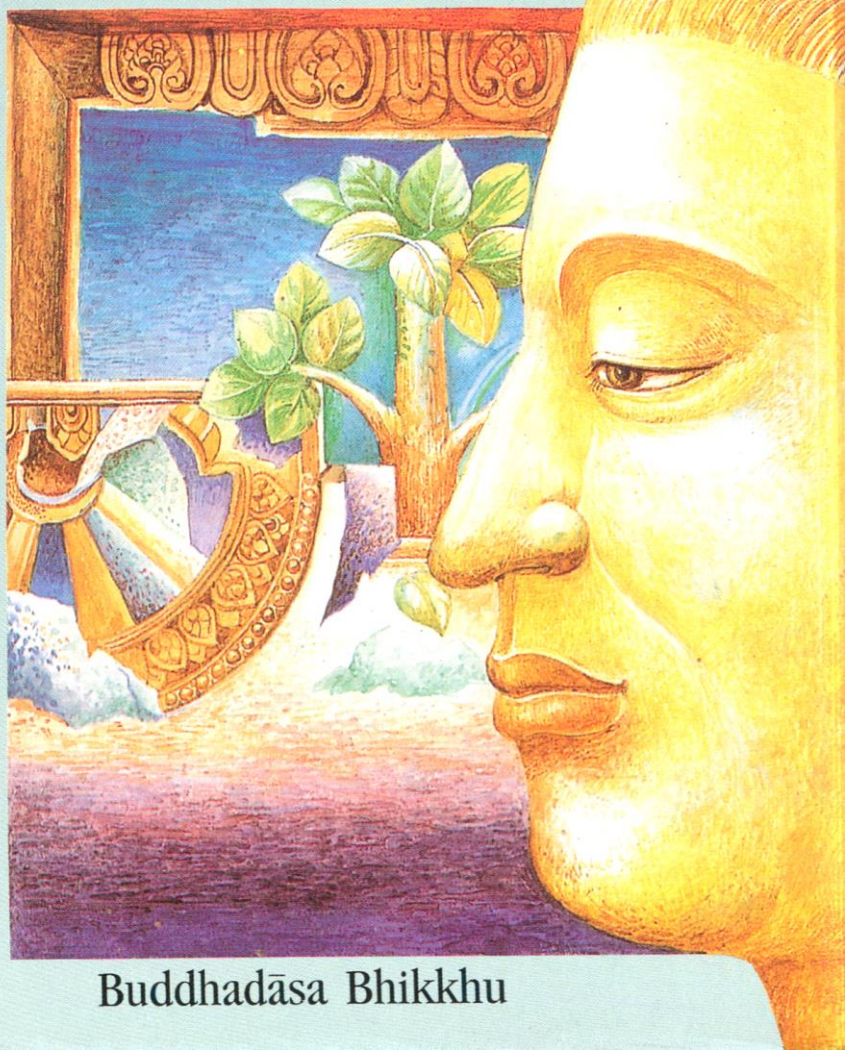


THE 24 DIMENSIONS OF DHAMMA



Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu

THE 24 DIMENSIONS OF DHAMMA



The 24 Dimensions of Dhamma

Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu

Translated by Suny Ram-Indra

First published in 1986 by Suan Usom Foundation

Second published in 1991 by The Vuddhidhamma Fund

Last published in 2005 by Dhammadāna Foundation

© Buddhadāsa Foundation



Dhammadāna Foundation

c/o Suan Mokkhabalārāma

Chaiya, Surat Thani 84110

THAILAND

Tel & Fax : +66-7743-1597

website : www.suanmokkh.org

e-mail : dhammadana@hotmail.com

ANUMODANĀ

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

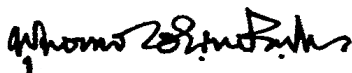
Heartiest appreciation from Buddhadāsa Indapañño,
Buddhist Science ever shines beams of Bodhi longlasting.

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

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

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

from



Mokkhabalārāma

Chaiya, 2 November 2530

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

Foreword

of the First Edition

This booklet is one in a series of the invaluable and innumerable works of Than Achan Buddhādāsa of Suan Mokkhabalaram, Chaiya, Thailand.

Having heard that Than Achan thought of seeing this piece of his discourse translated into English, as it has already been available in Chinese, I volunteered to work on the translation. I have tried my best to be true to the text, but due to my inadequate English, there might be some unclear passages, misinterpretations or even errors, for which I am responsible and ask for forgiveness.

Appreciations are hereby expressed to Mr. Mongkol Dejnakarindra of Chulalongkorn University for his kind help in editing the translation.

There is no need to dedicate the virtues and merits of this booklet to anybody, for they purely belong to Than Achan Buddhādāsa himself, who has been devoting all his life to the ultimate cause of Buddhism, and whose 80th birthday anniversary on May 27, 1986, is celebrated by his disciples and well-wishers nation-wide.

Translator

Suny Ram-Indra

May 27, 1986

Note: For this Second Edition, the translator also wishes to thank Phra Maha Insorn Cintāpañño Duangkid for his assistance in editing and preparing the manuscript.

Suny Ram-Indra

May 27, 1991

THE 24 DIMENSIONS OF DHAMMA

A discourse by Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu

Suan Mokkhabhalaram

July 13, 1965

Namo tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammāsambuddhassa.

