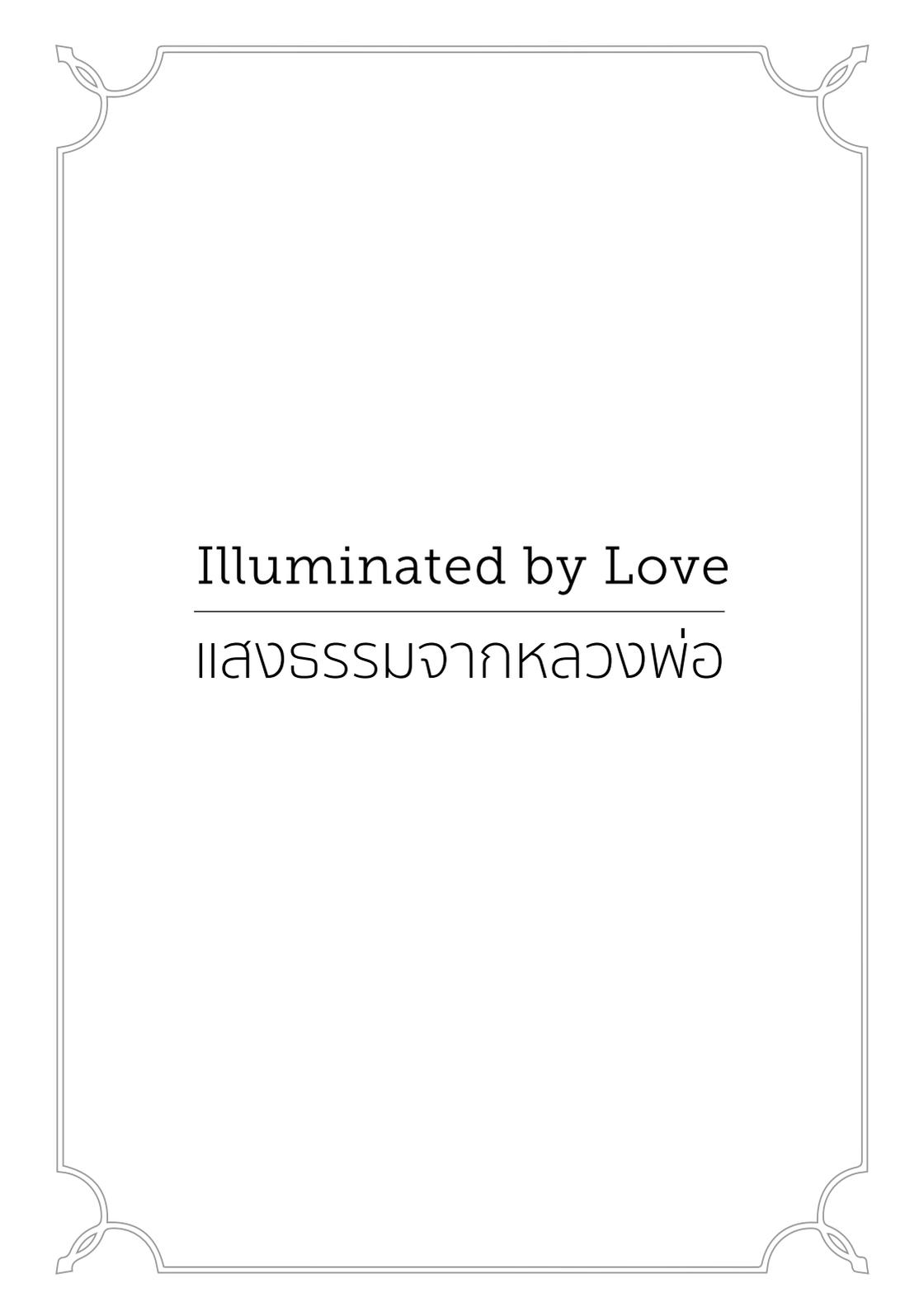


Illuminated by Love





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ILLUMINATED BY LOVE

A Collection of Tributes to

Phra Ajahn Jamnian Seelasettho

On this *auspicious* occasion of his 80th birthday

By his devoted students

Including a Dhamma Talk by Phra Ajahn Jamnian Seelasettho

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continuing to disseminate the Dhamma as taught by Venerable
Phra Ajahn Jamnian Seelasettho.

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This book was created out of the collective love, respect, reverence, and united effort of a group of American based Dhamma students toward their beloved teacher and Dhamma father, Venerable Phra Ajahn Jamnian Seelasettho.

We dedicate all merit that may result from the creation of this book to our beloved teacher, the Venerable Phra Ajahn Jamnian Seelasettho, who has most graciously and lovingly illuminated our lives with the light of the Dhamma.

May our beloved teacher Luang Por Jamnian, his transcendent wisdom, magnificent Dhamma, and infinite loving-kindness continue to flow unbounded, blessing and transporting all beings to the ocean of the deathless.

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and
Students of Luang Por Jamnian

Sabbadānam dhammadānam jināti
The gift of the Dhamma excels all gifts



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INTRODUCTION

Luang Por Jamnian is a highly revered Thai Theravadin monk known around the world for uplifting and healing the lives of those he meets, and deepening our understanding and practice of the Dhamma. Many flock to see him, sometimes by the thousands, especially in Thailand and Malaysia, where the power of his blessings is well-known. Over the past twenty years that he has taught in the United States, his unrelenting loving-kindness and potent instruction has won him a loyal following.

On the special occasion of his 80th birthday, a group of his American students wish to pay tribute to this extraordinary teacher by sharing our stories and reflections about him and how he has affected our lives. We hope this book will serve as a token of our unending gratitude to him, as well as provide a portrait of this unique being to inspire others in the Dhamma as he has inspired us.

Luang Por sees meditation as a living practice in which the development of insight must pervade every aspect of life, not just during hours devoted to formal meditation. He sees all beings, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, religious or ethnic background, as seekers of liberation endowed with pure consciousness. He has dedicated his life to awakening them to their own true nature.

With a glimmer in his eye and glowing warm expression on his face, he is known to affectionately say, “I love you, you love me...” melting the hearts and minds of those he encounters. He delivers sometimes deceptively simple and always potent instructions to remedy what ails us, as if plucking the core essence of what is needed straight from one’s mind.

For those who do not know, “Luang Por” is an honorific term that literally translates *big father*. But it carries a deeper connotation of most beloved, most dear, and most revered Father, which is precisely how we feel about him. We are all Luang Por’s children in the Dhamma, and he welcomes, supports, and instructs us with the generosity and informality of a beloved grandfather, making the Dhamma at once

personal, and personally applicable. This combination of tenderness and exacting instruction leaves us humbled as we are awed.

In the West, where many have not encountered the Theravadin tradition, it may not be evident just how unusual Luang Por's approach and appearance really are. For someone expecting long hours of silent walking and sitting meditation typical of Theravada practice, Luang Por's retreats may appear unstructured. He tells story after story from his own life and practice, and the lives of those he has known, sometimes into the wee hours of the morning. He may shock our senses with what he says, or even sound outlandish. But as many who have sat with him can attest to, it is an effective delivery method for the subtlest and most essential instruction.

The numerous amulets and power objects he carries hidden in pouches and hanging from his belt is not typical of the ascetic appearance of a Theravadin monk. In fact they are only a small part of the sixty pounds he actually carries, and has carried, for decades. Despite carrying so much weight strapped to his body, his mind remains free, carrying nothing. His embodied demonstration and teaching of non-attachment shows us that with strong commitment to search and investigate, completely letting go is possible.

Luang Por's methods have various effects on us, from deeply challenging our concepts about the path, to delighting those who are won over by his mastery. With tireless devotion, Luang Por Jamnian travels the world in service to all who need him, with the conviction of a warrior, the loving-kindness of a grandfather, and the wisdom of the greatest of masters.

It is our great honor, and a gift to us, to have had the privilege to assemble this book. We dedicate any benefits that may arise out of our collective work on this book to our most beloved teacher.

With deepest gratitude and love, Happy Birthday Luang Por Jamnian!



SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Phra Ajahn⁽¹⁾ Jamnian Seelasettho, affectionately known among his students as Luang Por Jamnian, was born in 1936 in a rural village in Southern Thailand. He began meditating when he was five under the guidance of his parents, who were themselves accomplished practitioners. Even from a young age, he dreamed of becoming a monk someday.

His father, a local doctor, healer, and shaman, taught Jamnian herbal medicine, astrology, and shamanic practices. Jamnian adored his mother who demonstrated loving-kindness towards all through her actions, including animals she lovingly took care of. Jamnian's step-grandfather taught him to generate loving-kindness with the powerful AW-AE-AW-AH mantra that he still teaches today. Thus from a young age, Jamnian was surrounded by the inspiration and the training necessary to help others in many broad and practical ways.

When he was six, his mother passed away, leaving Jamnian heartbroken. The loss deepened his resolution to dedicate his life to the Dhamma and loving all equally, without discrimination.

By the time he was eight, people of all ages and stature sought him out for physical and emotional healing, as well as his wisdom on topics ranging from interpersonal to community relations.

When Jamnian ordained at the age of twenty, he had already studied the *Tipitaka* (Buddhist canonical scripture) in depth. Part of Luang Por Jamnian's practice in those years was to pay respect to the great forest masters of his generation and learn directly from their wisdom and experience. Whenever the opportunity arose, he wandered as a mendicant through the remote regions of Thailand and the border areas of Cambodia, Burma, and Laos.

Luang Por Jamnian often recounts how even with all he had

1. In the Thai Theravadin tradition, Phra Ajahn or Ajahn, which literally means teacher, is an honorific used to address senior male monastics who have been ordained for more than ten years.



learned; he still wasn't practicing in the right way. In his seventh year as a monk, he met Ajahn Pan Dhammadharo, who instructed him in the Four Foundations of Mindfulness according to the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. At first he resisted the practice, but when he took it up with determination, it led to a breakthrough in understanding. The Four Foundations of Mindfulness, as well as the Eightfold Noble Path and Seven Factors of Enlightenment, remain at the core of his Dhamma teachings today.

Civil war broke out in Thailand in the early 1960s. The area around the southern province of Surat Thani became a hotbed of Communist activity, with the highest concentration of Communist rebels in the country. Luang Por Jamnian relocated there to help bring safety and peace to the region. He counseled people on all sides of the conflict, including military personnel, local government officials, police forces, the Thai border patrol, local villagers, and Communist insurgents. He negotiated political amnesty for those Communists who, with his encouragement, renounced violence and surrendered to the government.

At the end of the civil war, Luang Por Jamnian established Wat Thum Sua, Krabi (Tiger's Cave Monastery) in Southern Thailand, a predominantly Muslim area. Unresolved nationalist issues from before the war caused Muslim and Buddhist tensions to run high there. Luang Por facilitated the development of much needed infrastructure, including bringing electricity, water, and proper roads into town. Wat Thum Sua grew supported by the community, and Krabi prospered, becoming one of the most popular tourist destinations in the country.

Luang Por Jamnian relocated to Wat Khaolao, in Ratchaburi, west of Bangkok, in 2010, to focus on spreading the Dhamma. He teaches throughout Thailand; and internationally, in the United States, Australia, Malaysia, Taiwan, Singapore, and India.

For more information, please see the Dhamma talks in this book, as well as *The Four Foundations of Mindfulness*, a translation of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, and *Under the Bodhi Tree*, a book elucidating the Buddha's teaching from Luang Por's own experience. You can also visit www.forestretreat.org to hear his audio talks.



Tributes

Pure Insight from

... Presence



TRACING LUANG POR'S DHAMMA

One of the greatest blessings in my life is to have been able to serve as Luang Por Jamnian's Dhamma interpreter. For the last ten years, he has kindly allowed me to help translate for his meditation retreats and Dhamma engagements in several places, including the United States, Bodhgaya, India, and others. The interpreter seat has afforded me a unique place from which to absorb his teachings, as well as to observe the way he teaches the Dhamma and how his students respond to it. (This book relates some of his students' personal experiences.) Because of this privilege, the complexity and depth of his teachings and his skillful methods have gradually revealed themselves to me. He has enriched my understanding with amazing gems of Dhamma hidden in refined layers of wisdom.

Though Luang Por Jamnian's methods are subtle, refined, and complex, the Dhamma he teaches is traditional and well expounded: *svākkhāto bhagavatā dhammo*. He passionately elucidates and explicates the words of the Buddha. His core teachings are based upon the Buddha's key teachings, such as the first discourse of the Buddha—Setting The Wheel of Dhamma in Motion, the Eight-Fold Noble Path, the Four Foundation of Mindfulness, Dependent Origination, and the Seven Factors of Enlightenment.

The meditation practice Luang Por Jamnian teaches is to cultivate and sustain one's mindfulness or *sati* throughout all activities until it becomes *mahasati* or continuous mindfulness. He insists on his students practicing the middle way—that is, mindfully experiencing the world through the six sense doors without letting the mind attach to any preference of liking or disliking toward the experience that arises. When the mind stays firm and unwavering in the face of the good or bad experiences that hurl toward us, that is *sammā samādhi* or right concentration, from the Eight-Fold Noble Path that he encourages us to practice.

Luang Por puts emphasis on standing and walking meditation as being especially conducive to cultivating insights. He cautions about concentration practices, which can cause meditators to be attached to peace and happiness, and which can suppress defilements

temporarily, but do not uproot them. Luang Por Jamnian's teaching does not aim to produce mental stillness, but is rather directed at eliciting wisdom and insights to see and cut through the defilements no matter where we are or what we are doing at any time. The tribute entitled "Gratitude" in this book provides an example of the quality of the Dhamma known as *sandiṭṭhiko*, apparent here and now.

From the beginning of the retreat he suffuses the meditators with loving-kindness, joy, and happiness. After basking in these wholesome energies, our minds often become joyful and bright, and our capacity to receive and apply Dhamma teachings is amplified. (A lovely example of one student's experience of this is "Living Metta, Breathing Dhamma" in this book.) As the retreat and the teachings progress, the energy transmitted becomes even more refined, carrying the meditators deeper into the experience of Dhamma.

The way in which Luang Por Jamnian is able to lead his listeners toward deeper Dhamma is both unique and inspiring. He uses many tricks and skillful means—some simple and some intricate—to help his audience understand and experience the Dhamma for themselves. His meditation retreats are designed to help practitioners cultivate wisdom from listening to the Dhamma by cutting through the defilements immediately, in the moment, without reference to past or future; the practice is *akāliko*, timeless. A powerful example of this experience of immediate Dhamma is in the story by one of his students, "Pure Insight through Presence."

Luang Por has often told stories to emphasize that during the time of the Buddha, many more individuals attained a level of enlightenment from listening to the Dhamma than from attainments by all other methods. He explains that he teaches "*sukhā paṭipadā khippābhiññā*," pleasant practice with insight that cuts through the defilements quickly. For this reason, he always gives lengthy Dhamma talks throughout his retreats, which some new retreatants find disconcerting at first, having been used to long, silent sitting meditation at traditional Vipassana retreats. Luang Por Jamnian then demonstrates the Buddha's teaching and trains us to be what I consider "Dhamma warriors", by setting up the right conditions for us to practice. He gives precise instructions and encourages us to see the Dhamma for ourselves, *ehi-passiko*. One example of the fruits

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of carefully following his instructions during walking meditation practice is told in the story “Ending Suffering,” by one of his students.

He alternates between teaching profound Dhamma, holding Dhamma discussions, answering questions, and telling stories of all kinds. Some stories are entertaining and some are perplexing. Even when the purpose is unknown to us, we are practicing within the container of the Dhamma and receiving a steady stream of Dhamma transmitted from Luang Por as our guide and support. This process has been compared by some of his American students to potatoes being baked in an oven until we are all cooked!

The times when he takes the whole class way off topic is often an opportunity for students to apply the teachings to their own minds in the reality of arising conditions. Luang Por will tell us very provocative stories to deliberately stir up reactions and our defilements. An example is in the piece entitled “In Honor of Luang Por Jamnian.” He gives us the opportunity to recognize and skillfully deal with our reactions within the most supportive of environments.

Above all, Luang Por wishes for us, with all his heart, ability, and service, the fruit of the Buddhist practices he teaches. That fruit means his students will be out of danger, and irrevocably on the path blazed by the Buddha. Such a practiced student is no longer as dependent on Luang Por’s direction. This quality of the Dhamma is *opanayiko*, leading inwardly. Luang Por gently and lovingly opens the hearts and minds of his listeners, infusing them with the quality of Dhamma so that they can internalize and practice it with confidence. One of the most touching accounts of this quality can be seen in the evolution of a long-time practitioner, from chasing love to “Finding the Love from Within,” in one of the following pieces.

When Luang Por Jamnian comes to teach in the United States, a group of his dedicated American students who love and appreciate him with all their hearts will come to attend his retreats. Many of them are advanced meditators with previous experience studying and practicing the Buddha’s Dhamma with other teachers. I noticed that when I translate Luang Por’s deepest and most intricate teachings, difficult to convey even in its original Thai language, these students are able to follow along, grasp, appreciate, and even directly experience the Dhamma for themselves. Luang Por Jamnian doesn’t

only teach the Dhamma conceptually, but skillfully leads students toward its direct experience. This is a quality of Dhamma called *paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhīti*—the Dhamma is to be experienced individually by the wise. Examples of students directly experiencing the Dhamma in this way can be found throughout the book, including "A Path of Love and Joy" and "Finding the Middle Way."

To myself as well as many of his students, Luang Por Jamnian is a great Dhamma father who most lovingly and patiently ushers his children toward the world of Dhamma that is permeated with unconditioned joy and happiness. He encourages us to follow the footsteps of the noble ones who are firmly established in the Dhamma. After ten years of interpreting the Dhamma for him, his wisdom still never ceases to amaze me. Each year I have heard remarkably inspiring stories from the retreatants of their profound, direct experiences of the Dhamma, some of which are related in this booklet celebrating his 80th birthday. These invaluable experiences have brought me so much joy, and given me confidence that the Dhamma is still accessible in this day and age. Gratified, it reminded me of how fortunate I am to be able to offer my service to the Dhamma, to the Buddha's disciples who have practiced well such as Luang Por Jamnian, and all the Dhamma friends who share the path.

Dearest Luang Por, I don't know how to adequately express my infinite gratitude toward you except to say that I will strive to firmly abide in and walk the middle path following your footsteps.

Dujruedee "Amdee" Vongthongsri

Student since 2003

Dhamma Translator since 2005

San Mateo, California

A CHANGED LIFE ON THE PATH

It is difficult to put into words how much Luang Por Jamnian's wise instruction has changed my practice and my life. I have been practicing meditation since my late teens and I am now in my mid-fifties. For most of that time, before meeting Luang Por Jamnian, I was on my own and lost.

The value of having a real teacher, a meditation master who has practiced and realized the Dhamma according to the teachings of the Buddha, is priceless. I have had the privilege of attending four week-long retreats with Luang Por Jamnian and spending a significant amount of time with him off-retreat. In my experience, he is a living example of the practice; he is always cheerful, kind, and wise. He is never conceited, angry, irritated, sad, greedy, or selfish. Even though he is a teacher of great stature, he is very approachable. As a teaching tool, he is willing to frankly share with us the personal challenges he experienced during his training period as a young monk. I find this extremely helpful and can readily apply these lessons to the challenges I face in my own life.

If you are looking for a teacher who will give you specific, formulaic instructions under a strict practice format, you should look elsewhere. If you are looking for a teacher who is a living example of the practice, who gives you tools to practice, but expects you to take responsibility for yourself, then Luang Por Jamnian may be the teacher for you. He uses a variety of different tools to accomplish his purpose. These include direct practice instruction, explanation of Buddhist principles, stories from the Suttas, and stories from his own life experience.

So how have Luang Por Jamnian's teachings helped me personally? I cannot claim any great achievements or accomplishments, but what I can say is that I understand, at some level, that whatever happens in the outside world, or what I feel, think, or experience, are not me or mine. They are impersonal, subject to change and decay. The problem is not with the outside world, the problem is not with what arises in the mind, the problem is believing that what I feel, think, or experience is something to cling to, to fight for, and

create a personality around. Thanks to Luang Por Jamnian's clear explanations, I also understand some of the pitfalls of the path. I used to think that meditation was something we practice in solitude once or twice a day or on long isolated retreats. I now understand practice is something that must be done from the moment we wake-up, until the moment we go to sleep. Every moment is an opportunity to practice.

I bow deeply in gratitude to Luang Por Jamnian and his monks, specially Ajahn Phra Vuttichai ("Phra Woody"), one of Luang Por Jamnian's closest and most trusted monks, who set me on this path. They have taught me something of greater value than winning the lottery or any type of worldly success.

I wish you the reader, every success on your own personal journey: may you find great happiness, may your mind and heart be kind, and may you realize Nibbana in this very life.

Alan Flum

President, Mahasati Retreat Association
Oregon, USA



PURE INSIGHT FROM PRESENCE

It was my first retreat with Luang Por Jamnian. I was enjoying it greatly. I had attended many Theravadin retreats before and was well-versed in the tradition of sitting and walking, watching the breath, silence, and a low-calorie diet. I greatly value the pure beauty of presence and insight that arise from this formula.

Here I was sitting with a master who talked, and talked, and talked. It was wonderful. He spun his words to catch people's minds and show them how they become caught. He showed how to overcome the mind, not just pacify it. He embodied the qualities of a noble one, while being lively, playful, and truly free. The classic formula was changed. Instead of quiet personal reflection, he requested our engagement with him; he presented us with the big issues of life, and encouraged us to face the truth head-on. This I found exhilarating. It was as if he were saying, "I have done the hard work, please take part in the fruit of it."

