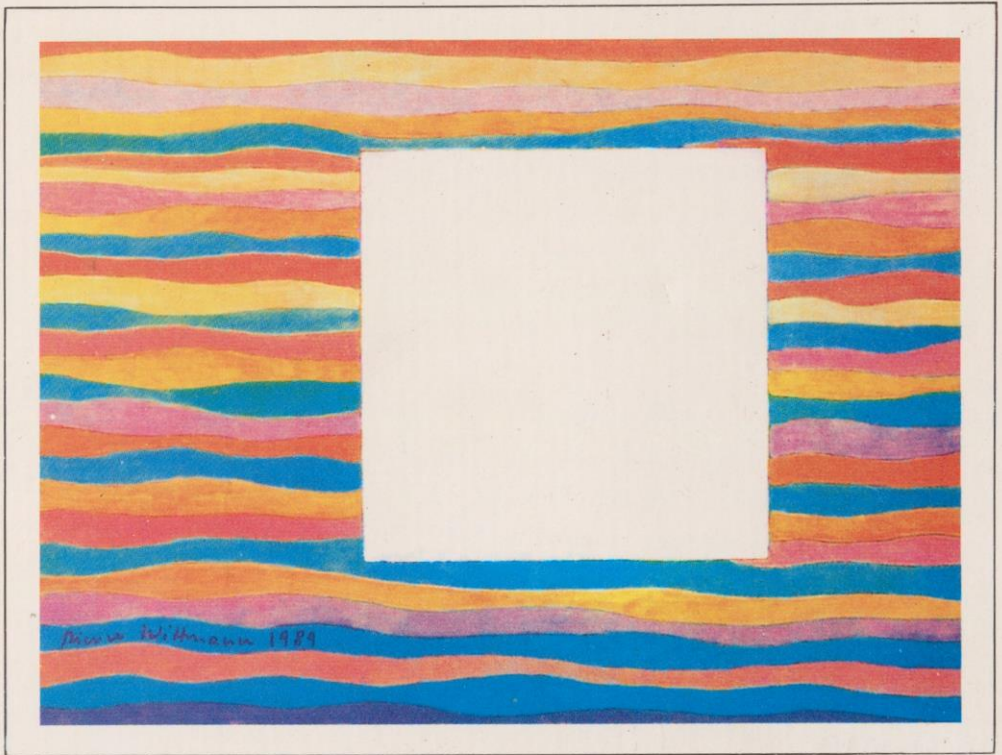


A Buddhist Charter

Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu



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กฎบัตรพุทธบริษัท

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จากที่ประชุมพุทธบริษัทวันครบรอบ ๕๐ ปี
แห่งสวนโมกขพลาราม ไชยา
ในวันวิสาขบูชา พ.ศ. ๒๕๒๕

From the Buddhist Assembly
on the 50th Anniversary of Suan Mokkhabalārāma,
Visākhapūjā Day, 1982



FOREWORD

This book, *A Buddhist Charter*, which consists of 136 proposed items, results from the 50 anniversary commemoration of Suan Mokkh on the Visākhapūjā Day of 1982. The Venerable Than Achan Buddhadasa of Suan Mokkh drafted and presented motions to the Buddhist assembly there so that they would consider them and reach a common agreement which would become a practical guideline for Buddhists in general. The assembly consisted of two committees, one scripture or theory oriented and the other proper social practice oriented. The two committees joined forces in considering and refining the motions until they reached mutual satisfaction. Then they declared the motions as a Buddhist charter.

The charter is divided into 10 groups, namely, (a) general; (b) practical principles that should be considered and put to rest; (c) different views that should be eliminated; (d) interpretation of the terms; (e) problems between religions; (f) international problems of the present world; (g) things that deserve to be understood and written down as rules; (h) culture of the present day Buddhists; (i) the ultimate dhammas that everybody should know; (j) miscellaneous problems. It can be seen that these cover almost all aspects; and the charter should be used a guide in tackling problems properly and in accordance with the Buddha-dhamma principle.

The Dhamma Study & Practice Group realizes the importance and indispensability of this Buddhist charter. Therefore, we have it translated into English and publish it together with the Thai version. This is for dual study and dissemination to the whole world. We hope this would help create more correct understanding and right view, which in turn would create peace for the world and happiness for those who abide by the charter.

The translators and the publishers humbly dedicate this work to Venerable Than Achan Buddhādāsa in commemoration of his 84th birthday on May 27, 1990. We also take this opportunity to suggest that the readers try to follow the charter in order to live righteously and to create a righteous society.

CONTENTS

The Charter consists of the following 10 headings:

(a) General	1
(b) Practical Principles that Should Be Considered and Put to Rest	5
(c) Different Views	9
(d) Interpretation of the Terms	12
(e) Problems Between Religions	15
(f) International Problems of the Present World	18
(g) Things That Deserve to Be Understood and Written Down as Rules	23
(h) Culture of the Present-day Buddhists	27
(i) The Ultimate Dhammas That Everybody Should Know	34
(j) Miscellaneous Problems	37

(a) General

1. **Buddhists are required to disseminate Buddha-dhamma to the present violent world in order to fulfill the Buddha's wish.**

The Buddha said that His arrival and the existence of His dhamma-vinaya were meant to benefit the masses, both *devas* (deities) and men.

2. **"Dhamma" (or "dharma") means "duty." This is the meaning which has been used in its original locality since the ancient time.**

When the associated people realized what man's duty was, they used this particular word "dhamma" for that duty; the word has been used continuously up to the present time and has been adopted into the Thai language.