Dhammadīpā dhammasaraṇā

Attadīpā attasaraṇā

Anaññadīpā anaññasaraṇā-ti

Dhammo sakkaccaṃ sotabbho-ti

Today commemorates the auspicious occasion of *Āsāḷhapūjā Day* or, in simple words, the Day of Dhamma. The Day is marked by the setting in motion the Wheel of the Doctrine or *the First Sermon delivered by the Buddha, thus simultaneously giving birth to the holy Buddhist clergy.*

Since *Visākhapūjā Day* is observed as *the Day of the Buddha*, *Āsāḷhapūjā Day* as *the Day of Dhamma*, and *Māghapūjā Day* as *the Day of Sangha*, we have today, since the previous session, held an ethic consideration and discussion on Dhamma and the meaning of the word "dhamma" or "dharma."

Now, Dhamma—the Doctrine or the Buddha's Teachings—will be discussed as a cause of merit, refuge, benefit and happiness for all beings. You are hereby encouraged to *study* in order to understand the various special *characteristics of Dhamma* for your beneficial application.

DIMENSION 1 : DHAMMA AS A REFUGE

Dhamma in this aspect is considered as a refuge. First try to understand the word "*refuge*." In Pali, the word "*dīpā*," which means *a refuge*, is normally used with the word "*saraṇā*," which denotes *a remembrance*. The word "*dīpā*" also means *an island* or *a continent* surrounded by water. *An island can serve as a refuge for the castaways*. Likewise, dhamma can bring *a refuge to those who are struggling in the sea of suffering*. All kinds of misery are like the sea in which the people have shipwrecked: they can cause death or great sufferings to the brink of death, particularly for the weaker ones. These people are unable to help themselves; so they have to seek a refuge.

In Buddhism, we are taught to rely on dhamma, not on other things or other people, because dhammic reliance is the same as self-reliance. This is said in Pali as dhammadīpā dhammasaraṇā—have dhamma as refuge, have dhamma as remembrance; attadīpā attasaraṇā—have self-reliance, have self-remembrance; and anaññasaraṇā—do not take other things as remembrance. This Buddhist maxim is generally said. Essentially, it means that dhammic refuge is self-refuge, and we should not rely on other things.

The maxim may be beyond understanding of common people, as most want to depend on others and disregard themselves. If this is the case for the Buddhist congregation, it will be very shameful, especially in the

eye of the people in *other religions* whose teaching is "*Help yourself and God will help you.*" The reason is that in the Buddhist teachings there is also self-reliance or dhammic reliance. The teachings tell us not to depend on other individuals or other things.

The term "other things" means *the objects people clung to* before the Buddhist era: *sacred trees, forests, mountains, rivers, and anthills*. The term "individuals" means persons whose help is sought after. Assistance from others should be in trivial material matters only. Meanwhile, we should also admit that people help us because we have some virtue in ourselves. And that virtue is actually dhamma.

The help we have obtained from others shows that at least we have certain virtuous quality. For example, when we want to borrow money from others in time of hardship, they would lend it to us because they know about our honesty, which is a dhammic principle instilled in ourselves. So this means we have helped ourselves first by having dhamma in our minds, and this enables us to get help from others.

Even in material or physical matters, one can get help only when one deserves it.

Dhammically, or spiritually, we must rely completely on ourselves. The reason is that we suffer because of our own defilements. No one else can help us, but we have to help ourselves. There are *the Buddha's sayings: tumhehi kiccaṃ ātappaṃ—to practice dhamma, you have to work for yourselves—and*

akkhātāro tathāgatā—the Accomplished Ones can only show you the way. Hence it can be clearly seen that the dhamma we practice is the only refuge for us.

Apart from dhamma, we cannot find refuge in any other things. Generally, all human beings are subject to defilements and sufferings that are beyond their control. They need dhamma as a tool or an amulet, for there is nothing that can prove itself better than dhamma. Do see whether the so-called amulets such as *a takrut*¹ and *a pha yan*² have ever really saved you. How far can you trust them? Think it over. Finally you will find that it is as ridiculous as being deceived like an innocent child.

But having dhamma as a charm can truly protect us. *The ultimate dhamma you have can protect you from any danger, even from mortality*—you no longer die or are subject to death—since any person who has attained the supreme goal of the Teachings is supramundane, having no attachment to the self, being, or individuality. To him, nothing dies.

Dhamma can lead you to *nibbāna* in the sense that, when your mind is transcendent, it gives you immortality, that is, the state of being free from the sense

¹ A "magic jewelry" strung on a small cord and worn around the waist, or as a necklace or armlet. It is believed to protect the wearer against injury from all forms of weapons.

² A piece of cloth on which mystical drawings or characters are painted. Like the takrut, this is believed to protect the wearer.

of death. Since dhamma can prevent death in such a way, it is true refuge for mankind.

Without dhamma, all human beings would be defenseless. Do keep in mind that *there is no true refuge other than dhamma*. Although we sometimes speak of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha as our refuge, all of these three elements unite in dhamma.

We hold *the Buddha as our refuge* because we practice according to His Teachings. *Sanctuary in Dhamma* is self-explanatory, and *refuge in Sangha* also needs no further explanation. We must follow the right conduct of the Sangha or the Buddhist Order; this is the same as practicing dhamma. It is dhamma that actually produces the Enlightened One and the Sangha from mankind. Thus *the only refuge is dhamma*. Please keep this point in mind.

DIMENSION 2 : DHAMMA AS A TORCH

Next, we compare dhamma to a torch or a source of light. Without light one cannot walk or work in the dark; it is particularly inconvenient when one falls ill. When we have a lamp, we can work or even travel in the dark. But this is only a worldly matter. Spiritually, the mind that would progress to extinction of suffering needs only dhamma as the guiding light.

