

FOR YOU, THE NEWCOMER

————— SANTINAN —————

(Venerable Luangpu Pramote Pamojjo at present)



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Translated by Hataitip Devakul

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## PREFACE

Those who are interested in practicing Dhamma often don't know how to begin. As such, Luangpor Pramote Pamojjo's Teaching Media Foundation have selected two articles, 'For You the Newcomer' and 'A Brief Guideline for Practicing Dhamma', both written by Luangpu Pramote Pamojjo when he was still a layperson under the pen name 'Santinan', to be published for free distribution.

It is hoped that beginning Dhamma practitioners will use this book to answer Dhamma-related questions, and as a guide for their Dhamma practice.

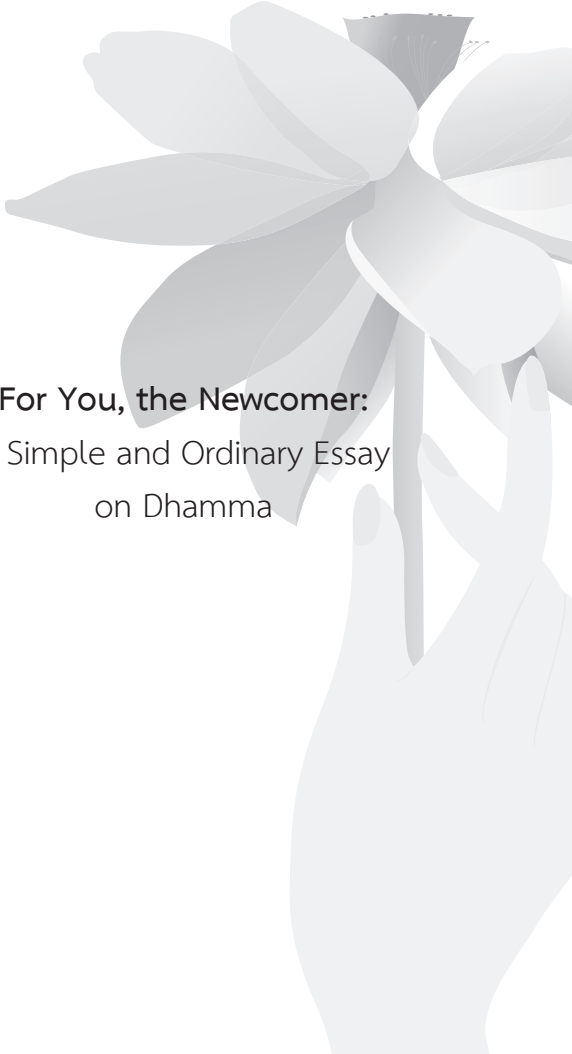
Please be aware that the articles were written during the time when Luangpu Pramote Pamojjo was still a layperson, distributed amongst a small group of Dhamma acquaintances, therefore the wording may be slightly different from that of his current works.

Luangpor Pramote Pamojjo's  
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**For You, the Newcomer:**  
A Simple and Ordinary Essay  
on Dhamma







It is difficult for us to see that Dhamma (the Teachings of the Buddha) is simple and ordinary. This is because the ways that we perceive Buddhism and Dhamma are often less than ordinary. To begin with, Dhamma teachings are often full of words in the Pali language and contain a multitude of technical terms. Therefore, understanding the terminology alone is a challenge to everyone.

Once we are familiarized with the terms, there is another obstacle in that there are many volumes of the Buddha's Teachings and an overabundance of interpretations by His disciples. In addition, when someone wants to begin practicing, he will be faced with yet



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another challenge: there are many meditation centers and most of them suggest that their teaching methods most accurately reflect the Buddha's Teachings on the four foundations of mindfulness or Satipaṭṭhanā. Some places even accuse others of deviating from the actual Teachings.

We have all faced these difficulties. And they are what led me to question myself as to whether it is possible to study Dhamma in a more simple way: without learning Pali, without reading books and without having to join a meditation center.



