

DOCUMENTARY VIDEO :

LIFE & WORK  
OF  
BUDDHADASA BHIKKHU



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ENGLISH SCRIPT TRANSLATED BY  
SANTIKARO BHIKKHU



มูลนิธิเด็ก  
FOUNDATION FOR CHILDREN

## INTRODUCTION

Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu was born in a small market town of Southern Thailand, at the beginning of this century when "modern ways" were being brought to this agrarian society by the Bangkok elite. That era, known by our grandparents in the East and West, is long gone and hopelessly foreign for most of us, yet it is the roots of our chaotic modern world. The changes that have shaken the world are even more drastic when viewed from the former pastoral calm of Southern Siam, where even today nature is not yet so far away, nor relaxation a fleeting dream. Still, much has been lost here, like everywhere. Worshipping progress we have abandoned much of the wisdom people used to live by. If there is anything worth regaining from those people, studying lives like Ajahn Buddhadāsa's can help us to find what we should be looking for. Not only does his life bridge the chasm between then and now, he has a clear awareness and understanding of both. He has always been ahead of his time in his thinking, yet remained firmly rooted within the values and strengths of his past and the local culture which he deeply respects. Best of all, he transcends them both.

Buddhadāsa means "Slave of the Buddha." The documentary you have here shows how Ajahn Buddhadāsa has lived up to a name both humble and audacious. He began simply enjoying the challenge and novelty of the monk's life which opened up for him. Then, something clicked and a powerful, yet cheerful, earnestness led him to seek out the overgrown and often overlooked path of the Noble Ones. The desire to follow that path fired creative study, which was tested in practical life, which in turn was shared through speech and writing with comrade sufferers, until he developed into one of the most influential teachers of modern Thai, some say Buddhist, history.

Bhikkhu is the second half of the simple name he prefers over various titles. This is the word with which the Lord Buddha

addressed the men who followed the homeless Brahamacariya ("Supreme Way of Life") under his guidance, within his Dhamma and Discipline. Bhikkhu can mean simply "beggar." It can also mean "one who sees the fearsomeness" of worldly conditions. That such men, and women of comparable quality, yet exist in our strife-filled, materialistic world is a treasure. That someone has fulfilled the potential of such a life with the determination, forthrightness, profundity, purity, and completeness which Ajahn Buddhādāsa has accomplished is priceless. The West has never really known the bhikkhu life, and has lost most of the parallels that once thrived. To see how one man has taken the opportunity of this life and adapted it to his changing times and culture provides us in the West with new possibilities. Especially now, as increasing numbers of bhikkhus, both Asian and Western, at different stages along their journey to peace, come to live in the West. Ajahn Buddhādāsa's example can help us to understand their place, potential, and value in a healthy or healing society.

Further, Ajahn Buddhādāsa's life can help us to understand something which the West claims to have brought to Buddhism. Long before anyone used the words "engaged Buddhism," Ajahn Buddhādāsa was living a life fully engaged with the Buddha's Dhamma. Drawing most of all from the Buddha's life and teaching-- rather than from social, political, and economic theories and doctrines-- he demonstrates that real Buddhism can never be disengaged. Having dedicated his body and life to the service of humanity, an unwavering vision kept that service always rooted in and aiming at Dhamma. There is no question of running away from society or escaping into causes. This middle path should be carefully examined by would-be Buddhist activists.

Running through the examples suggested here, as well as throughout Ajahn Buddhādāsa's life, is the theme of work and Duty. He has taught it in terms ordinary, practical, and easy to understand. He helps us to see that everyone is able to practice this if we would only try, and he inspires us to try. Lastly,

his spirit and attitude shine forth the fruits and rewards of simply doing our Duty.

Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu became a monk in 1926 and founded Suan Mokkh in 1932. Unique things happened from the start. Suan Mokkh was, at that time, the only Forest Dhamma Center and one of the few places committed to vipassanā in Southern Thailand. A quarterly magazine appeared. Clear, challenging, sincere words were spoken and written. Thais began to take notice, and later foreigners followed suit. Word has continued to spread, to the point that in his old age there is interest in a documentary like this. Here, we should mention a few of the more interesting services he has rendered Buddhism.\*

Now, he focuses thought and energy on his last project, establishing an International Dharma Hermitage. This counterpart to Suan Mokkh is hoped to provide facilities through which he can:

- introduce foreigners to the natural truth explained by essential Buddhist principles and start them in the Buddha's system of mental cultivation
- gather representatives from the different religious communities of Thailand in order to meet, develop mutual good understanding, and cooperate for the sake of world peace
- host meetings among Buddhists from around the world to establish and agree upon the "heart of Buddhism."