Dhamma can be considered a torch that lights the way for travellers, so that those with healthy eyes can see the path under the light. When we have knowledge about any subject, even about an occupation, that

knowledge is also taken as dhamma. It was said in the morning session that *dhamma means nature and knowledge about nature*. It also means *the duty that men must perform in accordance with nature and the results from such performance*. So you see now that knowledge about nature is the greatest light.

Dhamma as knowledge about nature is an ultimate light. With this light we can know, for instance, the truth of suffering, the truth of the cause of suffering, the truth of cessation of suffering, and the truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering. These are direct knowledge of nature and its laws. The knowledge serves as a light that leads us along the right path.

It can be concluded that all kinds of knowledge about nature are the light that shows the right way for us to follow. Know-how for farming, trading, earning a living, knowledge of society, and all that people should know about are considered dhamma, which is comparable to a guiding torch. Without dhamma, men would become as if they were blind, unable to travel or work in the same manner as when they have good eyesight. We, therefore, hold dhamma as the guiding light to follow both materially and spiritually. And this is Dimension 2 of dhamma.

DIMENSION 3 : DHAMMA AS A FRIEND

As for *dhamma being a friend*, it is universally accepted that everyone needs a second party or a companion to keep him company. The word

"companion" means a person who goes along or associates with us. In travelling we need company; in time of unhappiness we want a sympathizer; and when we feel discouraged, we need a moral supporter. The one who keeps us company in time of need is called a companion.

Of all companions, *who can be our companion better than dhamma?* If we are without dhamma, no one would want to associate with us. Although we already have friends, which of them could help us better than dhamma? Self-consolation is much better than consolation from others. To do so, however, one must be instilled with enough dhamma. Also, self-encouragement is superior to encouragement from others; and just the same, we must have proper dhamma for self-spurring to the ultimate goal.

This, by itself, shows that, wherever you go, *your best associate is dhamma.* If you want to have a companion, you are advised to select a person who is infused with dhamma, because the dhamma in him would also become your true friend.

Wherever we go, *our best companion is dhamma.* Having dhamma as a friend or companion, we could reach our beneficial goal. However, when we want to have a friend, a consoler, or a supporter, we should also keep our eyes fully open so that we shall become strong-minded, not weak-minded as most people are. For these people, even a trivial matter can make them cry out loud for help, out of unnecessary

fear. But those who are infused with dhamma will not appear so pathetic. Therefore, think more earnestly about having dhamma as your friend or supporter. This is the property or value of dhamma in Dimension 3.

DIMENSION 4 : DHAMMA AS THE SOURCE OF VIRTUE

Now I would like you to see *dhamma as the source of virtue* or the mine that is deposited with ore of goodness. When we *want to exploit ore from a mine*, we have to do the mining to get to it. Similarly, when we *want to produce goodness*, we are *required to do dhamma mining* or to make dhamma a mine from which we can get sufficient goodness. All kinds of virtue and morality universally sought after can be produced from the mine of dhamma only.

It is quite true to the point in a saying that *dhamma is the source of goodness*. Do try to understand and see the fact that *it is in vain to search for virtue elsewhere*, since *virtue can be found only in the mine of dhamma*. In other words, dhamma mining is certainly better than other kinds of mining; the former yields goodness endlessly whereas ordinary material minerals dredged by miners will naturally run out sooner or later. But from the dhammic mine, the more you dredge, the more virtue it stores. Thus dhamma can be considered the source of virtue or the mine of goodness. And this is the quality of dhamma in Dimension 4.

DIMENSION 5 : DHAMMA AS A MEDICINE

Now let's consider *dhamma as a medicine for treating diseases*. You might hear very often of the word "dhammic medicine" and might understand that it could cure only mental ailments. But this time let's consider the cause of an illness.

What is the actual cause of ailments? I would like to emphasize here that almost all kinds of *bodily disorder are caused by lack of dhamma*. For example, a careless person lacks an aspect of dhamma and is often injured in one accident or another that he deserves. *A fool also lacks dhamma*; he will fall victim of one thing or another.

Thinking more carefully, we will see that even when a man tumbles, it is because he lacks an aspect of dhamma. *Losing mindfulness or awareness of any kind means lacking dhamma*. This is why we are easily stricken with an illness. Even when we catch cold, our ailment is most likely caused by carelessness or foolishness of some kind. But we are not so afraid of this matter and therefore pay little attention to it.

Now let's consider the most widespread *diseases* at present such as stomach disorder and neurosis. Medical study has revealed that any kind of malady related to the stomach or the intestines results from decreased blood supply to the organ.

The *blood supply insufficiency is caused by anxiety*, mental torment, or turmoil, which drives most

of the blood to the head, so that blood supply to the stomach is decreased. This results in disorder or malfunction of the stomach and the intestines. If this condition continues for an extended period, it can become chronic.

When we feel sorry, furious, or worried, our stomach will be short of blood supply. Such mental irregularities induce insomnia and neurosis, which are hard to cure. Now most people are found suffering from these illnesses. Having been afflicted with stomach ulcers or neurosis, they later suffer from several other ailments.

A person of sound mind will naturally have a good digestive system. Forest dwellers or yogis can even take leaves for food, since their digestive systems are healthy as a result of their peaceful minds. These people do not suffer from stomach disorder, neurosis, diabetes, or any other ailments that torment present-day people. Men are being afflicted with various ailments because they *lack dhamma*, particularly the kind of dhamma *that withdraws self-attachment and stops anxiety.*

There is in this world more and more of anxiety, fear, ambition, and greed. Their existence poses critical danger to men both physically and spiritually. Since dhamma can eliminate all these defilements, it can be considered as a medicine to cure both bodily and mental illnesses. *Helped by dhamma, a patient would partially or fully recover from the illness in the end.* This means

that dhamma can serve as both preventive and curing medicine. It can be a health tonic or even a panacea.