It is impossible to sit with Luang Por Jamnian without having extraordinary experiences. One of these moments that might be useful to share came from around the third day of that retreat. By this time most of the group appeared bonded, synchronized, and harmonised by the teaching of the master. At one point, someone took the floor to speak who was out of sync with the general feeling in the room. We had become accustomed to the clarity, emptiness, and metta of the master. Within minutes there was shuffling; it was obvious that the group was becoming impatient with what the speaker was saying. You could hear sighing and sense a palpable tension rising in the room.

The group endured silently. I, along with some, became lost in anger and aversion. About halfway through the ordeal I turned my attention to Luang Por Jamnian. He was sitting quietly and smiling, his presence so tangible, and unchanged by the events in the room. I became entranced by him. I looked back at the speaker and then at Luang Por: emptiness, pure, stable emptiness. I kept doing this, comparing the situation and Luang Por Jamnian's reaction. The more I recognized the difference, the brighter I became. Eventually the

speaker fell away from my attention. It was as if I were being carried by Luang Por. This expanded luminous state continued to grow until my connection to Luang Por Jamnian was all that remained. There was some kind of lapse of cognition, and then I was filled with so many positive qualities, far beyond anything I had ever experienced; intense happiness, compassion, and well-being, along with deep Trust and Faith. Yet none of these things had a root; they just were.

The speaker finished and left. I was awash with bliss and clarity. The effects of the state lasted for three more days. During a group discussion, I decided to share how my observations during the difficult speech had helped me to see what was important: to recognize the suffering in my mind and the minds of others, and to see the alternative.

Luang Por Jamnian listened to my experience and said that I had walked the *magga*, or path of the Arahant, for a few moments.

This experience demonstrated to me the importance of meeting a noble one. Without his presence, I am sure I would have had a very normal reaction to this speaker. His presence had turned a difficult experience into something profound and life-changing.

Chris Fernie

Student since 2004

Qigong teacher

Berkeley, California



ENDING SUFFERING

Due to a spinal cord injury, I've lived most of my adult life in excruciating pain. After trying, for twenty-three years, everything I could—surgery, drugs, doctors, acupuncture, chiropractic, etc.—my acupuncturist suggested a meditation retreat. I spent two years trying to locate a retreat that would accept me—many domestic venues, overseas retreats, and online retreats—when I heard about the Ajahn Jamnian retreat that was being given in a few weeks. Since they were willing to accommodate my handicaps, I wouldn't have to sit on the floor, I wouldn't have to sleep on the floor, I wouldn't have to walk far. I was able to attend Ajahn Jamnian's 2003 retreat.

He walked into the room. He sat down and spoke (via a translator) and said, "There is suffering."

I thought, "Great! Now we're getting somewhere. This man is willing to talk about suffering when everyone else avoided the subject at all costs."

He continued, "Suffering arises from a set of causes and conditions."

"Yes!" I thought. "That's right!"

"There is an end to suffering," he said.

I almost fell off my chair! The end of suffering! "Yes!" I gasped out loud to disapproving neighbors, and reached for my pen and notebook.

"And there is a path to the end of suffering."

In all these years, no surgeon, no doctor, no pharmacies, no one gave me any hope of ending my suffering. Wow!

Here, I was willing to travel anywhere on earth, under any circumstances to stop my pain and suffering, and right here, less than five miles from home, the answer dropped right into my lap. HOW LUCKY CAN YOU GET! Here was a teacher who could teach an ordinary, untrained, inexperienced person like me the Buddha Dhamma in simple, uncomplicated English, who would accept a student with no experience or skill.

At the end of that retreat, Ajahn Jamnian said something life-changing to me—something I had never heard before—“I want you to be happy.” And I believed him, and in 2004 went to his retreat again.

At that retreat Ajahn Jamnian again changed my life. He said, “Go out and walk for twenty minutes. Pick a *kilesa*⁽²⁾, any *kilesa*, and meditate on that object.” So I did what he said to do. I went out of the meditation hall and thought: “OK, which *kilesa* should I choose: Sensuality? Sloth and torpor? Restlessness and anxiety? Anger? Doubt?” I thought, what was giving me the most trouble in my life right now? Since the week before, I had had a big fight with my husband, I chose Anger. I spent those twenty minutes invested in a story of why I was right to be angry.

During the next meditation period I picked the subject up again, and was appalled to find I was angry a lot of the time. “How’d I miss that?” Never having thought of myself as an angry person I asked—“Wow! Where did that come from?” And boom! I saw my early life, and a person who survived a very poor and pathetic childhood and early adulthood, who used anger to survive. I saw how I used a refined form of anger to motivate myself to get food and a place to sleep, to get an education, and to fire me up to get a professional job that I was told was out of my reach. I saw, too, how it affected my personal relationships.

I continued this investigation for three more days and nights, each time asking, “Where did that come from?” until I saw what I thought was my very first lifetime. I understood the mechanism of how anger arises, where it comes, from and how it goes from life to life. I saw how I used anger as a tool for survival. It enabled me to fight back when someone tried to eat me in an animal life. Its more refined variation in this life enabled me to become a successful broker who was independent enough to survive financially when pain prevented me from working.

I realized that I had spent eons and eons doing the same thing over and over again, each time expecting a different result from the same action of anger. Isn’t that the definition of a crazy person—doing

2. A defilement of mind preventing clear seeing.

the same thing over and over again, expecting a different result? I was tired of it. I used to think I was an intelligent person. Now I was ready to act intelligently. Eventually I came to understand that anger was no longer a useful tool in my endeavor to end my suffering, and Ajahn Jamnian's ability to teach with loving-kindness and humor helped me develop the skills needed to drop anger and pursue the end of suffering.

Between my first retreat with Ajahn Jamnian in 2003 and his 2004 retreat, I got cancer: the result of many, many lifetimes of using anger inappropriately—misusing the fire element. Ajahn Jamnian didn't even know my name, but after the doctors gave me a less-than-5% chance to live even a year, I started to think. I was really tired of living in pain. I could just take this opportunity to die and end it all, and try to do better the next time. While in this meditative state, Ajahn Jamnian came to me and said "Yes, you can die now, but you could do so much more before you die." That made me think. Do I really want to come back again with all these same problems and face another fifty to one hundred years of suffering, or would I take Ajahn Jamnian's suggestion and make a determination to seek enlightenment? I would do anything not to live this same life over and over again. If Ajahn Jamnian thought I could do more, and at least reach *Sotāpanna* in this life, I would give it a try. I made a determination to get well and pursue some level of enlightenment with whatever time I had left.

Now I am 67. My doctors are still shaking their heads, but none asked me how I did it, or even what happened. I have it on good authority that I still have a way to go, but the end is in sight. There are no words to express my gratitude to Ajahn Jamnian. The only way I can think of thanking him is to go as far as I can.

In great gratitude,

June Nieze

Santa Rosa, California

A GREAT MASTER

Over a decade ago, a friend told me that Luang Por Jamnian was coming to San Francisco. I wanted to see him because I had heard of his good reputation as a monk. So I went along to welcome him at the San Francisco Airport. There were many disciples waiting for him there. Everyone was so happy and excited to see him the moment he came out from customs. He had many amulets and heavy things hanging from his body and was radiating the happiest and most joyous smile to everyone. I could feel the great loving-kindness coming from him. In my mind, I said "YES!"—I felt, *this is the one. This is a great master.*

Over the years I have followed him and joined his retreats, these are some of qualities I've seen in him:

~ WELCOMING ALL ~

He opens himself to all who come to see him equally, no matter who you are, with kindness, compassion, understanding, and willingness to help. He is like a father, mother, brother, or friend, depending on how you see him. Sometimes, we feel his purity as if he were a newborn baby, and we all want to hug and take care him, or like a cheery child who uplifts everyone.

People love to take his picture. He is happy to let them and smiles broadly so it will be a good one. In this, I see how he gives them a little memorable moment which may remind them of the Dhamma later. If you think about the situation, all kinds of people come to him with problems, from the morning till night, breakfast and lunch included, taking no holidays. All these people want something from him, and he is still willingly, joyfully, and happily receiving them. *That is him.*

~ RESPECT ~

Many people come to pay respects to Luang Por, but it is the respect that he gives back that brings joy and peace to them. He teaches that love, respect, and reverence will bring peace to all people.

~ KNOWER ~

He sees that most human minds are trapped with greed, anger, and delusion, like birds trapped in a cage. He would like to free the

human mind, just like freeing the bird from the cage. When you free a bird, do you want anything in return from that bird? He is the example of someone who has done it. He practices, understands, and goes through with what he sets out to do. That is the reason he is a great teacher of the path.

Besides teaching Buddha Dhamma, he can address each individual's problems and accurately speak to the cause of the problems. His ability to pinpoint a problem is well known. Many people seek him out for this reason. Then we have to work on them. I tend to get mad and irritated easily. He said to me, "Don't get angry at anyone, don't hate anyone, even a little bit." I am still working on it today. One word or one sentence from him could mean a lifetime of working.

~ GIVING & GENEROSITY ~

Wherever he goes, he prepares and disperses amulets. In addition to the Buddha's teachings, they help remind people of the Buddha and the Dhamma.

~ GREAT TEACHER ~

He selflessly, diligently, and continuously works for the well-being of all humanity with loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy, and equanimity. He shows the way so people can understand the nature of impermanence, suffering, non-self, and emptiness and walk toward Nibbana.

It is such an honor to know this Great Being. Words could not describe how much Luang Por has done for me and many others.

Piphat "Pat" Udomponganant
San Mateo, California

A FOUNDATION FOR FAITH

When I came home from my second retreat with Luang Por Jamnian in 2005, I was flooded with an explosion of joy unlike anything I had experienced before. It signaled the beginning of a new level of training in the Dhamma, and I unabashedly rejoiced in the depths of my lucky heart.

Ten years later, in a public park in the Pacific Northwest, a New York tourist spotted Luang Por (he is hard to miss), and approached to ask a question about her meditation practice. He spent about ten minutes with her, explaining the Dhamma and what she should do. As he finished, tears flooded her eyes. I marveled to one of the monks traveling with us, "He was only with her ten minutes and already she's weeping with joy," and he responded, "That happens all the time with Luang Por."

What I remember thinking at that early retreat, and many times after, was that this monk is a genius at presenting the Dhamma with compassion, humor, powerful energy, deep knowledge, and formidable truthfulness. He masterfully drew me in with a combination of dead-on characterizations of my own practice ("Your mindfulness is weak," "You are too much in the future"); clarifications about various meditation phenomena I experienced ("That fearsome, wild wind? Your breath," "Uncanny chimes? Rejoicing in another dimension"); and in-depth explications of the Dhamma salted with stark reminders of the effort required to break through the delusion of our suffering.

So, when he brought out slides of the 2004 tsunami that ravaged Thailand, focusing on countless bloated dead bodies dissolving into the elements, I bowed to the intensity of the seed planted in my mind. The Buddha taught us to deeply, deeply meditate on the temporality of the body—down to the dusty skeletons we all are—and Luang Por captured the value and importance of such a meditation in his uncompromisingly direct way.

He masterfully described the dark recesses of the ordinary human mind, cautioning that just the smallest spark of anger held the possibility of creating a dangerous conflagration, and I knew he was

right. When he drew a line between one who is a true noble disciple of the Buddha, and one who is not, he drew it at anger and lust. This made absolute sense to me, and I have since measured my practice with this line in mind.

He artfully gave countless examples from the Buddha's teachings and from his own life to explain the causes and results of human ignorance, which is our companion at birth. Reflecting on these teachings, over time, I became more aware and accepting of the anger, violence, greed, and confusion of my own mind—a necessary beginning to move onto the path of freedom.

On the dangers of lust, he regaled us with the glorious story of the red panties (to the embarrassment of some). Over fifty years ago, when he was a young monk in his twenties, a young woman came into the monastery at which he was training, and fell from her bicycle. Her legs flew into the air, revealing red panties underneath her skirt. Luang Por was transfixed by the sight. Even though he had been practicing *samādhi* and his mind was concentrated, lust arose in his heart, followed quickly and shockingly by anger at the man who helped her—because this interfered with his view of the infamous panties. He retired to his *kuti* to reflect on this incident. He told us that he could see that metta and lust cannot co-exist. In that long-ago instant, for him, metta was gone and selfish desire was exposed. His wisdom realized that lust could arise from hidden latency if it were not fully eradicated, and that his determination, deep effort, and wisdom could uproot it.

This story and others like it explained the Dhamma in its own terms: unvarnished, deeply inclusive, and treading a line that others might fear to tread. It meant that I could trust this teacher with the messiness of my own heart.

His constant and frequent admonition is to *let go*, to release *liking* and *disliking*. To demonstrate this dhamma, he uses a marvelous drawing:⁽³⁾ the path of consciousness moving like an automobile from the coarsest to the most refined recesses of the body/mind, the driver being consciousness, the source of dependent origination

3. A version of this drawing is included on page 122 of this book

in the heart. When he has explained the Noble Eightfold Path, he sometimes distills it to a refined litany: right view: to see *aniccā, anattā, dukkhā*;⁽⁴⁾ right intention: intention to see *aniccā, anattā, dukkhā*; right speech: to talk to yourself about *aniccā, anattā, dukkhā*. By Luang Por's great graces I recognized that such a cleansing could be done. In his presence, the sense gates conspired to show me which arising mind states were on the path, and which were veering into the side gutters, and that one could move one's mind back into the middle from each arising mind state of liking and disliking.

It is difficult to put this into words, but the teachings offered by Luang Por Jamnian, and the strength and power of his presence, elicited enormous faith in me; faith not only in the Dhamma, but in the Buddha as an awakened one. The Buddha, the perfected human being existing now in my heart, rescued from improbability and imbued with truth, living in the lineage of his noble disciples, and in this remarkable monk, today.

With gratitude Luang Por Jamnian, on your 80th birthday,

Brenda Walsh

Student since 2004

Director, Mahasati Retreat Association

Larkspur, California



4. The characteristics of impermanence, non-self, and suffering.

THE POWER OF LOVING-KINDNESS

One retreat, I remember Luang Por saying that loving-kindness is the strongest power there is. It was a simple sentence tucked into a longer answer about his experience over the course of eight years working for peaceful resolution during the Communist insurgency in Thailand. I felt great respect for his statement, and had the sense I was being handed something very important. This sublime, wise being in the front of the room was sharing his truly battle-tested experience. He had taken Buddha's teachings into the cauldron of life in some of the most difficult circumstances I could imagine. For that being to use the phrase "loving-kindness" sank deeply into me, profoundly affecting me, a Westerner raised in a culture that elevates anger and violence as powerful. To the best of my knowledge, this was the first time I had ever heard anyone who personally faced down assassination attempts with loving-kindness and wisdom. This monk, this ambassador for peace who had crawled through the jungle putting his faith into practice, inspired me to borrow his conviction and to apply this wisdom of loving-kindness as the strongest power there is, to the best of my ability. When I face my own shadows and weakness in practice, his testament to loving-kindness stays with me, reminding me that with great faith and love, it is possible to conquer even the seemingly impossible.

Thank you Luang Por from the bottom of my heart. Happy 80th Birthday!

Jen Freeman
Billings, Montana

FINDING THE LOVE FROM WITHIN

My father was a harsh, abusive, and violent man. Blood was not uncommon in my growing-up environment. He was the only parent I had who lived with me, and he tried to kill me several times. He tried with a knife, tried to drown me, and tried to push me out of a tall building. I had to take my young brother to the emergency room sometimes. My father broke his skull once. He caused one of my stepmothers' to lose hearing in one ear. I never had a loving word from him. I understand now, after training as a social worker, that he had PTSD. But during my childhood, no one understood what that was.

Before he passed away, our house smelled of urine. He was diabetic, and had lost control of his bladder.

When I was in deep meditation at a ten-day retreat, the strong smell of urine returned. I told my retreat teacher that I felt my father's presence. He did not know what to do. In the western world, spirits or ghosts seem to freak people out, whereas they are a part of the Chinese culture I grew up in. I wasn't frightened. I mentioned it as a matter of fact because it came up. Actually, whenever I was in deep meditation, I'd sense my father was present by the smell. Or maybe the smell just reminded me of him.



The retreat teacher referred me to the main teacher, who had trained in Thailand for five years. He interviewed me and said a Thai teacher who was very good at dealing with spirits would be coming to the United States the following year in May. He said that if the conditions were right, this teacher might be able to help me.

I was happy to meet someone who understood spirits and had some idea of how to deal with them. When I thought of my father, my own feelings were complicated. He appeared to me in a dream right after he passed. He was angry with his children, and cursed us. I wished his journey could be peaceful, but he was so angry. I thought, *maybe a great master could help my father, and help him find peace.*

When the teacher arrived the following year, it was Luang Por Jamnian. My teacher took me to see him. Luang Por was sitting in the hall after a Dhamma talk to the general public. Many people were surrounding him. There was a fun, festive feeling. Luang Por was smiling and making protective necklaces for the people around him.

The western teacher told Luang Por something about me in Thai. Luang Por looked at me and said, "There is no ghost in her." I did not understand Thai. I guess the teacher told Luang Por I had a problem with a ghost? The teacher explained a bit more and pressed a little. Luang Por nodded and said something in Thai. The teacher translated



that Luang Por had asked that I bring a candle and incense to him the next day. He would do a ceremony for me.

After my teacher left, I was standing there watching people and found myself very interested in this smiling, laughing Thai monk, Luang Por. I didn't know why I didn't leave with the other teacher. Luang Por looked very happy and laughed a lot. He didn't speak English, but as he made the protective necklaces, he was saying: "computer, computer". I guessed he was referring to the speed for which he was making them, and the precision of the action.

He suddenly lifted his head, looked at me, and waved me over to him. The translator told me he was asking me to kneel down in front of him and repeat after him. I did. When he stopped, the translator explained Luang Por had said I didn't have to worry about my father anymore, and he had just adopted me as his daughter. He said he would protect me from now on. If my father came to me again, to just tell him that I have a new father.

I slept very well that night and got up earlier than usual. I walked to the kitchen and saw an American woman preparing fruit. I asked if she needed help. She said sure, and asked where I was staying. I told her in the dormitory just next to the kitchen. She was excited and asked if I could help every morning to prepare breakfast. She didn't live at the center, and if I could help her out, she wouldn't have to be in a hurry every morning.

I was in the kitchen when Luang Por came in for breakfast with two monk disciples. He greeted me in Chinese (my first language), "Papa loves his daughter, Papa loves his daughter." I was so surprised that he had learned a Chinese sentence to say to me. I cannot tell you what that did. My own father had never told me he loved me. When I heard Luang Por say that, it made me feel light and happy. It felt like a huge thing had lifted me up in the air. He just seemed to know what I needed, and how significant that simple sentence would be to me.

From then on, I became like a duckling, following a little distance behind Luang Por everywhere he went. I saw him every year when he came to the retreat center in California.

In one retreat, I had a sudden realization that I wasn't really interested in the teachings or practice. I just wanted Luang Por's

loving-kindness. During my interview, I told him that I didn't care about any Buddhist practice, I just wanted his love. Luang Por looked me in the eye with the most sincere compassion and told me, "All the loving-kindness in the world will not alleviate your suffering." I almost cried out loud. No, I didn't want to hear that.

Luang Por became stricter with me afterwards, and I did not like it. I still wanted to be a baby. I wanted him to coddle me.

Once I asked him about a difficulty I had encountered in meditation. He told me to apologize in front of my father in my mind. I was so mad after hearing that, I considered leaving the retreat immediately. I thought if I could forgive my father as I had, I was doing pretty well as a Buddhist. How could Luang Por say I should ask my father for his forgiveness?

After I calmed down, I was thinking very hard. I asked myself if I believed in past and future lives. I'd never wanted to think about it before, because it wasn't tangible. I had no idea what I thought about it, much less to answer yes or no. The Buddha talks about past life in scripture, but that was too remote for me to be sure.

I thought about it: why would a man want to kill his own children? What possible thing in this life could have resulted in that kind of hatred? I had to admit, I did not know about my past lives. If there really were past lives, how could I know what I might have done to my father? Was it possible I abused him!? In all honesty, I had to admit that I may have harmed others in many lifetimes.

So I started to ask forgiveness from my father in my prayer and meditation. I started to take my practice more seriously, and I started to see my path. This world is not so attractive to me anymore. It's not that it ever was, but now I realize that I need to strive for something better than being a hungry ghost chasing after love from people. I want the liberation of my heart, and to find the love from within.

Laiman Mai
Student
Taiwan



Special Tributes from Monastics



GRATITUDE

OFFERING FOR LUANG POR JAMNIAN'S 80TH BIRTHDAY

As i sit to reflect on the thought of Luang Por Jamnian, gratitude arises to mind. The image of his robe, amulets, smile, and presence is fully imbued with and pervaded by the sense of depth of constant and steady compassionate mettā and *upekkhā*, a permeating and deeply grounded radiance of love and steadiness. Luang Por has been one of the great benefactors in this life.

The first thing i am grateful for, and may always be, is for his bringing close attention to the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. He did so before mindfulness was uber-popular and on the cover of Time Magazine, and before i really thought it was anything so special either, as the retreats i'd sat before were generally more focused on *samatha* (concentration) and *vipassana* (insight) practices. Like many other noble folds of the Noble Eightfold Path, early in my monastic life and even earlier in my university time as a teenager, i just thought all the folds were common sense in a sensible, balanced, well-rounded Path: "like, *duh*—a 'no brainer.'" The way that i learned mindfulness when i entered monastic life as an *anāgārikā* and then *sāmaṇeri* was in strong attention to how to care for our monastic requisites like our robes and bowl, our monastic environs while sweeping and chopping the vegetables, etc., and in our behavior with our fellow monastics. It was just a part of learning the whole package of monastic life, and was one kind of regular discipline of body and mind. However, bringing the attention to mindfulness of the body, over and over again, layer by layer, was not something that i had really done before in that first decade or two of monastic life. (Actually, surprisingly, many other Buddhist monastics and householders haven't either).

