

# Life Should Be Harnessed By Two Buffaloes

*Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu*

*Translated by:  
James Ratana Nantho Bhikkhu*

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The Buddhadāsa Foundation  
c/o Suan Mokkhabalārāma  
Chaiya, Surat Thani  
Thailand 84110  
Fax : 66-77-431597

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# ANUMONDANĀ

(To all Dhamma Comrades, those helping to spread Dhamma:)

Break out the funds to spread Dhamma to let Faithful Trust flow,  
Broadcast majestic Dhamma to radiate long living joy.

Release unexcelled Dhamma to tap the spring of Virtue,  
Let safely peaceful delight flow like a cool mountain stream.

Dhamma leaves of many years sprouting anew, reaching out,  
To unfold and bloom in the Dhamma Centers of all towns.

To spread lustrous Dhamma and in hearts glorified plant it,  
Before long, weeds of sorrow, pain, and affliction will flee.

As Virtue revives and resounds throughout Thai society,  
All hearts feel certain love toward those born, ageing, and dying.

Congratulations and Blessings to all Dhamma Comrades,  
You who share Dhamma to widen the people's prosperous joy.

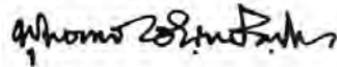
Heartiest appreciation from Buddhadāsa Indapañño,  
Buddhist Science ever shines beams of Bodhi longlasting.

In grateful service, fruits of merit and wholesome successes,  
Are all devoted in honor to Lord Father Buddha.

Thus may the Thai people be renowned for their Virtue,  
May perfect success through Buddhist Science awaken their hearts.

May the King and His Family live long in triumphant strength,  
May joy long endure throughout this our word upon earth.

from



Mokkhabalārāma

Chaiya, 2 November 2530

*(translated by Santikaro Bhikkhu, 3 February 2531 (1988))*

# Foreword to Special Imprint

This copy of *Live Should Be Harnessed by Two Buffaloes* is offered by the Buddhadāsa Foundation free of charge. It is available for free distribution only. ('For sale' copies published commercially are available elsewhere.)

The Buddhadāsa Foundation was established in 1986 on the occasion of Venerable Ajahn Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu's eightieth birthday. The Venerable Ajahn requested that the foundation not be named after him directly; hence, Buddhadāsa here refers to all 'Servants of the Buddha'. Tan Ajahn Buddhadāsa also requested that the foundation concentrate on publishing books in foreign language, especially English, as his works are already widely available in Thai. Finally, he requested that the foundation make his works available free of cost. Thus, this and future publications of the foundation will be distributed for free to suitable groups and individuals.

Out of respect and appreciation for the Venerable Ajahn's work, many people have contributed to the Buddhadāsa Foundation. Their generosity has made this

book in your hands possible.

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Buddhadāsa Foundation

# Translator's Foreword

It has been said that it is never an easy task to translate the discourses on Buddhist Dhamma by the Most Venerable Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu into foreign languages. There may be some truth in that notion especially when one brings into consideration that how different a language may sound when compared to that of another, for instance, I am sure many people would agree with me that Chinese language definitely sounds different from Arabic, or even Japanese which is the language closest to Chinese. Well, it is not my task here to dwell on the difficulties involved in trying to translate the discourses by Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, I would rather leave it to the so-called experts or experienced translators to make whatever sound judgement as they see fit as I am only an 'amateur' in the field of translation. However, I try as best as I could to stick to the original words of Buddhadāsa and in some inevitable cases, I may supply a few words of my own which I include in brackets.

The content of this book was delivered about thirty years ago in front of a group of university students who

joined the monastic life for only a temporary period of time. It was a time when western culture and modern technology and even political ideological concepts were beginning to exert their respective influences on the Thai thinking and way of life, causing some young people to become western-orientated and seemed to pay no heed to the traditional concepts of values from their own culture.

It was a time of political uncertainties and many university students, being young, idealistic but impulsive, could not hide their discontent which resulted in political demonstration which, on some occasions broke out in violence and ended in bloodshed.

Thus, the mid-seventies saw a more democratic political system surfacing but of course in the so-called 'Thai-style' and some western aspects of life like individualism, consumerism and materialism began to make their way and crept into Thai psyche. People became glued to their television screens and many of them, especially those in the country or rural areas even believed everything they saw in the advertisements from the screens. A booming consumer culture was the inevitable result. Young people, particularly those in Bangkok, were quick to pick up '*Farang*' or western ideas and some superficial aspects of the western life-style. Thirty years ago the transitional changes were not so rapid and obvious as they are now. Wise people such as Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu could not help feeling

alarmed at young people's indifference and disregard for traditional and religious values.

Buddhadāsa was not at all blind to the benefits of western science and technology, but he could see how infatuated and deluded the young Thai people could be with western values, and this could lead to a senseless quest for material consumption, turning people into materialists with no lofty interest and high regard for their own cultural and national heritage. Thus he delivered a discourse on Dhamma to a group of university students in which he used the ploughing method of the old days as a way of drawing a parallel between how the smooth ploughing of a rice-field could be accomplished and how a balanced life could be maintained by wisely applying technological knowledge for the benefit of mankind while at the same time not neglecting the inner spiritual development which is a significant criterion for a happy and harmonious life.

For some western readers, the content of this book might seem to suggest that Buddhadāsa was being anti-westerners or anti-western technology. In addition he seemed to be speaking in a provocative tone and style with regard to things western. I use the word 'seemed' because in reality or actual fact, Buddhadāsa was not anti-westerners, nor was he anti-western technology. Instead he appreciated the inquisitive mind of western people and he knew the benefits of science and technology. What he wanted people to do was to realise

that technology ought to be wisely used for both the material and spiritual well-being of human beings. The two buffaloes used in farming are symbolic of technological power and spiritual wisdom. We need these two to strike a balance in our lives. To be short of either one of the buffaloes would cause an imbalance. Life would not be harmonious. Buddhadāsa did point out that if we were to possess only one buffalo, the one called '*tua ru*' which knew and took orders, it would still be possible to plough the field although the work done might not be as much as when there were two buffaloes. This means that with wisdom alone, it is possible for us to get on in this world more or less moderately well but not excessively well or comfortable ; but if we were to possess only the second buffalo which has only strength but is ignorant of orders, then the rice-field could not possibly be well-ploughed, the buffalo might be running wild on the rice-field instead of properly performing its job. It would be too dangerous to be using this kind of buffalo alone. We would have to use the first buffalo as its working companion to lead it to the right path of the field that must be ploughed. This is the same as saying that technological power in the absence of wisdom is very dangerous. Historical facts have proved that. We invented deadly bombs and we had used them in Nagasaki and Hiroshima and the consequences were terrible.

That means, we need wisdom to restrain our material and technological innovations. We need to be awakened spiritually ; we need spiritual enlightenment. In fact we have gone too far in our technological accomplishment. We have unscrupulously interfered with nature, exploited it and destroyed a lot of it. It all started with the Industrial Revolution which began in Britain in the mid eighteenth century (around 1760s) during which many things were invented to facilitate production and promote an industrial economy. This era brought about a lot of social ills and also the beginning of the environmental pollution which threatens the world ecological system till this day. Even when pollution still remains a problem, we are now facing new problems existing in our present information technological era which is marked by the introduction of the Internet — something which is very useful in conveying information. But Internet can be used by people with ill intention for carrying out their criminal activities and the world so far has not yet come up with effective solution and measures for curbing or preventing possible abuses of the Internet ; so long as this situation remains, privacy will be jeopardized. Then we have this so-called bio-engineering technology (by which we even manage to clone an animal, alter the genetical structure of plants, etc., that we have bioengineered). In 1953 Francis Crick and James Watson managed to identify the double-helix structure

of a DNA. Biotechnology was then at its gestation period and now it is in the growing stage. In the next twenty or thirty years, it will be fully matured. Even now it is said that the basis of what makes a smell can be captured molecularly, and digitized on a cheap chip. However, is it all that necessary ? Will this extraordinary technological accomplishment bring peace to us ? Will it mean happiness and harmony for all nations on earth ?