3. **The word "dhamma-vinaya" is the essence of all words (*pāvācāna*) that describe the Buddhist assembly.**

It encompasses all words about livelihood, rules of conduct, traditions, culture, religion, and civilization of the Buddhist assembly.

4. **"Dhamma" can solve all of the world problems at all times, regardless of their kinds or levels.**

This is because dhamma is knowledge of nature, natural laws, duties in accordance with the natural laws, and the results from fulfilling such duties--all of which correspond to the Law of Conditionality (*idappaccayatā*).

5. There are two kinds of dhamma: dhamma as a tool and dhamma as a desirable goal of practice.

For example, the Four Paths of Accomplishment (*iddhipāda*) are a dhamma as a tool and the Noble Paths-Noble Fruits (*magga-phala*) and nibbāna are dhammas as desirable goals. However, some dhammas such as precepts (*sīlas*) can be classified as contained in either of the two categories, depending on where and when they are used.

6. Dhamma of a certain name can be used on all levels, both mundane and supramundane.

For example, *sati* (mindfulness) can be used by a baby, a teenager, an adolescent, a householder, or an elderly person in their work, such as farming or government work. It can also be used by everyone of every generation, and in every age, in the primary stage of religious life and such later stages as the Noble Paths and the Noble Fruits up to nibbāna.

7. The four meanings of dhamma—nature, laws of nature, duties in accordance with the laws of nature, and the due results—are wholly included in the meaning of the single word *idappaccayatā* (the Law of Conditionality).

Don't grasp at or cling to dhamma as "I" or "mine," for it will harm you; this is a conclusion from Buddhism.

8. Man's true companion is dhamma, not "my" spouse or knowledge beneficial for "myself," as commonly accepted.

This is because dhamma is more necessary; it can help and protect us better and more effectively than the other two items.

- 9. Dhamma is the archaeological item that is older and more deserving of study than any other archaeological item. Knowledge about it can really solve all of the world problems.**

Dhamma includes everything counted from before the birth of the sun and all other bodies in the universe, but archaeology as it is known at present includes only the world matters since not so long ago. So how can the conventional archaeology be complete?

- 10. Dhamma can solve all problems that the world creates but cannot solve by itself.**

The world creates problems through *kilesa* (defilements); it cannot fight *kilesa* with *kilesa*. Therefore, problems like the crises of the present world must be solved by using dhamma.

- 11. The dhamma that always creates and controls all things is *idappaccayatā*, which is a law of nature.**

This law states that "Because of this thing, that thing is caused to occur; and because of absence of this thing, that thing does not occur." It is what the Buddha discovered and respected as the ultimate law. Everybody should know this and act rightly in accordance with it; otherwise, *dukkha* (suffering) cannot be eliminated.

- 12. Buddha-dhamma is essentially scientific, not philosophical. But worldly people study it as philosophy and, therefore, do not benefit from it in any way.**

Science is the study of real natures of things, but philosophy is study of hypotheses.

13. **Although people are different from one another as much as an ordinary man is from a god, their cessation of *dukkha* is uniquely the same, namely, in accordance with *idappaccayatā*.**

All people, regardless of whether they are young or old; male or female; masters or slaves; clerics or laymen; etc., suffer from *dukkha* and eliminate it through *idappaccayatā*.

14. **No matter whether the Buddha was a real person or an invented one as perceived by some people nowadays, actual cessation of *dukkha* always exists uniquely in accordance with *idappaccayatā*.**

Cessation of *dukkha* does not depend on whether there was the Buddha.

15. **Regardless of whether the Tri Pitaka is exactly the original or a newly composed one as perceived by some people nowadays, actual cessation of *dukkha* always exists uniquely in accordance with *idappaccayatā*.**

This is why the Buddha suggested in the Kālāma Sutta that we not take anything as true just because it is referred to in a *pitaka*.



(b) Practical Principles that Should Be Considered and Put to Rest

- 16. A practice that is neither too strict nor too permissive, but just moderate, is true Buddhistic steadfastness.**

This is the so-called *majjhimā paṭipadā* or the Middle Path in Buddhism.

- 17. A true Buddhist follower does not take anything single-mindedly, for it is just a stream of *idappaccayatā*.**

For example, he thinks of what he eats as neither a vegetarian food nor a non-vegetarian one, but considers it as just a food, without attachment in perceiving anything.

- 18. In reciting the Disciplinary Code, performing the daily chantings, reciting the holy stanzas, etc., use of the original Pali language is still necessary and better.**

This is because there will be no variation or change of the words with space and time. Even when the words are recited in Thai, it is necessary to have the full Pali version for control.

- 19. True practice of dhamma does not need any front to deceive the world.**

One who deceives the world cannot progress in his practice. He will have a profession like that of a hunter who deceives animals by using a cover.

20. **The Buddha's word that points to the heart of Buddhism and deserves being frequently mentioned and always kept in mind is "tathatā" (as-suchness).**

This word means that anything should not be grasped at as one's self, for it naturally follows its own path.

21. **Birth, aging, illness, and death can be conquered when one has the Buddha as his good friend.**

There is, for example, a Buddha's word for this which, in the Pali language, says "Mamañhi Ānanda kalyānamittam āgamma jātidhammā sattā jātiyā parimuccanti jarādhammā sattā jarāya parimuccanti, etc."

22. **The normal, natural mind is basically free from defilements until there is a cause and supporting factor for them. Then defilements occur; but they will die out when their cause and supporting factor lose their power.**

Our duty is to mindfully keep away the supporting factors of defilement. If defilement occurs, we must have mindfulness and insight to prevent it from harming us, or suppress it. In this way, our mind will have defilement free intervals, or settle into the original enlightened state at times, without being always filled with defilements.