Doing so, on my first retreat with Luang Por, I appreciated how it brought up things in me (and others!) that had been hidden: prejudices, views, discriminations, and "no-go" zones—things that had been long concealed in the psyche, lurking in the shadows and dark undercurrents. The atmosphere Luang Por created, of continual loving-kindness pervaded with deep *upekkhā* (equanimity), provided the space where it was possible to look at these things, layer upon

layer—like peeling an onion! If it weren't for Luang Por's good mood, as he said, we would cry and be horrified to see these things—but instead, we were all so often laughing, as he said “Happy, happy—empty, empty!” And with the light-heartedness, the trappings can fall away easily, like the sloughing off of the onion's outer skin with the brush of a hand. Luang Por's ongoing focus combined with his great patience, provided and offered support for working with these matters, in element after element, layer after layer, day upon day, with these qualities of focus and patient endurance. Luang Por's quality of pervasive joy made working with these heavy things feel light. As a much younger and more junior teacher, i appreciated these qualities as enabling teaching contexts, facilitating what might not otherwise be possible.

It was in significant part due to what unfolded during that first retreat with Luang Por, that i reentered into teaching after more than a decade-long hiatus, and the first *bhikkhunī vihāra* in the Western United States was established. But i did not know that was going to happen at that time! Luang Por kept warning about the difficulties and challenges of having a monastery over and over again, teaching funny ways to overcome them, and i thought: “Why does he keep talking about that!?!?” Pat explained to me, as he so often explained things in a nice way: “Maybe *someone* is going to be starting a monastery... It seems to be in the air.” Less than ten days later, i found out it was true, although i didn't have that plan when entering this retreat! :) With a bright twinkle in his eye, Luang Por was one step ahead, and some of the most wonderful and dedicated supporters of Dhammadhārinī, founded less than a fortnight later, have been his students.

Another thing that rises to mind, with humor, are the skeins of Luang Por's compassion and playfulness in teaching, woven into that great tapestry of skillful means. On one subsequent retreat, when the late night teaching time came, i was thinking of resting. But, he asked me and a lay woman to sit up next to him on his left side, facing everyone, which we did; i with some discomfort. And, it was clear and obvious to me that that discomfort was because of the “I,” which brought up aversion. Now, on that retreat, the big paper pictures of

the car and the road,⁵ with *bhava taṇhā*⁶ on one side and *vibhava taṇhā* on the other side, had been talked about for hours that day. So, it was not as if *vibhava taṇhā* and its low-level manifestation as disliking or irritation (*paṭigha saññā*) were a new concept at that point, or not on the table. They were right up there in front of us being spoon fed or shoveled in! Being asked to sit up in front of everyone brought up some *vibhava taṇhā*. Then, Luang Por launched into the story of the Venerable Uppalavaṇṇā Therī, “the leading left-hand disciple of the Buddha,” as he called her.

Now, it was not that i had never heard about Uppalavaṇṇā, either. In fact, i had specially studied about the great, eminent, leading *bhikkhuni* disciples of the Buddha, and a series of my research and writing on them was published in a magazine when i was an associate professor in Sangha college a few years before. Uppalavaṇṇā Therī was one of the two greatest exemplars among these ancient *bhikkhunīs*, the one “foremost in spiritual power.” As Luang Por reminded, she was one of the two disciples that the Buddha himself told all the other *bhikkhunīs* to look to as a model. But, i did not expect that Luang Por would know her story, or that he would be able to tell her story—based upon his vast memory of Southern Thai oral tradition teachings together with the canonical texts of the Tipiṭaka—so *excellently*, including details that i’d never before heard. “This is invaluable for my research!” i thought. So, despite being tired, and the chair being uncomfortable, and not liking to sit up front, i was extremely interested in continuing to listen, and to remember what he said, as the teaching extending into the night. As he spoke at length about the unfolding process of her awakening, i saw him as a master puppeteer pulling the strings. He kept returning to her story during that three hour-long teaching, while we sat up there at his left, which he repeatedly mentioned with a playful and challenging tone and look. So, i got it—Luang Por is driving for results here—i cannot waste this time! In our monastic ethic, if an elder teacher

5. A version of this diagram is included on page 122 of this book

6. *Tanhā* is craving, from the word for thirst, and is the chief cause of suffering and the cycle of rebirth. There are three types of craving: *kāmma tanhā*, craving for sensuality, *bhava tanhā*, craving for becoming, and *vibhava tanhā*, craving for non-becoming.

gives so much time and care and encouragement, it would be very embarrassing and shameful to go to bed early!

On another occasion, Luang Por came to Amdee's old house in the San Francisco East Bay, very nearby our Dhammadhārinī Vihāra. I and my fellow bhikkhunīs accepted the invitation to join for *Sanḅhadāna* at Amdee's home. It turned out that Luang Por and entourage had come with a large and beautiful full-color book, commissioned by the late Supreme Patriarch of Thailand, which had full-page color photos of relics inside. In that book, there were photos of the ancient arahant bhikkhunīs' relics, which had been found in old *chedis* (Pali: *cetiya*s, stupas or pagodas) that had been opened up in Thailand when being renovated and reconstructed. Not just one photo, but a whole collection of them. At Luang Por's direction, i got excellent quality photos of all those ancient therīs' relics.

And then, with his characteristically sly good humor, and the loving playfulness of a father, mother, or best friend—Luang Por had saved the best for last. He had recently come to possess physically one of the relics of Emperor Ashoka's bhikkhunī daughter Saḅghamittā Therī (perhaps from when her mortuary stupa was rediscovered in Sri Lanka by a mutual friend not that long before). So then, i had the awesome chance to actually see and hold that relic, which Luang Por guided me to "sense" into, and afterwards, which i also received an excellent photo of. He then instructed me to take all the photos of the bhikkhunīs' relics back to our bhikkhunī vihāra, and in the dark, to meditate looking at them on the computer screen at night, until i could see them clearly with my eyes closed, sense each image's unique qualities and characteristics, and feel the image 3D-projected into and pervading this very body. He spoke about how mind pervades matter, and how we can sense his mind through his body, and a sacred place through its ambiance. He suggested "sensing" the ambiance of the relics though the images. Doing this most nights for an hour or two for around a month profoundly impacted and deepened my sense of bodily (not to mention heart) connecting with these ancient women masters.

On yet still another retreat occasion, at the park in Washington State, we began the teachings out in the big, blue tent. The very first night of the retreat—which was attended by two bhikkhunīs

additional to myself who were new to Luang Por's teaching—straight off, he launched into telling the stories of ancient leading awakened bhikkhunī disciples in his teaching. He first told the powerful story of Khemā Therī (leading bhikkhunī disciple foremost in wisdom), and how, through recognizing impermanence in mindfulness of the body, she became an arahant on her first meeting with the Buddha while standing there still in her lay clothing! Oh, did he get our attention fast! And the attention of many other non-monastics, too! They are great teaching stories; so i and the rest of us got to see how his teaching relates and applies directly to our ancient foremothers' teachings; transcending gender, but explicitly supporting awakening within *this* gendered embodiment, now. I very much appreciated Luang Por's example as a very senior Buddhist monastic, employing and exemplifying such skillful means (*upāya*) freely—illuminating the entire tradition, independent of gender, but using gender just as skillful means, as our heritage and inheritance, and all of us the heirs of the Buddha. This breaking down of the walls and barriers of ego-identity and opening up the field of merit is a wonderful quality and skill i observed in him, with admiration, awe, and appreciation.

However, although this was excellently wonderful, the teaching that i've most appreciated and benefited from, together with the Four Foundations of Mindfulness with focus on Mindfulness of the Body, is his teaching on *taṇhā*.

That car, the road, all kinds of *taṇhā* on the left and the right, the cut-out switches: that has been one of the most useful and excellent teachings ever. To bring attention to this fundamental root and core *dhamma*, day after day, such that one can see and recognize and work with it, is not something to be underestimated or underappreciated in its value in this lifetime. *Taṇhā* is right there front and center in the Causes of Suffering in the Four Noble Truths; *taṇhā* is a key link in Dependent Origination. If we see Dependent Origination, we see the Dhamma. If we see the Dhamma, we see the Buddha—more truly and clearly than anyone who ever saw and attached to his physical body. Insight into the truth of *Dukkha Samudaya Ariya Saccā*, the Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering, is of inestimable value and worth.

Having said this, truly, it stops all other words; as this teaching has such depth and gravitas. So i will end here; with ultimate gratitude

for the Buddha's Dhamma, shared by way of the three doors: of body, speech, and mind. May the merit of this Dhamma sharing be for all of our long-term benefit and happiness, unto the highest emptiness that is the highest happiness of Nibbāna.

As Luang Por would often say:

"Nibbānam paramaṃ sukhaṃ; nibbānaṃ paramaṃ suññaṃ."⁽⁷⁾

During that very first retreat, Luang Por gave me a little gift, one of his collection of bodily relics, a heart of gold. I still have the heart sitting within the wooden monastic bowl of my venerable bhikkhuni mentor on my teachers' shrine. In my heart and eyes, it radiates here now, with those qualities of love and wisdom that are peaceful, sublime, and liberating: the Buddha's great heart in sharing the Dhamma.

Nibbāna paccayo hotu.⁽⁸⁾

Ayyā Tathālokā Therī
Dhammadhārini
Santa Rosa, California



-
7. Nibbana is the highest happiness; Nibbana is the highest emptiness.
 8. May this be a condition for Nibbana.

SEEDS OF DHAMMA

Krab Namasakan Luang Por Jamnian Seelasetto. I, Phra Wutthichai Wutthiyano (Phra Woody), would like to express my appreciation of Luang Por's kindnesses through this writing in order that other disciples or followers may also appreciate my experience.

In 1997, I retreated to Tam Talay Hoy Temple in Krabi province for the Buddhist Lent. During that Phansa (three lunar months during the rainy season), I determinedly meditated without making any progress. I was in a state of being lost and being unable to find an answer. Making an attempt to consult the Buddhist scriptures (*Tipitaka*), I gained a lot of knowledge and yet was still not able to find the answer. My mind was in a completely obsessive state that lasted until the end of Buddhist lent.

On the day of Kathina ceremony, Luang Por Jamnian attended the ceremony without informing anyone in advance. He had visited a small temple located in a remote area upon no invitation at all, and that was my fortunate day. While I was escorting him to the restroom after the ceremony was completed, he suddenly brought up an issue about the mind—in fact, it was about my mind that was lost in a maze of undefined questions, which were not being answered. What he said enabled me to see through my own distraction, restlessness, and perplexity, and into a certain peace of mind. Those were the answers I had been seeking for a long time. As strange as it may seem, I cannot remember exactly what he said, but his words completely eliminated all my doubts within the short period of time of our thirty meters' walk to the restroom. He explained even more Dhamma to me when I saw him off. That was the first time I met Luang Por Jamnian. In 2003, I coincidentally met him again in Houston, Texas. During that time, he spent a few days delivering his sermons until I understood and was able to detach myself from my own grief-stricken mind.

During his trips to teach Dhamma in other countries, I have had the opportunity to return my gratitude by serving Luang Por. Therefore, I have experienced and appreciated his kindheartedness, purity, and wisdom, which are so elevated as to be beyond comprehension. He has helped other people, every one of them, in an equitable manner.

I have seen the persistence of his kindheartedness: how he is kind to a person from the very beginning, and remains the same over time, regardless of how that person's beliefs might change. One of the teachings he always emphasizes is for us to love, respect, revere, and be in harmony. That is, to love the goodness in each other, to respect the goodness in each other, to revere the goodness in each other, and to be in harmony with our goodness and the goodness of others.

Luang Por teaches us the path which he also follows. He values unity and harmony, which brings him into conflict with no one. No matter which country he goes to, no matter which group he is with, he offers help and proper resolution regardless of what their beliefs may be. There are times when those who were helped did not even realize that they were being given help. This is the mode of practice he follows; he expects nothing in return for everything he does. He has said that, "If we expect something in return, we are not cultivating virtue, as we have already received the fruit of that particular deed." Luang Por lends a helping hand to both human beings and angels, with pure intention.

I myself used to perceive Luang Por as one of those spiritual pundits who consecrate sacred objects by incantations in a way that is against the path of Buddhism. However, when I had a chance to learn and practice Dhamma according to his Dhamma techniques, I let go of my skepticism about his holy objects. They are intended to help people and to guide those who do not have a deep understanding of the nature of the power of a well-controlled mind. How does this help the world and foster faith? A small object can help a person recollect the energies of the teacher, and ease their fears, and in this way can promote trust in their own peace of mind and in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha. This is why it is called a "holy object".

Throughout my monkhood, I have had a preceptor who planted the seeds of Dhamma discipline in me, while Luang Por Jamnian is the one who has nurtured me by giving me Dhamma strategies and teachings that provide me with the consciousness and wisdom that have kept me in the holy life for this long. I cannot find the words to describe the benevolence of Luang Por Jamnian, who has given me such immense kindheartedness that has sustained my monk's life. It is truly beyond compare. According to the *Tipitaka*, my preceptor

is the one giving birth to me, while Luang Por Jamnian is the one nurturing me through my holy life, which is not easy to maintain. There have been many critical times that have brought me close to the edge of leaving, but I was able to adopt Luang Por's Dhamma strategy and wisdom to keep me from falling from the edge and giving in. Sometimes, I would like to simply bow to him ten thousand times to express my gratitude in a way that might begin to show the depth of gratitude in my heart.

When he has traveled to other countries, Luang Por Jamnian has always disseminated the Buddha's teaching everywhere he goes. In Indonesia, he has delivered sermons on almost every island and in every major city. In each city, there were a thousand people attending. There were both radio and television broadcasts. When meditation classes were conducted, there were a hundred people participating. He has been visiting and disseminating Dhamma in Malaysia and Singapore for forty years. A number of his followers have shown their firm belief and faith in Buddhism.

The first time he went to Taiwan to offer a meditation class at Chung Yuan University in the Zhongli district, there were many people attending his sermon, most of whom were professors and students. On that day, a participant asked Luang Por's opinion of the difference between Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism. With an attempt to ease the tension between two sides of belief, Luang Por sensibly answered that *Maha* means greatness. *Yana* means wisdom. Theravada means the doctrine of the elders. Mahayana's followers aim at practicing to become a great wise person with omniscient wisdom, and to ultimately become a Buddha. For Theravada, it is believed that we were born to encounter Buddhism in this life to ensure good practice that can be comparable to the elders who have been enlightened and have reached Nibbana. These include Sariputta, Mogallana, Maha Kassapa, and Ananda. There is Mahayana in Theravada, and there is Theravada in Mahayana. For example, disciples like the arahant Maha Kassapa had developed their virtues to become a Buddha, but eventually withdrew from that path in order to sooner end the never-ending sufferings. There is Theravada in Mahayana because there are those who make an attempt to reach Nibbana, but become compassionate about the suffering of living creatures, and then would like to help by developing themselves to

become Buddhas or the disciples of one. Therefore, both paths have the same goal, which is Nibbana. His answer was compelling to a lot of people and eased the tension between each side's view. Luang Por Jamnian has become recognized in Taiwan since then. He has been invited to teach or deliver a sermon at many temples throughout Taiwan.

In the United States where Luang Por has been teaching Vipassana for twenty years, I have seen inspiring levels of spiritual maturity among his followers who have practiced *dana*, generosity, *sila*, wholesome conduct, and *bhavana*, truth contemplation, with great commitment. Even though Luang Por primarily teaches the practice aspects of the Buddha's teaching that lead to liberation, such as the Four Foundations of Mindfulness and the Noble Eightfold Path, nevertheless, his students also practice *dana*, *sila*, and *bhavana*. They are mindful with their conduct and very committed to the Threefold Training to pursue higher virtue, higher concentration, and higher wisdom. In my observation, these qualities are the result of the seeds of Dhamma sprinkled by Luang Por.

I have to end my writing at this point despite the fact that there are a lot more of Luang Por Jamnian's benevolences imprinted in my soul. I can verbally describe this better and it will be hard to finish. At this point, I would like to pay homage to Luang Por Jamnian and take his teachings to my soul and my body, as well as practice them as a token of my gratitude to his kindness on the occasion of his 80th birthday.

Phra Vutthichai "Phra Woody" Vutthiyano
Oregon Ariyamagga Okasati Refuge
Oregon, USA

HAPPY! HAPPY! HAPPY

What if I tell you Luang Por Jamnian's presence transformed my life? It's true! It was when I first met him during the meditation retreat at a well-known meditation center in California in 2006. I was experiencing agonizing pain due to a pinched nerve at that time. However, Luang Por's beaming and contagious smile attracted me like a magnet. I began listening to his Dhamma talks which were filled with anecdotes, life-experiences, and wonderful stories.

We had breakfast and lunch with Luang Por and his entourage. Luang Por always had a Dhamma point to make. I learned his powerful approach to insight meditation from the illustrations he used to explain. It was simple and easy to understand even for an average person. His style of teaching was centered on cultivating happiness. Every time I met him, he'd say: "Happy! Happy! Happy!" He expressed these words in a warm, wise, and playful way. Indeed, he was always happy.



Luang Por allowed his senior monastic attendant to help treat my neck problem. The pain subsided within a few days. Furthermore, I was impressed by Luang Por's energy when he gave Dhamma talks. His listeners were glued to his stories. His talks used to run almost until midnight. He gave freedom to his listeners. They could either stay or leave at any time. However, people were not tired of listening to him.

I asked him the best time for me to return to Uganda to spread Buddhism. He told me first to engage in Dhamma activities and become known in overseas countries before I go to spread Buddhism in Uganda. He said that people would get to know me through the work I have done overseas.

I learned from Luang Por the way of radiating metta as a way to support the practice of *vipassana* meditation. He also taught me how to practice metta toward my audience before giving Dhamma talks.

On the occasion of his 80th Birthday, I wish our beloved Luang Por peace, long life, and happiness.

With metta,

Venerable Bhikkhu Buddharakkhita
Uganda Buddhist Centre



LIVING METTA, BREATHING DHAMMA

The only real thing I can remember from the first time sitting in Luang Por Jamnian's presence was that I felt really happy. So happy, I couldn't stop smiling. So happy I laughed out loud like someone was telling jokes. So happy, my cheeks hurt. Many years later I was drawn by that memory to attend his retreats in Washington state.

At the first Washington retreat, Luang Por shared with us the mantra he has practiced since he was a boy. When I left the retreat that first year I didn't consciously have the intention of practicing the mantra, but as the year progressed the mantra took on a life of its own, like a boulder rolling downhill.

I find myself chanting while cooking, during conversation with people, driving, eating, drinking, walking, and even sleeping. The mantra acts like an instant reflection showing when any action, thought, or feeling is not in accordance with Dhamma. Luang Por doesn't speak much English, but the one thing he often says is, "I love you, you love me." The truth couldn't be more simply said.

Luang Por Jamnian is living metta, the living, breathing Dhamma. His teachings are jewels, infinitely giving light like stars across the heavens. When I see Luang Por I still smile a lot, but the smile has gone much deeper than my face can express. I am deeply grateful to have crossed his path. Long life and Happy Birthday to Luang Por Jamnian, Metta, Metta!!!

Kristina Forester-Thorp
California, USA

VIGILANCE IN DAILY LIFE

I have only known Luang Por Jamnian for four years, but he has changed the way I look at life. His style of teaching is different from any teacher I have listened to before. He taught me to use my mindfulness as the main tool to direct my life. You have to pay attention to where your mind is going, or you will not end up at the right destination. There is no place for liking or disliking in the present moment. Liking or disliking is only a view through past conditioning that taints the truth. In the present moment with an untainted view, the truth is plain to see. The price is constant vigilance. I am grateful to Ajahn Jamnian for his teachings, and I make them part of my daily life.

Don Sparks

Director, Mahasati Retreat Association
Student of Buddhism for over 45 years
California, USA



APPRECIATION AND GRATITUDE

It is possible that I first met Luang Por Jamnian in 1994, when he first visited a meditation center in California. I know I met him in the 1990s and continued to attend his Dhamma events for the next dozen years. I was immediately drawn to his strong presence. He was very unique. He was wearing orange robes with a belt over his robes that contained myriad objects which continually jabbed his body. He said he wore the belt as a reminder to be present in every moment.

Once while he was teaching, he looked at me and made a gesture of waving two fingers at each other. I didn't know what it meant, but I felt a connection to his vibrant energy. Many years later one of my friends encouraged me to go on a weeklong retreat with him and I did. It is very hard to put into words the experience I had there. Just being with him over that amount of time created a focused mindset and a joyous appreciation for the moment. I felt Luang Por Jamnian's deep awareness was guiding me into deeper meditative states. One morning meditating alone, I experienced a sustained meditative absorption. Later Luang Por Jamnian commented on my experience. This is what it was like to be around him, he was clairvoyant and often able to communicate beyond spoken language.