Buddhadāsa believed that peace could not come from technological accomplishment. On the contrary, human beings could destroy the entire human race with our own technology. That is why Buddhadāsa said that besides the second buffalo (which has strength and is thus symbolic of technological power), we also need the first buffalo (which is symbolic of wisdom) to lead us as well, in order to bring us to the right path — the path leading to spiritual awakening, enlightenment and eternal life — a life that knows no death.

The two buffaloes — one means wisdom while the other stands for technological power — are just the essential factors necessary for the building of peace and harmony in the world of today. Buddhadāsa was aware of those wonderful things technology could bring to mankind, but he was even more aware of the perils which could be incubating within the sinister potentiality for destruction of technology, and men are always driven by their greed and ambition or even hatred into very

reckless and irresponsible actions. History always repeats itself because mankind never seems to have learnt from history.

People are always chasing after material goods, and yet inspite of the abundance and availability of material things, they never seem to have enough. They have not found the happiness they dream of. They discard family values and cultural traditions. They abandon their religions or faiths and declare themselves atheists. Many of them find it hard to conform to any existing cultural and religious or moral values. They believe in their own selves and set up their own values. When problems arise, they often find it not possible to solve their problems and they suffer emotionally. Then they take drugs as a way out. Some people look for happiness in piles and heaps of material goods. They search for it in the neon lights of the big cities, in bars, in casinos, in restaurants and even in brothels, but they find none and in the end they are back to their starting point — loneliness, misery and suffering.

Thus, Buddhadāsa reminded the university students that peace and harmony in life could only come true by attaining spiritual awakening and enlightenment. Sheer secular education and knowledge would not be enough to enlighten us, to lead us safely through the entire journey of life and to bring peace to the whole world. We need to develop ourselves spiritually. Technology is good but it has to be applied with

wisdom, otherwise it will bring only troubles and chaos.

Information technology is so advanced these days and free market economies are embarking on a globalization process ; Thailand finds it hard to evade the impact of western technological and economic influences. In fact western influences are creeping into many aspects of Thai people's lives. Bangkok is a big city of big shopping malls and young people prefer to drink a can of Coke instead of some coconut water which was popular with their forefathers. Many choose to lunch at KFC or the Pizza Hut instead of taking some traditional Thai food from some small stalls. This is a new, modern and western trend, according to some wry observers. Yes, western style is everywhere. A trifling example can be witnessed from those melodramas or soap operas which many Thais love to watch. The popular trend these days is to employ actors and actresses born of Thai mothers and western fathers. The audience seem to prefer their heroes and heroines with some Caucasian or western look, so those Eurasian actors and actresses are in popular demand. Ironically, some years ago, in the attempt to 'preserve the Asian identity', a neighbouring country forbade its advertising companies from employing people with 'Caucasian look' to appear in their television advertisements. However, in Thailand, to wear a Caucasian look or to be a Eurasian Thai is not something to be frowned upon, after all, Thailand had

never been colonised during those colonial days. The Caucasian-looking Thai actors and actresses may or may not have an identity problem is one matter, but the important thing is this appreciation of Eurasian look or beauty reflects the impact of Farangs' (or westerners) influence on the Thai concept of beauty. It also reflects on the Thai people's kind tolerance of people of other races.

At present, Thailand is undergoing a lot of transitional changes — politically, economically, socially and culturally. The world too, is subjected to big changes and the changes are on a global scale. No matter to which direction we choose to go, we should heed the advice of Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu that our lives should be harnessed by two buffaloes — one with great wisdom and the other with great technological power.

If we were to have a good scrutiny at the present situation of many countries (including even the rich and powerful ones), we could conclude without any doubt that almost all nations on earth have only one buffalo, that is the second buffalo which has only strength but no true wisdom, and all these nations are badly in need of the first buffalo — the one with intelligence and wisdom. Therefore we need two buffaloes. We need our knowledge of science and technology, but we also need spiritual knowledge and enlightenment to guide us so that we will not stray into the path leading to chaos and wars. Since the last millennium, mankind has been

talking about making peace for centuries, but wars still predominated the world stage, and now we are bringing the unfinished wars and human suffering into the beginning of this new millennium. Is it not time for us to stop our petty quarrels, put aside our ideological, racial and religious differences and embrace the only true message of all religions — to be truly good to each other, to love each other and to love and protect the world we live in ?

We have been straying too far from the path leading to peace and harmony. We tend to act on our impulses instead of wisdom. We bring too much unnecessary sorrow, pain and sufferings to ourselves, to other people and even to other living beings or creatures on earth. So, it is time to heed the advice of Buddhadhāsa, let our lives be harnessed by two buffaloes so that we will have the wisdom to walk the Middle Path — a path which avoids the extremes of life and leads us to peace and harmony. Yes, we need to avoid extremism and practise moderation. Extremism creates fundamentalism and fanaticism which only help to promote intolerance. This intolerance is the basic cause of all oppression, persecution and massacre. Technology has led to the invention of deadly weapons of mass destruction, and when such weapons fall into the hands of fanatics, the consequences are not something to be cheerful about.

Human thinking and actions often tend to

become extremes. We always experience extremes of emotions which either make us extremely happy or sad (or even angry). We have exploited natural resources of this earthly world to the extremes. As a result we have excessively contaminated the streams, rivers, seas and even oceans. We have polluted the air and we have driven some species of animals and birds into extinction. We are destroying the whole ecological system bit by bit and finally we may end up in slowly destroying our human existence too. If we fail to rein our so-called technological advancement properly, it is only a matter of time before we will finally be ‘wiping ourselves out from the surface of the earth’.

Therefore, we need moderation to bring about some kind of harmony to this topsy-turvy world of ours. We need to walk the Middle Path to attain this much-forgotten concept of ‘moderation’, and we need those two buffaloes to lead us through this Middle Path so that in the end we will be at peace with ourselves, at peace with our neighbours, at peace with all people on earth and at peace with our dear, old Mother Nature. By then, we will have found peace — true peace in the strictest sense of the word.

J. Ratana Nantho Bhikkhu

# **Life Should Be Harnessed By Two Buffaloes**

*By Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu*

The 21 April 1970 is the first day of our lecture. Today I will begin with talking about some prefatory matters as a measure of leading you into an understanding of some particular matters which you all want to know about. From the notes which you have scribbled I will thus gather the content, take a good look at what it actually consists of and see how I should approach the matter and speak about it.

**HOW SHOULD WE DO TO PREVENT SUFFERING  
FROM ARISING OR HOW TO TACKLE  
THE EXISTING SUFFERING**

The prefatory matter concerned here is the subject you want to know about. You want to know what you should do to prevent suffering from arising

and how to deal with existing suffering. You want to know the answers from the point of view of householders, not monks.