23. **The "empty mind" that is spoken of by a "hooligan" cannot extinguish *dukkha* in any way.**

The mind of the person who says such words is compactly filled with defilements. Actually the words are used only as an alibi of a person who wants to do evil openly.

24. **Producing in great quantity, consuming and storing moderately, and giving the surplus to help fellow men-- these are Buddhists' political ideal that can save the world.**

This ideal contributes to the Thais' identity of having an ever-present smile, with consideration that all fellow men are commonly subject to birth, aging, sickness, and death; and that the capitalist and laborer classes should not destroy each other.

25. **Buddha-dhamma does not benefit those who do not know their own suffering to the point of being unaware of it.**

Those are actually the people nowadays who do not come to study the religion for extinguishing their sufferings and thus cannot know Buddha-dhamma in its actual, right meaning.

26. **The Law of Conditionality (*Idapaccayatā*) and the Law of Dependent Origination (*paṭṭiccasamuppāda*) are practicable and must be used to extinguish suffering, even on the level of laymen in general.**

This is because the sufferings of people, regardless of their class and career, all arise from mistreatment of the Law of Conditionality.

27. **Reincarnation, or lack of it, depends on its causes and contributory factors. So, don't declare any strict viewpoint (don't say it tactlessly).**

So doing is wrong in view of the Law of Conditionality in Buddhism, which states that actually none is born or is not born; there is only a stream of causes and effects that are taken so seriously as one's self and one's actions that they become objects of attachment and quarrels.

28. **Buddhists in general are still interested only in good deeds and evil deeds but not in neither-good-nor-evil deeds, which are the actual principle of *kamma* in Buddhism particularly.**

The principle of good deeds and evil deeds, or the *kam-mavādi* doctrine, existed before the arrival of Buddhism, or was outside the Religion, but was accepted by the Buddha. However, He added, as a strictly Buddhist kammic principle, the kamma (the Noble Eightfold Path) that is above and beyond goodness and evilness and is the end of good deeds and evil deeds. Present day Buddhists should be interested in this kamma as the world's most distinguished dhamma principle.



(c) Different Views

29. **Saying that there is self or that there is no self should depend on the language used by the person spoken to and the level of truth.**

With ordinary people, one can speak as if there is self; but with people who understand dhamma, one should speak of non-self. It depends on whether one speaks on the mundane or on the supramundane level. Buddhism has teachings on both levels.

30. **The Buddhist scriptures offer teachings on both self (*attā*) and non-self (*anattā*), depending on the level of the audience being aimed at.**

The scriptures teach goodness and evilness to the people who are still clinging to self so that they can improve their selves, but teach what transcends goodness and evilness, namely, non-self, to the people who are tired of self. Therefore, both teachings are Buddhistic.

31. **Simultaneous birth, enlightenment, and complete decease are the ultimate characteristics of a Buddha.**

Enlightenment annihilated Prince Siddhattha, gave birth to the Buddha, and extinguished all defilements (*kilesas*) simultaneously, leading to the complete decease. Therefore, the three terms mean the same thing; and this is correct in accord with natural truth and the principle of Buddhism.

32. Buddhism is not materialism, or even spiritualism, but dhammism by the Law of Conditionality.

Matter and mind associate and condition each other such that all new things can properly arise from them. Thus, there are three items, namely, matter, mind, and conditioning through the Law of Conditionality. And this defines the term "dhammism."

33. If one knows how to use the *Kālāma Sutta* for judgment, he will have no problems concerning his belief.

The *Kālāma Sutta* states that one should not blindly believe in something just because of any of the following reasons: it is spread by word of mouth; it is practiced as a tradition; it is sensationally spread far and wide; it is cited in a *piṭaka*; it is based on logics; it is based on philosophy (*naya*); it appeals to one's common sense; it agrees with one's preconceived idea; the speaker is credible or prestigious; and the speaker is one's teacher. Rather, he should believe something as true because he experiences it through his own mind and knows it as such. For example, he can realize that greed, anger, and delusion are evil without believing anyone else, including even the Buddha.

34. If one knows how to use the Four *Mahāpadesas* for judgment, he will have no problems concerning rightness and wrongness.

The Four *Mahāpadesas* in the Vinaya are things that the Buddha neither forbade nor allowed explicitly. If any particular thing matches what He allowed, that thing is also allowed; but if it contradicts what He said one should do, then it is forbidden. The Four *Mahāpadesas* in the Dhamma are what was heard from the Buddha Himself, from a very learned Sangha, from a very learned group of people, and from a very learned monk. All of these should be verified by the majority of the *suttas* and compared with what is said in the majority of the *vinayas*. If they correspond, then what one heard is correct; but if they do not, then what one heard is not in line with the Buddha's teachings.



(d) Interpretation of the Terms

- 35. The correct and complete meaning of the Five Precepts is one's abstinence from endangering in any way others' lives and well-being, possessions, loved ones, and deserved rights as well as one's own mindfulness and awareness.**

All of these are meant primarily for peace of the society, but they have to be practiced by the individuals.

- 36. Killing is judged by the intention to kill, not by the act of it.**

Taking life in line of duty, for example, a rice farmer's killing of small animals while he is ploughing his field, one's killing of an animal by accidentally stepping on it in the dark, an ill person's killing of parasites by taking a laxative, or one's killing of another in self-defense, etc., is not considered intentional killing.

- 37. Buddhists consider abortion as proper or improper in accordance with the real reason and motive behind it.**

Buddhists avoid absurdity in a matter like this because they consider reason and motive for judgment.