Actually Dhamma as taught by the Buddha is quite easy and simple, as his disciples exclaimed, “It is so explicitly clear my Lord! Your sermon is like turning an inverted object right side up.” This should not come as a surprise because we are all born with Dhamma, live with Dhamma, and will all die with Dhamma. We just don’t realize where Dhamma is until it is revealed to us through the Teachings of the Buddha, which provide us with a simple path to follow.

Another point to note is just how wise the Buddha truly was. He could make the most complicated topic simple and easy to comprehend. He had the ability to convey



the essence of the Dhamma in a way that was most suitable for His listeners. And language was no obstacle, as He was able to communicate clearly without relying on complicated terminology. On the contrary, many people who have studied and taught Dhamma in later generations have turned Dhamma into something complicated, out of reach, and not easily applicable as a tool to end suffering. Even the language used in their teachings is too difficult for any ordinary person to understand.

The truth is that Dhamma is extremely close to us. It is so close that we can say it is about ourselves. The Dhamma's aim is simple – how to be free from suffering.



When we study Dhamma, we should look directly into “where suffering is, how suffering arises and how to end suffering.” To be successful in the study of Dhamma means to practice until suffering is eradicated. It is not about the amount of worldly knowledge acquired or the ability to explain Dhamma eraborately and beautifully!

The truth is that the suffering we experience lies within our body and mind. The field of study for Dhamma is actually inside of us. Instead of looking to the outside world for learning, we may look inwardly at our own selves. The method is simple: just observe our body and mind closely. We can start by



simply looking at our physical body.

The first step is to relax. There is no need to be tense or to think about practicing Dhamma. We just watch our own body. It does not matter how observant we are, just be as natural as we can.

Once at ease, we can see the whole body. We watch it as if it were a robot... walking, moving, chewing, swallowing food and excreting waste.

If we can watch as a neutral observer at this robot-body, which we call “ours”, performing its tasks, we can see that the



body is not really ours. It is something that is constantly changing. It's components have substances moving in and out all the time, such as air when breathing in and out, food and drinks when we consume, and waste matter when we go to the toilet. It is dynamic and unstable. By simply observing the body, our clinging to the wrong view that the body is “ours” will eventually fade. Then, we will see that there is some other nature, which we call mind, that is aware of this body and resides within it.

Once we can see that this body is just an aggregate of constantly changing elements and not ours, let us study further and try to observe what is hidden inside it.





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What we will see are feelings, sometimes happy, sometimes unhappy and other times indifferent. For example, as we observe this robot-body moving around, soon we will see aching, pain, thirst, hunger and some other discomforts arising. However, once these unsatisfactory feelings pass, we will again feel comfortable. This is happiness arising. Or when we are thirsty, we drink some water and the unhappiness caused by thirst is gone. Or when we sit for a long time and begin to feel the pain, we feel the discomfort. Once we adjust the body position, the unpleasantness goes away and again we feel happiness arising.



Sometimes when we fall sick, we are aware of physical suffering for longer periods of time. For example, when we have a toothache continuously for days, if we closely monitor the pain we will discover that the discomfort arises from somewhere between the tooth and gum. Though both the tooth and gum do not suffer. The body is like a robot, it is not in pain and yet the discomfort is there.

The body does not feel happy, unhappy or indifferent. Though these feelings arise from somewhere within. Moreover, these feelings are being observed the same way as the body itself.



And when we study more deeply we can see that as suffering arises, the mind becomes agitated and unhappy. Some examples are: when we are hungry, we get upset more easily; when we are tired, we get angry more easily; when we have fever, we get agitated more easily; and when our desires are not met, we get irritated more easily. We can be aware of the anger that arises when faced with suffering.