It is quite right that you should want to know about matters concerning the householders. After all you are not going to remain as monks forever and you will have to go out to be common folks. Thus, it is only natural that you want to learn about your problems and matters relating to them from the stand-point of a householder. However, I want to speak in another way by which I intend to let what I am about to say to be regarded as general matters for mankind as a whole, and there is no need to talk about the monks because you are going to face your problems as householders, not as monks. I can talk about the householders from their stand-point too.

You must understand that whether you are a householder or a monk, these problems about human desires or mental defilements and sufferings are all a problem of one and the same kind, except that matters concerning the householders tend to be a bit more crudely basic ; nevertheless they are one and the same kind of problem. If suffering arises in you, it is because you are very attached to something. That is to say, the suffering comes from your own sense of attachment or craving, regardless of whether you are a monk or a householder, and sometimes it is the same for both, so one simply cannot distinguish as to whether the

suffering is that of a monk or a householder, because in reality, so far as human craving and suffering are concerned, there is no room for distinction — there is no monk, there is no householder, it is all a matter of the human mind. Now you listen, even when you are a monk, it is still possible for you to think like a householder does. Similarly, it is also possible for a householder to think like a serious monk too. Sometimes both may think in the same way. The monks of these days, especially, are very much prone to entertain all kinds of worldly thoughts (some dream of becoming millionaires, for example). Do bear in mind that desires and cravings of one person will not differ much from that of another. People's desires and cravings are more or less the same. Monks and householders may experience greed, anger, delusion, craving and attachment of the same nature, and the concomitant suffering will be similar in nature too.

You try to look at things broadly and you will realise that perhaps to categorize people into monks and householders is such a trifling act. It is over simplifying things. The important thing for you to bear in mind is that suffering is common to all people. Therefore, it is better for us, when talking about human suffering, to speak from the perspective of mankind or people as a whole.

Now, as for the questions asked : 'How to prevent suffering and how to deal with it ?', we shall

not run into great details in answering that ; but rather we shall deal with the question broadly or on what is called a prefatory level. That is enough to answer it to the point.

## **OUR LIVES SHOULD BE HARNESSSED BY TWO BUFFALOES**

Regarding the topic — Our lives should be harnessed by two buffaloes, I would like to talk about it as something similar to the ploughing of rice-field by buffaloes. We, Thai people have been using buffaloes to plough our rice-fields since the old days, so I choose to speak about ‘the ploughing of rice-field by buffaloes’ as a symbolic comparison aiming at assisting you to commit more enduringly into your memory that **‘our lives should be harnessed by two buffaloes’**, only then will it be possible for us to extinguish our existing suffering and prevent it from arising.

Now, let me tell you something about buffaloes which are often being used for ploughing the field, because you all are young people who know nothing much about this matter, and are more likely to remain so if left uninformed. I was born before you all and I was born at a time when folks used two buffaloes to plough the rice-fields. Nowadays they used only one buffalo, or sometimes they simply abandon their

buffaloes and replace them with a ploughing machine, but our forefathers used two buffaloes. Also do not have the wrong idea that those two buffaloes were the same.

No, they were not. One was a clever buffalo. It could be of a smaller size. It could be thinner and it did not have tremendous strength. They called it 'the inside one'. The other buffalo was big and strong. They called it 'the outside one'.

When the owner of the buffaloes called his two animals, he would hit some wood hard, making some loud noise to alert the animals, or while working in the field, he might shout whatever orders or utter whatever words aloud, but he meant it for the first buffalo (the inside one) which was smaller but clever enough to understand and obey the orders. When he said 'left' or 'right', he meant it as an order for the first buffalo to either turn 'left' or 'right'. The second buffalo was sort of dull. If order was given to the first buffalo to stop, it would stop while the second buffalo would still want to continue moving.

You know now that those two buffaloes were different and did not take orders together. The first buffalo, being cleverer, would heed the order. It was called '*tua ru*' meaning 'one which knew', thus it was symbolic of knowledge and wisdom. The second buffalo, being strong, was called '*tua reng*' meaning 'one with strength' and it was symbolic of physical en-

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ergy or power. Therefore, it is obvious that one buffalo relied on the other for its own deficiency in strength, and the one with strength depended on the cleverer buffalo to heed the orders. So ploughing was done in this way and it was very good.

Now then, our lives too, need to be harnessed by two buffaloes. That is, we also need one buffalo that 'knows' and another buffalo that has 'strength'. One is symbolic of wisdom while the other stands for strength or power. If anyone of you were to have only one buffalo, life would not be well balanced.

Should the buffalo you have happen to be '*tua reng*' — the one with strength only, then life could be a perilous journey as there is no wisdom to guide you. However, if life is being harnessed by the first buffalo, '*tua ru*' — the one which knows orders, then it will not be dangerous for you to journey through life. But of course, with only one buffalo for work, even if it is a clever one, the work done will not be so satisfactory as compared to work done by two buffaloes. Nevertheless, it is still safer to have life harnessed by the buffalo that knows orders. It may move slowly or at a moderate pace, but in any case, it is still safer.

However, if life were to be harnessed by the second buffalo only, that is the buffalo with only strength (no wisdom), then it would be perilous. Be careful ! This is a warning meant for all of you who, I believe, have only one buffalo with you, that is the strong one

only ; and the same goes to people all over the world, who, for most of the time are like you all too.

## **SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT IS THE TREASURE OF THE EAST**

I wish to point out further to make it more discernible regarding the fact that our east world is truly enriched with spiritual awakening or enlightening. I believe you know what ‘spiritual enlightenment’ means. You can define the term by yourselves. It is a much valued treasure of the East. Perhaps you would notice that every religion was born in the East. Christianity was born in the region of Palestine or the Middle East. Buddhism, Brahmanism, Taoism of Lao Tze, Confucianism of Confucius (or Kung Fu Tze) and Zoroastrianism (originated from ancient Persia) are all treasured properties of the East. Therefore it is obvious that the East is thriving with various religious teaching.

As for those westerners, they have only knowledge about earning a living to feed the mouths and fill the stomachs. This knowledge has now become so highly developed that it has come to be called ‘technology’ which you guys worship a great deal. Those ‘*Farangs*’ (Thai word for westerners or white people) worship technology. It is in their every breath. It is a matter of survival as it contributes to the material well-

being of human beings. Thus '*Farangs*' become obsessed with it. There is no room for spiritual development. It has disappeared. Those who have onced professed some faiths have now discarded their faiths. God is dead. There is no need to believe in anything. Those '*Farangs*' thus have only technology left with them.

You listen carefully, those '*Farangs*' have only their technology. That means they have only the second buffalo which has lots of strength only. With that, anything can be created. It is possible to go to the moon ; or it is possible to satisfy the needs of the mouth and the stomach or whatever needs there may be. This technology — it makes anything possible as it is so advanced, but then on the spiritual side, there is nothing but darkness, no enlightenment.

Now try to understand this first, otherwise you will not be able to know a lot more. The significant thing is you do not know how the world is these days. Is the world becoming a delightful place to dwell in now ? Does it deserve praise ? (or worship) Think about it. It is worsening each day. It is getting more and more filthy each day.

Let me take a trifling matter as an example. Some time ago in those good old days when the weather became very hot, people could sleep under their houses (in Thailand many houses are built on tall stilts) comfortably until day-break. Nowadays, no one dares to do so for fear of getting shot. Even sleeping inside

the house with the doors and windows closed can still be unsafe, but it was not so in those good old days.

Take a look at Bangkok , robbery, molestation and other sex crimes are all committed in broad daylight, and nowadays there are many reported cases of young girls being lured into the flesh trade. Some foreign countries are even worse than Bangkok. It has been reported that sexual crimes occur every second of the day in some countries. I have come across this piece of information from some newspapers. Such things hardly ever existed in the old days.