But it is regrettable that modern men prefer material medicines to a dhammic one for a cure. The more drug they take, the more sicknesses spread in this world. This is because taking medicines *without right knowledge about the cause of the illness involved* is against a natural rule, thus *making things worse*.

The more doctors and drugs we have, the more numerous and the more puzzling the diseases seem to become. In this respect, we have to admit our inferiority to our ancestors who were infused with dhamma. They were rarely acquainted with any ailment, and did not have to suffer from such illnesses as neurosis and stomach disorder, which are now afflicting almost one hundred percent of the world population.

This is how dhamma can be a medicine. But do not take "*dhammic medicine*" as a cure for defilements only; get the right idea that *it can cure all kinds of diseases*, both physical and spiritual. Also be aware that all physical diseases originate from the mind, that is to say, from defilements. People, however, rarely relate illnesses to defilements. For example, *anxiety* is in fact a kind of *defilements that can cause innumerable illnesses* to people nowadays. This concludes the quality of dhamma in Dimension 5.

DIMENSION 6: DHAMMA AS A TREE SHADE

Now let's look further in another direction. We will find *dhamma comparable to a tree shade*, which offers protection from the sun's rays and gives coolness to people, especially to weary travellers after a long journey.

Man's struggle in life from birth to death can be compared to a journey. One starts the voyage when he is born, proceeding along with his desire, until the end of his time. During such a long expedition, which shade will one choose as a shelter? The answer here is that *there is no other shade that is better than dhamma*. However, one must study and learn how to make dhamma a shade for his life throughout his journey, from the beginning to the end. It would be a pity if one resorts to anything else other than dhamma, since the best coolness can be found under the shade of dhamma only.

Having dhamma is the same as *having right understanding, right conduct, and right action* in working, resting, and studying to understand life better. This is the *knowledge that teaches us how to take enough rest* after having performed our duty. Life is not just for working perpetually; it must proceed along proportionately with repose for survival. Working without rest, one may die too soon.

Physically, we need to sleep for several hours a day. Mentally, we also have to take a rest propor-

tionately; otherwise we can fall ill, suffering from neurosis or mental disorder. The ailment would obstruct our journey in life and cause it to fail. We would suffer and worsen to the point of total failure or death within a short time. This situation is caused by lack of knowledge about the true mental repose. The knowledge is the most essential for mankind of the present world. And this is the virtue or quality of dhamma in Dimension 6.

DIMENSION 7: DHAMMA AS A POOL

Now turning to another view, we can see that *dhamma is like a pool or a well*. When we are thirsty, we have to look for drinking water; when the weather is too hot to endure, we have to find a place for shower or bathing. But to *quench our spiritual thirst* and to cool our burning desire, *there is no other source of water like dhamma*.

Think carefully and you will find that the body is not of much importance. When the mind is craving and parched, the body is adversely affected correspondingly. If you want to put an end to your spiritual thirst and craving, you should resort to dhamma, which in this respect is compared to a pool or a well of pure water—without mud or sediments, and thus causing no harm.

You should always be mindful that only *dhamma can eliminate your thirst and craving*. It is *dhamma that can extinguish the defilements*, reduce attachment, and produce peace at the very moment. It is an undeniable

fact that we cannot survive without water. So *why don't we consider dhamma as the water that we all need?*

If we lack the water of dhamma, we would be very filthy, for nothing can wash us cleaner than dhamma does. We would become dirty at the body, at the words we say, and at the mind, being always thirsty and craving. All are therefore advised to *rightly drink enough water from the well of dhamma* and take sufficient bath each day in the pool of dhamma. Then you will experience wonderful things that you have never encountered before.

Dhamma as a pool or a well does the best and the most in cleaning, quenching thirst, and cooling. This is the ultimate quality of dhamma in Dimension 7.

DIMENSION 8 : DHAMMA AS AN ISLAND

Looking from another viewpoint, we will see *dhamma as an oceanic island*, which is very much needed by those adrift in the sea. Or it is like a supporting pole greatly wanted by those fallen into the water.

Amidst all things involving us, if we have nothing to hold on to, our lives will go wrong. Mistakes in the daily life are like water in a deep sea. If one falls into it, one is certain to die because it is so deep, vast, and stormy. Our daily living is like swimming in the sea, being surrounded by all kinds of obstacle from everything we associate with.

Without a principle as a supporting pole, we would become insane soon. Or else we would not know what to do. We might *commit wrong deeds*, such as wrong decision and erroneous acts, all because we have no principle to grasp or hold on to as a support.

Spiritual support is greatly needed to save men from being adrift aimlessly. Without it, what they do can be either right or wrong. If it happens to be right, it is good; if it happens to be wrong, it is usually forgotten. Those without a principle are truly pitiable.

For anyone who has *dhamma of right knowledge* about his life and work, that dhamma will be his firm and truly dependable support. There are *many forms of such dhamma*, ranging from *mindfulness and awareness (satisampajañña)* to *wise learning and full remembrance* of past experience. All of these contribute to the right knowledge, and are like a support to be held on to or an island to be reached by those swimming in the sea of work or occupation.

Do try to *build such a support or an island* to suffice our need. See *dhamma as a support or an island in an ocean*, for it can save us from loneliness, fault, and aimlessness. This is the virtue of dhamma in Dimension 8.