On retreat Luang Por Jamnian would often continue teaching after the scheduled program ended at 9 p.m. Many people would go to sleep, but I had so much energy from laughing and meditating that I was happy to spend more time in his presence. I will never forget one evening around midnight, a small group of us were with him, and he shared an amazing display of Buddhist objects. Underneath his robes he was wearing what I can only describe as carpenter's tool belts. And what an honor to see what was in them: collections of gifts that Luang Por Jamnian had received, some of which were more than a thousand years old. Buddhas that were shaped in sand, tigers' claws, prayer beads, etc. He heaped these treasures on the floor and began to bless us with many of them. It was a Buddhist Christmas moment. So much joy and delight.

I had the opportunity to have private interviews with Luang Por Jamnian along with his translators. In one of the interviews he

told me what the waving of the fingers at each other meant. He said it meant, father and daughter. It was an endearing moment as he warmly welcomed me onto the Dhamma path.

Luang Por Jamnian would often use a model of a skeleton to teach. He would have us do walking meditation outside while envisioning ourselves as walking skeletons. On one retreat, it was very unusual, but I noticed many snakes were on the ground and were slowly moving with us. At one point Luang Por Jamnian was outside sitting on a raised wooden platform talking to a student. I watched as a snake slithered up a plank to the platform as if to have an audience with him. A monk was sitting next to Luang Por Jamnian and waved the snake away. Later I was told that snakes do approach Luang Por Jamnian in Thailand, but it was rare to see this happen in America.

I had an experience in a meditation retreat when Luang Por Jamnian was in Thailand and I was in the USA. I clearly felt his support despite the distance.

I went to pay homage to him in Thailand in 2010. When I arrived in a taxi at his temple Wat Tham Sua, another car pulled up about the same time. Two monks got out of the car and we spoke briefly. I said that Luang Por Jamnian was my teacher, and asked if he was there. They said they had just left him in Bangkok and he would be back in three days. I felt very blessed. I knew Luang Por Jamnian was constantly traveling and I hadn't pre-arranged the visit. When I returned in three days, I was able to sit with him as he blessed many people. I realized how fortunate I had been to see him in the United States in a small, intimate setting with translators available.

There was an American woman there for the first time, who had never met Luang Por. She asked me who he was and I told her some of my experiences. This gave her trust in the situation. When she went to receive blessings from Luang Por Jamnian she cried and was deeply moved.

As I walked around the temple grounds, I spoke with a monk who let me sit in the cave he meditated in. I felt grateful to meet one of Luang Por Jamnian's dedicated practitioners and to experience his simple lifestyle.

I also have witnessed the transformation of an American friend

who has become a nun under the guidance of Luang Por Jamnian. This gives me a lot of hope and encouragement. I yearn for the possibility of meditating in long-term retreat. Although I haven't seen Luang Por Jamnian for several years, he always remains in my heart. It is inspirational to have witnessed his dedication and how many people he has touched with his sincere and devoted practice. I imagine this connection with him will transpire over many lifetimes.

I would like to add a heartfelt Happy 80th Birthday to Luang Por Jamnian. Thank you for the amazing Dhamma work you have done in those years.

With appreciation and gratitude, sending you love,

Louisa Gluck
California, USA





Luang Por's Friendship with Ruth Denison



A BEAUTIFUL FRIENDSHIP

A beautiful friendship that I was privileged to witness was the one between Luang Por Jamnian and Ruth Denison. Their first encounter was at a retreat that he was teaching in 2006, in the southern California desert near Ruth's meditation center in Joshua Tree. In driving past the location where he was teaching (shortly after a hip replacement and with her mobility still limited to a walker), she couldn't resist dropping into the ongoing retreat when she noticed the sign indicating an in-progress Vipassana retreat taught by a Thai monk. She started with a few probing questions from the back, and it wasn't long before Luang Por Jamnian had invited her onstage. There they taught, joked, and laughed together: all amid a dance of words and teachings that spoke to the deep truths underlying the human condition. On the final day of the retreat, Ruth pulled a skeleton out of her purse to match the one Luang Por Jamnian had on stage as a continuous reminder of our bodily reality. This resulted again in bright-eyed laughter and commentary from Luang Por Jamnian and then from Ruth, spreading joy and glimmers of understanding to the retreatants. The pair of skeletons quickly evolved into the basis for the next teaching. It was humbling, joyful and uplifting to behold: two great masters, a Thai-born monk ordained for more than fifty years, and a woman lay teacher of German descent about fifteen years his elder, whose Vipassana teaching transmission dated back to 1960s Burma. Recognizing each other's unique attainments, they developed a kinship that lasted until Ruth's passing in 2015.

In the years following this meeting, Luang Por Jamnian talked about Ruth at nearly every retreat he gave, using her as an example that lay students could look to as a model of attainment in this life. He often pointed out how remarkable it was that he had encountered someone as advanced on the path as Ruth during his visits to the United States. Likewise, Ruth attended his daylong teachings in Los Angeles during his visits over subsequent years. As Ruth's body advanced in age, the two of them spoke occasionally by phone through an interpreter. Their discussions revolved around the truth and experience of the human condition, and, as Ruth came to suffer the effects of old age, the practice of working with that reality.

“There is nothing wrong with me,” she would sometimes say, “just old age,” to which Luang Por Jamnian would reply with the Buddha’s instructions for working with subtle attachments.

Luang Por was known to encourage his students to go study with Ruth. Once arrived in the desert where she taught, their process of grooming continued under Ruth’s tutelage. Invariably the students who trained with her would return with a deeper sense of embodiment of the Dhamma: coaxed onward by her masterful ability to turn each moment into a personal teaching, and to bring the practice into all aspects of one’s living experience.

Luang Por and Ruth were kindred spirits in that they had both followed their own personal journey of extensive and rigorous practice and study. Both developed their own unique style of teaching. They shared a poise born of a deep and constant touch with a deeper truth, and a flexibility and aliveness born of a living experience that truly acknowledges that each moment is pervaded with impermanence and change. Their profound sense of empathy resulted in an aura of indiscriminating love which they generously turned toward anyone who met their path.

Teachers such as Luang Por and Ruth have an inner discipline that frees them to go skillfully beyond conventions. The deeper wisdom available to them through their well-developed practice gives them access to a greater range of instructional tools such as humor and storytelling. Their selflessness, energy, awareness, and firm inner strength, allow them to use the moment at hand to help others gain Dhamma insights. This spontaneous teaching style can be uncomfortable for people who are used to practicing in specific ways. However, these methods, often tailored in the moment to the student and situation, provide uniquely powerful opportunities for developing insight for those students who take the leap to open themselves up and try.

Luang Por and Ruth are living examples of the practice and the goal. In the tradition of great teachers, each is set apart by his or her own attainment, but both are supremely accessible thanks to their great compassion.

The last daylong teaching of Luang Por’s that Ruth attended

was in June 2013. After the teaching was over, she walked up to the Dhamma seat as retreatants were dispersing, and requested his blessing for the strength to support her practice to its fulfillment in reaching the path's end. He responded by stepping meticulously through each of the remaining fetters of a nonreturner, and working with the various subtle states of attachment. He discussed for example the practice of allowing the arising tendencies and memories to occur inside a space of impersonality, gently enfolded inside of a nongrasping awareness imbued with a quality of allowing.

Health problems prevented Ruth from attending the following year's daylong teaching in 2014. However, the last day of Luang Por Jamnian's stay in the United States, before a midnight flight for Thailand that very evening, he and an entourage of monks and lay followers embarked, in a caravan of cars, on the four-hour road trip to visit Ruth at Dhamma Dena, her center in Joshua Tree. This was the last time they met: a touching meeting between two great teachers, shared with the monks and students who were with them that day. They exchanged words of Dhamma and the experiences of the moment, and Luang Por Jamnian presented Ruth with two ancient Buddha amulets, after which he and the other monks that accompanied him chanted the Buddha's words in Ruth's living room as a parting blessing.

Philip Rathle

San Mateo, California

BEING SEEN

My first encounter with Luang Por Jamnian was in March of 2008, when he came to teach a two-day retreat that my mom was hosting. I had only just met Ruth Denison several months prior to that, in July of 2007. It was during this two-day retreat that Ruth and I cemented our connection. Ruth referred to an event that took place the night before this retreat began as “how I caught Sonya in my Dhamma net.”

I couldn't really understand anything Luang Por was teaching during those two days. I just sat happily and peacefully at Ruth's feet, or by her side, for the entire time. Ruth was recovering from either a fractured femur or hip, I now cannot accurately recall, and I was her attendant. I remember being surprised that although everything went over my head, I was totally present and at peace—happy as a clam. I was completely content to just sit there right up front with Ruth, soaking in whatever they were beaming at each other.

For the remainder of Ruth's life, I was to accompany her to every one of her meetings with Luang Por. One such meeting was a lunch at Brenda Walsh's house in Larkspur. Ruth had a private visit with Luang Por, and I interpreted for them. I soon felt that whatever they were communicating, words were only mundane. The environment within that room was completely saturated with what I can only describe as a feeling of immense goodwill. I stood there in utter amazement, filled with tears of joy.

During Luang Por's 2014 US teaching schedule, I agreed to try my hand at helping Amdee interpret for him. During my first full day as interpreter at Millersylvania State Park in Washington, I experienced a very direct hit to the gut from Luang Por. I had arrived with a personal issue I was in heavy denial about. Just a month prior to that, I was visiting Ruth during a weekend, and out of the blue, she asked me about this same issue. Realizing I had been seen through, I spilled my guts to Ruth. She told me, “You have much to learn about this, dahling. You two connect in higher ways. Stay with it. Keep looking. Put Dhamma into it. Keep taking it higher.” At that time, I didn't really know what Ruth meant by “stay with it.”



As I was interpreting for Luang Por that day, someone asked a question; Luang Por used an example to answer. It was in that example that he demonstrated to me that he too saw through me. What he said, how he said it, the moment and the way he made eye contact with me, there was no denying that he had me pegged. The hit was so direct that I literally got the wind knocked out of me. It took all of my effort to continue interpreting like nothing had happened. Everything in me wanted to crumble and run out of that hall. All of my shit was effectively stirred up!

I continued to interpret for two full days during that retreat. When my interpreting duties were over, I devoted the rest of my time to “Staying with it. Looking at it. Putting Dhamma into it.” I began to see through myself in ways I had not been capable of before. In Luang Por’s presence, I was able to build upon the foundations of training Ruth had diligently instilled in me. I will always be grateful to Ruth Denison, my Dhamma mother, and to Luang Por Jamnian, my Dhamma father.

Sonya Pongsavas
La Verne, California



AT THE SEAT OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Happy birthday, dear Phra Ajahn Luang Por Jamnian:

It is not very often that you can meet a great master. Many years have passed since I had the great fortune to meet you for the first time. I guess they say everything ripens from past causes and so my meeting with Luang Por Jamnian is surely to have been the result of previous karma. How fortunate am I to have met you and continue to cross paths at the most sacred place on Earth!

I was born into a Buddhist family with a Tibetan Rinpoche as my father, and was quite accustomed to Buddhist ceremonies. I've had many opportunities to learn about Dharma and have had the great fortune to meet many great masters along the way who have confirmed my unwavering confidence in the Triple Gem. But it takes time to develop understanding of the Dharma and requires direct experience to really penetrate the truths, so when a master of the Dharma comes onto your path, the fixed nature of one's perceptions can begin to loosen and give way to more depth. As if gently pointing a stick in the right direction, masters are there as guides. But it is only through direct experience that one can ultimately begin the process of transformation.

It was twelve years ago when my father, Rinpoche, requested me to focus on inviting the Theravada Sangha for a prayer gathering under the sacred Bodhi Tree. It was an unusual and quite radical shift in my traditional upbringing, but I followed dutifully his sincere intention of wishing to preserve the firm foundations of the Dharma. Given how fragile these times are, he likened the Dharma to the dim light of a candle about to be blown out. Clearly, this was very important to him. Now, these living lineages which form an unbroken stream from the time of the Buddha need to be protected and encouraged to practice.

He told me clearly; "We are fortunate that of all the early Dharma traditions, the living lineages of two schools remain: Sarvastivadin, within the Vinaya of the Mahayana traditions; and Theravadin, vital today in the Sanghas of Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, India, Laos PDR, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam. It has

long been my dream that these streams of Sangha would return to Bodhgaya after an absence of seven hundred years, to bear witness to the Buddha's message of harmony and peace."

My particular meeting with Luang Por Jamnian took place at the Seat of Enlightenment in the early stages of bringing this intention to fruition. It was as if he had an unspoken understanding between the great aspiration that I was carrying in my heart and the seeds that were to be planted in bringing the Dharma back under the Bodhi Tree.

In meeting this great Venerable, I was immediately struck with the fact that he carried so many belongings, great weights, as a spiritual practice. I had to take a crash course in intuitive learning to understand the various streams of lineages within the Theravada.

Even though there were barriers because of language differences, there was an immediate attraction, as if I were pulled towards him like an electric magnet. In fact, he often used a magnet on his arm to show amazing tricks that always created an air of laughter and ease. After meeting him for the first time in Bodhgaya, my husband Richard and I found ourselves flying to Thailand to celebrate his birthday in Krabi with thousands of other monks and lay people. On the night of his birthday, I had the great honor to sit in front of him for hours and hours without an interpreter. The language was like a stream of energy, and I found myself completely absorbed in it. It was that evening that I fell very ill with a serious stomach problem and another of his senior disciples came to my aid by giving me an amulet to hold while I was sleeping. I realized that such pure energy could also be a source of great purification.

During the eight years that passed between Krabi and our most recent meeting in 2016, Luang Por Jamnian has attended the International Tipitaka Chanting Ceremony under the Bodhi Tree as a regular Dharma speaker every December 4th. In the ocean of great masters, there was always a radiant smile from him, an assurance that all was safe and protected. It became an annual tradition to request special prayers and blessings inviting the Devas to protect the sacred space which we were all to inhabit during the ceremony. I was in tune with his pure energy and had faith that he could link to these higher powers to clear any unforeseen obstacles. His generosity never stopped. He always had handfuls of gifts including sponsoring

a full day of food for the entire assembly of some 4,000 people. His generosity manifested a boundless source of energy for anyone who had the great circumstance to connect with him.

During his Dharma talks, he would present profound teachings with the aid of colorful descriptions and maps of consciousness. While I am one of the main organizers of these international gatherings, I often found myself more mystified by him as a person than by the teachings that he presented. However it was only this past year that something began to sink into my mind about them. He spoke about “abiding in pure awareness.”⁹ He described this in many ways—as if trying to bring us all back again and again to this main point. My understanding of pure awareness only really began when I recently fell ill with dengue fever and had to be hospitalized. I spent almost a week in bed, with a high fever going up to 103 degrees. Most of the time I was in a delirious state and all I could experience was “absolute pain.” I was fully absorbed in pain.

After coming home, I remembered how vividly he spoke about pain. I flashed to our last evening in Bodhgaya with Luang Por, Amdee, his translator, and his senior attendant, Phra Woody. I had many questions for this great teacher, but what I left with was again his emphasis on “abiding in pure awareness.” Amdee gave the example of when Luang Por Jamnian had a broken tooth while he was in Bodhgaya a few years ago. Nobody knew of this until half a year later when it became so infected during one of his retreats in the US, that someone took him to see a dentist. The dentist was amazed to see a broken tooth over six months old, and asked about how much pain he must have been in! It was only with my recent experience of being totally absorbed by pain that I began to understand what these teachings really meant.

Luang Por, I am forever grateful to you for your boundless joy and kindness! May the Dharma continue to flow through you like an ocean of wisdom to benefit all sentient beings! And, may those of us on the path take your teachings in a direct manner without any time to waste so that we too may be of service to others and ultimately

9. A translation of this Dhamma talk, *Abiding in Pure Awareness*, can be found on page 123 of this book



return back home to the pure awareness.

My husband, Richard Dixey and I, bow to you great master, three times, and over and over again. May we have the extraordinary circumstances to meet you again and again.

And, may your life force be the source for many to awaken to the teachings! Happy 80th Birthday!

Wangmo and Richard Dixey

Directors, Light of Buddhama Foundation International
Berkeley, California

A POWERFUL LESSON

During my last encounter with Luang Por Jamnian in Bodhgaya, I saw a living example of the Buddha's teaching: how we can separate the feeling in the body from feeling in the mind!

My friend and I went to pay respects to Luang Por Jamnian the night he and his entourage arrived in Bodhgaya. During that visit, he showed us his broken molar, which had just broken off from its root after being severely cracked for several months. Students who were traveling with him were all taken aback in surprise because they had no clue that he had been dealing with what must have been very intense tooth pain. They commented that he showed no sign of any physical difficulty throughout their entire nine-day journey together.

Luang Por Jamnian explained that he did not let anyone know of his condition because it would have meant that a great many people would have suffered over their concern for his physical wellbeing. He explained that the pain didn't bother him because his mind rested in pure awareness and stayed independent of the pain. When asked why he didn't have it removed by a dentist earlier, he replied that his schedule was all booked far in advance, and he didn't want to inconvenience anyone with cancellations and changes to plans.



It really struck me that Luang Por Jarnian was more concerned about worrying and inconveniencing the people around him than with his own physical pain—what compassion! But more than that, his example had made the Buddha’s teaching come alive so clearly to me.

I had been reading a book about Dependent Origination from Venerable Phra Brahmaganabhorn (P.A Payutto) translated by Robin Moore. On page 26, he wrote the words of the Buddha:

“Bhikkhus, when the uninstructed worldling is contacted by a painful feeling, he grieves and laments: he weeps beating his breast and becomes distraught. He feels two feelings—bodily feeling and mental feeling...”

The author continues explaining the reasons for that. And then on the middle of page 27, he continues writing what the Buddha had said:

“Bhikkhus, when the instructed noble disciple is contacted by painful feeling, he does not grieve or lament. He does not weep beating his breast and become distraught. He feels one feeling—a bodily feeling, not a mental feeling...”

Luang Por Jarnian had shown me that if you apply the Buddha’s teachings, it works! He could separate the feeling in the body from the feeling in the mind, which is the Buddha’s teaching in action. How powerful and moving this was to observe.

I could also see how I had met an “instructed noble disciple”. I am very fortunate to have had a chance to see a living disciple who really applies the Buddha’s teaching and is spreading metta and loving-kindness around the world!

Nelson Chamma

Director, Light of Buddharma Foundation International
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

ABIDING IN EMPTINESS

During Phra Ajahn Ngam Rattanayano's 2014 visit to the United States, he and his students stopped by to pay respects to Luang Por Jamnian Seelasetho. At the time, Luang Por Jamnian was teaching a meditation retreat organized by Mahasati Retreat Association, at Millersylvania State Park in Washington. During a walking meditation period, Phra Ajahn Ngam asked Luang Por Jamnian a brief Dhamma question before parting:

Phra Ajahn Ngam: "Luang Por, how do you maintain your *citta* (mind) such that even amid chaos and intense suffering, you can continue to teach the Dhamma as usual?"

Luang Por Jamnian: "I keep my mind in the awareness of the emptiness of emptiness. Whenever someone asks a question, I leave that emptiness to answer the question. My mind is in the habit of such abiding; therefore, I don't need to struggle with suffering. I witness sufferings but have no identification with them."

I took note of this most insightful conversation to inspire all of us to recollect and practice this Dhamma quality cultivated by Luang Por Jamnian. We can bring to mind and abide in these mental qualities to support our own practice anytime and anywhere for the end of suffering.

Recorded by Phra Vutthichai Vutthiyano



A PATH OF LOVE AND JOY

Four years spent in Thai forest monasteries as a young man—despite having had the good fortune of meeting and studying with several great meditation masters—had left me actually scared of reaching enlightenment. Junior monks like myself were treated by these legendary monastic elders quite sternly. This sternness caused me to associate Nibbana with ego death of a most stern and unpleasant variety—something to fear and recoil from.

Until I met Luang Por Jamnian. The first time I met him, he thoroughly intoxicated me and my fellow retreatants with loving-kindness for several days. Only after we were deliriously drunk on metta did he begin to introduce the *Lokuttara* vibration; that which lies beyond the beyond—which he steadily ramped up for the remaining days of the retreat, acculturating us to the stepping-off place for entry into the Stream.

He taught me that the path to enlightenment does indeed involve ego death, but that it is a process that is as painless as it is loving and full of joy. Thank you Luang Por Jamnian!

Nubby Shober

Acupuncturist and Intuitive Healer

Studied with Luang Por for nine years

Ordained in the Ajahn Chah lineage for four years.