So, such are the consequences of technology which only helps to enhance sensual pleasures obtainable by way of the mouth, stomach, eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. Through technology we can seek and get whatever we like on the material side. We can even go to the moon or do anything we like, depending on whatever whims we may have. Everything seems possible, but one thing seems to be beyond our reach — spiritual awakening and enlightenment, it is simply not there in our mind. Consequently we do not even know the simple meaning of life. We do not possess any clear vision about the purpose of life.

In this part of the world, spiritual enlightenment has been an inherited property of ours for a very long time, but nowadays it is slowly fading and slipping away because we simply follow the '*Farangs*'. You look at those '*Farangs*', yes, they have nothing but only their

technology to offer, whereas we have an abundance of spiritual knowledge (and very enlightening one, for that matter), to enrich our lives. We used to have happiness and enjoy bliss and peace, even though we had no cars, no aeroplanes to travel by, no whatever it might be, and yet we had the peace and happiness of humankind.

Things took a new turn when we started making contacts with the '*Farangs*' and it did not take us long to become involved with them in many aspects of modern-day living. We copy or follow them. Gradually we become infatuated with the results of their technology, and then we discard our spiritually enlightened way of life — our original cultural heritage. You people here are just the very people who are going to follow those '*Farangs*'. You adhere to their ideals and learn their ways ; your teachers are Farangs. When you go abroad for pursuing further education and skills, you would finally return, bringing along with you some particular fields of Farangs' technology.

**EXCESSIVE GREED IS MORALLY OFFENSIVE  
IT IS A SUFFERING THAT SPREADS CHAOTICALLY  
ALL OVER THE WORLD**

You have to observe carefully and you will perceive that nowadays all sciences which form the base of many other fields of knowledge, have now been swept

away to become slaves of technology, be they mathematics, science or whatever field of sciences they may be, all have been enslaved by technology with the sole purpose of serving nothing else but technology itself.

If it were to be in the old days, all those sciences would have been applied by people for the purpose of seeking knowledge leading to spiritual enlightenment, whereas these days whatever subjects you learn, arts or science, they are all meant to be used as ‘slaves’ to technology.

Do try to figure out as to whether what I have said contains any element of truth or not — that all sciences which people are learning in this world are intended for serving as useful tools or devices for technology and have never been applied as a means of attaining spiritual enlightenment.

Our forefathers had never experienced such complex and agonizing suffering or problems that we are encountering these days. It is because they adhered to the Dhamma. However, that does not mean that they possessed spiritual wisdom only and were hopeless in the other aspects of life. On the contrary, they too, were practical enough as to know how to tackle the day-to-day problems of earning a living. They knew how to work, how to create or how to invent, but only to a certain limit which was considered properly sufficient for their needs because, after all, they did not want to go to the moon, nor did they want anything beyond what

was necessary.

They adhered to a Buddhist proverbial saying : ‘*ATILOBHO HI PĀPAKO*’ meaning ‘excessive greed is morally offensive’. Now, those who are slaves of technology are greedy without any limit. They want to have unlimited amount of luxurious material goods for their own consumption. They even yearn to go to the moon or Mars or whichever planet as they see fit. There is simply no limit to what they want, and this is excessive greed which is disgusting and immoral. Immorality itself can cause suffering, creating a chaotic situation in this world.

Look around and see how wars which occur all over the various parts of the world are started. It will not take you long to realise that excessive greed of human beings, regardless of race, is the motivating factor which sparks the outbreak of war between two parties.

### **LIFE WHICH HAS TWO BUFFALOES IS THE AMULET PREVENTING SUFFERING**

Let us bear in mind that every religion holds on to one and the same principle, that is, to be excessively greedy is lowly, base, and immoral, only that in some religions, unlike ours, this principle has not been explicitly dealt with. In our religion we emphasize

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explicitly that '*ATILOBHO HI PĀPAKO*' or 'Excessive Greed Is Morally Offensive'.

Actually this moral concept is in Christianity too. The Christian religion teaches that 'to possess more than is necessary' is sinful, but those who try to acquire things excessively, are sure to do it at the expense of the well-being of the others, while they themselves, rather ironically, are trapped in the misery of having to deal with their uncoveted suffering resulted from their excessive and unnecessary acquisition. Any good religion would teach people to acquire only what is necessary for them. They could acquire any amount they want, but that amount of things should be proportional to their justified needs only. It should not be excessive. Any decent or sensible religion would teach in this way. People should be taught to acquire only the necessary amount of things for their decent living, 'necessary' in the perspective of 'only the right amount which is justifiably needed', beyond that is rendered excessive and unnecessary as it leads to only problems and suffering, and is thus considered morally offensive.

Hence we know now that to be over greedy is morally offensive. Therefore our forefathers had never been excessively greedy. They had only moderate wants, but then stepped in the '*Farangs*' who came to see how we, the Thai people lived and then they expostulated ... Oh ! This is sheer laziness ! This is backward ! ... Then we too, misunderstood ourselves just like those

'*Farangs*' who misjudge us. So, the children and grandchildren of the Thai forefathers abandon the old way of life and follow those '*Farangs*' instead, and become greedy and indulge in sensual pleasures which come through the eyes, the ears, the nose, the tongue and the body without any restraint at all.

Reflect wisely about this : our forefathers had two buffaloes harnessed to their lives, enabling them to live a life of spiritual awakening and enlightenment — a property inherited from their own forefathers ; and there was the usual norm of life — farming, buying, selling, and earning a living, all carried out to a moderation by which everything was rightly sufficient for any decent human being who wanted to live a happy and contented life. Everyone was happy and one could even sleep on one's bamboo bed in the open under the raised floor of one's house, letting the cool breeze blow over the body and fell into a comfortable and deep slumber till the next morning without having to be scared of becoming a target of any gunman.

That is the nice part of our Thai culture (simple and contented way of life). It is a culture in which life is harnessed by two buffaloes that lead us through the path heading for spiritual enlightenment — one buffalo which knows the orders of its master stands for our wisdom, the other buffalo, the one with strength, is symbolic of our ability to carve out a living with our strength and whatever little technological knowledge

that we may have. Life harnessed by two buffaloes like this brings about harmony and contentment.

Meanwhile those '*Farangs*' have become reckless enough as to surrender themselves as slaves of material things, thus driving them towards rapid progress in technological innovations. They have that second buffalo which is tall and gigantic and powerful, but they have only one buffalo ; they do not have the other buffalo which could lead them to spiritual enlightenment. So, they are different from our forefathers in this aspect. Well, to you people who are the descendants of your own forefathers, all I can tell you is that since we are now living in this so-called democratic nation, and seem to be upholding democracy, I therefore leave you to your own democratic right to choose as to whether you prefer to have only one and the same buffalo that those '*Farangs*' are having, or you would rather have two buffaloes just as your forefathers used to have.

But listen, I am telling you this : our forefathers did not have to agonize over the problems which you asked — such problems like 'How to prevent suffering?' and 'How to extinguish the suffering that is already there ?'. That they did not have such problems is because they possess some wonderful sacred amulets. These amulets shield them from sufferings of all kinds. What were those amulets ? They were : a life which is harnessed by two buffaloes. Those buffaloes were the amulets actually. They protected our forefa-

thers from suffering, prevented the arising of complex and difficult problems, criminal offences such as molestation, obscene acts or behaviour and all other sorts of sufferings ; so they did not have problems like you all in this modern era, you who are their descendants.

