, it is called ‘paṭipat pūjā’ (showing veneration through one’s practise and conduct). **It is truly the highest and most excellent form of veneration.**

Performing acts of goodness: is giving something in generosity equal to us sitting in meditation here? Ow! Really look. Is it good, or don’t we know? These hearts of ours... are they not good, or don’t we know? We want what’s good when our hearts are not good; what are we going to get that’s good?

Because of that, for whatever things that are good or evil, **the heart arrives there first**. In Pāli, the Buddha said, “*mano pubb’āṅgamā dhammā, mano setṭhā, mano mayā*” – for whatever things that are good or evil, the heart arrives there first; they are



accomplished in conjunction with the heart.

Don't keep on reflecting that '*that* thing is not good', '*this* thing is not good' – really look. Cleanse things right now. From now on, when our hearts are good, we will receive the results of goodness both in the present and in the future.

When our hearts are not good, we will receive the results both in the present and in the future.

The future – how will it be? People ask, 'Look, will my venture succeed or not?' They ask, 'Will I succeed or not?'

For things to succeed, our hearts have to be steady, our hearts have to be cool and composed, our hearts at ease. How is it that things will fail? When the heart is scattered, chaotic and agitated, things have already failed. Just like this. That Dhamma: look at it *sandiṭṭhiko* – a practitioner knows themselves, sees themselves. How can we not know our own hearts?

Success or failure, good or bad – will we be prosperous or not? Have a look. Will we be beautiful or not? Have a look. When our hearts are good, there will be beauty and charm. When our hearts are not good, there will be ugliness and wickedness. Have a look.

Ow! Now, all of you, look into your own hearts. Not for long – maybe 30 minutes. Look into it...



Comments or questions about this talk can be addressed to the translator by email:

wide.angle.lens.email@gmail.com

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