On the other hand, when we see beautiful sights, hear pleasing sounds, smell pleasant fragrances, taste delicious flavors, feel a soft touch or a comfortable temperature – not too hot and not too cold – or think of



pleasant thoughts, we will feel liking and satisfaction with such sights, sounds, fragrances, tastes, touches and thoughts. Once we are aware of pleasant and unpleasant feelings as they arise, we can similarly become aware of other feelings such as doubtfulness, vengeance, depression, jealousy, disdain, cheerfulness and tranquility of mind as well.

When we study these feelings further, we will begin to realize that they themselves are not stable. For example, when we are angry and become conscious of the anger, we can detect the constant change in the intensity of this anger. Eventually, it will fade and disappear. Whether or not the feeling of



anger disappears, what is important is that the anger is seen as an object to be observed, not belonging to us. There is no “us” in the anger. We can observe other feelings with this same understanding.

At this point we can see that our body is like a robot. And, the feelings of happiness, unhappiness and all others are just objects to be observed and do not belong to us. The more we understand about the process of our minds, the more evident is the truth that suffering only arises when there is a cause.

We will find that there is a natural impulse, or force within our mind. For example,



when a man sees a beautiful woman, his mind may start to develop a liking for her. This creates a compelling force towards that woman. His mind will then focus at her, seeing only her, and he will forget about himself.

When we have doubtful thoughts about how to practice Dhamma, we will notice that we have the urge to find a solution. Our mind will then wander into the world of thoughts. This is when we forget about ourselves. The robot-body is still here, but we forget about it, as if it has disappeared from this world. There may be other emotions inside as well; however, we might not be aware of them because our mind is busy thinking, searching for answers to the doubtful thoughts.



Regarding the subject of the mind wandering, a person who only studies from textbooks may be puzzled. However, if he also practices, he will see just how far the mind can wander, as described word-for-word by the Buddha himself.

If we observe ourselves more often, we will soon understand how suffering occurs, how to be free from suffering, and how it feels to be without suffering. Our mind will rectify itself without having to think about meditation, wisdom or the path that leads to the end of suffering.

We may not be well versed in Dhamma or Pali words, but our minds can still be free



from suffering. And even though we still experience suffering, it will be less intense and for a shorter period of time.

I wrote this essay as a small gift for all those who are interested in practicing Dhamma in order to convey that Dhamma is ordinary, it is about ourselves, and can be self-taught without much difficulty. So we should not feel discouraged when we listen to people who are so proficient in Dhamma talking about theory. In reality, we do not need to know anything but how to be free from suffering, because this is the heart of Buddhism. It is indeed the most important lesson of all.







A Brief Guideline for  
Practicing Dhamma





Many friends come to practice Dhamma with me, and I have seen some common problems that incur when they set out to practice. Some are afraid that they will not be able to practice Dhamma correctly if they are not with me. The Bangkok folks are more at ease because they know where to find me; however, my friends living abroad and upcountry are more concerned because of the distance. They asked for a brief guideline with clear instructions on how to practice Dhamma correctly so that when I am not around, they can still practice with confidence.



Some friends listen to my talks, but get confused and do not understand correctly. Some would apply advice that I have given others to their own meditation. This is often an inappropriate thing to do as the person I'm advising may be at a different stage of the practice. The result of applying the answer to another's question to oneself is no different from taking another patient's medication. A related problem is that some of my friends have argued amongst themselves about appropriate practices by quoting my suggestions taken from different occasions and at different times.



I have therefore been requested to systematically put together all of my teachings on Dhamma practice in order to clarify any misunderstandings. I feel that there is a need for a brief Dhamma guideline to summarize the practices that I have suggested to my colleagues and friends. This is to clearly show the whole picture of Dhamma practice from the beginning onward, in order to avoid the above-mentioned problems.