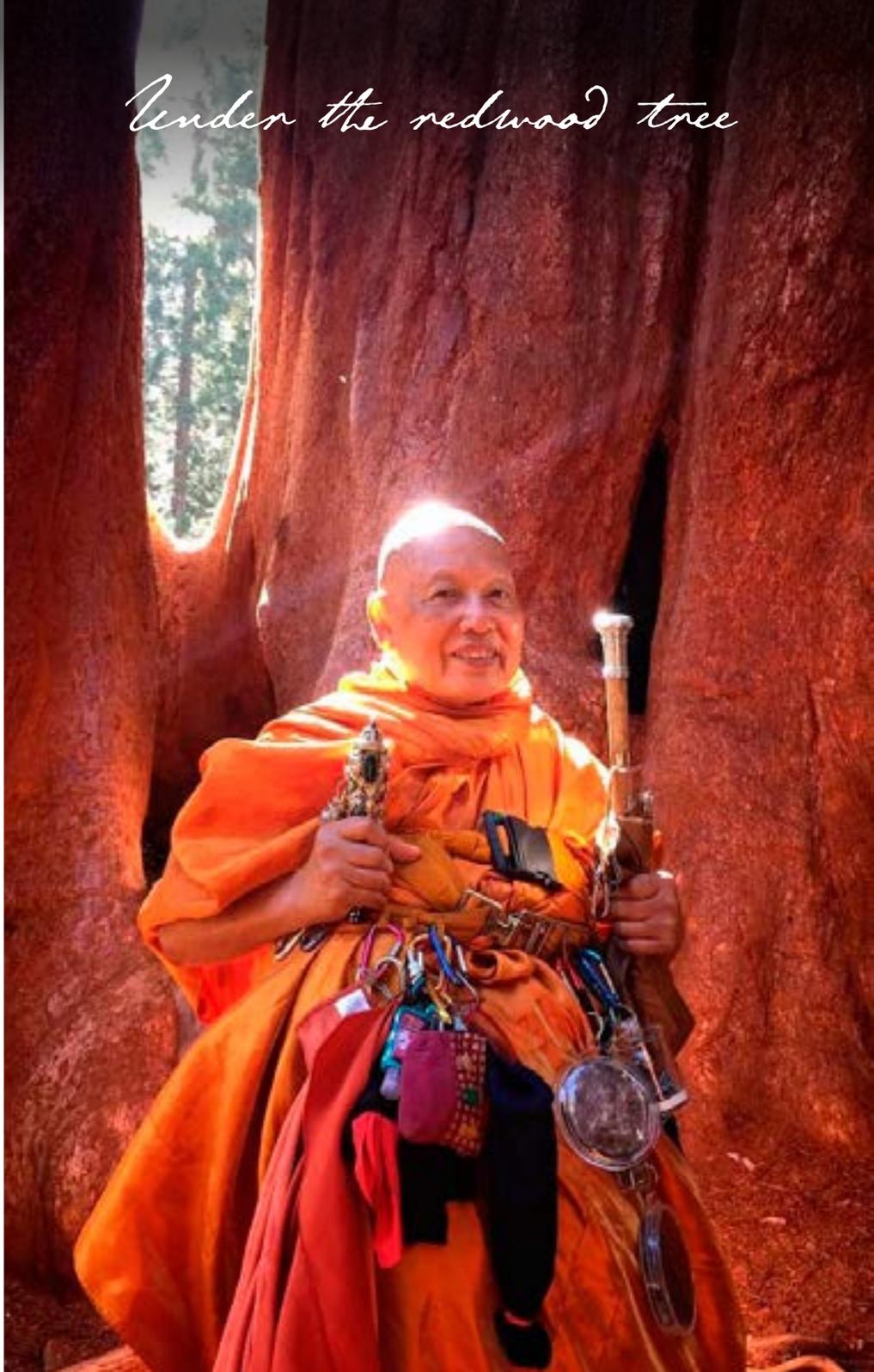
San Francisco Bay Area, California



At Mt Baldy Retreat



Under the redwood tree



FINDING THE MIDDLE WAY

My first experience with Ajahn Jamnian was a short afternoon talk nearly a decade ago. It was clear to me right away that Ajahn Jamnian was able to teach detailed Dhamma topics with great lightness. As I listened to him I found that I was able to approach very heavy topics of suffering, attraction, and aversion with an unexpected joy that I had not previously experienced in my encounters with Buddhism.

In 2014 during a break between jobs I had a chance to go on a week-long retreat in Washington with Ajahn Jamnian. The first three days were challenging. I had meditated, practiced qigong, and studied Buddhist philosophy as a lay person for the last twenty years, but I didn't know quite what to make of so much story telling. Though skeptical about religious stories, I gained insight by persevering.

By the fourth day I felt a deep sense of bliss while being present with Ajahn Jamnian's storytelling. I surprised myself by becoming eagerly interested in minute details such as the quantity of rice balls given to the Buddha after he was an ascetic. There was a quality of awareness of people and conversations in the moment that I had never experienced before. In this state of presence, Ajahn Jamnian answered my intricate and long-standing philosophical questions about the Dhamma and experiential characteristics of consciousness with great detail and patience.

At the end of the retreat I was curious about different types of suffering. To my surprise, Ajahn Jamnian gave us an awe-inspiring tour of the incredibly uncomfortable and ponderous forty- pound load of amulets that he wears each day. It was nearly impossible to believe that he could endure this discomfort for a day, much less every day. It struck me how great his equanimity was with this constant physical discomfort—and how challenged I was with my own. This shed a whole new light on the loving-kindness and patience he had just shown through the seven-day retreat.

In 2015 I went on a shorter retreat. On this long weekend my feeling of bliss was almost completely absent. I was confronted with great physical discomfort due to dry weather, very dry skin, and a disconcerting number of insects. The teaching on this retreat seemed

condensed and direct.

Over the previous year I had become more deeply engaged with western communities who are skeptical of any claim not supported by tangible physical evidence. My doubt of the intangible was at an all-time high. On the second day I was experiencing a disconcerting split between finding the practice highly meaningful, and finding a discussion of reincarnation really difficult to accept. I expressed my doubts to Ajahn Jamnian. He cut through my circling thoughts and met me exactly where I was, saying, “The intent to be free of suffering is the fastest path. It is more important than any theory of reincarnation. The tools are the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the Eight-Fold Noble Path, and the Seven Factors of Enlightenment.”

On the final day, Ajahn Jamnian gave a slideshow of some of his travels that everyone was enjoying. He happened upon a picture of himself standing by a redwood tree with sunlight glinting off his head. The discussion oscillated between describing the light as an aura, and describing it as a camera effect. My skepticism was in overdrive. Ajahn Jamnian oscillated back and forth in his description of it as an aura or as a lens flare for what must have been ten minutes—maybe as much as half an hour. The discussion seemed to go on forever as my mind generated massive waves of emotional discomfort and skepticism. In this extended moment I was able to observe my mental state with greater clarity than before. As I wrote in my journal, “On one side there is critique and doubt. They are useful, heavy, and dark. On the other side there is purpose, belief, and faith, which feel amazing and synchronistic, but can be ungrounded and unsustainable.”

My wife and I were halfway down the mountain from the retreat center after the retreat. I was relating my experience and perception of these mental states. Suddenly the significance dawned on both of us and we couldn't stop laughing. What could it be that could balance these two states of mind? How could they relate? With help from Ajahn Jamnian's skillful means, I had just discovered the middle way.

Noah Thorp
California, USA

REFLECTIONS ON THE CELEBRATION OF LUANG POR JAMNIAN'S 80TH BIRTHDAY 2016

I met Luang Por Jamnian on July 11, 1994, while attending an evening meditation. I was an architect, part of a team invited to compete in the design for the center's new meditation hall. I wanted to learn about the practice at the center. It happened to be the night Luang Por Jamnian was invited to speak, and his first trip to the United States. He was in the Bay Area, on a one-day stopover flying back to Thailand. Luang Por Jamnian's Dhamma talk that night left a strong impression. I remember it as a soundwave that went straight through me, it was music to my heart. I said to myself as I listened, "Now here is someone I can listen to." It was encouraging, just to know such a being existed, even if he was a meditation master from Thailand and I was a career woman in San Francisco.

Ten years before, while working in Taiwan, I had asked a friend to refer some good Dhamma books and they had dropped off a few volumes from Thailand. I kept these volumes, thin booklets, in a neat pile close to my bedside, and somehow never opened them to read. After hearing Luang Por Jamnian's talk, I went home, opened these volumes, and read through them, over the next days and weeks with great interest and enjoyment of the Dhamma. I had asked for the Dhamma books one year after my father passed away. I met Luang Por Jamnian one year after my mother's passing. The ten years between, I wandered and was unable to open the door to Dhamma. Yet when my Teacher arrived, the first thing he did for me was to open the path of Dhamma for me.

The following year, on a spring day, I found a flyer in my inbox at the office. It was from the meditation center, announcing Luang Por Jamnian would be teaching a series of day-longs in June 1995. I immediately walked over to administration and put in my vacation request for those days in June. How lucky I was to have joined the firm a few months before the retreat. Our firm did not win the competition, but Luang Por Jamnian's Dhamma came into my life.

Below is a passage from my journal dated August 1, 1995. It was written about two months after having retreated ten days and evenings with Luang Por Jamnian that first time in the Bay Area -

"I've traveled a path of magic and revelation since meeting Ajahn Jamnian. Sitting with him in meditation opened so many paths in my life. I was able to return to work a new being, 'reborn' and revitalized. Can I express the awakening which has been aroused? I returned to my life of trials able to maintain a new outlook—a disentanglement. I had left a heavy burden at the center—the burden of my anger and harshness. To look deep within my heart and hear Ajahn's words about the unkindness of anger and to know deeply that no human being should be subjected to it.

I had said to Luang Por Jamnian I felt anger and do not want to: how do I stop? He said "Watch the anger as it leaves you, see where it lands, that it never does any good where it lands. Then see that it inevitably returns and it never does any good where it lands." With the gift of his teaching, I no longer justified the anger I could not control. I had been telling myself that my anger was the result of the harsh realities that created me. With his teaching, I understood that no one should be subjected to my unkindness and that anger is always harmful. Knowing that others come to me for my skills, I was to help them in equanimity and avoid being demanding. I was to help others when I felt they have burdened me with their unknowing, by helping them to learn smaller tasks until they can.

Once, there was a situation in a group, where another seemed not to have behaved supportively and I had felt deeply pained. With time, and close to coming to terms with the situation, I had an opportunity to speak with Luang Por Jamnian and asked for his insight. He dove in to the point and said "The other just wants to help. Can you come up with what it takes to be done?" Not quite sure of myself, I said with commitment, "I would do my best." This conversation with him helped push me through to let go, be done. I have noticed, when I gather my courage to take the risk, and bring in the light of his wisdom, speaking with Luang Por Jamnian about what troubles me, a power comes in to help me through. The problem is no longer a problem."

I have now attended retreats with Luang Por Jamnian for over twenty years, whenever he comes to the West Coast. How fortunate I am. Over the years his Dhamma has been working on me non-stop with two qualities. One, like a lighthouse, always shining bright, holding a steady light by which I could navigate my way in life. Secondly, like the ocean wave against the shore, breaking down, dissolving the hardness and form of self, *atta*.

Over time, by attentively observing Luang Por Jamnian, his teachings, his wisdom and his *sila* (conduct) showed me the way to find and be at peace in my living. There was a time, when I found myself in what felt like a "den of vipers," a very challenging situation where "no one is a friend." I asked him what he recommended, "What do you do in such a situation?" He leaned closer, looked at me intently and said, "Find the thing that you really value, that is worthy, then let it be what guides you."

Observing him over the years, by the stories he told us, by his actions; whatever the situation before us, I am learning the great wisdom, to adhere to the greater good at stake—to review any situation or challenge and be guided by that which is the greater benefit. With people, we have beneficial and unbeneficial aspects. I am guided to orient my intentions, and support that which is beneficial in others.

Today, the person who came before Luang Por Jamnian, isolated, in self, with suffering and anger in her heart, knows how to attend to the peace of heart and mind, and is forever grateful to Luang Por Jamnian.

Viviane Chen

Palo Alto, California

A TREASURE CAPSULE OF WISDOM

Half a day of clarity, seven days of mental aversion. This was my first retreat experience with Luang Por Jamnian.

“What is this guy endlessly talking about? This has nothing to do with waking-up!” was what my mind said for much of that retreat.

Thankfully, the moment of clarity that he gave me was so touching that even as the mind began complaining later, the depth and profoundness of Luang Por’s Dhamma understanding was deeply etched in my being. Just to reflect on that moment, there is sheer awe, reverence, and gratitude.

Luang Por was talking about the trickiness of the egoic movement and how it can hide, misleading even the extremely seasoned and advanced practitioners. I knew that this message was received by something deep inside me. I don’t know if it’ll be relevant in this lifetime, or lifetimes ahead, but it’ll be a treasure capsule of a wisdom that will reveal itself when and if the need arises.

I have since attended a couple more retreats with Luang Por and the depth of his teaching and guidance have become a lot clearer. Wow wow wow. I look back now and think 'how did I miss this absolutely incredible teaching,' and how it was so lucky for me that something kept me coming back to Luang Por despite myself.

I am so incredibly grateful for Luang Por and his teachings. I bow at his feet in gratitude and reverence. Happy birthday Luang Por. I hope you are able to stay healthy and impact me and all your students for years to come.

Yo Kobayashi
Hawai’i, USA



TRANSCENDENT JOY

I first met Luang Por Jamnian in the summer of 2004 at a half-day program in Marin, California. I didn't know much about Theravada and had never met a Thai monk before, so I didn't realize how truly unique Luang Por is, even within his tradition.

He was in the middle of telling a story when he arrived at how, as a young boy, he had played a trick on his mother. Apparently she had wanted him to meditate, when he wanted to go outside and play. So he went into a meditation so deep, she wasn't able to get him to come out! The endearing smile on his face and his infectious melodic laughter as he recounted what his five-year-old self was thinking had us all laughing so hard, we were swept up with him in joy!

At the end of the session, he began chanting deep resonant sounds with several other monks that vibrated through my entire being. Everyone lined up to pass by him, receive a light misting of blessed water, a tap on the head with his colossal cluster of amulets, and a pouch with blessed objects in it. People said it was a very auspicious opportunity.

When it was my turn, I was lowering my head as others had. But at the last moment my eyes spontaneously raised and I found myself looking him squarely in the eyes. Oh, how to put that into words?!!—Love—joy welled up in me so strong, I didn't know such sublime love existed. Had someone not told me the rules of their traditions, I might have hugged him on the spot out of pure joy! And the otherworldliness in his eyes—I couldn't begin to fathom all he must know.

His presence, and the way he conveyed meaning beyond the surface of the words, left me feeling what a remarkable human being he is, and unshakable faith in him and his capacity to deliver the teachings at a very deep level. He was wise and loving beyond anything I could conceive of.

And still, it wasn't until I went on my first week-long retreat with him that I got to see just how perfected his Dhamma is. The retreat was held at a rustic facility in the northwestern rain forest of Olympia, Washington. It was cold and poured with rain almost non-stop, and

we were packed to the brim with lay people and monastics alike. Luang Por arrived for each session cheery and full of *joie de vivre*! He'd settle into a great big armchair at the front of the room, and leaning in on one arm, he'd say "He-llooooo" in English into the mic, flashing dazzling light from his eyes and a most beatific smile. Thus began the long sessions, sometimes three hours or more, weaving together Dhamma stories, his personal experience in life and practice, and the lives of those he had learned from.

I don't think it's possible to explain just how marvelous Luang Por's sense of comic timing is. He has a way of raising one eyebrow and lowering his voice into the mic at peak moments in a story that has even those of us who don't know Thai already laughing before it's been translated. At other times, he repeats certain stories elaborating on and on until half the room is slack-jawed and nodding off. It rained and rained. And he repeated and repeated, driving our *kilesas* from hiding.

His stories always have many layers of hidden meaning. And even beyond that is his ability to give what cannot be given in words. Yet that doesn't stop me from being hardheaded more often than I care to admit! It was usually about the time I'd impatiently start thinking, *what is his point?* that I'd catch myself. Why the attitude? And then when I actually got it, oh how humbling, and the profundity and the precision of his teaching! It was as if I was getting my own private instruction on a whole host of hidden confusions without ever fully realizing how confused I was.

On this retreat, he was driving at the meaning in the story of 'the little red panties'—his personal experience as a young monk realizing he himself had not yet given up attachment. Apparently one day, he inadvertently saw the red underwear of a girl who'd tipped her bike and almost fallen over. Though outwardly he behaved properly as a good monk should and turned away from the scene, inwardly, he was unable to shake the image of the glimpse he saw. He noticed that instead of concern for the girl's well-being arising in him, and running to assist her, instead his focus was consumed by red underwear.

Try as I might, I wasn't seeing how this applied to me. I searched myself—did I have hidden lust for men or beauty that I wasn't acknowledging? Not that I could see. The main desire for me in

recent years was my overwhelming love of animals, particularly my animals. But how was loving something and wanting to care for it like red underwear?

I mustered the courage to ask, “Luang Por, I’m not attached to sexuality or red underwear. I suffer the love of my animals—how can I let go of this suffering?” Without a moment’s hesitation, he shot back, “they are your little red underwear.”

*What?!—*Did he just compare my beautiful furry friends to red panties and lust? Some part of me was incredulous. But trusting him as I do, I knew my reaction was utter hooley. Without a doubt he would only say what I needed to hear, and know, to get free of the ignorance that kept me in that perpetual cycle of suffering.

It slowly dawned on me. I was acting like my behavior was loving, but it wasn’t at all. I refused to let go of them, and we both suffered from my clinging. My attachment dwarfed my ability to be present and do what was best for them—and I called that love? This teaching alone transformed so much about how I relate, not just with my animals, but the world. And there were many, many more



times on that retreat alone that he utterly transformed my view of the Dhamma and life.

Even when he is thousands of miles away, he still guides my life. I feel his presence and support in my heart and mind in practice. I also notice his literal words come to me when I need them most.

In preparation for this book, I was transcribing a lecture from 2008. There were many wonderful points of clarification, but the most important for me was right at the end. He was answering a question from a guy in the audience about how to know the difference between *lokuttara* (transcendent) and *lokiya* (worldly)—something I had heard before, but not really gotten. I'd asked him before about the sustained periods of joy-bliss I'd experienced after meeting him the first time, and he had said they were *lokiya*. But since the joy had arisen in me without a worldly reference, I was still confused. In the recording he explained that what made something worldly instead of transcendent was the thought/feeling *this is my joy, this is happening to me*.

Beloved Luang Por Jamnian—my dhamma-father and good fortune, may you grace us with your presence and precious Dhamma on this earth for many years to come. I am grateful beyond measure for how you have blessed my practice, my heart, and my life. Happy Birthday!!!

Colette Evans

Truth or Consequences, New Mexico

DHAMMA WISDOM

I am from Chiangmai, Thailand. I first met Luang Por Jamnian when I was nineteen years old and a first-year student at Songklanakarin University in Southern Thailand, during a field trip to Wat Tham Sua in Krabi. I received a Buddha amulet from Luang Por, which I kept with me at all times.

During summer vacations at home in Chiangmai, I earned income from opening a stall selling snacks and other sundries. I always remembered to bless my goods with Luang Por's amulet for good luck, and that seemed to help with my sales. Upon graduation, during my first job teaching in grade school in Buriram, of Northeastern Thailand, I felt protected and assured with Luang Por's amulet with me. However, one night, I went to bed without the amulet and had a terrifying feeling during my half-dream-half-awake state that someone was pulling my feet incessantly. I tried to chant and pray for protection, but to no avail, until I saw a lady in a traditional Thai outfit coming out of one of the house posts, standing with her arms akimbo as if she were reprimanding someone. I woke up and reached for Luang Por's amulet and felt safe. Nothing happened to me after that.

Several years have passed; I still keep Luang Por's amulet with me at all times, even in my car while driving, for I feel that his presence helps me overcome difficulty while driving. I feel that belief and faith are personal inclinations, but Luang Por's knowledge in the Buddhist Pali Canon and Dhamma wisdom is superior and transcends all barriers. His teachings illuminate the minds of those who apply them to bring happiness to their daily lives.

The salient features of Luang Por include:

1. His Dhamma and teachings appear to be exactly what the person or group needs to learn, as if he senses the inner struggle of the person seeking advice.
2. He is very experienced and highly accomplished in his meditative practices.
3. He utilizes his wisdom as an armor to protect himself, like a well-designed vehicle that takes him safely where he wants to go,

with built-in protective mechanisms. This attitude is reflected in the way he dresses in full awareness and protection. He stays centered in his own conviction and wisdom and does not waver by any pressure created by convention. Instead, he relies on his hard work, directly and indirectly, to accomplish his goal. He teaches us to rely on our own wisdom and practice in solving problems.

4. He teaches us to make discernment from personal experience rather than following other people's judgement.

Prejudice is like dirt in our eyes and water in our ears that prevent us from reaching the Dhamma. According to Luang Por, "Everything is good and well-intended." If such is the case, wash your eyes clean to experience Dhamma in the laws of nature. As for water in the ears, remove doubts through clear thinking to be free of any preconception or prejudice. Once removed, one can see clearly that all is good and well-intended, and everything that arises is Dhamma.

Supron Mookumla
Mill Valley, California



PARTING THE CLOUDS

Talk about the Five Aggregates might not be more than a jumble of names, ideas, concepts, and description, unless we are lucky enough to meet someone who can convey the actual experience of each *khanda* in ways that the practitioners can receive. Luang Por Jamnian shows us how to cut through the cycle of becoming at *rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*, and at *viññāna*⁽¹⁰⁾ in ways that can be understood and applied directly. He demonstrates how to work with this process at each of the *salāyatana*,⁽¹¹⁾ so that it is almost as if each of the sense doors falls off one-by-one. Some say his brightness is like the sun, but that would be missing the point. The gift of this practice is that we each become a star and learn how to connect skillfully with the vastness of the sky. We are left holding nothing and wanting only to point out this capacity in everyone.

Julia Harris
USA



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10. Materiality, feelings, memory/perception, mental formations, and consciousness.
 11. The six sense gates of the ear, eye, nose, tongue, body sensations, and the mind.

IN HONOR OF LUANG POR JAMNIAN

My father's favorite kind of joke is called a "shaggy-dog story." There are many versions, but they are always very long, full of absurdly specific details, and designed to hide a punchline that is a simple play on words. The punchline at the end would never be funny on its own. The joke is only funny because the listener's own mind is the real joke: as we listen to a shaggy-dog story, our thinking mind latches onto the many tiny details, working hard to figure out the complicated puzzle. Our minds thus engaged, we can't see the simple, obvious truth of the bad pun.