- 38. Whether preventing a predator from catching or eating its prey is proper or improper depends on suitable conditions; it has nothing to do with the precepts or the system of good deeds and evil deeds.**

This is because every living thing has its own natural rights to act in natural ways. The action does not concern the *kammic* system of human morality.

39. **Practice that emphasizes only the precepts is not enough; it should rather emphasize the Path, which includes all three components, namely, the precepts (*Sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*).**

The Pali words that say, "*Sīlena nibbutim yanti*" means that the precepts are the first step towards nibbāna; but attaining nibbāna does not depend on the precepts alone.

40. **The term "Buddha-dhamma" is more scientific than "Buddhism."**

Buddha-dhamma is the description of nature in accordance with the laws of nature, whereas Buddhism is the description of doctrines established in compliance with the laws of nature.

41. **The word "life" that conforms with the laws of nature fully conveys the meaning of morality (normalcy).**

Therefore, a true life has to have normalcy in the sense of a satisfactorily peaceful condition; it is not just staying alive.

42. **Buddhists in Thailand should banish their ignorance about the meaning of the word "diratthiya" (lit. a place for crossing a river, here used to refer to a teaching that helps one "cross over" from suffering to freedom from suffering).**

Our ancestors used the word correctly. (For example, the book *Mūlasāsanā* published by the Department of Fine Arts in 1980 has this word on Pages 55, 76, and 77, etc.) They never neglected the prefix "añña" which composes the word *aññadiratthiya*, when they meant to mention doctrines other than Buddhism. Buddhism is also a *diratthiya*, but we consider ourselves righteous and need not use the word *Buddhadiratthiya*.

43. **Thai Buddhists still use the term "vipassanā" incorrectly, that is, not in correspondence with its true meaning.**

The meaning of the word is distorted so much that monks of some categories or some monasteries are not expected to practice *vipassanā*. The word has a new meaning, describing just a rite or a sitting of some kind that is aimed at attaining clairvoyance or other strange and magical abilities, rather than attaining defilement-destroying dhammas, as is everybody's obligation.



(e) Problems Between Religions

44. **Every religion has "God" in its own gratifying form. The laws of nature have induced man to get the idea since the first era man began to think about it.**

Therefore, characteristics of God have changed continuously from the time of pre-historic men to the present, as evident from the scriptures of individual religions.

45. **"God" in the real meaning is the original cause of creation and control of all things in all places and at all times.**

God as the Creator, the Preserver, the Destroyer, the Omnipresent, the Omnipotent, and the Omniscient—all of these meanings are included in that of the Law of Conditionality (*idappaccayatā*).

46. **God has been given different names according to the namers' perceptions, but all the names mean the same thing.**

The different names given are as described above.

47. **Buddhists have God with His names and all the meanings of true "God" in the Buddhist sense.**

The names are those given above.

48. **The inherent state of the existence of the Law of Conditionality is the "God" that the Buddha discovered and paid His respect to immediately after having attained enlightenment. The Buddha then revealed that state as His Dhamma. Therefore, Buddhism also has God, but just an impersonal one.**

49. **All religions or sects try to find ways to preach and practice that are suitable for themselves. In the beginning they did not have ill will or enmity toward anybody.**

Later on, when they had contradictory interests and desires, they developed outgrowths that led to animosity among them.

50. **The founders of all the religions were just "speakers" for the same ultimate entity, namely, God. They preached the same doctrine, namely, love for others or unselfishness, although the practical details are somewhat different in accordance with time, place, and era.**

An example of difference in practice is that a follower of one religion is unselfish because he sees non-self (*anattā*), whereas a follower of another religion is so because he believes in God, or accepts that everyone is a God's child, or that everyone else is a fellow mortal.

51. **To have just one world religion will be possible only when people in the whole world are aware and have a common morality that is in line with the laws of nature.**

For example, everything that is created by the Law of Conditionality is governed by the Law and ended by the Law. Man must have a moral system that is truthful to the Law of Conditionality, his God.

52. **All the disputes concerning God would be eliminated if people agree to change the status of God from a personal one to an abstract or impersonal one, that is, the most powerful law of nature.**

For what is called God in both ordinary and dhamma language, people in the old days are believed to have used both meanings correctly. Only at present are people probably ignorant enough to use the meaning of God in just one language.

53. **To have a change from God in personal form to God as a law of nature, we must all contribute to a correct and sufficiently broad understanding, using scientific means.**

This can be done by taking as a principle the idea that natural laws, especially the Law of Conditionality, can perform various functions of God's.

54. **Although dhammas or religions are of different levels, they are equal in importance just like all the steps of a stair.**

We should not consider the top step, for example, as more important than the bottom one, or the other way around.

55. **All doctrines, those so-called "-isms," in the world have too much of a smell of "self."**

They are so overbearing that they never yield an inch, even when they should listen to others in the beginning of a friendly talk.



(f) International Problems of the Present World

56. **In the language of nature, human beings attack one another more ruthlessly than animals do among themselves, in a manner that ought to make us ashamed before them.**

This is evident from the people who prepare for wars, how large the areas are where they constantly make war, how many people are dead, how far and wide the wars have been felt, and how deadly the weapons are that they use.

57. **Human beings have more diseases than do animals; our diseases are worse than those of animals, to the point that we ought to be ashamed before them.**

This is because human beings use their intelligence more and more in doing wrong spiritually; and this leads to insomnia and neurological and mental diseases, all of which cannot afflict animals.

58. **Human beings are destroying world resources to satisfy their defilements in such a manner that ought to make them ashamed before animals.**

How much do men and animals destroy the resources in a single day? Try to compare the extents of their destruction.