Actual results will depend on Natural Law, as Ajahn Buddhadāsa and his helpers continue to explore the potential of mindfully wise actions within Nature according to the Law of Nature. Visitors are welcome.

We hope that this film will enliven these observations and help you to understand and appreciate this remarkable life.

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\* Copy paragraphs 2 through 5 from "ABOUT THE AUTHOR" (pages 164-165) in Mindfulness With Breathing: Unveiling the Secrets of Life.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

This script was not intended originally to be published. There has not been sufficient time to prepare it for print and we apologize for irregularities.

This is not an exact translation of the original Thaiscript . I have inserted explanations in places where I feared foreigners would get lost and have summarized details incomprehensible to non-Thais.

Indented passages are the words of Ajahn Buddhādāsa [Tan Ajahn:], his brother [Dhammadāsa:], Luang Ta Sawai [Luang Ta:], and a young boy [Child:] .

Santikaro Bhikkhu

LIFE & WORK OF BUDDHADASA BHIKKHU

MIN. 1

Sri Vijaya was once a thriving empire, dominating the seaways between South and East Asia. The ancient foundations and artifacts which last to this day, testify that Sri Vijaya once thrived politically, culturally, and religiously, that is, with Buddhism.

The Dhamma, the Natural Law or Truth in Buddhism, maintains itself even among the ordinary people. The culture and way of life even now continue within the framework of appreciation and respect for virtue. This traditional respect is still being handed down through the generations after more than a thousand years. Hints and traces of this Dhammic prosperity appear in unexpected places, such as in this children's lullaby:

Dearest little one,  
the coconut palm stands,  
One lonely tree,  
midst the ocean of wax.  
  
Rain doesn't touch,  
thunder doesn't reach,  
Midst the ocean of wax,  
reached just by those who transcend all merit.

The message here is that NIBBĀNA (the supreme goal of Buddhism) is found only in the midst of SAMSĀRA ("the faring on" of ordinary life). The end of misery can be found right here in the midst of this ocean of misery.

People, if they are to reach the end of all misery and pain, must give up evil, and do good, without clinging to that goodness. That is, they must transcend merit to go beyond both evil and good. The sublime truth of NIBBĀNA can be expressed even in an ordinary lullaby.

The roots and atmosphere of this virtuous living had been preserved through the years and still existed when Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu was a child.

Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu's original name was Ngeum Panich. He was

born on the 27th of May in the year 2449 of the Buddhist Era, or 1906 of the Christian Era, in Klang Village, Pum Rieng Subdistrict, Chaiya District, Surat Thani Province.

His father's name was Siang and his mother's name was Kleuan. Tan Buddhādāsa was the first child. His younger brother was named Yikey, and is now known as Dhammadāsa. The last child, their sister, was named Kimsoi.

For a child, ordinary village life was the first school of morality and right living. Tan Buddhādāsa learned not to abuse and take the lives of other living beings, not to steal, not to lie, and so forth, in the easy, natural way.

5 Then, when he was eight years old, Tan Buddhādāsa was sent to live at Wat Mai Pum Rieng, the local monastery. As a "wat boy" he learned to read and write, as well as all the things a boy needed to know about Wat life in those days.

When he was eleven, he returned home and started his formal education at Wat Bodharam School. He later continued his studies through the Third grade of Secondary School at Sarapi Utit School in Chaiya.

Tan Buddhādāsa's formal education came to a halt when his father died, for work at home required his help. Tan Buddhādāsa took over the management and daily operation of the family store. This happened when he was sixteen years old.

In addition to running the family business, he was fond of discussing the finer points of Dhamma.

[Tan Ajahn:] There really wasn't much to it. Only that I had read quite a few books and could talk well enough to discuss and debate with the adults, a little. I was just a child and that made it interesting for them. They set me up as a so-called "expert." But I was just an ordinary kid who liked to show off a little, wanted to make a place for myself. So, I studied and researched and gathered things in order to talk and debate. It was all original, the things I came up with were new, different than they'd heard before. So, they thought that I was really talented, or had something special.