## 1. To Understand the Scope of Buddhism

Friends who have little background in Buddhism need to know that Buddhism is not a medicine that cures all illnesses in the universe. It is not the only tool necessary to survive in society. Therefore if you are a college student, you do not need to quit college just to study Buddhism, because worldly knowledge is essential for everyone to lead a normal life in this world. A student of Buddhism needs to be well rounded in other fields of study as well. Do not misunderstand that Buddhism is the study



of something other than suffering and how to be free from (mental) suffering. Buddhism is not limited to providing answers relating to superstition, fate, past lives, future lives, ghosts, angels and other mystical phenomena.







## 2. Tools for Practicing Dhamma

Those who already know the Buddhist teachings on suffering and how to end suffering have already been introduced to the tools for practicing Dhamma, which are mindfulness and clear comprehension (sati and sampajañña).

My advice for us is to be aware of the feelings that are happening in our mind. Some examples are feelings of doubt, greed, worry, happiness and sadness. This is the practice of being mindful, which is the tool to be aware of the objects of consciousness that arise.



We are all encouraged to be aware and not to get lost through the six sense doors, namely, the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body (tactile sense) and mind, of which most common are through the eye and the mind doors, intently focusing on an object or getting lost in the world of thoughts. By consistently being aware, not getting lost in thoughts or over-focusing, we can achieve clear comprehension, clarity of consciousness.





### 3. Foundations of Mindfulness

Once we have the tools or weapons for practicing Dhamma, the next step I would like to invite us to do is mindfulness practice or satipaṭṭhanā, which is to have clear comprehension of the body, feelings, mind, and/or mind-objects, depending on each individual's natural tendencies. Examples of this are mindfulness of bodily movement while doing walking meditation and of the breath in and out while doing sitting meditation. In the beginning, we can do concentration practice or samatha, focusing at the body in a relaxed way. Once focused,



bodily movement and movement of the air when breathing in and out become just objects of meditation. We can see that they change constantly, cannot stay in one state and are not under our control.

Through this mindfulness exercise, the mind gains strength and clear comprehension. And when a mental object arises, the mind will automatically be aware. For example, when happiness, sadness, wholesome or unwholesome state arises, the mind will know, the same way it knows any physical object.



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For those who are good at knowing mental objects, continue with the exercise. Otherwise just observing physical object is also acceptable.

When the mind is continually aware of mental and physical objects, it will gain strength and insight. The mind will naturally react to these objects with content, discontent or indifference. Be aware of these feelings. They will arise and fall away just like all other mental and physical objects we have been observing. The mind will then let go of these feelings and become equanimous. At first it might only experience this evenness for a short time. Once more skillful however, the



mind will become equanimous more often and for longer periods, and it will eventually be aware of the equanimity itself. It will be able to distinguish the five aggregates or khandha, which make up the body and mind, in greater detail, seeing them distinctly as form, feelings, memory, mental fabrication and consciousness.

At this stage in mindfulness development, many practitioners often have one of these two reactions: some become bored and stop the practice, while others are unsure of what to do next, and again stop the practice in search for answers by using analytical thinking.



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Actually once the mind becomes aware of the equanimity, all we have to do is continue to observe. Once mindfulness, concentration and wisdom (or *sati*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*) mature, the mind will advance by itself.

This concludes the brief guideline for the Dhamma practice.





## 4. Incorrect Methods of Mindfulness Practice

Even using the above guideline, when we start to practice Dhamma, we are often faced with many different problems resulting primarily from incorrect mindfulness practice.

For many of us, the more we practice, the more we divert from the goal. The main mistake is, instead of being mindful of things as they are, we tend to create a new object of consciousness and then get stuck in it.





This can happen when we think that our mind is too distracted and therefore need to do concentration practice first. We then do it incorrectly, instead of developing right concentration or sammā-samādhi, we develop wrong concentration or micchā-samādhi. We focus in on one object, letting the mind get absorbed and attached to it instead of just being aware with ease and comfort, and not getting lost or over-focusing.

With wrong concentration, the mind becomes attached to the object that it has fabricated. And once we progress from concentration to mindfulness practice,



because of its attachment this mind will no longer be able to see the actual truth.