59. **Human beings are suffering more than animals, in ways that ought to make them ashamed before animals. They should rather help one another to eliminate the suffering by using dhammas.**

Human beings are suffering more because they have more knowledge with which to enslave themselves under sensual pleasure, which animals never succumb to.

60. **God created the world with a dhammic system, but people in the world, while creating things with non-dhammic systems, are unknowingly competing with God.**

This has caused in the present world such severe crises that the various world organizations, however hard they work, never find an end to the problems.

61. **Dhamma can solve all the world problems. Therefore, we should join forces in familiarizing people with dhamma and urging them to tend to dhamma in solving problems.**

This is in accordance with the fact that dhamma distinguishes man from animal. Otherwise, man would be pitifully more evil than animal.

62. **Education in the world has a characteristic of a "tail-less dog" because only academic and vocational subjects are taught but how to be a righteous human being is not.**

Therefore, people in the world do not know love for others. This has led to nasty incidents between the capitalist and the laborer classes, hence severe world problems as evident nowadays.

63. **We are lacking "dog-tail completing" universities for teaching how to solve problems due to the incomplete, "tail-less dog" education.**

The more progress present day education is making, the more selfish the people become and the more problems are created by such a "tail-less dog" education.

64. **The much-worshiped education of the present hellish day can produce only "foul-mouthed dogs" and "barking dogs," but cannot produce "world wound-lapping dogs."**

The world is full of war mongers and their conspirators. But there are seemingly no groups of people who try to prevent and suppress wars or console the war victims, both military and civilian.

65. **Although the worldlings aim at benefits that satisfy their desire, Buddhists still aim at benefits that are contributory to attaining nibbāna for the purpose of destroying such desire.**

May all the Buddhists maintain this principle as steadfastly as they can with all their lives and souls.

66. **The four requisites of life, namely, clothing, food, dwelling, and medicine, have now become tools or opportunity for profiteering among people; and this is the origin of the hellish situation in the present world.**

This is because people lack loving kindness, which is an important principle in every religion, thus rendering religion ineffective and turning beneficial things into detriments in all places.

67. **To fight and exchange dhamma at the same time is the way out for the war-ridden world of the present.**

We should not busy ourselves with cultural exchanges, such as a tour of ballet, for they are apt to accelerate the destruction of the world.

68. **Democracy of each country in the whole world is not complete because of lack of morality of its citizenry.**

Without morality, election becomes cheating, the representatives are dishonest, the parliament consisting of them is also dishonest, and if they set up a government, the latter will also be dishonest. That is why democracy is never complete.

69. **We should help the foreigners themselves to be capable of spreading Buddhism abroad.**

This is because they understand their own culture and problems better than we do; they can fully make use of their languages.

70. **We should teach dhamma principles in Buddhism to foreigners by using the principles of their former religions as a conveyor.**

For example, to teach a Christian to understand the Buddhist principle of suffering due to attachment to good and evil, we may use the tale of the goodness-evilness revealing fruit that God forbade Adam and Eve from eating so that they would not die.

71. **Defilements are more terrifying than communism; if we can conquer defilements, then we can easily conquer communism.**

This is because defilements of the capitalist's have caused communism in the world. The communist, because of their own defilements, think of killing the capitalist. Defilements work on us all the time, even when the communist has not come.

72. **About the problem of communism prevention, we have to take the hint of the communist but must not use their method.**

The communist preaches peace for the world. We can also preach the same thing but in practice our method must be directly opposed to theirs: the communist uses weaponry but we use the power of dhamma.

73. **Social problems in the world arise from people s lacking the morality of loving others.**

Should love for others return to dominate the world, the world would become that of Sri Ariyametriya, or a utopia, where no social problems can exist.

74. **Every problem in the world has to be solved by the method of right understanding (*sammādiṭṭhi*).**

We should not obstinately solve it by means of economics, wars, or politics as being done all over the world, for doing so complicates the problem and creates a vicious circle.



(g) Things That Deserve to Be Understood
and Written Down as Rules

75. **Setting up donation boxes is tantamount to begging in the name of the Buddha. This practice should be demolished.**
This is a tumor of Buddhism. It disgraces the Religion and, therefore deserves serious consideration.

76. **The everyday and the dhamma languages are superficial and core languages, respectively, of religions. In order to know completely, we have to know both of them.**

We know various matters in the Scriptures incorrectly or incompletely because we do not know how to use both languages.

77. **The Buddha that is still with us is His dhammic body (*dhammakāya*) or dhammic being (*dhammabhūta*), which are synonymous with Him.**

Both can be caused to occur within us, or even to become one with us. Then we would be, for example, time-independent (*akāliko*), perceptible to any individual (*sandiṭṭhiko*), and deserving of inquiry (*veditabbo*) just like them.

78. **We will have nibbāna for every in and out breath when the the mind is free from defilements.**

This is an instantaneous nibbāna, which occurs to the mind within the period that the mind has no defilements, that is, when it stays with its actual, original nature, which is a pure one.

79. **A householder can be a "monk" at home without being ordained.**

This is possible if that householder sees danger in the round of rebirth (*vaṭṭa*), that is, the cycle of defilement, action, and consequence for householders in general.

80. **"Sweat" is the ultimate symbol of having dhamma, but most people detest sweat.**

Dhamma is man's righteous duty, which, when worked on, will cause sweat. The more one performs his duty, the more he sweats, that is, the more dhamma he has. But no one likes sweat anyway.

81. **"Do all work with a void mind"—this slogan is beneficial and necessary for the present world, in which the number of neurotics is increasing.**

A void mind is a mind without the defilement of the "I/mine," but full of awareness and knowledge due to being void of the defilements.