Thus, this is my prefatory talk. You listen carefully. I have already told you the reasons, the root causes of many difficult problems existing nowadays. Our forefathers never had such problems because our righteous and refine culture simply functioned like sacred amulets protecting them against all ills and sufferings of life.

Regarding those visible traces or signs of the spiritually lofty culture of ours which still prevail on this land, I can assure you there are plenty, you may discover them even in children's lullaby such as '*Maphrao Nalikay*' — a lullaby which reflects the 'spirit' of our lofty culture. There, in the middle of the pond, stands the living monument (a coconut tree) marking the remaining trace of the highest spirituality of our human culture.

Well, it is you all who are not familiar with lullaby like this. Over a thousand years ago when Buddhism flourished here, people were already familiar with such lullaby like '*Maphrao Nalikay, Klang Telay Khi Pheung*'<sup>1</sup> (coconut tree standing above in the mid wax sea) is a reflection of our cultural refinement. However, it is most dismaying that some of the good things

in our culture are lost throughout the years and now we are actually returning to an age of darkness.

**LEARN THE WAY OF PRACTICE WHICH FORMS  
THE CORE OF RELIGION,  
DO NOT LEARN IT AS SOME KIND OF PHILOSOPHY**

Well, now, whether we are able to have a life harnessed by two buffaloes or not is still a problem to be considered and dealt with. In theory, it seems plausible, but in practice, is it practicable ? Is it really possible for our lives 'to be harnessed by two buffaloes' ?

In the world of today, the wheel of life seems to be turning in favour of life with only one buffalo — the one symbolizing technological power. Now, you may ask me : Technology is knowledge, shouldn't we apply our knowledge ? I tell you I admit it is knowledge, but it is a knowledge which does not cover things it should have covered, and it is wrong about certain matters which it should not have misconceptions about. For instance, it should not have regarded matters relating to spirituality or spiritual enlightenment as something lagging behind time. Students from universities often tend to regard Dhamma or Buddhism as something out of date, only '*Farangs*' are modern-minded or up to date, so they follow those '*Farangs*'.

Do not forget that nowadays some 'Farangs' are beginning to open their eyes. They begin to realise that the East has something special and lofty in cultural and spiritual values. Thus they come to the East in search of this special thing, then they find out and they begin to learn about the eastern religions such as Buddhism — the religion which is the ultimate truth, not some kind of nonsensical philosophy — the philosophy which is being taught in some universities. Regrettably, some western universities regard Buddhism as a philosophy. A lot of people have very wrong view and perception about Buddhism.

If we were to teach about the practice of Buddhism, which is what Buddhism is all about, then we would have to teach about how to restrain the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. These six physical parts of human beings, which when coming into contact with form, sound, odour, taste and touch will interact to evoke in us the sense of like and dislike as well as craving and attachment.

Buddhism ought to be taught in this way only then will its essence be realised ; but things do not go the way they should. People talk about Buddhism in the context of this philosophical theory or that philosophical theory. Even matters about *Nibbāna*, *Anattā* and *Suññatā* are being dealt with as some kind of philosophical theories. Therefore no matter for how many generations they may be teaching about Buddhism, there

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will be no one at all who can reach the core of the religion, and Buddhism will remain, at best, a philosophy — hollow and nonsensical.

Some intelligent '*Farangs*' make an effort to come to us in order to learn a way of meditation practice known as '*Kammatthāna-Vipassanā*' aiming at overcoming cravings or desires evoked by our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. This is the real Buddhism. There in the west, they compare Buddhism with various schools of philosophical concepts, formulating reasons in terms of logic and raising such questions like : why is it like that ? why is it like this ? When an answer is provided, then comes another question : Again, why then is it like that ? When that is being answered too, comes another question : So, but why has it become like that ? This is sheer nonsense.

The Buddha does not want us to know more than what is necessary. If we aim at the extinguishing of suffering, then we should know all that needs to be known about the extinguishing of suffering. It is needless to ask : why should it be like that ? and ... why should it be like this ? A farmer only needs to know that he should use exactly what kind of soil to make his manure for his plants to flourish and bear fruit. He is not required to know 'Why has it become like that ?', 'Why has the soil become like that ?' or 'Why do these elements constitute to the formulation of such a soil as this ?'. It is needless for him to know. Even if he were

to know, it would still be meaningless to him. It would be as good as nonsense. (It is like telling him water is H<sub>2</sub>O, he will be puzzled.)

These days we are much too well-acquainted with lots of nonsensical stuff so much so that we find ourselves in the position of being 'one whose knowledge floods the brain or head and yet has failed to carry oneself safely through one's life'. Be events or matters in life big or small, lofty or lowly, we only manage to see them in their external forms and fail to discern through their nature. Thus, we become someone who seems to know a lot and yet fails miserably in life. It is because we fail to grasp the ultimate truth of life. Our mind is over-flowed with knowledge of the external and physical world, but it has not really seen through our own inner selves.

Those '*Farangs*' are in this regrettable position. Their brains are over-flooded with a lot of knowledge but it leads them astray. (What a regret it is !) Comparatively, our forefathers were better off. Their lives were harnessed by their two buffaloes which led them to the peace and harmony which we need very badly now. Their knowledge was limited to only what was necessary for them to know, and they had the energy that they needed to have for performing their work. Life was blissful then.

**ONE MUST KNOW ‘WHAT IS LIFE ?’  
AND  
‘WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF BEING BORN  
(or of life) ?’**

Now you must be careful, you may become deluded with the big buffalo without knowing everything about it. If so, you may have the strength and power which will be utilized in the pursuit of sensual pleasures brought about by your eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. You will be pursuing the delights of eating (taste), sensual pleasures of the flesh and even fame or honour and experiences of success in your duties and work, but deep inside there may still be a blankness of your mind that haunts you with a sense of emptiness of life, devoid of any purpose and meaning. In a case like this, you are in an apparent lack of spiritual awakening and fulfillment, and that is enough to stir trouble and cause havoc bubbling up in the colleges or universities which you are attending. There may be conflicts of ideas leading to student clashes, rioting, fighting and even killing. In the past such things were unheard of in the higher academic institutions of this country, but these days they do happen.

That one should prefer the second buffalo — the big and strong one — seems to be a contagious tendency ; but without the first buffalo — the important one which understands or knows orders, you will not

have the much needed wisdom to deal with such questions as ‘What is life ?’ and ‘What is the purpose of our lives ?’. Most probably you know it well that they do not teach you about such things in the universities. They may teach about life but in the context of biology. That does not serve any useful spiritual purpose. You still remain in the state of persistent ignorance and misconceptions.

It seems to be rather incomprehensible that they do not teach about the purpose of life in the universities, and yet they do teach about many other subjects. I have never come across any school or university which teaches about the meaning and purpose of human existence. Oddly enough, there are many which offer all kinds of knowledge about many other subjects. Thus it is obvious that they do not have the first buffalo — the one with wisdom. They have only the second buffalo — the one with great strength only. It is simply like this.

Now, the knowledge you possess is about to ‘overflow’ because you have grasped too much of it as you move along the path of life. That you grasp blindly is due to the fact that you are ignorant of the purpose of life. Can you see my point ... you are now as good as blind. You cannot discern life and its purpose. The knowledge you have is a matter of blind grasping and keeping on grasping, without end in sight. You know not how to apply and where to apply your knowledge.