Their interest grew, they came around and talked more frequently. I had a chance to show off for awhile. A bit of fun .... (ha-ha).

Due to the fact that his shop also sold books, he always had the opportunity to do a lot of reading.

[Tan Ajahn:] I read everything in the store. Children's books, old fashioned books, humor books, the latest books, the most recent translations of European books, the first novels ever published in Thailand .... We got to read the first sets of these new books to come off the Thai presses. The sales boys came and pressed Mother to buy them. Some of the boys even slept at our house. Eventually, they auctioned off the books 20 for a penny. Think about that. The best books available then, such as "The Thousand and One Arabian Nights," pressed on us at 20 for a single penny. So we bought them, and they piled up because we couldn't sell them all. But we felt sorry for the sales boys. We had books scattered all over. I've enjoyed reading books like this since way before I was a monk.

[Question:] And what about Dhamma books?

[Tan Ajahn:] There were the Dhamma books they sold at the Printing House in front of Wat Koh, in Bangkok. They were the old style of Dhamma books. We had a lot of these books. They were very popular then. I read them, of course, and they got me thinking. They made me think deeply like their authors were doing.

And then Grandpa, who was always interested in Dhamma-Dhammo, had books of his own to read. Sometimes he left them around and I picked them up to read myself. He stayed at our house sometimes.

And I read some of the books of KSR Kulap and Tianwaana, who were the most outspoken and controversial writers then. Of course, I read the official Dhamma studies books--first level, second level, and third level. I read them all even before becoming a monk. As I read them, I had my own

thoughts and ideas. Sometimes I disagreed with the authors. I thought freely about everything and understood things as I saw fit, as it seemed right to me.

When he reached the age of twenty, Tan Buddhādāsa followed the Thai tradition of becoming a BHIKKHU or Buddhist monk. The custom was for all young men to seriously study Buddhism at least once in their lives, usually during the three month long Rains Retreat.

Venerable Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu undertook the going forth and higher ordination as a bhikkhu in the temple of Wat Ubol. The Venerable Phra Kru Sophonsidaram, otherwise known as Kong Wimaralo, was his UPAJJHĀYA (preceptor). The new bhikkhu first took up residence at Wat Mai Pum Riang.

Due to his background of Dhamma reading, study, and debate, the young bhikkhu became a popular preacher not many days after his ordination. Such a thing was most unusual, yet he had his Abbot's full support.

10 [Tan Ajahn:] When I got up into the Dhamma chair in the Dhamma Hall, some things came out that people had never heard before. People found it wonderful and exciting. The word spread and people flocked to come listen. On the observance days, they tried to arrange things so that I spoke in different Wats at different times. First at one Wat, then to a second, and finally at my own. Some people listened to all three sermons. It was like preaching at three Wats at once.

Because he was such a popular speaker, he received the praise, support, and attention of the people around him. So he passed the first Rains Retreat enjoyably immersed in his various activities. In the end, he forgot about his original intention to disrobe at the end of the three months retreat.

At the same time, his younger brother Yikey, now known as Dhammadāsa, had gone up to Bangkok for secondary school. Yikey passed the necessary examinations and entered the Pre-medical curriculum at Chulalongkorn University.

During the time he was studying at University, Yikey was impressed by stories he read about the Buddhist Revival taking place in other countries. He found out about them from the University newspaper and the Japanese magazine "Young East."

Of special interest was the news about Anagarika Dhammapala, the Singhalese man trying to revive the Buddha-Sāsana in both Sri Lanka and India, as well as spread the Buddha-Dhamma to the West.

Yikey followed the progress of these developments with great interest.

When school let out for the year, Yikey returned home for a visit and discovered that his older brother the monk had not disrobed as expected. Consequently, Yikey decided to drop his formal studies and assist their mother with the family store. This choice allowed Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu to continue the homeless religious life without any worries about the situation at home.

Venerable Buddhadāsa continued his studies through a second Rains Retreat and passed the second level of Dhamma studies. Then, his Uncle Siang from Chumporn, who had been a monk at an important Wat in Bangkok for many years, took the trouble to push Venerable Buddhadāsa up to Bangkok, where he could advance in his scriptural studies at Wat Patum Kongka. His experiences in Bangkok, however, had a jolting effect on his life as a monk. He was frustrated and disheartened enough to return home intending to disrobe.