82. **The panacea of Suan Mokkh is a compilation of all essential principles in Buddhism.**

The concoction consists of the bark of the "uninterest" tree, the inner core of the "unconcern" tree, the root of the "as-suchness" plant, the leaves of the "no I no mine" herb, the flowers of the "unappealingness" shrub, the fruits of the "death-before-death" tree, and the seeds of the "extinction" plant. The combination of all these is added with the magical power from a spell of "*sabbe dhammā nalam abhinivesāya*" (all things are not for attachment) and boiled down in water to a third of the starting volume. The brew should then be drunk

three times a day. Those who have lived in this world long enough can find the ingredients of this panacea everywhere.

- 83. Temples or monasteries have to be organized into museums of objects that, in all available spaces, instill and promote morality.**

When one steps into a temple or monastery, he should get a glance of things that remind him of love of peace, detestation of evilness, courage to do good, and enthusiasm to help fellow mortals without first being asked.

- 84. Temples should be refuges for everyone, including animals, as the Deer Garden was in the Buddha's time.**

There is no harm to lives and bodies in any way, but there are only help and generosity everywhere in such places.

- 85. Ground and trees were the favorite of the Buddha's. Every Buddhist should know this.**

The Buddha was born, attained enlightenment, preached, lived, and passed away on the ground and under trees. Therefore, we should regard them as honorable; Buddhists should respect them.

- 86. Every Buddhist should be a "Buddhadāsa" (servant of the Buddha), dedicating all their lives and souls to the Buddha.**

This will be in line with what they recite in the evening chanting, "*Buddhassāhasmi dāso/dāsī va Buddho me sāmikissaro,*" that is, all, rather than a particular individual, pledge to serve the Buddha as His dedicated servants.

- 87. Buddhists know the arts of acquiring, possessing, becoming, consuming, and storing in a manner that doesn't bite the owner.**

This means that there is no attachment of the egoist, no grasping at and clinging to with worry, brooding, or possessiveness, but there is adequate knowledge of the Law of Conditionality.

- 88. We should have a Suan Mokkh-type garden that is a spiritual amusement park or a spiritual Disneyland.**

This is for spreading dhamma with enjoyment, rather than boringly. It is a spiritual entertainment, a fifth necessity for the pure life, which man cannot do without.

- 89. Dhamma is duty to maintain life of a living thing. Performing one's duty is practicing dhamma.**

However, this fact has not been known to people in general, and even to the governments of all countries in the world. Therefore, there is no incentive for working profoundly and voluntarily, without being forced or deceived, while at the same time making merits in every workplace.



(h) Culture of the Present-day Buddhists

90. We need to reform activities in religious study, practice, attainment, objects, rituals, and culture so that they are greatly more righteous.

At present they are in the state of absurdity and have become too much of occultism, hence improper for Buddhist membership.

91. Our religious activities and rituals are still ones that are so destructive to economy that they seemingly become heretic.

If we tolerate them, the religion may become extinct without anybody knowing.

92. Occultism is a religion which is still necessary for those low-intelligence people of the world, but it has to be improved eventually into Buddhism.

The world in whatever era never lacks low-intelligence people. This is because there exists only the type of education that cannot eliminate occultism, which is a refuge of cowards, weaklings, idlers, and foolishly selfish persons.

93. Even prostration for obeisance in an *uposatha* or in various rituals is still more than 50 per cent appearance and intention of occultism.

To prostrate before a Buddha image as a sacred object from which one hopes to get favor is occultism, whereas to prostrate because one really appreciates His virtue is Buddhism. Occultism is based on belief and grasping at and clinging to, but Buddhism is based on intelligence and letting go.

94. **Buddhism, in combination with Brahminism, in form of superstition, is like a panacea of low-intelligence people. It still has to exist in the world just like the penicillin, which, at one time, was used as a cure-all.**

Low-intelligence people are those who like something simple, facilitating, and widely powerful in the mould of occultism. There is a large number of them in the present world.

95. **Whether a Buddha image and a Buddha amulet will be beneficial or harmful depends on the user or owner.**

If the user or owner uses it foolishly, in adherence to mere rule and ritual, it will block the path to nibbāna. But if he uses it for reflection on the virtue of the Buddha, then it will promote attainment of nibbāna.

96. **If the Buddha could come and see the great number of Buddha images of the the present time, He would say, "Use such things rightly!"**

He would call them "things" because He would not want them, and they are incompatible with the principles of Buddhism. They will simply and inconspicuously transform Buddhism into the idolatry of the pre-Buddha or pre-Buddhism era.

97. **Under current conditions, if the Buddha came to visit, He would never recognize the appearance of His religion.**

This would be the case especially if He went into, for example, some temples, *uposathas* in general, and the living rooms of senior monks on the preceptor level.

98. Monasteries have not really been monasteries; preaching has not really been preaching; education has not promoted the three studies of morality, concentration and wisdom; practice still has not had nibbāna as its target.

This is the current situation of the present day Buddhism.

99. We should practice dhamma so that we have dhamma as our characteristic symbol, suiting the fact that we have adopted Buddhism for no less than 2,000 years.

This is in accordance with what is generally believed, that we have done so since the Nan Chao period. Or according to the scripture, it states that King Ashok of India sent senior missionary monks to spread Buddhism in Suvannaphum, where Thailand is now situated, around 243 B.C.

100. Adopting Buddhism together with Brahminism for political benefits without causing damage is what our ancestors are believed to have done.