The best you can do is to apply it in the pursuit of matters relating to the satisfaction of the senses, for instance, eating and drinking. Any way it is an obvious fact that we only make use of our knowledge as a means of earning a living by holding on to some kind of occupations, duties or work and earn some money to purchase material goods or services to satisfy our physical or sensual needs which are, after all, nothing but a matter of cravings and desires ; and we live in this way from day to day, grasping blindly as we move along. We are swept into a situation like this simply because of our own ignorance.

If only we could be aware of the true purpose of life, then we would be able to apply all our knowledge for upholding that very worthy and noble purpose. Make it known to the world what life is meant for. Normally, I would sort of say ‘with my fist pounding on the earth’ (an old Thai way of showing vehement emphasis) that ‘we are born into this world with the purpose of striving for the best thing that mankind should ever strive to attain’. Well, you do not know what that is. Apparently, the fact that for the whole day you conscientiously wrestle with your academic learning has not led you in any way to the ultimate comprehension of your own action as to why you have to do your learning, and to what purpose it is meant for, except that you are aware it could aid you in reaching and fulfilling your worldly goals in life. ‘Spiritual enlightenment’ probably never

crops up in your mind.

So, that is the tale about the second buffalo, nothing too good about it. It has only strength but no wisdom. What a pitiful creature ! Poor thing ! It is so unlike the first buffalo which has the capacity of knowing its duty.

Now, about this matter of blindly grasping — it keeps on expanding its domain, that is to say, we keep on learning more and more about technology, and eventually some '*Farangs*' said, "Well, let us go to the moon so that we can know more and reach the peak of our human knowledge". Now, I tell you, I do not believe that, but nevertheless, I still have the decency enough as not to accuse him of lying. (Going to the moon ? You will not reach the peak of human knowledge by going there !) Going to the moon would not solve the existing problem about world peace at all. No, it would not help. Mankind will continue with their blind grasping even if they could reach the moon. The '*Farangs*' will grasp at anything they think meaningful to them ; they may go to other planets, or any planet, for that matter, still they would be far away from the right goal.

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**ONE SHOULD BEGIN WITH KNOWING  
THE SUFFERING ITSELF,  
REASONS LEADING TO THE RISE OF SUFFERING,  
CESSATION OF SUFFERING  
AND THE RIGHT WAY OF PRACTISING**

You need to practise meditation before anything else. You go to a quiet place and close your eyes, then think reflectively about the kind of situation the world is in, and also the situation we ourselves are getting into at this moment. Is it in accordance with the purpose of nature that human beings should emerge to dominate the world (and subjugate nature without any scruples) ? It is said that God created humankind in this world and it is His will that human beings should make this world a better, nicer, more beautiful and excellent place to live in ; but look at our world now ! It is over populated ! Myriads of political, social, economic and moral problems, all waiting to be solved. Have we succeeded in making the world a better, nicer, more beautiful and excellent place to live in ? Think about it !

Now, let us sit down to practise '*Vipassanā*' or to contemplate reflectively and deeply about our situation. Let it be perceived that how dismaying, how sad, how pitiful and revolting it is for humankind of this age to be so lost in our own unchecked madness over technological innovations and material consumption ; and that

we should choose to know only about the second buffalo.

How are we going to carry ourselves through this life ? How are we going to end up with ? What kind of situation are we likely to face ? And how is it to be in such a situation ? When you have discerned these problems, you are said to have entered the path of Dhamma learning. You have seen the problems and it is the same as you have seen the suffering which comes with the problems too, because after all, suffering itself is the problem. Naturally, before you could set about tackling and solving your problems, you need to be able to discern them from the right perspective.

We have to understand the nature of our pain, both physical and mental and we need to know about other kinds of sufferings too. Then we can look for the correct or proper way to ‘cure’ them. If you fail to see the core or the real nature of problem or suffering, and you come to me for a solution to solve the problem and suffering facing you, that is ridiculous.

Sometimes it becomes a matter of subtle imperceptibility for both you and I. Both sides seem to have the eyes closed and both become blind to the fact of what actually constitutes to the making and arising of the existing problems and suffering ; yet we continue talking vigorously about them. Such is the case with us these days, whether in Bangkok or at any other places, this is the prevailing situation. There are only people

who tend to talk, talk and talk, and yet ironically they do not really know what they have been talking about ! They talk about Dhamma in this perspective and that perspective and even try to talk about Dhamma at the highest level.

You begin by first discerning the suffering itself, and followed by scrutinizing at its causes. See what the causes are, then you will be able to know the opposite side of them, that is, you will know how to eliminate them. There are Four Noble Truths in Buddhism : What is suffering ; what are the causes leading to the arising of suffering ; the cessation of suffering — how it is like; how to reach the state of the cessation of suffering. These Four Noble Truths form the core of Buddhism.

These days Buddhism has been embraced by many so-called amateurs who voluntarily take up the practice of Buddhism aiming at achieving a life of no suffering. Many of those people who go to '*wats*' or monasteries frequently belong to this category of 'amateurs'. Even young people, including university undergraduates, join in this group of amateurs. These seemingly enthusiastic Buddhist amateurs are, rather regrettably, the very people who never see or realise the core of their own problems and wherever they come or go, their problems follow them like shadows.

Since Buddhism is often being taught as a philosophical subject even in our own universities here, it normally does not help at all in making people 'enlight-

ened'. Instead it becomes an even more confusing spiritual matter. Right concepts are being mixed with wrong interpretation, thus worsens the already confused mind of the students. The more they learn, the more ignorant of Buddhism they become.

### **THE MORE ONE LEARNS FROM THE TRIPITAKA, THE MORE ONE BECOMES IGNORANT OF BUDDHISM**

I went to speak at the Teachers' Council with Mr. Kukrit. I said that 'the more one learns about the Tripitaka, the more one becomes ignorant of Buddhism'. Mr. Kukrit was one hundred percent unconvinced with regard to what I said, but I said it with reasons. The Tripitaka is a piece of literary work. It is in the form of literature. When one learns about Tripitaka, one tends to derive some sense of literary pleasure from it ; or if one learns about *Abhidhamma*, one learns about it in the perspective of both logic and philosophy, one is likely to get satisfaction of a certain degree but one is unlikely to grasp the most essential message of Buddhism which is mainly concerned with this matter about suffering and its cessation. That is why I said the more one learns about the Tripitaka, the more ignorant one becomes about Buddhism. You just think about this.

You also need to learn about life, nature and your own self, then you will know more about Buddhism.

The Tripitaka does tell us the way to learn and know about Buddhism, but there is too much for one to read and to grasp. If you go about in the proper or correct way and approach, then you will be able to extinguish your own suffering, but if you learn it in the way as you would with regards to Arts and literature, then there is no way you can extinguish your suffering, just like those people who have learned the ninth grade of Pali language and have become “*Maha*” (a tittle given to monks who manage to pass the third–grade Pali language examination) but yet do not know how to relieve themselves of their own suffering, because they learn it as an academic subject, not as a spiritual matter to be experienced, realised and eventually enlightened. Thus, learning the Tripitaka will not make you understand Buddhism. You have to learn about craving — a state of mental defilement and about suffering which comes from your own inner mind.

The Buddha taught that ‘be it the world itself, or the causes leading to the existence of the world, or the extinction of the world, or the way leading to the extinction of the world, I, the *Tathāgata*, have taught about all these in reference to this two-metre long body of mine which is alive and possessing consciousness’. So, now you can see for yourself that your living body has the whole world, the causes for the birth (existence) of the world, the total extinction of the world and the way leading to the extinction of the world in it.