DIMENSION 9 : DHAMMA AS AN UMBRELLA

In the Pali Canon, *dhamma is often compared to an umbrella*. Though nowadays most people prefer a

raincoat, the two things serve the same purpose. When it rains, and you don't have an umbrella, what will happen to you? Certainly, all of you know the outcome because you were occasionally caught without an umbrella or a raincoat.

The word "*rain*" here is a *metaphor for defilements*, which *pour on our unprotected minds* and make us wet, cold and unhappy. But you must admit that *rain is a natural phenomenon; it is certain to fall*.

Since *rain will naturally fall*, it is up to us to find something to protect ourselves against it. That may be an umbrella, a raincoat, or a roof. Without one of these, we all know well what rain will do to us. It can harm us, our children, and our belongings. No further explanation is needed.

Any kind of cover than can protect you from rain is considered the best thing in the situation. As rain naturally exists and falls, we have to find something to counter it. *And among the protective implements against the rain that drenches our minds, there is nothing better than dhamma*. Even when it rains on our belongings, we have to cover them properly. This effort is also regarded as an aspect of dhamma. Without good judgement, we could run into trouble even in finding some rainproof covers. Spiritually, however, we need something more effective; for, apart from dhamma, there are *no umbrellas, raincoats, or roofs of any kind that can protect one's mind against the falling rain of defilements*.

So you must get to know dhamma as the cover against the rain of defilements, which exists in nature. And this is the property of dhamma in Dimension 9.

DIMENSION 10 : DHAMMA AS AN ABODE

Now let's consider *dhamma as an abode*. Men need a place to live in. The same is true for animals. Some of them find a dwelling in a hole or in a tree trunk, whereas people live in houses.

If we do not have an abode, how will we be? The answer can be guessed right away. Spiritually, a mind without a home of dhamma will have trouble as a homeless person would. It is *no use* for anyone to live in a heaven-like castle if his mind is *lacking dhamma*. He could only *suffer* from *burning desires*. It is therefore necessary for one to find an abode for his mind first so that he could later live happily in a house.

If your mind has no place to live in, your body will be as if it were homeless, for wherever you live—even a big mansion or a big castle—will be rendered meaningless by your misery. Only after you have found a home for your mind, the place you live in will then be truly beneficial.

Thus, an adage that *dhamma is like a real home*—with an emphasis on the word "*real*"—summarizes the quality of dhamma in Dimension 10.

DIMENSION 11 : DHAMMA AS A NOURISHMENT

This time let's look further to that *dhamma is a nourishment or food*. We need both material and spiritual food, since we have not only the body but also the mind. The body requires material food, and the mind requires spiritual one. Still there is something more than this. If we take material food only, abstaining from spiritual food, certainly we cannot live properly. We are most likely to succumb to mental disorder, insanity, or an illness of some kind as mentioned earlier.

Thus material food can be really beneficial only after one's mind has been nourished with the spiritual food of dhamma. *Any kind of food would become valuable only when it is composed of dhamma*. If we don't have dhamma, the food we have eaten—whatever it is—will be poisonous.

Usefulness of material food is therefore identified with first having dhamma as a nourishment.

When we are hungry, we want food. And after we have had a meal, our hunger subsides. Naturally we are hungry both physically and spiritually. But *dhamma can quell both physical hunger and spiritual hunger*. With dhamma, if we were to starve to death, we would die peacefully. This shows that food is significant when it associates with dhamma. That *dhamma normally gives nourishment to lives* is the quality of dhamma in Dimension 11.

DIMENSION 12 : DHAMMA AS A CLOTHING

There is also a saying that *dhamma is like a clothing*. We can say that *a man without dhamma is like one without a clothing*, that is, he is naked. We need to cover our bodies because we have moral shame and fear (*hiriottappa*). Without this moral conscience, which is an aspect of dhamma, one may go unclothed because he or she is shameless. So a clothing is in fact created by dhamma or moral grace. In other words, *dhamma indirectly serves as a covering for the body, but it is directly and completely the clothing for the mind*. Thus, as far as conscience is concerned, we must be clothed both bodily and spiritually.

From another point of view, if we consider our *clothing as a means to protect ourselves against the weather condition—cold or heat— or against insects such as mosquitos and gnats*, we will see that dhamma can similarly cover our mind from both the cold and heat of defilements. These natural enemies must also be fought against with dhamma as a clothing, which is its quality in Dimension 12.

DIMENSION 13 : DHAMMA AS A WEAPON

Let's look further to *dhamma as a weapon*. We all need a weapon, at least a small knife, to make us feel secure. Since we have fear, we want weapons for

security. And since we have enemies, we want arms to destroy them.

Our enemies come from both outside and inside. External enemies are those who dislike or hate us, whereas internal enemies are our own defilements. How can we conquer these enemies? What kind of weapon should we use? The answer is there is nothing better than the dhammic weapon. If we have dhamma, we will be well loved by all. Then who will be hostile to us or want to kill us? On the other hand, those who lack dhamma create enemies. Their ill will and evil actions toward others are results of their *lack of dhamma*; therefore they have to find guns and other weapons to protect themselves.

This results from one's own mistake of lacking dhamma. Only if he is *armed with dhamma*, he will be able *to conquer all his enemies*, both external and internal.

You are advised, therefore, to use dhamma as a weapon for self protection as well as for fighting the enemies. Particularly for your internal enemies, there is nothing but dhamma that can protect you. You must always rely on goodness to conquer the evils because this is the right way to use dhamma as a weapon. Do not use evilness to overcome wickedness or wicked people. Triumph over all by using virtue or dhamma as a weapon that none can oppose or resist. Where dhamma is used, there is no one left unconquered by the power of

the dhammic weapon. So this is the ultimate quality of dhamma in Dimension 13.