The first time I heard Luang Por Jamnian lecture for over an hour on obscure details of American political history, I was baffled. How does this relate to the Dhamma? Should I be taking notes? Will there be an exam? It wasn't until years later that I realized Luang Por uses a shaggy-dog approach in his teachings, intentionally using irrelevant details to keep our thinking minds occupied while he leads our deeper minds into the Dhamma. While his American sangha is very diverse, most of us are highly educated and analytical. Our thinking minds are our biggest obstacles as we try to grasp the Dhamma.

Perhaps a better description of Luang Por's teaching approach is "misdirection." When we go to a professional magic show, we



know the magician is creating an illusion, and many of us work hard to figure out the trick. The magician's task is to take advantage of the weaknesses of our grasping, thinking minds so that we focus on whatever he wants us to focus on. Pay attention to this beautiful woman here! Observe these red flowers that have appeared from nowhere! Thus misdirected, the magician does his real work.

Luang Por has a famous story about a time he saw a beautiful woman fall off her motor scooter and caught a glimpse of her red panties. He tells it in great detail, the focus always on the red panties, and the last time he experienced the phenomenon of rising lust. He has another, far more disturbing, story about an undertaker who falls in love with the corpse of a beautiful young woman, and is caught having sex with her dead body. I was shocked the first time I heard it, particularly from a monk and accomplished Dhamma teacher like Luang Por. How could he be telling us a story about a topic as revolting as necrophilia? How is this relevant to the Dhamma?

Later, still puzzled and feeling a bit sick to my stomach, it was time for the evening meal. For the eight precepts students, there was a five-gallon container of sherbet, in brilliant orange, yellow, red, and green colors. Suddenly an immense and uncontrollable craving came over me: I *must* have a *huge* bowl of sherbet *right now!* I looked at the sherbet with greed, but then noticed some things: I was not hungry. The sugar would give me a headache. The brilliant colors of the sherbet were all made from semi-toxic chemical dyes. This craving for the sherbet I was experiencing was no different than the craving the undertaker had for the beautiful dead body.

In Luang Por's unusual, shocking, or seemingly rambling Dhamma teachings, it is often not the red panties or the necrophiliac that is the main subject; it is the listeners' own minds. His masterful manipulation of my overdeveloped thinking mind has opened me to the Dhamma in ways that no other teacher has. By playing the role of trickster, Luang Por is a true magician, misdirecting my obstacle mind so I can find the Middle Way. For that, I am deeply grateful.

Jeffrey Tumlin
San Francisco, California

FINDING MY TEACHER AT LAST

I'm not sure when I first saw suffering. I was lucky enough to have a roof over my head, and enough food to eat. The basics were covered, and even more so. The town I grew up in had a large world-renowned university in its midst. We had a lovely view out our living room window, with the Bay spread out below. Maybe it was hearing about what my parents went through when they grew up: the prejudice they experienced, the hardships they faced. And I could tell at times they still carried those memories with them. You could see it in their faces, and how it burdened them. Maybe it was hearing the yelling down the street, or when one of our neighbors, a professor, who taught at the world-renowned university, beat his wife, and the cops were called.

And these were not the only families that suffered. Other families, my friend's families, who also had more than enough food to eat, and were so-called well-educated, were going through their own personal struggles. Not wife-beating perhaps, but several of their parents had affairs, or a prescription drug problem.

In any case, I learned that just because you had enough money, and a good education, it did not mean you were necessarily happy. So I wondered what it was all about, this thing called life. What did it mean? Why weren't people happier? Why didn't they treat each other better? Why was there so much strife in the world? Why was there war? There must be another way, a different way.

And so I searched. And searched more. Read about different practices, different religions. Tried many different things, mostly what you would call New Age. And though I got some benefit from some of those things, they would only go so far. Or the teacher would go down in flames. Like the last one, a New-Age practitioner, a gifted energy worker, but who had a temper like you wouldn't believe. So after a particularly nasty explosion, I left.

At that point, I was pretty tired. This search had turned into many years. I thought maybe I was wasting my time. I decided to take a break—I was worn out. But it so happened that a friend of mine called me one day. "Hey, there's a Buddhist monk I think you would like. He is a Thai Forest monk." Thai Forest monk? Well, that sounded

appealing. Forest, coolness. Something which had not quite given up inside me, some little ember flared a little, and I decided to go check this monk out. She told me his name was Ajahn Jamnian.

When I arrived at the place, I saw a monk sitting under a tree, and he looked so supremely happy and clear. There was an aliveness to him, but a sense of peace as well. I was immediately intrigued and thought, "Wow this is more like it." I had seen a few other Buddhist teachers but didn't feel particularly drawn to any of them. This was different. And then I found out this wasn't even Ajahn Jamnian. This was one of his monks. Wow. I couldn't believe it. Hope arose in me.

I went into the meditation hall. And waited.

A stir went up from the back of the room, and I turned to look. A supremely bright-looking individual came walking up the aisle in orange robes. How can I describe him, he just looked so... just filled with goodwill. He radiated brightness and again I saw the same alive quality as the monk outside. He beamed something, which I can only describe as goodness. The energy changed. People sitting around me relaxed, but also looked more energized. I felt the same. This was Ajahn Jamnian.

That day was a day I will never forget. It was a culmination of my search for a teacher. It was the start of my dedication to the path of the Dhamma. In fact, when I write this, I have tears of gratitude. I cannot express how grateful I am to have met someone who so embodies the Buddha's teachings, and how those teachings have helped me. I saw that day the Buddha's teachings were not dry, but full of life and promise.

Ajahn Jamnian is probably the most equanimous person I have ever met. He is also the smartest, most happy, and most wise being, too. The patience he has shown everyone, including me, and his kindness, is awe inspiring. I have observed many people tug for his attention, and he is always kind, always wise.

Later, I appreciated Ajahn Jamnian even more, when I learned what he went through as a child. And how he overcame many obstacles, eventually becoming a monk, and dedicated his life to the Triple Gem.

But this great teacher always encourages us to keep practicing. He tells us we can make it too. When I first heard this, I thought, "I don't know," I mean, that is Ajahn Jamnian. And I am me, with my abundant *kilesas* and shortcomings. But over the years, with his encouragement to keep at it, and his monks also saying the same, I practice. And bit-by-bit as I practice the teachings of the Buddha, I see more often the suffering, the rise and fall, and the cessation of suffering. And I realize, my goodness, this really works.

Luang Por, on this day, let me say thank you. Let me keep practicing to honor your time and efforts to teach us. Thank you for being the spiritual lifeline for me when I needed it most. I saw the suffering, and now with your teachings of the Buddha, I begin to see there really is a way out of suffering. I will keep at it, Luang Por. And hopefully one day, bit-by-bit, I can realize it.

I bow with gratitude, with a deep appreciation for you, your monks, and the Triple Gem.

Luang Por Jamnian Student
Oregon, USA



FINDING A RUDDER

The first day of the retreat, Luang Por explained the stages of enlightenment in detail, and I realized that he was giving us a map—succinct directions on how to realize the path to Nibbana. Wow! I was awestruck that he was just offering it freely: the wisdom from his own direct experience, detailed accounts of his own key practice insights, stories from the *Tipitaka* and the many masters he had encountered, as well as experiential lessons to make the Dhamma come alive for us. A tremendous feeling of gratitude, and a deep sense of responsibility were seeded at that retreat, which just keep growing. The Buddha provided a map, Luang Por Jamnian transmitted it to us, and we just have to follow the instructions.

By the power of the truth of the
Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha,
May any doubt in my ability to apply the teachings
fall away by the recollection of this memory.

One teaching of Luang Por's is illustrated in a diagram¹² where all versions of desire are on one side, and aversion on the other, from extreme, to very subtle, to non-existent. As one progresses down the path, he provided details of the behavior one has to let go of to reach the various levels in the stream.

The work of staying in the middle, of not getting caught by liking and disliking, was like driving a car down the middle of the road. This was the path. It had never seemed so accessible, so simple, so clear. I thought, "I can do this!"

By the power of the truth of the
Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha,
May any doubt in my ability to apply the teachings
fall away by the recollection of this memory.

We just have to follow the instructions. They aren't even that

12. A version of this diagram is included on page 122 of this book

difficult. There's only one wee problem: resistance. Where is that coming from? So I then learned from Luang Por to examine the resistance to following the directions. Is it constant? *Of course not. Sometimes I'm clear and focused on the goal. Ah-ha, keep remembering that!* What is causing the need to control? *Name and form, aeons of habit.* Is there a self in the body or mind? *Just blood and guts, feelings of all varieties, memories of the past, persistent meaning-making, awareness of the sensory onslaught. In short, an unholy mess.* What am I clinging to anyway? *Self-View, the insistence that this is all me and mine.*

What is real? Insight often reveals things to be 180 degrees from my mundane perspective. How can I trust my ordinary, thinking mind when I have seen this?

Luang Por just says I haven't finished cutting through. He told a story over and over again about trying to saw through a piece of wood, but abandoning it for a new piece and starting again.

Twenty years ago I was clinging to pleasure as a way of coping with the uncertainty of life, and I thought that was the way to bring happiness. I lived in a beautiful house, in a pleasant neighborhood on the edge of open space. I was a psychotherapist, full of compassion, wanting to be effective and contribute to the world. I practiced the art of relationship and taught direct, and clear, communication. I was a leader.

I'm still clinging to pleasure, and trying to control due to aversion, but in a much less pervasive way. What's more, I see it, and the futility due to impermanence. I have lived in a monastery in Southern California most of the past six years, negotiating the up-ending experience of being conditioned as an American, and living in the midst of Thai Monasticism and Thai culture. I often refer to it as learning to stand on my head. The relationships I have are of a different nature, people much less often seek out help, so I see now how being the helper reinforced my self-view. I'm trying to learn the art of indirect communication, slowly learning to appreciate the wisdom of subtle interaction that does not demand anything, just presence, and a willingness to follow ... without resistance.

I had a dream a year ago that pretty much captures where I am. I am climbing a tall ladder, about two stories tall, 16 rungs. I'm a couple

of rungs from the top and can see all the rungs clearly. I know them, they are visible. But at the very top of the side rails a section of the ladder is not visible, so I cannot see how it connects with the next level.

Below me are two monks poking me with long poles, as if to say “keep going, keep going.” I’m hesitant, looking down, then up. It is unpleasant, and it feels unsafe, but I have to keep going. I see some people above on the next level and wish they’d give me a hand, but I also know it is my task, and mine alone.

Thank You Luang Por

Without your example, instructions, encouragement, and yes, poking, I’d still be adrift, a boat without a rudder, without the understanding that “I” too can make it to the other shore.

Thank You for being the real deal and teaching us.

*By the power of the truth of your teachings,
May I persevere to completion, the only way I can truly repay
my debt to you for bringing me the gift of the Dhamma.*

Judith Levin
Southern California, USA



AN UNBOUNDED HEART

My inspiration to undertake this spiritual quest was forged in a firm yet ineffable conviction that for me, life's highest actualization lay in the attainment of a certain state and attitude of being. As far back as I can remember, the picture of this state in my heart was an important motivation for me: bright-eyed awakens rooted in clarity of understanding, suffused with compassion, and transcending suffering through its own deep acceptance. I imagined this state as timeless and ever within each person's grasp... but elusive, and running counter to our societal and innate conditionings.

As a teenager I explored different ways of training my mind in hopes that I could bring myself nearer to this goal. Much of what I tried didn't help, and I started to see that without some guidance from someone who understood my journey and what I was seeking, I could spend a lot of time playing tricks with my mind and chasing dead ends.

Through happy circumstance, I became exposed to meditation by a Thai friend and mentor. I traveled East looking for answers, and over the years made time alongside my busy tech-job time for monasteries and meditation centers, retreats, reading, and an established twice-daily sitting practice. Over time my practice spanned thousands of hours of cross-legged sitting practice. There I experienced first-hand the stickiness of mental conditioning, and how, unless one walked a perfect inner line, one could establish behavioral patterns that would lead in unfruitful directions.

When I met Luang Por Jamnian, I had a diligent and consistent meditation practice. However, it had come to feel stagnant: I would find myself running in circles working to break the same mental cycles. Luang Por, with his brilliant smile, indefatigable alertness, and radiant loving-kindness, opened up fresh new possibilities for me. His wise and penetrating words invited a renewed spirit of investigation. His teachings expounded upon aspects of the Dhamma that I was previously unfamiliar with. I found it particularly helpful, for example, to hear Luang Por's teachings about the mental qualities and attitude coincident with respective levels of noble attainment. These helped

me to evaluate and steer my own mental frequencies.

I have now known Luang Por for more than ten years. During that time, I have had the fortune to participate in his teachings, travel with him as his attendant, and accompany him on monastery and house visits. During this time, I have been marked by his unstinting generosity, his smiling acceptance, radiant love, and unbounded heart. He engages wholly with each moment without any judgment or expectation, and never once have I heard him asking for even the slightest thing for himself, nor detected the smallest vestige of preference.

Luang Por does not merely teach, he trains: tirelessly and cleverly, skillfully and with endless patience. For many years I approached the Dhamma intellectually: listening in order to accumulate knowledge, rather than setting about to apply the teachings the moment I heard them. I was a Dhamma squirrel. Something in Luang Por Jamnian's teaching bypasses that inner squirrel and calls upon one to practice *now*. Once I developed the skill of active listening, I discovered that I could progress much better: practicing as I listened, and no longer just saving what I heard into a mental filing cabinet for some future time. This shift was freeing and exhilarating.

Another important shift in the way I learned was the experience that Luang Por's *being* is as much a teaching as anything that he has to say. I found that the more I tuned in to how he carried himself and responded to situations, the more I was able to use his example as an accelerant. Doing this, I developed an even greater appreciation of his training and self discipline. I became convinced that his entire being, moment to moment, abided in precisely the states that I had been seeking to develop. Stories about his own development and childhood provide additional pointers. The crafty, creative, playful five-year-old "Jamnian" who he describes in his stories (which, by the way, is still very much alive inside his body as it approaches eighty years of age!) tells of the importance of applying all of one's creative efforts in investigating and developing one's heart and mind. This is an important lesson, and one that has brought a greater sense of aliveness to my practice.

Three principles from his teaching have affected my own heart: first, letting go of preferences; after all, these are often arbitrary as well as selfish. Preference gives desire and aversion (also known as

“trouble”) ground on which to grow. Second, filling the mind with positivity (love, compassion, forgiveness, understanding) as a basis for working with aversion and attachment. It is sometimes easier to uplift the mind and then let go, than to let go of heavier mental states directly. Third, lifting up attention, such that the activities of the mind become known as they occur. From this vantage point one sets about the ruthless task of ego sacrifice: letting go of desire and aversion the instant we detect them, letting the mind return to a balanced state.

Luang Por is an inspiration and reflection of a well-progressed inner journey, and a living example of what is possible.

I am grateful to Luang Por for his generous training, and for being the embodiment of the path that he teaches. I wish him many more years of good health in which to continue his work: that he may touch many others as he has touched me.

Philip Rathle

San Mateo, California.



METTA BUDDHO

Happy Birthday Luang Por Jamnian!

I have sat with many teachers over many years. Each time it was like receiving a new piece of a giant puzzle. Luang Por Jamnian's teachings assembled the puzzle for me into one coherent practice. "Metta Buddho" is a real letting go, with some clarity and joy. In my study of Buddhism, he also showed me how to do walking meditation with concentration and openness. I am forever thankful for his kindness. With bows,

Brenda Sherburn LaBelle
Fairfax, California



A POWERFUL MOMENT OF CLARITY

I first met Luang Por Jamnian at Angela Center. It was a twelve-day retreat and I spent much of it in silence so that I could focus on my process more easily. Luang Por does not necessarily encourage silence, because he emphasizes that you should be able to follow the Middle Way in each moment, no matter what you are doing. But for me it was useful to stay in silence because I was less distracted by other people and by my own mind. It allowed me to stay calm and see what was happening in my mind more easily. I also noticed that when I interact with others, I get pulled out of a clear state—getting upset or excited about whatever I am talking about.

For the first few days, every time I entered the room we were gathering in, I would fall asleep. I'm not really sure why, but I think it has something to do with the fact that Luang Por is so clear, that coming into contact with his presence is immensely cleansing, and this cleansing process can knock you out. I've also thought about the stories of *Māra*, who comes to distract anyone who is getting close to clarity. *Māra* will come to tempt that person with many different states such as sloth and torpor. I was definitely still far away from real clarity, but I think my sleepiness had some relation to this idea.

I was in immense physical pain for much of the retreat due to the chronic pain I'd been battling the past few years. Part of my interest in seeking out Luang Por was part of my overall recovery, which I saw as deeply related to my mental state. Early on in the retreat, I had a private interview with Luang Por. I told him a little bit about my pain and asked about his early days as a healer. He brushed it off, saying he doesn't do that anymore. Yet I remember that after my private interview with him, I went back to my room and got in bed, where I shook uncontrollably for about an hour. Again, I can't really explain what happened, but I assume that Luang Por gave me some sort of healing. It may not have been intentional, but rather an alchemical response from being in the presence of his clarity. When I got up, the majority of my pain was gone. And I no longer fell asleep in his presence. Every once in a while I would start to have pain, and it seemed as though Luang Por would acknowledge me in some subtle way, maybe a nod or a glance, after which my pain would disappear

again. I did not question the fact that Luang Por was responsible for this remarkable turnaround, because I have met many incredible healers and believe in their existence.

Later, I got the opportunity to ask Luang Por what he had done. "I thought you said you no longer heal people?" I asked. His response was something to the effect of "It's true, I do not focus on healing, but it is impossible for me not to help you. When I see pain, I can't stop myself from helping."

It was also very hard to ask questions on that retreat. Everyone in attendance was very eager to ask questions, so it took a long time to get a question answered. I felt like I had to wait several days to ask each question that would come to mind. Being forced to wait to ask my questions had a profound effect on me. I started to see the various *kilesas* in my questions. I was asking questions either to illustrate that I understood something (pride and conceit), or, to be acknowledged in some way because I wanted attention. I was confused, and my question was a means of getting reassurance. Slowly, one by one, I could see into my questions and the *kilesa* that muddled them. One by one my questions dissolved. Because I could see their underlying motivation, I did not ask them. It was particularly interesting because I suffer from great self-doubt. I like to ask questions. It was very illuminating to see another aspect to my desire to ask questions, and my decision not to ask them.

Towards the end of the retreat, we all got very excited and euphoric. I started to speak to people again. But every time I opened my mouth I could see unclean motivations in what I would say. So much ego and pride was contained in everything I wanted to say. It became hard to talk to people because I was truly disgusted by everything that came out of my mouth. Everything was motivated by ego/self.

When I got a chance, I asked Luang Por how to be in the world without having ego. I really couldn't comprehend how to take any action because every word, question, and action seemed so laden with pride, ego, or conceit. He told me to "just stop it." I was quite taken aback by this answer, which seemed woefully inadequate. At first it was difficult to understand, but it later registered that *every moment is simply a choice*. If you see clearly in each moment, you can

stop. I can't say I've managed to stop, but it was a very humbling period of time. I had great insight into the fact that most of my actions, conversations, and questions are entangled with self-view, *kilesas*, and ego. I had a brilliant period of being completely disgusted by this tendency.

Recognizing Non-Self: Toward the end of the week, I felt very clearly that there was no self. I can't remember the question I asked Luang Por, but it had something to do with not being able to find the self. He immediately invited me to come sit at the base of his feet, and proceeded to lecture. As he spoke he talked about not being our minds, emotions, body etc. Each time, he would pause and ask me, "can you find the self now?" And each time I could clearly see that I was not the body, mind, emotions, memories, etc. It was a beautiful teaching that I will always remember.

Following The Middle Way: For several weeks after the retreat, it felt very easy to follow the Middle Way. I distinctly remember being with a group of recent graduates from a school program I attended. Everyone was chatting about their various anxieties about what to do next, how to get clients, etc. Normally, I would be very triggered by this type of conversation. But I could literally watch their words falling off my back. I had the image of water falling off a duck's back. Nothing stuck to me. I could be surrounded by people in anxiety, anger, upset—things that would normally pull me in, and instead stay completely clear and unaffected. I was not pulled in either direction. In this way, I was able to stay in the Middle Way. I could stay completely neutral, unaffected by other people. I remained clear during their confusion. It's been a lesson that I haven't been able to sustain at all times, but it was a powerful moment in time that I try to remember and practice regularly.

Sarah Kowalski

Student since 2005

Writer, personal coach, former attorney, and single mother
Oakland, California

UNREMITTING COMPASSION

What drew me to Luang Por Jamnian was that I wanted to know that it was possible. I wanted to know that full, complete, and unadulterated enlightenment or awakening was indeed possible. Something in me deeply desired to meet someone, a real living human, who had done it, who could show me it was indeed possible. Luang Por Jamnian was that for me.

I had heard stories about him and had learned about Luang Por's friendship with Ruth Denison, a Dhamma teacher who passed away before I could meet her in person. I was feeling the need to actually meet a living master, but none could be found. Then, through the encouragement of a new friend and a fellow meditator (as well as some synchronistic events!) I decided to commit to the one week retreat I had heard about online with Luang Por in Olympia, Washington. Before signing up for the retreat, my mind flipped and I was having last minute doubts like, "Well I don't really *need* to see a teacher. I could find this Truth myself. And it is far away..." I was on the fence about the retreat for a couple days, until two friends in the Dhamma encouraged me to take advantage of this rare and precious opportunity. I committed and it turned out to be one of the best decisions of my life.

Luang Por is teaching me so much. One of the ways he resonates with me personally is in the style of his teaching. One of the first things his dedicated monastic disciple Phra Woody said, once we got to the retreat, was to *feel* the teachings, not just think about them. This resonated with me because Dhamma is something I like to listen to with my whole body, not just the thinking mind. In other words, feeling it, like music.