[Tan Ajahn:] Only a few months in Bangkok and I was fed up with the way of living there, with the strain on the nerves. My ideas slowly changed little by little. Within a few months I was thinking, "forget it, I've had it, I don't want any more of this. There's nothing here that I can trust to be correct, or to lead to what I'm looking for."

So, I thought that it was time to stop and try something else. I thought I would have to disrobe. I came back home to do so, but somehow I didn't manage it in time, before the Rains Retreat began. So I took the next level of Dhamma studies and was able to pass the exam. And they made me a

teacher, too. Another year passed enjoyably. When I stopped thinking about disrobing, I ended up going back to Bangkok to study some more. That's how things go."

In his third year, besides continuing his studies on his own and successfully passing the exam, he gave increasingly more time to outside reading. He was much impressed by the writings of the first Thais to return from studying in Europe, particularly what they wrote about world history, science, and Dhamma. He also read English periodicals recommended by Dhammadāsa, such as, "Mahabodhi" and "British Buddhist."

In December 1929 (2472 BE), during Venerable Buddhadasa's fourth year as a bhikkhu, his brother Yikey gathered together a group of relatives and friends who shared similar ideas and sensibilities. They formed their group with the purpose of spreading the Dhamma of the Buddha-Sāsana. This was the group that was to become the Dhammadāna Group and then the Dhammadāna Foundation, now known throughout Thailand, as well as abroad.

The causes and inspiration which led to the formation of the Dhammadāna Group are best explained directly by Mr. Yikey, or Dhammadāsa as he is generally known:

15 [Dhammadāsa:] It started when a Singhalese man came to Purn Rang. He told us about the things the Singhalese Buddhists were doing to spread the Buddha-Sāsana. He recommended some magazines and newsletters to us. We read them all and got to know what was happening in Ceylon, in India, in England. We thought that we ought to do something similar, somehow.

The first thing we did was a "Book Chest." It was a chest to collect and store the best Dhamma books that we could find at the time. Such as books by Luang Wichit Vadakan, who wrote about everything. And King Rama the Sixth's books like "What the Buddha Awakened To" and "Sermon For The Village Tigers." These were the best books available then. We gathered them so that friends could read them. That's how we began, with the "Dhammadāna Chest," that is, a chest of Dhamma books.

[Question:] The books were for anyone to read, is that right?

[Dhammadāsa:] Yes, for ordinary people, everyone.

[Question:] Who were the founding members of the group?

[Dhammadāsa:] Mr. Tiang Jantaravet, Mr. Siva Waanaklad, and Mr. Thaam Jaisa-at helped out the most. In addition, there were the friends who came by to read the books. But those three were the ones who helped with various responsibilities.

As for the Venerable Buddhādāsa, he spent all of his fourth year teaching the Dhamma studies to other monks. He taught at Wat Boromathat Chaiya, a royally sponsored Wat, the most important in the area. When all of his students had successfully passed their exams, his Uncle Siang at Chumporn again pressed him to continue his Pali studies in Bangkok. Everyone else supported that plan, including his own Aṅṅbot, so Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu ended up in Bangkok a second time.

This was the time he began his first attempts at writing. "The Benefits of Giving" and "The Worldlings Level of Buddhism" were the resulting articles.

[books shown:] THE BENEFITS OF GIVING  
THE WORLTLINGS LEVEL OF BUDDHISM

At the end of the year, he passed the first, that is, Level Three Pali examination, as was his goal. More significant, however, than such scholarly progress, were certain changes in his thoughts and understanding. The more widely and deeply he studied the original Pali words of the Lord Buddha, the more his confidence grew in the highest ideal of the Lord Buddha's teaching. New ideas and dreams began to take root in his heart, as he expressed in a letter written to his brother Dhammadāsa.

20 [Tan Ajahn:] "Bangkok is not the place to find purity. I blundered in hoping to study the Scriptural Dhamma, mixed up as it is with fame and status. The positive result is that I have woken up to the fact of my own mis-steps. In this self-awareness of having taken the wrong step, I have found the clue of how now to take the right step.