DIMENSION 14 : DHAMMA AS AN ARMOR OR A FORTIFICATION

Next, *dhamma is viewed as an armor or a fortification*. Personally we wear an armor to protect our body against weapons. Our country also needs fortification for military defense against heavy weapons. But it must be noted here that there is no better armor or fortification other than dhamma.

When we are attacked, we want an armor or fortification to defend ourselves. However, we still get hurt, because the armor or the fortification we use is not formidable. Even if they can protect us, they are merely small material things. They will be laughably trivial if what they are supposed to protect are disastrously destroyed.

Equipped with dhamma as an armor or a fortification, ourselves and our country will be completely and eternally safe from all kinds of weapons. Being an armor or a fortification is the quality of dhamma in Dimension 14.

DIMENSION 15 : DHAMMA AS A BOAT OR A RAFT

In another aspect, which is found very often in the Pali Canon, *dhamma is*, according to *the Buddha*,

compared to a ferryboat or a raft that can cross saṃsāra or the Round of Rebirth. We therefore study dhamma as a vessel for crossing the sea of saṃsāra.

However, *most of us* at present *do not have dhamma as a vessel* for the purpose of crossing the sea of rebirth. Instead, we *study dhamma just for bragging about* or showing off our authority in this subject. Dhamma, therefore, cannot serve us as the vessel but becomes a weapon for us to fight and destroy one another. People today study dhamma for argument, which divides them into several disagreeing parties, but not for utilizing it as a ferryboat. It is extremely deplorable that they do not apply dhamma in accordance with its properties.

Just a little better are those who have boats and ships for sale instead of using them to cross a sea. These people *learn dhamma only for commercial purpose*—to earn money—never thinking of crossing the sea of sufferings by themselves. Thus they are referred to as those who *do not know the value of dhamma as a vessel*.

All the fifteen Dimensions described above are very essential for human life. Think about this and see whether this is true. If your answer is affirmative, you can say that dhamma is the most vital factor for mankind. It must be had and applied to everything concerning us, for our survival and prosperity.

DIMENSION 16 : DHAMMA AS A PLEASANT THING

Next we shall look at dhamma as something superfluous or an embellishment, since it seems that *men could not do away with pleasant things*, though they are not really necessary.

First we will see *dhamma as an ornament*. It is a human nature to love beautiful things. But we must find out what is the best ornament that can really adorn us.

The answer here is that *dhamma is an adornment for mankind*. Tasteful people should be well acquainted with all the beautifying objects and know how to make themselves attractive. However, even when they are bedecked with jewelry, if they have the manners of vulgar people, they *cannot be beautiful* at all. *Lack of dhamma* in this respect makes them crude; the more they decorate themselves, the uglier they look, because no dhamma is used as their embellishment.

All pundits regard *dhamma as an extremely beautifying decoration*, though a material adornment is an excess. This is the property of dhamma in Dimension 16.

DIMENSION 17 : DHAMMA AS A MUSIC AND A POETRY

In another aspect, those who are students are advised to pay special attention to *dhamma as a music*

and a poetry. By the word "*music and poetry*," we mean *pleasing sounds and words* that satisfy us auditorily, in similar way that beautiful things or persons satisfy us visually. Now let's consider what is more pleasing than worldly music and poetry, and how?

What we call dhamma has the sweetest sound. Those who appreciate auditory pleasure will find *the music and verse of dhamma the most pleasing*. But it is worthless for those who are deaf or blind to dhamma, for the sound or sight of dhamma is too subtle and too delicate for them.

The Buddha always said that dhamma and *the sublime life have beauty and sweetness from the beginning, through the middle, and to the end*. In Pali, the saying goes *ādikalyāṇaṃ—beautiful or melodious in the beginning; majjhekalyāṇaṃ—beautiful or melodious in the middle; pariyosānakalyāṇaṃ—beautiful or melodious in the end*. Still people do not appreciate the melody of dhamma. They do not get addicted to dhamma as a pleasant thing. Most of them are interested in or study dhamma just because of peer craze or some foolish misunderstanding.

Or just a little better than that, they *learn and practice dhamma for some necessary reason*, but their minds are not exalted enough to appreciate the beauty and the pleasant voice of dhamma as said by the Buddha.

Dhamma is too high and too subtle for low-minded people who are attached to food, sensuality,

fame, money, worldly properties, and family only. They will never be impressed by the melodiousness of *dhamma as the ultimate music and poetry*. We regard dhamma as *a music* because it is *melodious*, and as *a poetry* because it is *wonderfully versed in itself*. This is the quality of dhamma in Dimension 17.

DIMENSION 18 : DHAMMA AS A SPORT

We shall now look further to find that *dhamma is like a sport*, which is normally played for *fun* or for *competition*. But, collectively, all sports are played for *entertainment*.

Dhamma is the ultimate sport. But people do not know how to play sport properly. Instead, they turn to sport activities that lead them by the nose to enslavement by defilements. Actually, dhamma is a sport in the sense that it is a spiritual plaything.

For example, a *yogi* or an *ascetic plays with his trances*—or *jhāna*—in various spheres. This activity is also a sport. In Pali, the term for such an activity means the same thing as "*sport*," because it is an *exercise*. It is not for passivity or insight development but for pleasure as would be expected of a worldly sport.