This simply means that the Buddha did not tell us to refer to the Tripitaka in order to know all about the world. He wanted us to look into our own lives and our own bodies. We should learn directly from our lives and bodies, and learn too about our own craving and the concomitant suffering ; only then will it thus become possible for us to really understand Buddhism, otherwise we will only have acquired the outer shell of Buddhism from the perspectives of literature, arts or whatever subjects they may be.

### **THING WHICH IS CALLED 'LIFE' ACCORDING TO THE MEANING IN RELIGION**

We are going to assume a broad outlook so that we are able to get to know the thing which is called 'life' in a proper perspective. Life in the biological sense is when the protoplasm in every single cell is still fresh, functioning and 'alive'. However, that is not what I am concerned with or want to talk about. The word 'life' in that biological or material sense does not concern Buddhism. It has to be life in the Dhammic or spiritual sense that actually matters.

The same goes to other religions, the word 'life' is not meant to mean life in the biological context, nor is the word meant for such definition as 'still alive' or 'not yet dead' as found in the ordinary languages that

are being used in our daily life. 'Life' in arts is still deficient in its actual meaning because the word itself has a much broader implication, as can be perceived when one guy says to another : "You already have no life in you !" while the latter is still well alive. Obviously, there is something deeper or more profound than it seems in the word 'life' which is being used in this case.

In the holy book of those Christian, Jesus said : "Give away your life and you will get life". Christ made only a short statement as such and the Christians themselves failed to understand him. You all cannot comprehend what Christ said too since he spoke in such a strange way. What he meant to convey to people is "abandon your crazy and meaningless way of life and you will get the eternal life of God", which is a life of proper righteousness and decency. This too, is life.

Thus the word 'life' has various meanings. Nowadays there is what we call a stupid kind or way of life — life that is persistently infatuated with the second buffalo. This is not conducive to our well-being. Cultivate a new, clever and righteous way of life which realises and appreciates the worthiness of those two buffaloes — '*tua ru*' and '*tua reng*', and then you will be able to reach God, or the so-called eternal life. The Buddhists call this eternal life '*AMATADHAMMA AMATAPHAP*' meaning 'life that knows no death'. A true life is one which must know no death. Were it to

know death, it could not be considered as life.

Here we know about 'life' in the material sense, or from the view point of ordinary folks' language. We are not acquainted with 'life' in the language of religions, one which we call 'spiritual life', not materialistic life. Think about this and see for yourselves if there is anything which you still do not know or comprehend.

### **ONE OUGHT TO APPLY EXPERIENCES IN SPIRITUAL LIFE AS GUIDING LESSONS**

The word 'enlightenment' simply means the state of having attained illuminating knowledge and this again has to be coupled with the word 'spiritual' to mean enlightenment of the mind, which implies that the mind is on the side of the Dhamma.

Therefore knowledge from the material side is of no use to the enlightenment of the mind. This thing called 'enlightenment' is not something to be jesting about. You may not know what it is because even the word 'know' itself has many synonyms but can be interpreted at many different levels too.

You read books. You learn from books in your universities and things that you have learned and known about are collectively called knowledge, or you could call it by any other names if you wish but it is still what it is, that is, knowledge. This knowledge is being

applied in education and researches, both on a broad and specific basis, using reasoning as the tool to acquire deep understanding about many things. The knowledge thus obtained is still deficient in nature. It is far from spiritual awakening and enlightenment. It relies on reasoning and it relies on books. No matter what you learn or study in your universities, it is still too low and has not reached the level of being entitled to the term ‘spiritually enlightening’.

Understanding depends on reasoning. Proper reasoning leads to understanding. Thus understanding has to rely on reasoning. It is a slave to reasoning and it is not in any way a form of spiritual enlightenment. When you apply this so-called knowledge in trying to get acquainted with things relating to the mind directly, you get various kinds of experiences which will later be regarded as lessons of life. These experiences are in actual facts, spiritual experiences too as they may come by way of mind or in the form of Dhamma of a higher level. For instance, you had been a child before and you know what it is like to be a child, and whatever experience that had been experienced by you since your childhood days till now — what it is like to have experienced pain, joy, sorrow, craving etc., are also known as spiritual experiences.

Take these experiences and study them anew by applying the knowledge you have acquired from books and from your reasoning etc., to assist you in any

possible way till you manage to discern by yourselves as to what craving actually is, what suffering really is like and by that you have eventually arrived at a realisation which will finally lead to your enlightenment. Therefore, knowledge alone will not do, neither is understanding sufficient for enlightening ; you need sound reasoning and actual experiences.

Actual experiences come ahead of reasoning because you need to actually experience things by yourselves before you can reason without any bias or prejudice. For instance, when you are seized with some kind of sensual desires, just be mindful how those desires burn in you, how 'hot' they are. Be mindful of their 'hotness', experience by yourselves the 'hotness' of sensual desires. No one can make you understand or realise what the 'hotness' is like, you have to actually experience it by yourselves. You do not have to use reasons, nor must you rely on books. Even if the books tell you that sensual desires are 'hot', it is simply similar to parrot talking, it will not bring you to the right point. You need to experience it personally and to realise by experience its 'hotness', then you are said to know about it truly. This 'knowing' is what they call spiritual experience which forms the material necessary for leading you to eventual enlightenment.

We do not want other forms of enlightenment. We only want enlightenment of the mind and soul — the one that puts a stop to all of our sufferings.

Spiritual enlightenment of this kind used to prevail all over the land of our eastern world. There were once the prevailance of Zoroastrianism and now we still have Buddhism, Hinduism, Brahmanism, Taoism, Confucianism, Islam and Christianity. They are all a matter of spiritual enlightenment, but then regretably we fail to understand those religions ; or even people in those religions themselves fail to understand their religions, and this trend seems to be rising these days, and many people simply abandon their faiths.

Since there is this lack of right understanding and the inclination not to believe and accept religions is on the rise, we are thus losing the excellent and special treasure of our own Eastern world. In its place we embrace technology and become slaves to it, and we become slaves to westerners' wisdom and sink more and more deeply in it.

I am saying all these without fearing that those '*Farangs*' would be angry with me. No matter where I speak, I will speak in this way. Even when I speak to '*Farangs*', I will speak in this manner. When I write, I will write from this perspective because I hold on to the fact that I am speaking one kind of the truth, and I speak with the aim of hoping to drag all of us back to the good, special and excellent old values of the old days of our forefathers.

We are about to step out of our path and get crazy over things which are demonic — things which can

make mankind destroy and lose their humanity, rendering this world a world with no peace in sight. However, it is still possible for us to pull ourselves back to our original condition because it is a matter of convincing each individual. We may not be able to convince or pull back the whole world, but at least we can persuade people to give some reflective thoughts about such things as ‘What is life ?’ or ‘What is the purpose of being born (of life) ?’ and ‘How are human beings able to attain the best thing that we can ever hope to attain ?’.

### **HIGHER EDUCATION OF BUDDHISTS IS TO PRACTISE TILL THE ATTAINMENT OF THE RIGHT PATH, FRUITION AND NIBBĀNA**

Now I am speaking to you people who are students or undergraduates of some universities or institutes of the so-called higher education. I want to warn you people that you must not become conceited about you yourselves simply because you have a higher education. (That is not the way to feel proud about oneself) There are many things which you are ignorant about. To begin with, you do not even know correctly what you were born into this world for. You cannot come up with a suitable answer. You lack knowledge about the purpose of life. Therefore, I do not believe in

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your education. If it were to be called higher education, then I will tell you right to your face that it is a higher education only for children who still suck their fingers (or hands) in their mouths (and cry for lollipops). It is a higher education for people who are only concerned with matters about eating, and other sensual needs. Upon graduation, you get, at best, a well-paid job but you will be still slaving under your own cravings and desires in your pursuit of sensual comforts and pleasures. Your dream for material comforts and sensual pleasures can come true with the help of technology which you worship a great deal.