I have walked following the ways of the world since the minute of my birth until the moment of this awakening. Henceforth, I will not follow the world. I will give up the world to search for that which is pure, to follow the Noble Ones who searched until they found what they were looking for."

Once he had found the path his life must follow, and had made his decision with certainty, Buddhadaśa Bhikkhu returned to Pum Riāng. Now began a new era of following the Noble Ones' footsteps.

He moved into an abandoned temple named Wat Tra Fang Jit. This became the original site of Suan Mokkhabalārama, a name chosen to clearly illuminate the intention of Buddhist practice. It means "The Grove of the Power of Liberation."

The basic principle of life at Suan Mokkh is to make the environment, atmosphere, chores, and duties of the monks and novices, simple and intimate with nature. From the beginning, Suan Mokkh has strived to follow the example of the Lord Buddha's time as far as possible. Such a setting is easy and ideal for studying, investigating, and practicing Dhamma. Upholding this basic principle of spiritual practice eliminates problems about the material aspects of life and is fitting for mental cultivation and progress. Thus, a motto of Suan Mokkh states:

"Eat and live simply, aim for the highest action."

When he first came to live at Suan Mokkh, Buddhadaśa Bhikkhu's primary duty was simply the practice of Dhamma. As he set out, however, it became apparent that his knowledge about how and what to practice was insufficient. It was necessary to discover the guiding principles of practice, through personal research of the Pali scriptures, then, to experiment with and test them in daily reality until certain that they were the correct principles on which to base Dhamma practice. The results of such practice and study is correct understanding of the Buddhist approach. Further, such knowledge was naturally shaped and ready to be shared with others. In the transmission of that Dhamma, the Dhammadāna Group has always been an important vehicle.

\*\*\* Interview with MR. DHAMMADĀSA (Yikey Panich):

[Dhammadāsa:] We printed our magazine "Buddha-Sāsana" four times per year. It contained a variety of articles, things that Tan Buddhādāsa had written throughout the year. In addition, some of the articles were reprinted by sponsors who wanted to give them away free.

[Question:] Regarding the journal, and other ways of spreading the Dhamma, how did Suan Mokkh and the Dhammadāna Group divide the work and responsibilities?

[Dhammadāsa:] The print shop took care of the printing. The Dhammadāna Group took care of the correspondence, money, and other worldly matters. Suan Mokkh, being a Wat, took care of the work appropriate for bhikkhus. This included the preparation of articles about Dhamma practice, Section One of the magazine, and translations from the Tipitika into Thai, which made up Section Two. Section Three, "In The Footsteps of the Arahant," was concerned with practical matters, but depended on principles found in the scriptures.

[Question:] How did you distribute the magazine and how did you publicize it?

[Dhammadāsa:] We began by printing coupons. People could fill in and mail them to us in a letter to ask for the magazine. Some people were interested and sent in the coupons. Once they read the magazine, they also knew what books we had to offer. They could order these books by mail. Word also spread from mouth to mouth.

[Question:] Where did you place the coupons?

[Dhammadāsa:] We placed them in the weekly magazine "Thai Kasem." Instead of mailing letters to individuals, we used a suitable magazine. Then people could send us their addresses if they were interested. The first year, the magazine went out in this way. The second year was the same, and the third, also.

25 [Question:] That first year, how many copies did you print?

[Dhammadāsa:] We printed 1000 copies, 1000 copies of each issue, four issues per year.

[Question:] In the second year, did you have to increase the amount of copies?

[Dhammadāsa:] The second year, we had to print another 1000 copies of each issue from the first year. As for the second year itself, we printed an extra 500 copies of each issue. The year after, another 1000 more.

[Question:] Besides increasing the number of copies printed, what other effects or responses did the magazine spark-- such as criticisms, disagreements, support, or interested visitors?

[Dhammadāsa:] All kinds. Many people got interested. For example, Chao Khum Ladplee, the Minister of Justice then, became interested that first year. He read "Buddha-Sāsana" since the first year, and also sent money to help our work. He provided the money we gave as prizes, as scholarships, to students taking our Buddhist Studies examinations. Many other people were interested, including many monks. For those days, this magazine was something unusual. It was far from ordinary, and came out of nowhere.

[Question:] Did "Buddha-Sāsana Quarterly" have its own printing press from the start?