If we ordinary people want to view dhamma as a sport, we should look at it in the following way: *suppose that we wish to give up drinking*. Then there *must be a sport between ourselves and the devil of*

liquors. It will be interesting to see who will lose and who will win the fight just for honor or pleasure.

Or if we want to give up smoking, we must be on one side and the devil of cigarettes on the other, *fighting each other in a sport competition. Who will lose and who will win?* If we are able to win, we can be called sportsmen, and the fight is actually *an exercise of dhamma. This fight between evil desires and our conscience is a spiritual sport.*

Everyone is born with animal instincts. Give it a thought and you will see that these instincts have developed in the human race since the beginning of the world. Mankind is the end product of evolution, during which men were lowly animals. The animal instincts still remain in men, inducing them to frequently behave foolishly and wickedly like animals. Therefore, we must have *spirit to fight* them. Take pleasure as the stake and prove our *sportsmanship*.

It is dhamma that will help us in the competition. If we like dhamma as a sport, we will be more successful in any worldly competition or contest that is commonly called sport. Worldly sports rarely improve mankind. The more people sport, the more selfish and hypocritical they become. This deplorable state can be clearly seen in all *team sports*, or even in international games, which are filled with selfishness, dishonesty, and *exploitation*. Sports of this kind *do not* help promote spiritual health or *better the world* in any way.

Try adopting *dhamma as a sport competition between ourselves and the devil of defilements*, and enjoy it as we do in boxing. Such a sport will definitely help improve mankind, thus bettering the world. Dhamma as the sport or the plaything really exists but has been overlooked. And this shows the quality of dhamma in Dimension 18, as the most enjoyable sport.

DIMENSION 19 : DHAMMA AS AN ENTERTAINMENT

Now we shall view *dhamma as an entertainment*. People invariably need entertainment and pleasure. But if we indulge in, for example, drinking and other ruin-causing activities such as gambling and habitual visit to theatres, which induce defilements in our minds, we cannot say that we have an amusement that is pure, proper, or ultimate.

Such kinds of entertainment actually cause suffering to people, morally pollute the nation, and downgrade the world. They should be considered entertainments of evil spirits and unsuitable for mankind. If we need *an entertainment, let dhamma be it*; then we will be delighted, immaculate, immune to suffering, and unpolluted.

We must *study dhamma for recreation*, entertainment, or pleasure in various aspects. The power of dhamma brings joy to us, and is much more welcoming than all polluting worldly amusements. But most people

do not consider *dhamma as an entertainment* or a theatre; so they go instead to a gambling house, a cinema, or a public house to get entertained. They greatly misunderstand the meaning of the word "entertainment," and thus fail to enjoy the real entertainment of dhamma, which is a gift of nature.

If anyone finds *dhamma as an entertainment* necessary for him or her or for mankind, he or she should study dhamma earnestly. For those who have never understood the meaning of dhamma, do try to understand it, and have dhamma for your entertainment. *Dhamma is naturally an entertainment in itself*, and this is its quality in Dimension 19.

DIMENSION 20 : DHAMMA AS A FRAGRANCE

Now take a glance at dhamma as a fragrance of scented powders or a cordial. *People naturally like to smell fragrant things* such as flowers and perfumes, or sometimes want to take an aromatic cordial for invigoration, although they are not suffering from any disease.

Among these scented refreshers, there is nothing that enlivens us better than dhamma in certain respects. Even a dhammic conversation can make us happy and comfortable as though we were taking a cordial. Dhamma is not always bitter as certain medicines. *There are many aspects of dhamma that can invigorate us like*

an aromatic cordial, but we must know how to use them. This is the property of dhamma in Dimension 20.

DIMENSION 21 : DHAMMA AS A FLOWER GARDEN

Also, according to a saying of the Buddha's, *dhamma is compared to a garden* full of all kinds of flower imaginable, which can be picked at one's own preference. In this sense, it means that each aspect of dhamma can please us as does each kind of flower, by its nature and characteristics.

Dhamma actually consists of innumerable categories, but, as it is generally known, there are altogether 84,000 textual units. This can be compared to 84,000 kinds of flower available for our choice. If anyone is unable to choose them, even for just one kind, it must be because of his or her foolishness more than anything else. The level of common human mind is too low to appreciate the *beauty of the Buddha's sayings, which are compared to a garden full of blooming flowers*. It is completely unjust to brand dhamma as an unpleasant sight.

On the contrary, those who have wisdom, particularly *the Noble Ones, enjoy themselves picking flowers, that is dhamma in as many as 84,000 textual units from the Buddha's garden*. They are so fascinated in the beauty of those dhammic flowers that they

sometimes delay their progress toward *nibbāna*, which is the extinction of all defilements and sufferings.

Think well and you all will see that there are many—ten, hundred, or even thousand—aspects of the beauty of dhamma. It is comparable to a garden full of innumerable kinds of flower. And this is the property of dhamma in Dimension 21.

DIMENSION 22 : DHAMMA AS A SNACK

Also dhamma can be regarded as a snack, a candy, or a tidbit. Although none of these are necessary, people are still very fond of them. Since snack taking has become people's habit, it should be managed in a proper and safe way.

There are many ways that we can *practice dhamma* in the same manner as we *have a snack*. One of them is talking about dhamma for pleasure. If we conduct the talk properly, we will enjoy the taste of dhamma so much that we feel like being tied up with it. There are many miscellaneous items of dhamma that give us more and more pleasure every time we resume thinking about, talking about, or practicing them. It is just like having a tasty snack.