In Chaiya, Surat Thani, Thailand, almost all old temples dating back to the Sri Vichai period have a Brahman *uposatha* on the eastern side of their locations. The images of Avalokiteshvara are found in many of them. At Wat Kaew, digging yielded a Shivalinkam and an image of Ghanesh at the main worshiping location in the big Buddhist pagoda, which is the main object of the temple. This was to promote, as a primer, morality among children and uneducated women, for example, who could not attain the profound principles of Buddhism. Brahminism was used as the means because it was adopted before Buddhism.

101. **Chanting the verses of protection and Buddhist incantations for the sick and chanting of *Bojjhaṅga* (Factors of Enlightenment) should be improved and maintained as a form of psychotherapy.**

This is to make the practice a kind of medical science, not occultism, and to eliminate a blemish in the religion.

102. **In asking *devatās* (deities) to participate in religious ceremonies, we should rightly regard the meaning of the word. Let's not make the practice fall under animism.**

103. **Sprinkling of the blessing water is simply a form of psychological exploitation; it is fully effective among low intelligence people.**

But we should do it in the name of the Dhamma to make the people feel that it leads to peaceful coolness just like that of the water being sprinkled at the moment.

104. **Pouring of the water of dedication in order to transfer merits to one's relatives and all creatures should be considered as a lesson in developing goodwill and gratefulness, which one should practice.**

We should not question whether the merits will reach the beneficiaries, but should regard the practice as the best a loving and caring survivor can do.

105. **Wearing amulets is oppositely different from wearing objects of recollection and respect.**

The latter is fully Buddhistic, without anything foolish or absurd.

106. Gates of temples should carry pictures that remind people not to be careless (for example, that of the *Rahu* demon trapping the Moon in its mouth), following the ancient model.

This is a translation of *muñcitukamyatāñāṇa* (knowledge of the desire for deliverance), which is the sixth item of the nine *vipassanāñāṇas* (insight-knowledges). It serves to remind us to work for our own deliverance urgently to the best of our ability, just as the Moon tries hard to escape from the Rahu demon's mouth.

107. The ancient culture of painting the pictures of dhamma riddles in *samut khoi* (books of a folding urticaceae-bark paper) and on church walls should be revived for a college of spiritual learning.

This is for those who, even when they are illiterate, can perceive the profound dhamma by this visual means. But it is a pity that the culture is ignored.

108. The political system of Buddhists should be dhammic socialism, which maintains the interest of all classes of people, from beggars to kings or emperors.

Otherwise, the system will not belong to Buddhists, but to those who consider that there are only two groups of people in this world, namely, capitalists and laborers.

109. **The Thai culture that is the real Thai identity is the "ever-present smile." We smile because we perform our work as the practice of dhamma, contributing to high productivity while living moderately and helping fellow people with the surplus.**

The Thai identity is not represented by the Thai painting designs, dances, foods, houses, flower arranging, etc., or even Siamese cats and Siamese twins, as it is stated nowadays. But it is the smile that loving kindness and compassion push out at the face.

110. **Clothing should be just a requisite for life, not for sexual temptation or for deception.**

The latter purposes are causes of world destroying crimes, and even overspending of a salary that leads to corruption.

111. **We should eat uncontaminated and correct food with mindfulness and awareness.**

Besides, we should eat like the parents who had to eat a part of their child, who had died in a desert, just to survive while crossing the desert. There should be no indulgence or orgy in eating as is being popularly practiced nowadays.

112. **Dwelling, vehicles, and appliances must not become so intoxicating as to drive us into thinking falsely that we are gods or behaving like one.**

Nowadays, abusing the facilities is popular like a fashion; and this leads to exploitation and cheating in some classes of people and extremely severe social problems.

113. The system of treatment, medicine, and sanitation has to be always guided by dhamma.

It must not be used to support defilements; otherwise, it will cause a system of new and strange diseases, and even spiritual diseases, which make people worse than animals.

114. Although there are many classes of people in the world, we have to regard them as equal for the right to live in this world, so that we can solve social problems.

At present, some people consider that some other people should not have a right to live in this world or to live equally with themselves, and that the other people should be eliminated.



(i) The Ultimate Dhammas That Everybody Should Know

115. All kinds of feeling and conditioning of the mind start from contact which can be controlled.

But we are aware of them after they have already gone all the way without being controlled. Therefore, they all become the matter of ignorance; and the arising of suffering is common among us worldlings.

116. The hells and heavens that are real and can be perceived by an individual himself are at the six base (*āyatana*) pairs.

According to what the Buddha said, He newly discovered hells and heavens that are different from the ones underground and the ones in the sky. These are *sandiṭṭhiko*, namely, things that can be perceived by oneself here and now. And they can be controlled by merely controlling the contact.

117. The worlds are actually the sense-objects that can be perceived at the six base pairs through contact.

Just consider this: If there are no base pairs and contact, how can the worlds appear? Everything, either concrete or abstract, is just a mental perception. According to the law of nature, if there is no contact, the worlds cannot appear.

118. As a law of nature, or as an absolute truth, happiness arises from satisfaction with one's security and one's own virtue.

Happiness arising from anything other than these is false happiness that arises from defilement based satisfaction, which people nowadays blindly worship.

119. Morality can be powerful or perfect only when it is based on absolute truth.

Morality can tell only how to do it, but absolute truth can go so far as to tell why one needs to do it. In modern terms, absolute truth is the philosophy of morality.

120. Nature creates lives and lets them perceive by themselves that there is a supreme being or God.

Even the animals can know by themselves that there are things they have to fear and those things are invincible. Thus, we have to study and understand the supreme being adequately for right practice. The being is now popularly called God and exists even in Buddhism. (See also Item 48 under Heading e.)