This is an important part of Dhamma practice that isn't always talked about: how to listen to Dhamma. It's a kind of learning, and the analytical thinking mind is definitely there to some degree, but unlike academic learning, it sort of takes a secondary importance when you're listening to Dhamma. It's most important to feel with your body what's being said. This message and reminder at the beginning of the retreat was much welcomed.

Luang Por also has other aspects of his teaching style that really fit well with me and my personality. He doesn't force you to do anything. He doesn't over-emphasize technique, and he let's you find it for yourself. In other words, he trusts you. He trusts you and the more than 13.7 billion years of wisdom that is in every cell of your body. He trusts your essence. He doesn't force or impose. Essentially he is like how Lao Tse says in the *Tao Te Ching* "the Master Teaches without teaching."

Through the power of the Dhamma, Luang Por let me know that it's okay to be wrong. It's okay to make mistakes. I don't need to be right all the time, even about how to practice the Dhamma. For me, someone who has always been obsessively goal-oriented and high-achieving in everything I do, like academics and athletics, this is like taking a big dip in the ocean of forgiveness. It is relief unlike anything else. The deeper I go into it, the more this message heals and frees me from my own bondage, my own prison.

In fact, there are not enough words in all of the human languages to really describe Luang Por Jamnian or what he means to me as a teacher. The following will be a shallow and poor attempt to reflect this Truth.

If I stand anywhere now, or succeed in anything in the future, it will only be because of this Giant. Why is this so? Because Luang Por Jamnian is the embodiment of the Dhamma. He is the embodiment of Love, Power, and Wisdom. As a human, and as a teacher, he represents your deepest potential. He is your icon, your hope, dream, and deepest fear. Today I am now, more than ever before, less fearful of my mind's made-up mental fictions, the demons I've created for myself in the dark. I'm less afraid of not being accepted by others, less afraid of being wrong, and ultimately less afraid of death itself.

However, part of me might still quake somewhere inside if Luang Por walked into the room right now. Why is this so? If you take him as your teacher, he will show you your darkest night. He will bring out all of the *kilesas* and garbage in your mind stream. And he will eat them with unremitting compassion. I think this is why some people don't understand him or don't like him. He is a threat. He is a threat to everything you hold dear, everything you cling to. Truly liberated beings are a threat to normal society. They're a threat to

the mainstream way of believing in ridiculous and harmful thoughts, and worse, acting on them. They're a threat to conventions and constipated social constrictions. A threat to the deadening wheel of samsara we are all a part of. And yet, with the tenderness of a rose petal or a newborn baby's smile, he is there for you. The Dhamma is there for you. It holds you dear as your perfect mother would. The Dhamma knows your deepest secrets and holds you in forgiving understanding while it all seeps out of you. This happens naturally when you're around Luang Por or any Truly Free Being. The degree of purity that is inherent in the freest human experience is so intense and bright that it cannot be held on to. That is why it's called the Middle. It's a paradox. Luang Por Jamnian is a walking paradox in the most divine sense. One moment personable compassion, another moment impersonal wisdom. Who knows what he will do or how life will go next?

All we can know is gratitude for the opportunity to practice and live. All I can know is gratitude for Luang Por Jamnian.

Michael Hui
California, USA



HOW TO BE FREE

How to be free from

The importance of me

For awareness and creation

To simply be



Thanks for all your efforts and work,

Vicki Forester
Encinitas, California



KEEPING IN THE MIDDLE WAY

Luang Por Jamnian came into my life in May 1997 when I first attended a teaching he gave in Marin County, California. At the enthusiastic encouragement of a dear friend, I went to hear him. When I walked into the meditation hall where he sat, I walked into a room suffused with an incredible atmosphere of golden light and joy. In front was a Thai monk dressed in robes, radiating loving-kindness to everyone there.

Infused with a sense of well-being and gladness, I took my seat to listen to his teachings, and to my amazement learned that the Buddha had described the intricate processes and workings of the mind over 2,500 years before the advent of modern Western psychology. Incredible! Here was a teacher who could show me a way to navigate the world of suffering with its 10,000 manifestations more skillfully! This was definitely for me! Since that time, I have happily, devotedly and steadfastly attended Luang Por Jamnian's West Coast talks in the USA.

From the very beginning, I took meticulous notes of his talks so as not to miss any nuanced or pith teaching that might prove to be a crucial bit I needed to understand about an important facet of Buddhist practice. Since I could not keep up with the fast pace of his talks, I sneaked a small tape recorder into the hall and started taping him secretly. But soon, I was discovered. To my amazement, I was not reprimanded, but instead was encouraged to continue. Emboldened, I zipped the recorder I had "concealed" behind the person seated before me and placed it directly, but respectfully, in front of Luang Por. Thus began my on-going custom of recording his talks that I attend, to this day.

In 2005, a discussion slowly developed about the possibility of uploading some of his teachings to the Internet. Of all the hours of recordings I taped, the question was which one should be the first to go up. Oh! What to do? What to do? What to do? Then I recalled the talk Luang Por just gave about "The Middle Way, Keeping the Mind in

the Middle"⁽¹³⁾ because it really inspired me, and because it received such enthusiastic praises from those who heard it.

In this talk, Luang Por said he ordained when he was twenty years old and after seven years of living as a monk, he realized he was not making much progress in his meditative practice and that he did not really understand what the Middle Path was. He thought about this deeply and recalled the story of the Buddha visiting a group of monks practicing meditation along a riverbank but not experiencing much success. The Buddha told them Nibbana was like a huge, vast ocean and they were like logs floating down the river trying to get there. Instead, they drifted onto the brambles and snags along its banks and got stuck. He told them the "inner" bank is one of the objects of sight, sound, scent, taste, sensation, or thought that enters through one of the six sense doors (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin, mind); the "outer" bank is their reaction to it in the form of "Liking" or "Disliking" and their mental proliferations about it. For lifetimes after countless lifetimes, the Buddha told them, they got caught on one bank or the other, unable to free themselves from the world of suffering. So, he instructed them to watch their mind throughout the night and to keep it from getting ensnared on either side. When the Buddha returned the next morning, he found they all did so well, they had each become a *Sotāpanna* and had reached the first level of enlightenment.

Upon recollecting this story, Luang Por Jamnian said he immediately resolved to do this practice, started contemplating the body, and quickly understood what the Buddha was teaching. We neither see craving and aversion as the supreme root cause of our suffering, nor do we see it is the nature of the mind to habitually and repeatedly react to an object by "liking" or "disliking" it.

So, Luang Por asked himself what would keep the mind from getting snagged on either river bank. With *sati* (mindfulness), he saw that awareness is able to see what is happening the moment it occurs, but then it is quickly sidetracked by other thoughts. On the other hand, with *mahasati* (great mindfulness), awareness is able to

13. To listen to the entire talk, "The Middle Way, Keeping the Mind in the Middle," please go to http://dharmafeed.org/talks/audio_player/7/1986.html or tinyurl.com/zkwvjxl

sustain mindfulness for a much, much longer period of time and keep the mind from drifting onto either side of the river. Thus, it can arrive at deeply important insights. Using a modern analogy, Luang Por said with *mahasati*, you can steer the car down the road, and if it drifts away, you can steer it back.

Ever since he had this profound understanding and realization, Luang Por said he has been able to keep his mind in the middle of the road, in the Middle Way, by attentively watching it moment by moment by moment and keeping it from getting caught up with “liking” or “disliking.” Thus, he has been able to steer clear of the dangers and defilements that usually taint the lives of people.

Luang Por Jamnian’s teachings are like ripples in my life. A teaching bubbles up and I come to a deeper, visceral understanding of it. While contemplating *dukkhā*, I recalled him saying the *Brahma vihāras* (divine abodes) of *mettā*, *karuṇā*, *muditā* and *upekkhā* (loving-kindness, compassion, altruistic joy, and equanimity) must exist or reside within us in equal measures. With a sudden, palpable jolt of realization, I understood the absolute rightness of this teaching and that being in this place was one of the glorious fruits of the Practice.

Luang Por, Thank You! Thank You! Thank You! Your brilliant teachings continue to help me navigate the choppy waters of life with greater skill!

Happy 80th Birthday!

Bowing Three Times,

Darlene
An Old Student
California, USA



Navigate the waters



LOVING-KINDNESS, THE PILLAR OF THE WORLD

I continued to have pain and disability in my left knee several months after an operation. Living in Mill Valley, CA, one of my pleasures was to walk the path by the estuary at the end of the day. What had been a routine of exercise, relaxation, and pleasure had become one of pain and despair. Each day I hoped to be able to walk a further distance, but I could make no more than about one hundred yards and then sit on a welcome and merciful bench, and this afternoon was no different. I thought I would go to hear a Dhamma talk on Monday evening to take my mind off of this frustration and disability.

That Monday there was a special guest, a monk from Thailand instead of the usual speaker. This event was held in the upper hall because attendance was expected to be high. I sat at the back while the monk and translator sat on stage. I remember that the monk told some funny stories and seemed amiable, but the experience did not make much of an impression on me one way or another.

The next afternoon while I was walking down the same path in the same knee pain, happiness arose spontaneously in me, rising to joy. I thought, "This is not like me. Happiness? Joy?" There seemed to be no object of this happiness and joy, no exterior event nor pleasurable experience to trigger it. After a while an intuition arose that it must somehow be this monk I heard last night. I checked the center's calendar online and saw that this monk, Ajahn Jamnian, would be giving two half-day sessions in a few days. I made a point to attend.

Ajahn Jamnian, whom I later addressed with the respectfully affectionate Thai honorific, Luang Por, gave instructions in the hall about a form of active meditation called "walking like a skeleton." This was about the transience of the human form, but even given through a translator there was a unique humor and lightness in this most serious of Dhamma lessons.

I did my best to visualize myself as a walking skeleton as we students silently circled the dirt roundabout in front of the hall. Luang Por stood under a tree watching us with keen attention. I wondered if there were some right or better ways to walk as a skeleton, as

Dhamma students do when first practicing a form of meditation. I felt a complete lack of judgment in Luang Por's watchfulness, his attention more of an encouragement. Back in the hall, Luang Por spoke briefly and then asked for feedback about this experience, responding with the same depth and humor, often eliciting laughter.

The formal half-day session was over and as I was walking out, I noticed that a large number of students gathered informally around Luang Por, asking questions, many personal, that the teacher answered with the same interest, humor, and unflinching energy. This informal session went on for about another hour and a half, two hours. This informality was very different from the more structured teachings I had experienced in other Dhamma settings. I stayed for the entire bonus session, struck by his generous engagement with his students. There was a quality of happiness in the hall that drew me in, along with a curiosity to hear how he would creatively and insightfully answer each question. I knew that I had met an extraordinary teacher.

Driving home I knew that the happiness and joy I felt on the park path in Mill Valley was related to this extraordinary monk. The deeper teaching was this happiness and joy are a natural state of our minds that Luang Por was showing by example—living Dhamma.

The second day started with the warmth and informality of the lunch offering to Luang Por and the monks in the Thai tradition with prayers and chanting, a discovery that continues to delight. Luang Por offered another bonus session after the afternoon teaching. The session spilled over to a breakaway group at the front of the hall that he was addressing with particular animation. Curious, I was able to pick up that he was speaking about a communist official, Surachai, whom I later learned was the head of the propaganda section in Southern Thailand during a bloody civil war there between the government and the communist rebels in the 1960s and 70s. Luang Por spoke about how Surachai helped him enter into communication with the communist rebels and how he in turn helped Surachai after the government betrayed and captured him in peace negotiations. What was a monk doing in a bloody civil war, I wondered.

Intrigued by this, the growing lesson of happiness despite pain and external circumstances, and the warm and supportive community, I decided to attend the weeklong teaching in Sonoma County. There,

Luang Por told stories of his peace-making efforts in this civil war that were at once harrowing and hilarious. This fascinated me on several levels. First I had been very moved by the non-violent civil disobedience of Dr. Martin Luther King and Gandhi that created deep and lasting change and justice in their societies without destruction. Here was a monk who was using his version of “unarmed truth” in the Dhamma to reconcile two sides in a civil war, vowing, “To stop the destruction without destruction.”

I had recently finished a Masters degree in counseling psychology at CIIS in San Francisco, an institute that grew out of an earlier one in Asian studies, where I could pursue a particular interest in the intersection of spirituality, particularly Buddhism, and psychotherapy. Unarmed truth, happiness, and joy beyond external circumstance and our life stories, and a grounding in shamanism that helped keep him from harm in the pursuit of reconciliation and peace, were themes core to my being.

I had been a screenwriter in Hollywood for several years before studying psychology. The suspenseful and cinematic quality of these stories clearly suggested a film to me. The next year, in a well-attended session, I found the courage to say that the stories Luang Por had been telling seemed fascinating and very cinematic, and to ask what he thought of making a film of them. Amdee, now his chief translator, related the request. Luang Por took it in and then replied. Amdee translated that this would not be possible. My heart sank. She related that Luang Por’s vows prohibited him from playing the part. I said, "Don't worry, we'll get Tom Cruise to play you." Luang Por laughed. He said, "Alright you can make the film".

Later, in early interviews for this film Luang Por said that metta or loving-kindness is called the “pillar of the world.” His objective was to create over time an atmosphere to prove that this world pillar was stronger than the poisons of greed, hatred, and delusion that were driving this civil war.

How did this quest and essential question, not only here but also for mankind, work out? You’ll have to see the film.

David Weinstein
California, USA

WE ARE ALL LUANG POR'S CHILDREN

When I first heard about Luang Por Jamnian, his students related many different stories about his magical capacities such as swimming with alligators when he was a child, and his ability to communicate with devas. Hearing about these amazing capacities were intriguing indeed. But they are not at all what attracted me to Luang Por Jamnian. To me, his magic is and has always been his unshakable metta, his kindness, and unconditional love of all beings. Whether he is speaking about diabolical dictators who have made terrible karma, or just someone he has met for the first time, Luang Por has kindness for that person, and wants to bring out the best in everyone.

I remember being in a deep state of dreamlike despair a few years ago, imagining looking into Luang Por's metta-filled eyes and saying, "Do not forsake me!" Then, waking up out of that deluded self-absorption with the realization that Luang Por forsakes no being. His heart embraces everyone, including those who (for political reasons) have plotted to murder him. Luang Por has told us many amazing stories about how he has sought out these would-be-assassins and introduced himself to them. Time after time, they would be so moved by his kindness and compassion, they would lay down their lethal weapons, fall to his feet, and ask to become his disciple. If I had never met Luang Por Jamnian and I had heard such stories, I probably would have dismissed them as mere fairy tales. But since I have been the recipient of Luang Por's palpable compassion many times over, I can only imagine how these potential killers must have felt when their murderous intentions were derailed by the love of one of the kindest beings on earth.

There was a time that I recall making a mistake in Luang Por's presence, behaving in a way that one shouldn't behave in the presence of such a High Being. I went to Luang Por, to acknowledge this unskillful action, and asked for forgiveness. With metta streaming from his eyes, he immediately accepted my apology and gave me a blessing. There was no blame or admonishment. Just complete acceptance.

I remember being on retreat with Luang Por when several of his mobile phones were ringing day and night. I always wondered why he answered phone calls even in the middle of giving Dhamma talks and then placed each mobile phone on his chest. So finally I asked him, "Why do you leave people waiting to speak to you? Why don't you just call them back after your Dhamma Talk?" He explained, "I'm not leaving them waiting. They are listening to Dhamma!"

One of the first retreats I went on with Luang Por Jamnian, he said he would teach Dhamma until no one was left in the Dhamma Hall. Early in the evening, the Dhamma Hall would be packed. As the evening wore on, more and more students would leave. The students that stayed on would lay down and cuddle up in blankets, and continue to listen to Luang Por's wisdom. Sure enough, there would just be Luang Por and one or two students and he wouldn't leave the hall until those students had no more questions for the evening or early morning.

We are all Luang Por's children, young and old. We have put our trust in him to teach us the practices to the deathless. Beings near and far, visible and invisible, have come to pay respects to Luang Por, to receive his blessings, to hear his teachings and to receive his advice. All Luang Por wishes is for his students and all beings to end suffering and for everyone to realize the deathless. That's what he has devoted his entire life's work to accomplishing. That's why he hardly sleeps (it's said he sleeps in between offering each precept!). There are very few people I would lay down my life for; Luang Por Jamnian is certainly one of them.

Luang Por Student
California, USA









Pure Consciousness Middle Path



Liking



Disliking

Lobha / Raga (Greed / Lust)

Dosa (Hatred / Rage)

Kodha (Anger / Jealousy / Vengefulness)

Itarom (Satisfaction)

Patigha (Irritation)

Bhava Tanha (Craving for Becoming)

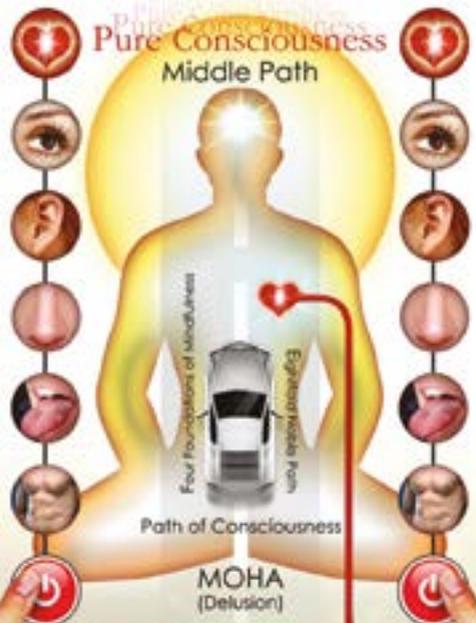
Anitarom (Disliking / Unsatisfactoriness)

Kama Tanha (Craving for Sensual Pleasures)

Vibhava Tanha (Craving for Non-becoming / Craving for something other than what is)

Ordinary Person

Ordinary Person



Jaramarana (Aging-Death)

Jati (Birth) Avija (Ignorance)

Sotapanna

Sotapanna

Bhava (Becoming)

Sankhara (Volitional Formations)

Upadana (Clinging)

Vinnanam (Consciousness)

Tanha (Craving)

Namarupa (Body & Mind)

Vedana (Feeling)

Salayatana (Six Sense Doors)

Phassa (Contact)

Dependent Origination

ABIDING IN PURE AWARENESS

DHAMMA TALK BY PHRA AJAHN JAMNIAN SEELASETTHO
GIVEN UNDER THE MAHABODHI TREE, BODHGAYA, INDIA
DECEMBER 4, 2015

Now that we have all committed ourselves to follow the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha until we reach Nibbāna, I will give you a short Dhamma teaching to match the time we have together.

In the teaching of *paṭiccasamuppāda*, dependent origination, kammic formations or *saṅkhāra* provide the condition for *viññāṇa*, consciousness (or the knowing element), to arise. Consciousness is the only factor in the process of Dependent Origination that has the awareness to know.

There are three types of *saṅkhāra*. The first is *puññ'ābhisāṅkhāra* or meritorious *saṅkhāra*. These are the kinds of kammic formations that cause beings to take birth in the heavenly or human realms. *Apuññ'ābhisāṅkhāra* is the second kind of *saṅkhāra*, demeritorious volitional formations. This kind of *saṅkhāra* conditions existence into the four lower realms, which are known as the hell realm, demon realm, animal realm, and hungry ghost realm.

In order to be free from the endless rounds of birth and death, one needs to let go of *saṅkhāra* and not attach to kammic conditioning; when *saṅkhāra* arise, just know them and do not react to them. Use awareness, the pure knowing of the present moment, to recognize when *saṅkhāra* arise, how they are full of anger or greed, and how they are entangled in proliferations. See them and do not follow the impulses. Simply recognize them and let them be.