Don't look for what you want from anywhere else or anything else that would bring you trouble and suffering. But *look at dhamma as the source of everything you wish for*—or as a wishing crystal that can make available everything you need.

DIMENSION 23 : DHAMMA AS A VICTORY FLAG

Next we shall see *dhamma as a victory flag, a carriage crest, or an ensign*. The metaphor can be explained by that people usually want to have a mark of distinction. For example, a flag is flown to display pride. A carriage crest is built not for any practical reason but just for showing off pride. People like and want distinction and *honor* for the same reason. As long as they live and their *defilements have not been extinguished, they always want these things*.

I would like to suggest here that you *accept nothing but dhamma as an exhibit of dignity*. If you want to *fly a flag, let it be the flag of dhamma*. If you were to grow a *crest*, like that of your carriage, let it be *the crest of dhamma*. And if you want a *mark of distinction or honor, let dhamma be it*. Whatever these are called, they serve the same purpose of showing your high status. But *don't show off anything other than dhamma*.

In the recent part of this lecture, we can consider the items from Dimensions 16 to 23 as superfluous or unnecessary. Still they are indispensable to some people. Take *these superfluous aspects of dhamma* as those which are vital and are described earlier.

DIMENSION 24 : DHAMMA AS A MIRROR

In this last Dimension, that is, Dimension 24, *dhamma will be viewed as a mirror*. If we want to look at ourselves, we should use the dhammic mirror, or use

dhamma as the mirror. Other kinds of mirror are unlike dhamma in that they may deceive us to various wrong paths. They are not so honest, truthful, or righteous as the mirror of dhamma.

Usually people look at themselves in the mirror to see how they appear or what they lack, so as to make up for what they want. But an *ordinary mirror cannot help us know what is right or wrong*, what is proper or improper. So sometimes we are falsely led to the path of defilements, where it is too difficult to escape. This is because the mirror we use is dishonest or deceitful.

Therefore, let *dhamma be the mirror every time you want to look at yourselves*. We will not be deceived, for we have studied dhamma long enough to differentiate the right from the wrong, the good from the evil, the high from the base, the meritorious from the sinful, and the proper from the improper. Moreover, we know the cause of suffering and the path to the extinction of suffering. If we use *dhamma as the mirror, we will follow the right path, know ourselves well, and understand ourselves correctly*.

People nowadays have the problem of self-ignorance. They often take defilements and wickedness, instead of dhamma, into themselves. So *use dhamma as a mirror*. Then you will accept dhamma but eliminate defilements and desires from yourselves. This is the nature of dhamma in this final Dimension.

I have talked long enough, and if I continue, the talk may be endless. However, what has been said here

is enough to assure you that *dhamma is the supreme and most wonderful thing* for mankind. Today we have considered dhamma in detail, for dhamma deserves scrutiny. The more we discuss dhamma, the more we come to like it.

Good as it is, and numerous—for at least twenty-four useful dimensions—as it is, *dhamma must not be taken as the self or a self-belonging. The Buddha said that all kinds of dhamma should not be grasped with egoism.* The sense of attachment to anything—even to dhamma—leads only to defilements and desires. And that will be a dead-end, because it is not the right kind of dhamma that can guide us to *nibbāna* or the extinction of suffering.

However good and however sublime dhamma is, we must let it be as it is, and let it perform its duty *without being taken as the self, ourselves, or our belongings.* In this way dhamma will retain its virtue, that is, its *ability to eliminate suffering.* This is possible only because *dhamma is not grasped with attachment that dhamma is the self or a self-belonging* as described.

As our minds are thus crystal clear about dhamma, it is very easy to have dhamma as a refuge, or have ourselves as a refuge. If we are ignorant about dhamma, or if we are ignorant about ourselves, then how can we have dhamma or ourselves as our own refuge? We would mistake something else for the refuge. Then we would wear *a takrut* or *a pha yan* as a charm; beg evil spirits, deities, or house-guarding spirits

for help; and pay a fee to get sprinkled with blessing water or get similar superstitious things done all the time as being practiced nowadays.

These are examples of those who have other things as a refuge because they cannot accept dhamma. It is shameful for them to completely lose their Buddhist characteristics; they *falsely declare themselves Buddhists but actually bear no signs of Buddhist adherence whatsoever.*

This happens because of their *ignorance in dhamma*, in spite of the fact that dhamma can offer everything and can be everything—the list is too long to describe. Then *what is to blame?* Perhaps they can blame their own ignorance, foolishness, and delusion for depriving them of dhamma, which is present everywhere and in a large quantity like an inexhaustible supply of flowers in an open garden.

Today commemorates *Āsāḷhapuṇṇamī Day* or the Day of Dhamma. We have discussed dhamma in detail long enough. On this day of *āsāḷhapuṇṇamī*, we must understand dhamma better than we do on ordinary days and keep bettering it every year. What I have talked today is somewhat different from other times because I hope that you all will progressively understand dhamma, thus wasting nothing in observing the *āsāḷhapūjā* ceremony every year.

It's just about time, and this concludes the lecture.

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 Buddhādāsa and his helpers continue to explore the potential of mindfully wise actions within Nature according to the Law of Nature. He welcomes visitors.

In this book, the author draws an analogy between 24 facets of Dhamma and the following material entities : a refuge, a torch, a friend, the source of virtue, a medicine, a tree shade, a pool, an island, an umbrella, an abode, a nourishment, a clothing, a weapon, an armor/ a fortification, a boat/raft, a pleasant thing, a music/poetry, a sport, an entertainment, a fragrance, a flower garden, a snack, a victory flag, and a mirror.