When I borrow these words ‘higher education’ for my own usage, naturally I mean education of a spiritual and moral nature. It is an education consisting of practising the Dhamma till you get the Right Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna*. Buddhists will call this higher education since it leads to a righteous way of thinking and living. It is ‘higher’ in this sense, whereas the education you get leads you to material comforts and your own attachment to those comforts and sensual pleasures. So, how could it be regarded as ‘higher’ ? If your kind of education is to be called ‘higher education’, then what should I call my kind of education ?

That I speak in this seemingly provocative manner is aimed at reminding you that your education is still deficient in spiritual substance. It is the higher education of children who still suck their fingers. If

you do not even know the purpose of life, then I will still regard you as those little children, not undergraduates of some universities or institutes of higher learning. Out in the society there you are undergraduates, you are students of higher education ; but here at Suan Mokkh, you are simply little children who suck their fingers because you do not even know what you were born into this world for.

I hope when you leave this place, you bring this matter along with you for further consideration and reflection. You come here in the status of students of higher education, but I call you ‘little children who suck their fingers’ ! Thus, there is plenty for you to think about ; and questions like “How should one do to prevent suffering from arising ?” or “How to eliminate the suffering which we are facing right now ?” are truly questions pertaining to higher education. If you know the answers, then you are someone who has truly completed your higher education, not children who suck their fingers.

Thus I have answered your questions in a broad but roughly inclusive way. I wish to repeat that you too have two buffaloes in your possession and you too could wisely let your life be harnessed by them. Then you will have both technology and spiritual enlightenment which can lead you safely through this journey of life. You will be above the state of little children who suck their fingers as far as Buddhism is concerned, and you

will enter an enlightened world in which you are fit to be called a true Buddhist even in the strictest sense of the word.

**TO BE WILL-ACQUAINTED WITH THE HIDDEN  
MEANING OF DHAMMIC LANGUAGE IS  
TO UNDERSTAND CORRECTLY ABOUT  
THE TWO BUFFALOES**

Today we talk about some prefatory matters — matters in broad perspectives first so as to prepare you for a more discerning comprehension of matters of particular concern. On some other days, I will speak about, in details, any one of the following topics : What is suffering ? Where does it come from ? By what method can we extinguish it ? Simply talking about ‘Life should be harnessed by two buffaloes’ only enables you to get the rough picture of the fact that we should make progress not only with regard to objects of sensuality but also in the spiritual field. You ought to know two languages : the language spoken by the ordinary people and the language spoken by the enlightened ones. You may look for a small booklet called “People’s language - Dhammic language” ; when you have read this booklet, you will come to know two more languages in addition to the language or languages that you have already known.

For example, the word ‘Chati’ means birth. When used in ordinary people’s language, it means ‘the state of being physically born from the womb of a mother’, but in Dhammic language, it can mean the birth of a conceptual ‘I’ and ‘my’ (which is not real and not-self). Thus, the word ‘Chati’ or birth can differ in this way. Once you can grasp the essence of the hidden meaning of Dhammic language, it will not be difficult at all for you to understand about the two buffaloes mentioned in this booklet.

*Well, this should be enough with regard to the prefatory matters for today.*

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<sup>1</sup> ‘*Maphrao Nalikay, Klang Telay Khi Pheung*’ is a very old lullaby of the southerners in the south of Thailand. ‘*Telay*’ is sea and ‘*Khi Pheung*’ is wax. When wax is heated, it melts. It becomes solid when it gets cool. Thus the melting and the solidification of wax is symbolic of the forever changing conditions of the human and natural world. It is suggestive of impermanence. However, no matter how the conditions change and how factors fluctuate, the tall coconut tree which stands firm in the sea of changing wax, remains unaffected. This coconut tree which stands firmly and remains unharmed is symbolic of ‘*Nibbāna*’ — the highest goal of spiritual development.

# SUGGESTED READING

Other books by Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu:

*Mindfulness with Breathing: Unveiling the Secrets of Life*

*The Buddha's Doctrine of Anattā*

*Paticca-Samupāda: Practical Dependent Origination*

*The First Ten Years of Suan Mokkh*

*Handbook For Mankind*

*Buddha-Dhamma For Students*

*Heartwood From The Bo Tree*

*The A, B, C of Buddhism*

*The Prison of Life*

*Christianity and Buddhism*

For more information, please contact:

The Buddhādāsa Foundation

c/o Suan Mokkhabalārāma

Chaiya, Surat Thani

Thailand 84110

Fax: (66-7) 431-597

Or visit the Suan Mokkh website:

<http://www.suanmokkh.org>



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu (Slave of the Buddha) went forth as a *bhikkhu* (Buddhist monk) in 1926, at the age of twenty. After a few years of study in Bangkok, he was inspired to live close with nature in order to investigate the Buddha-Dhamma. Thus, he established Suan Mokkhabalārāma (The Grove of the Power of Liberation) in 1932, near his hometown. At that time, it was the only Forest Dhamma Center and one of the few places dedicated to *vipassanā* (mental cultivation leading to ‘seeing clearly’ into reality) in Southern Thailand. Word of Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, his work, and Suan Mokkh spread over the years so that they are easily described as ‘one of the most influential events of Buddhist history in Siam’. Here, we can only mention some of the more interesting services he has rendered Buddhism.

Ajahn Buddhadāsa has worked painstakingly to establish and explain the correct and essential of original Buddhism. That work is based in extensive research of the Pali texts (Canon and commentary), especially of the Buddha’s Discourses (*sutta pitaka*),

followed by personal experiment and practice with these teachings. Then he has taught whatever he can say truly quenches *dukkha*. His goal has been to produce a complete set of references for present and future research and practice. His approach has been always scientific, straight-forward, and practical.

Although his formal education only went as far as ninth grade and beginning Pail studies, he has been given five Honorary Doctorates by Thai universities. His books, both written and transcribed from talks, fill a room at the National Library and influence all serious Thai Buddhists.

Progressive elements in Thai society, especially the young, have been inspired by his teaching and selfless example. Since the 1960's, activists and thinkers in areas such as education, social welfare, and rural development have drawn upon his teaching and advice.

Since the founding of Suan Mokkh, he has studied all schools of Buddhism, as well as the major religious traditions. This interest is practical rather than scholarly. He seeks to unite all genuinely religious people in order to work together to help free humanity by destroying selfishness. This broadmindedness has won him friends and students from around the world, including Christians, Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs.

Now he focuses his energies on his last project, establishing an International Dharma Hermitage. This

addition to Suan Mokkh is intended to provide facilities for:

- courses which introduce friends, foreign and Thai, to the natural truth explained in the Buddha's teachings and start them in the Buddha's system of mental cultivation

- gatherings of representatives from the different religious communities of Thailand (and later the world) in order to meet, develop mutual good understanding, and cooperate for the sake world peace

- meetings among Buddhists from around the world to discuss and agree upon the 'Heart of Buddhism'

Actual results must depend on Natural Law, as Ajahn Buddhādāsa and his helpers continue to explore the potential of mindfully wise actions within Nature according to the Law of Nature. He welcomes visitors.

Wnom  Park