121. Nibbāna can be found right in the cycle of rebirth (*sam-sāra*). But we have to consider in the opposite sense; for example, the extinction of a fire is at the fire, the extinction of suffering is at itself, etc. (See also Item 78 under Heading h.)

122. We have nibbāna as a necessity for sustaining life on all levels, from ordinary men to the *arahats* (saints), but we do not see it.

If we did not have a period time in which the mind was free from defilement for a while (temporary nibbāna), we would be neurotic or insane and would have been dead a long time ago. So we should not think that we have to wait for tens or hundreds of thousands of years before we can attain nibbāna, which actually has been sustaining our lives all the time.

123. Without nibbāna, there is no Buddhism, or there is no true Buddhism, no matter how hard we attempt to make it seem as though there is.

This is because Buddhism occurred in the world to show it the real nibbāna. If there were no Buddhistic nibbāna, Buddhism would not be different from other religions before it. But we at present are hardly interested in nibbāna.

124. Solving world problems by morality is solving them by the hands of God.

People nowadays try to solve problems by economic means which are based in defilements. It is like asking Satan for help. Think for yourselves what will result.



(j) Miscellaneous Problems

125. Obeying the parents brings no disadvantages. Conflicts between parents and children can be solved.

About Prince Siddhattha's becoming a pilgrim, it was His intention to give more than His parents asked for; it was not an act of obstinacy or disobedience.

126. Whether a home has basic morality can be seen from its toilet.

This is just an example of assessing matters concerning general basic morality; it is not limited only to the case described.

127. In spreading the Dhamma, which is comparable to giving eyes, most people have not been receptive because they see no need of it.

We still have to join forces in doing this activity to the extent that we can be good Buddhists and can help the world society in accordance with the Buddha's wish.

128. Let's all consider that now is the age of the dawn for study, practice, and attainment of dhamma.

May all join forces in promoting the present as an age that is forever as illuminated as a bright day.

129. Most teachers are still pursuing an excess of happiness in disastrous ways as much as, or even more than, the general

people. Therefore, teaching and training in morality are difficult to do.

Let all the teachers sacrifice this kind of happiness for the sake of their venerability.

130. Teachers and students alike obey God, monks, or their religions less than less-educated people do. This matter is a problem that needs solution from both sides.

The two sides, namely, the academic and the ordained people, have to be sufficiently righteous as Buddhists in their own part.

131. Teachers still have the status of employees who teach for salary, thus bearing the characteristic of common laborers, but without any appearance of venerable persons who are full of loving kindness.

The principles of education of the present world do not have the term "venerable person" for use in the educational circle. Therefore, teachers and students alike never have an opportunity to realize the meaning of venerable person.

132. There are some people who eagerly work on spreading morality; but they work with an intelligence in association with an impulsive, urgent thought, which is not profound, refined, or careful enough.

It is still of great concern how long this situation will further persist and when there will be dedicated volunteers who work with great caution and the highest intelligence.

133. The instinct of egoism is still leading the thoughts of both lay and ordained people; right and complete understanding

has not come to lead them.

A principle in Buddhism states that *sammādiṭṭhisam adānā sabbaṃ dukkhaṃ upaccagum*—we can transcend all suffering by taking up right understanding; and this means that we can really control the animal instincts within us.

134. For the Triple Gem and the real sacred things, we need not ask them or request their power to help protect us, since they themselves already have a duty to fully protect us.

If we have to ask or request anything from them, then they are false entities. Therefore, the problem simply depends on whether we behave properly enough to deserve protection or not. The righteous request is trying to practice dhamma to the best of our ability.

135. Religious studies at present have inconspicuously become subjects for promoting defilements rather than eliminating them.

Therefore, ethical problems are increasing while no one has or is able to take the responsibility for them. This is the matter that Buddhists must be concerned about.

136. The outer skin of a religion is not so greatly harmful as its tumor.

The tumor that thoughtless Buddhists have severely and rapidly caused to occur at present leads to the Religion being looked down upon by a great number of misunderstanding people. Let's prevent religious tumors that may occur.

Siddhamatthu idaṃ patthanam

May these wishes be successful.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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

Ajahn Buddhadāsa has worked painstakingly to establish and explain the correct and essential principles of original Buddhism. That work is based in extensive research of the Pali texts (Canon and commentary), especially of the Buddha’s Discourses (*sutta piṭaka*), followed by personal experiment and practice with these teachings. Then he has taught whatever he can say truly quenches *dukkha*. His goal has been to produce a complete set of references for present and future research and practice. His approach has been always scientific, straightforward, and practical.

Although his formal education only went as far as seventh grade and beginning Pali studies, he has been given five Honorary Doctorates by Thai universities. His books, both written and

transcribed from talks, fill a room at the National Library and influence all serious Thai Buddhists.

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

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

Now he focuses his energies on his last project, establishing an International Dhamma Hermitage. This addition to Suan Mokkh is intended to provide facilities for:

- courses which introduce friends, foreign and Thai, to the natural truth explained in the Buddha's teachings and start them in the Buddha's system of mental cultivation
- gatherings of representatives from the different religious communities of Thailand (and later the world) in order to meet, develop mutual good understanding, and cooperate for the sake of world peace
- meetings among Buddhists from around the world to discuss and agree upon the "Heart of Buddhism"

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

The Dhamma Study & Practice Group is a non-profit organization established to offer guidance and support to people who are interested in Dhamma and its practice. One of our primary activities is the publication of selected Dhamma books which are beneficial to individuals and society. With the support of the Vuddhidhamma Fund, we have published the following titles in English:

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