The third kind of *saṅkhāra* is *āneñj'ābhisāṅkhāra*, which proliferate into deep states of stillness or *jhāna*. This represents an extremely long path that does not necessarily lead toward Nibbāna. Therefore, attaching to mental stillness is not advisable: do not become mired in very deep absorption or *samādhi*. Cultivating *āneñj'ābhisāṅkhāra* conditions future births in the *Brahmā* realms where one can abide for aeons. An abiding in the formless or *arūpa* mental quality does not lead one away from ignorance and is not the path to liberation. Attachment to the mind state of formless emptiness, for one on the

Pure Knowing

Physical Brain

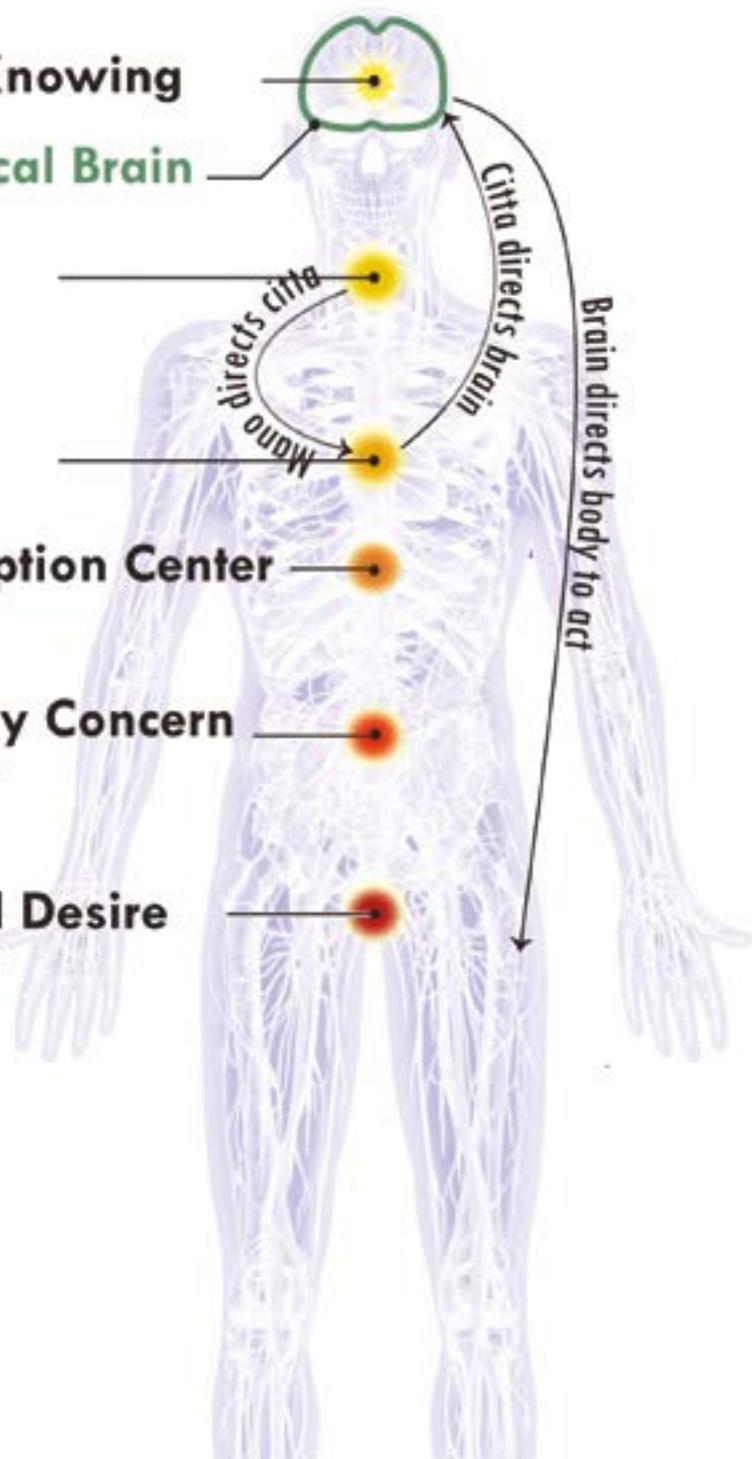
Mano

Citta

Absorption Center

Worldly Concern Center

Sexual Desire Center



path to liberation, is a waste of time.

It is most important to be aware in the present moment. Notice when *dukkhā* or suffering arises—that is, when discomfort or dissatisfaction arises. Notice it, do not react to it, let it pass. Know what arises in the moment, without attaching to it. You can let go. That is the practice that you can avail yourself of anytime, any place. So when suffering arises, do not see it as “me” or “mine,” as “I’m experiencing *dukkhā*.” See *dukkhā* as a passing condition, like a cloud in the sky, and let it go by. The mind then abides firmly in awareness, simply noticing phenomena arising as suffering. There are three types of *dukkhā*: first, bodily suffering, second, mental suffering, and third the suffering caused by *upādāna khandha* or attachment to the five aggregates that create the delusion of a self. It is the clinging that creates a self. The first four of the five *khandhās* are *rūpa* or materiality, *vedanā*, or feeling and sensations, *saññā* or mental perceptions and memories, and *saṅkhāra* or mental proliferation. None of the first four aggregates has consciousness and therefore none can be aware of itself. Each relies on the fifth aggregate, *viññāṇa* or consciousness, to know. When one feels pain or discomfort in the body, do not be concerned, it is only bodily suffering. The body itself does not have the awareness to know that it is having this discomfort. The knowing knows the discomfort, but is not the owner of that discomfort. So that which is suffering, in and of itself, is not aware of the suffering. And that which is aware of suffering, in and of itself, does not suffer. Therefore, continuously abide in awareness, in the knowing that is independent of suffering, and you will not suffer.

The mind is continually shifting between different centers of the body known commonly as the seven chakras.⁽¹⁾ The fifth chakra in the throat center, the sixth chakra in the third eye area, and the higher, seventh chakra at the top of the head, designate three locations where the mind can abide free from *kilesas* or defilements. If you keep your awareness in these three areas, you will create more space

1. Luang Por Jamnian uses the term “chakra” in a unique way to demonstrate his teaching of the Dhamma. It is convenient shorthand to denote the location in the body where the mind lodges at time in certain states. His use of the term is not meant to embrace any system of teachings that may be associated with the word.

around the defilements and will not be as easily caught up with them. Bringing awareness to the area of the third eye or higher keeps it in the vicinity of the eye of wisdom, or pure seeing. That is a different kind of perspective, where you can be aware of your experiences without being entangled by them.

Cakkhukaraṇī is seeing *aniccā* (impermanence), *dukkhā*, and *anattā* (non-self) in all things. When you see a form and know that this form is subject to change, is not reliable, and has no permanent entity behind it, that is called *cakkhukaraṇī*. *Ñāṇakaraṇī* is the cultivation of sustained pure awareness of mental and physical phenomena (*mahasati*)—but is not entangled with them. Awareness in this state of purity does not descend into lower parts of the body; it does not become entangled with the memories and emotions of the heart chakra, or the chakras below.

By cultivating an abiding of awareness at the throat chakra or higher, you will be aligned with the discerning mind or *mano*. *Mano dhamma* is the mind that can distinguish delusion and kilesas from the Truth. In contrast, when consciousness moves to the heart chakra, where the *citta* or heart-mind is located, it can easily become embroiled in the past and future because the *citta* is where memory from our past and from past lives resides and where our conditioned tendencies are located. It can be a very muddy place. The third chakra, the center of deep absorption, the second chakra, that of worldly concerns, the first where sexual desire resides, and the *citta* at the fourth chakra, can all get you into trouble and it's not easy to get out.

When one allows the knowing awareness to abide in the throat center or higher, one has the ability to use the discerning mind to see greed, hatred, and delusion as they arise, for what they truly are. For example, if the mind is filled with greed, the discerning mind will be able to see that the mind is now clouded by greediness; it will not react, but simply observe without suffering. When the mind is filled with lust, the discerning mind of pure awareness will see that the mind is now clouded with lust. It does not have to do anything except observe, noting that this condition is subject to impermanence, suffering and non-self. So as you practice, be aware and watchful. Don't let the consciousness fall below the throat level.

This kind of knowing awareness that observes the cloudiness

of the mind is called *lokuttara ñāṇa*, transcendent knowledge. And the *citta* that is observed without attachment is *lokuttara citta*, transcendent *citta*. The *citta* that is observed in pure awareness as it arises and passes away every moment is *lokuttara*. The pure awareness that observes the changing conditions, but is not attached to the conditions is *lokuttara ñāṇa*. Both are *lokuttara* when there is no attachment or identification; there is simply awareness that these changing conditions are just the nature of the *citta*.

When practicing, observe the clouded mind from a place of pure awareness, and return to the middle way. The middle way is not attached to concepts of good or bad. When we cling to what we believe to be good or desirable, or when we are caught up in what we believe to be bad or undesirable, we are bound to suffer. Not attaching to any phenomena as good or bad is the most effective way to practice. Conditions that are good and bring happiness are nevertheless inherently impermanent. Their dissolution is bound to bring disappointment and unhappiness. Anyway, both good and bad are *anattā*, so there is nothing to become entangled with, nothing to cling to. They are just changing conditions. Let them come and go. You can just observe.

To further summarize, there are five practices to keep in mind:

First, see everything, both internal and external, as *aniccā* and let go of attachment because all things are subject to change. Practice by remembering to observe and to know impermanence. That will remind you not to cling, to allow *saṅkhāra* to come and go.

Second, see the body as that which is made up of the four elements and five aggregates, which come together and are bound to pass away. See that the body is part of nature and is not something that we need to attach to. This body that is made up of the aggregates is subject to *dukkhā*, because the aggregates are unreliable.

Third, see that all phenomena are inherently empty of an independent self. They are *anattā*. Let this knowledge inform us; let it allow us not to cling to this body or this mind.

Fourth, once grounded in the knowledge of *anattā*, the mind will naturally incline itself to the awareness of *suññatā*, or supreme emptiness. Maintain this realization by continuing to let go, keeping

the mind in this non-clinging mental state. Continue to abide in pure awareness, the knowing that is free from defilements because it is not attached. Keep abiding in that non-clinging knowing.

Fifth, abide in pure awareness after letting go of *dukkhā*. Then all that remains is the knowing, and that which is known. Here there can be no *dukkhā*, for there is no one to experience *dukkhā*—that is Nibbāna.

In summary, seeing *aniccā*, do not cling, let it be. Seeing *dukkhā*, do not identify with it as “me,” let it be. Seeing *anattā*, do not identify with it. Noticing *suññatā*, let it be. Abide in the sense of extinguishing that could lead to Nibbāna. See clearly that there is no *dukkhā* and there is no “you” or any experience that belongs to you. This insight is *vipassanā ñāṇa*. When you see *anattā*, and *suññatā*, observe them and rest the mind in a state of knowing. Maintain it. See that everything is of the nature to rise and to fall away. Maintain a non-clinging, empty mind. For example, when the eyes see an object, know that the object is subject to change, unreliable and not self. This awareness will lead you toward *suññatā*. Apply the same process to any of the sense doors.

Since I began to abide in *anattā*, I have been walking the Middle Way. I have refrained from attaching to judgments of good or bad, or the idea of “I” and others. Abiding in the knowing, the mind simply observes these changing conditions as they come and as they go. Since then my mind has not experienced *dukkhā*. See if you can follow my lead: do not become entangled in good and bad conditions. Keep on going. You will find that practicing this way will eventually bring forth clarity and purity. Maintain that purity. Remain unattached to the disturbances that emerge from the world’s changing conditions. Notice and let them go. Follow your worldly duties, using concepts to carry them out, without attaching to them. By practicing in this way, you will find the true path toward the unconditioned.

Cultivate supportive qualities of the heart to help you stay in the middle way. I have cultivated five qualities: the first is freedom from changing conditions, whether good or bad. Second, is not judging conditions as good or bad, keeping the mind clear. With clarity comes the third quality, purity. When the mind is free and clear, empty of greed, hatred, and delusion, abiding independent of the changing conditions of the world, what naturally arises is the fourth quality

of *pīti* or joy. It may start modestly, and then grow larger and larger. Whenever you experience that joy, maintain it. That is a power for you to use. The fifth quality is the happiness that arises upon the extinction of suffering. In that kind of happiness, there is no owner. There is no “me.” It’s just happiness. This kind of happiness, that is free from conditions, can be a strong support.

I also recommend that you study and practice the Seven Factors of Enlightenment and strive to maintain these seven factors day and night. Use the first of the Seven Factors of Enlightenment, *sati-sambojjhaṅga* or mindfulness, to observe the changing nature of all *saṅkhāra* and to notice that all things, whether internal or external, are subject to change.

The next factor is *dhamma-vicaya-sambojjhaṅga*, investigation of dhamma. We see that all phenomena are impermanent, subject to decay, and empty of an independent self. When you continuously reflect in this way and see the dhamma in all conditions, the investigation becomes automatic without a person behind it.

The third factor is *virīya-sambojjhaṅga* or effort. This kind of effort does not involve straining oneself. It’s more of a continual persistence in making effort without identification with the one who is making it. It causes joy to naturally arise, which is the fourth factor, *pīti-sambojjhaṅga*. Joy leads to tranquility, *passaddhi-sambojjhaṅga*. Tranquility can be tranquility of the body or tranquility of the mind. When the mind sees conditions arise and pass, without attachment, it abides in great tranquility. *Samādhi-sambojjhaṅga* is the next factor that arises. It’s the quality of the mind that stays firm in unattached knowing, without letting changing conditions disturb it. This type of *samādhi* or concentration is the same as *samma samādhi* from the Noble Eight-Fold Path. Equanimity, *upekkhā-sambojjhaṅga*, is the last of the Seven Factors of Enlightenment. The mind in the middle way abides unperturbed by any changing condition, whether it is good or bad, positive or negative, desirable or undesirable. Continue to abide in equanimity and non-clinging and do not let the three types of craving pull you away.

The three types of craving, or *tanhās* are: *kamma tanhā* or the desire for sensual pleasure that arises when we perceive through our six sense gates. *Kamma tanhā* is just another condition that arises and

passes away. Let it go with *upekkhā-sambojjhaṅga*. Likewise when *bhava tanhā* or craving and clinging to the present desirable condition arises, let it be, noticing that *bhava tanhā* is changing, unsatisfactory, and non-self. Let the mind abide in equanimity and clarity. It will also pass. *Vibhava tanhā* is the kind of craving that pushes away an experience of the present moment and creates trouble. When it arises, let it go as soon as you become aware of it. Abide in equanimity and do not be swayed by its impulses. The mind has to be trained to abide in the middle, day in and day out, until it becomes a habit. This abiding arises out of deep and solid understanding of the nature of all things. You will find emptiness, that is, a state of freedom from attachment and clinging, free from suffering. When you find this middle way, try to abide there as long as you possibly can. Or whenever you find yourself moving away from the middle, bring yourself back as soon as possible. When pure awareness is firmly established, its emptiness and clarity will lead to clear seeing where no ignorance or *avijjā* can take hold. The awareness knows everything but clings to nothing. You will experience a great sense of ease by completely letting go.

So please, everyone stand up. We're going to do a little demonstration for everyone to become acquainted with the nature of change within us. Bring your feet together. Let them touch each other. Try to control your body to stand perfectly still. You will notice that your own body is not under your control, let alone the bodies of others. You can neither control your body nor any outside changing condition.

Next, try an experiment. See if you can keep your mind firmly on one location, like at the tip of your nose or under your feet. And see if you can stop your mind from wandering away, wandering to the sound, the chanting, the mosquitos, or thoughts about home. You will see that neither body nor mind are subject to your wishes or your will. They are not to be controlled. If you surrender, you may be able to let go of wanting or wishing that this body and mind be other than it is. Accept that what we can do is observe, and watch, and understand their changing nature.

Don't attach to *saṅkhāra*, whether good or bad, just observe as they arise. If you don't attach to proliferations, even the proliferations inclining toward stillness, then you will have more and more moments of freedom. If you can be free from the

saṅkhāra even for a while, then the feeling of Nibbāna will be there because you are no longer allowing your mind to be dragged into the conditions that belong to the thirty-one realms of existence. Likewise when you observe the mind, you'll notice that it will tend to proliferate toward wholesome, unwholesome, or neither wholesome nor unwholesome thoughts. Do not give any of them any importance. Mental formations have caused us to experience endless cycles of birth and death. As long as we allow ourselves be carried away by mental formations, there will be countless births and deaths in the future. Just notice that these mental formations are changing conditions similar to the reactions that arise from contact with the senses. Whether they are good or bad, just let them be. For example, if the mind is experiencing desire, notice the desire and let it be, abide in the emptiness of knowing. This type of emptiness is *not* the emptiness that is found in deep states of absorption or even in the formless *jhānas*. It is the emptiness born of *vipassanā* or insight meditation—from being free from desire, aversion, and delusion. If the mind is clouded by anger, see it as such, and let it go. When the mind is clouded by confusion, let it arise and pass. When the confusion passes, the mind will naturally come back to its empty nature: the emptiness that arises out of insight meditation. With *vipassanā* you maintain three kinds of emptiness: the emptiness of not attaching to the body's suffering; freedom from mental sufferings; and freedom from becoming entangled with *upādāna khandhās*, the attachment to each of the five aggregates as self.

That is the end of the standing instruction. Please sit down so that we can share loving-kindness.



Please find the video recording of this Dhamma talk at:

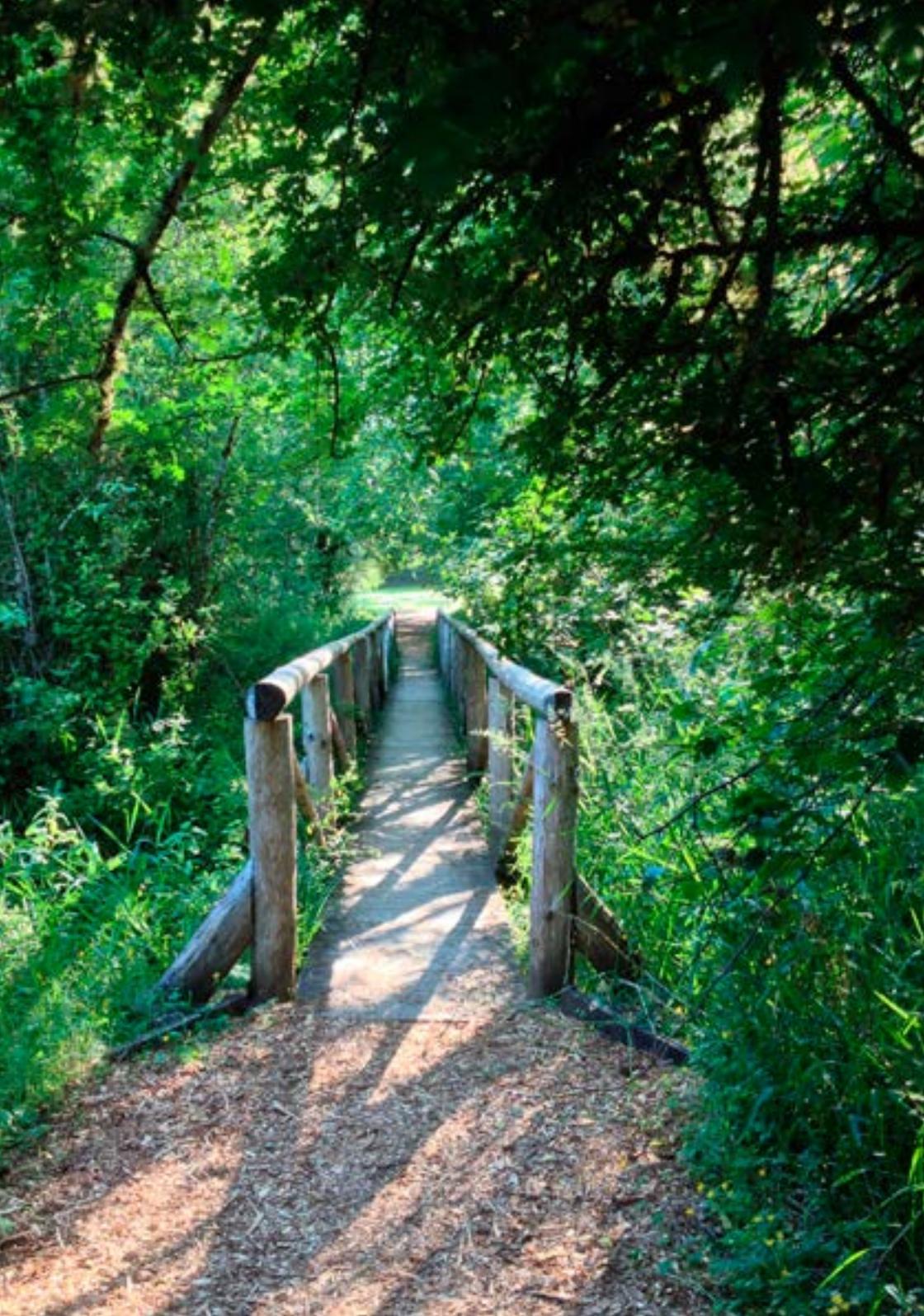
https://youtu.be/_52fif_yDFE

For other teachings by

Phra Ajahn Jamnian Seelasettho:

Visit <http://forestretreat.org/ajahn-jamnian/teachings/>

Or search YouTube for “Ajahn Jamnian Dhamma Talk” or “Ajahn Jumnie” or “Luang Por Jumnie”



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book was a joint effort of the American-based Dhamma students of the Venerable Phra Ajahn Jamnian Seelassettho in honor of his 80th birthday, and in honor of the teachings of the Buddha which he conveys with care, reverence, wisdom and deep understanding.

It includes one of Phra Ajahn Jamnian Seelassettho's Dhamma talks, and over thirty-seven writings from his students, most of whom have retreated with him in the United States; all have also been translated into Thai. Each piece tells a different, profound story of how this master has affected their lives. For many, the process of writing the stories became a cause for deep reflection, joy, and gratitude for having encountered such a master, and taken him into their hearts.

Emerging from these tributes are some reflective themes: Phra Ajahn Jamnian's teachings are based on the ancient Buddhist teachings as memorialized in the Theravadin tradition. He demonstrates how the Buddha's timeless teachings can be practiced today. His teaching style encourages inquisitiveness. It invites students to bring a quality of aliveness and inquiry into their practice. By making the practice of Dhamma an active and ongoing investigation, students have been able to penetrate and experience the Dhamma for themselves. The most striking practice that Phra Ajahn Jamnian consistently manifests is nondiscriminating, radiating, loving-kindness (*mettā pāramī*). His unconditional love has left very deep and positive imprints on many hearts and minds. He has become a role model to inspire others to follow their own loving-kindness practice with good results.

The most important truth this book testifies to, is that the Dhamma is as accessible and potent today as in the Buddha's time. It shows clearly the power of Phra Ajahn Jamnian's teachings among his students in the United States. We witness from these stories that the power of the Dhamma can transform those who practice with commitment, at any moment. That is the timeless quality of the Dhamma.

Many thanks and gratitude to all the students who took the time to share their sometimes very personal stories to honor their teacher and benefit others, and to Mahasati Retreat Association for the publishing support. We would like to acknowledge the support of the following individuals. Without them, this book would not be in your hands in its current form:

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