Another common mistake is, instead of being aware of whatever arises in a simple and natural way, many people force the mind to be alert, especially in my presence, thinking that this is mindfulness. Thus their minds become too tense and on-guard. This feeling is no different from a runner at the starting line.

The third most common hindrance is to practice Dhamma with craving, such as a need to show off and to gain praise and acceptance from friends, or a desire to be



enlightened quickly. The more we want to excel, the more we try to accelerate the effort instead of allowing mindfulness and clear comprehension to develop consistently and naturally. (In actuality for Dhamma practice, to develop mindfulness and clear comprehension consistently and naturally all the time is the true meaning of accelerated effort.) When we practice with craving, the practice is strained. Though it may look like there is progress, the mind is not at peace. These three mistakes are what cause many of us to get lost in or attached to a mind-object, and mistakenly believe that we are fully aware when we are actually not. Many of us are now able to detect these mistakes



and get back on course to just be mindful of things that appear at the present moment.

There is a funny story of one of my pupils whose mind was fixed to a mind-object. My suggestion was for him to be aware of this and free the mind by being aware of external objects, hoping that the fixed mind would loosen up. This young man was very troubled by this suggestion as he thought I meant to stop being mindful and let the mind wander off. Fortunately, he came back to clear the misunderstanding with me. Otherwise, had he mentioned this to the elders, I would have been expelled from the temple!



Actually, when a person becomes attached to a mental object, the mind already wanders off from being mindful. I tried to help the young man see that by over-focusing he was letting the mind wander off, in this case to the object of meditation.

Another problem that a few may face is to get lost in the side effects of meditation, such as getting lost in nimitta, or an inner vision of light, color, sound or even in bodily jerks and gyrations. When these conditions arise, some take pleasure in the experience while others the opposite. I have to guide them further to be mindful of these feelings. With repeated practice the mind



will eventually become neutral, instead of unknowingly focus on these pleasant or unpleasant sensations.

To avoid mistakes in practicing Dhamma, we must strictly adhere to the rule, which is to be aware of defilements when they arise, until eventually one day the mind gains wisdom and breaks free. If we practice Dhamma to satisfy our desire to know, to see, to become, to get, to stand out, to be famous or even to attain enlightenment, then the risk for getting off track is higher, all because the mind often times fabricates a new set of conditions instead of simply being aware of things just as they are.



We need to be observant of the mind. If for example it becomes weightier than the surrounding, then this means that the mind has unknowingly become attached to something. The natural state of the mind should not be heavy, but be the same as its surroundings. It feels heavy only because it is carrying the extra weight. Relax and look around. Everything we see, be it building, table, chair, tree, is not heavy because we are not carrying it. The mind, however, is sometimes heavy and other times light. This is because of clinging. The more we cling the heavier the mind becomes. It is this weightiness that causes the mind to appear separate from nature. This extra



weight is created by the mind when it fails to notice the defilements.

Once the mind becomes proficient at being aware, observe further and see how it reacts to these external objects, whether with liking or disliking. Continue the practice until the mind becomes impartial to all objects of consciousness, until the inside and nature are of the same weight, until eventually there is no more weight to carry.

The Buddha taught that the five aggregates that we assume to be our body and our mind are heavy. Anyone carrying this weight will never find happiness.





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His Teaching is the absolute Truth. The five aggregates are truly heavy for those with the faculty to see.



The Buddha has taught us that birth, aging, illness and death are suffering. Only few people, upon hearing this, attain true understanding. Most of us, after having heard this, hold that we, through birth, aging, illness and death, are ones who suffer.

No one fully attains the right view that in reality the phenomena of birth, aging, illness and death in themselves are suffering. It is not “we” that suffer. They are simply the phenomena of matter and mind, Exemplifying the three characteristics of existence: arising, persisting and vanishing,



all uncontrollable and not subject to any one's command.

Once misunderstood with wrong view that matter and mind or body and mind are our own self, when matter and mind face aging, illness and death, we struggle to escape. The more we struggle, the more we suffer. The more we suffer, the more we struggle. We do not realize that suffering exists but no sufferer exists. Whenever we practice Dhamma to the extent that we could simply see the phenomena in their pure state, devoid of animals, persons, our

own self and others, we will attain full realization of the Four Noble Truths.

From prior perception that with cause of suffering (*samudaya*) that is craving (*taṇhā*), suffering (*dukkha*) arises. We could now clearly comprehend that out of ignorance, we do not know that suffering is matter and mind and mistakenly think that matter and mind constitute our own self. Another craving then arises, which is the desire to liberate oneself from suffering and attain happiness. It is this desire which adds up another layer of mental suffering over



the other suffering.

How deep and subtle these Noble Truths are! Yet because of wrong perceptions of these, all beings are roaming in the endless round of rebirths.

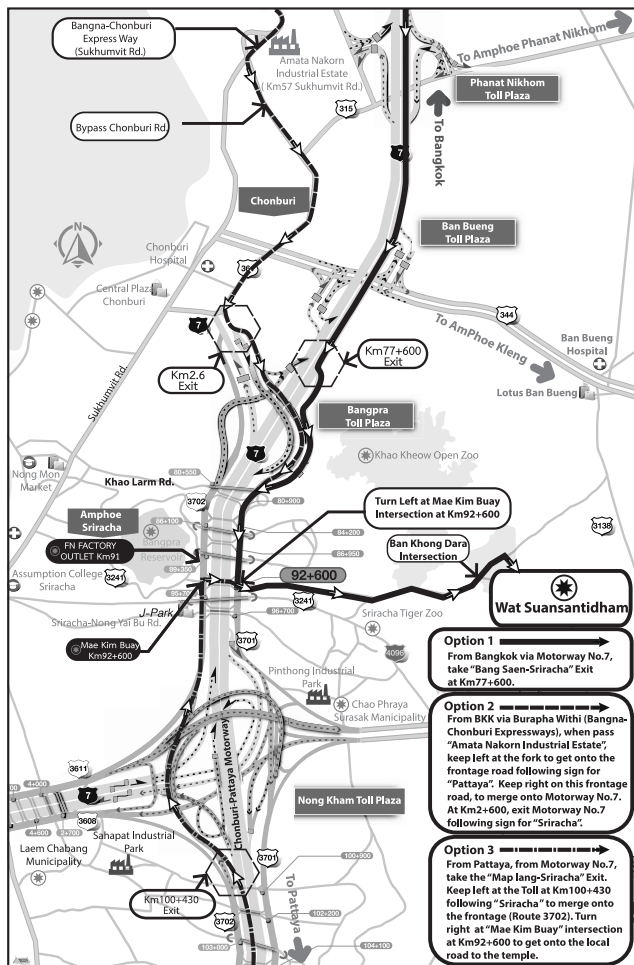
With thorough understanding of suffering, the cause of suffering will automatically be abandoned, the cessation of suffering will appear right before our eyes. The process of understanding suffering, Abandonment of its causes and cessation of suffering is the Noble Path - the only path

that leads towards complete freedom from suffering.

Whenever we see every phenomenon in its pure state of arising, persisting and vanishing, that it is suffering, non-self, and uncontrollable, we will be in the state of merely observing, perceiving, seeing and without any craving in such state involved. Such state is pure awareness, free from all thought processes.

*Phra Pramote Pamojjo*

# Map to Wat Suan Santidham



"Dhamma is ordinary,  
it is about ourselves, and can be learned  
by ourselves without much difficulty.  
So do not feel discouraged when you hear people  
who are well-versed in Dhamma talking about theory.  
In reality, you do not need to know anything  
except for how to be free from suffering,  
because this is the heart of Buddhism,  
which is the most important lesson  
for one to learn."

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