[Dhammadāsa:] We printed it in Bangkok the first year, at Siam Panichakan Printing, in the Silom area, which closed long ago. The second year, we got our own press, a small one, to print the magazine ourselves.

This harmonious and effective working relationship gave new life to Buddhist circles in Thailand. The "Buddha-Sāsana Quarterly" widened its circulation, becoming well known in Dhamma circles, as well as among the intellectuals in both Bangkok and the provinces.

In the year 1940, another big step was taken by the Dhamma Force from Chaiya. Venerable Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu was invited to

expound the Dhamma at the Buddha-Dhamma Association, Bangkok's most important venue for Buddhist thought. This was the first of what was to become many appearances.

\*\*\* [subtitle:] BUDDHA-DHAMMA ASSOCIATION, BANGKOK

His first Dhamma lecture there was titled "The Way of Reaching Buddha-dhamma." The effect of that first talk was satisfying. It caused a stir within Bangkok Buddhist circles. Different people have reprinted it many times over.

When it was read by Chao Praya Thammasak Montri, the foremost Thai writer and intellectual of the time, he commented that it would be a book which would never die. That prediction turned out to be true, for even today, after more than forty years have passed, it still is being reprinted regularly.

The following year, Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu went up to lecture in Bangkok regularly. Mr. Pridi Panomyong, former Prime Minister and leader of the 1932 Constitutional Reforms, came to listen to the lecture "Buddha-Dhamma and the Spirit of Democracy."

Mr. Pridi Panomyong's faith and admiration for the thought of Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, and the the work of Suan Mokkh, were so powerful that he invited Venerable Buddhadāsa to meet and consult regarding a Dhamma center modeled after Suan Mokkh, which Mr. Pridi hoped to build in Ayudhya, the old Thai capitol.

Unfortunately, the project was never realized. For soon after that, Mr. Pridi's life was threatened by political dangers and he was forced into foreign exile.

Of Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu's many Dhamma lectures at the Buddha-Dhamma Association, the one which created the biggest sensation--some called it a scandal--was titled "The Mountains Of The Buddha-Dhamma Way." The thesis of the talk was that the Triple Gem--the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha--in the view of those believers whose belief was incorrect, would become like Himalayan Mountains obstructing the path to NIBBĀNA.

Venerable Buddhadāsa was condemned and accused of being hired by the Communists to destroy Buddhism. His prosecutors took the

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matter to both the highest government officials and the Sangha elders. It seems that some senior monks even believed the charges. Thus, it was necessary for a senior monk who supported him to bring Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu before representatives of the Council of Elders, that they might learn the facts. Finally, the issue did not cause much harm and eventually quieted down.

As for the civil authorities, due to Venerable Buddhādāsa's long and tireless work, throughout which his motives were entirely pure, the danger was powerless to harm him.

All of Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu's Dhamma lectures were printed into books. For instance, Suvichan Press began to print them with attractive covers and in modern style, and put them on sale in the general market. In this way, his name and his Dhamma teachings received ever expanding interest and attention.

Increasing numbers of Dhamma devotees, both monks and householders, both old and young, came to visit Suan Mokkhabalārāma.

Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu came across the area surrounding Flowing Water Stream, a few kilometers West of Chaiya. He saw it as a fitting location for Dhamma work, and consequently re-established there. This new location was much more expansive than the old site.

Suan Mokkh at Flowing Water Stream is set in beautiful natural surroundings, in a tropical forest, cooled by breezes from the not too distant ocean, and overlooked by Nang E Hill. This new site is ten kilometers from the old one, and six kilometers from the Chaiya Railway Station.

After moving to this new location, Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu still concentrated on his principal work of producing Buddhist literature and expounding the Dhamma. More frequently, he was invited by interested groups to speak in a variety of places. He was appointed by the Sangha administration to be the Provincial and then Regional Leader for Dhamma Propagation. At one time, along with Praya Amarit Thamrong, the Royal Commissioner for the Southern Region, he traveled to every province of the South in order to teach and train government officials, students, and convicts.

In the North of Thailand, Chao Cheun Sirorot, a leading citizen of Chiang Mai, was inspired by the work being done at Suan Mokkh. He organized the construction of a Buddha-Dhamma Center at Wat U-Hong, on the outskirts of Chiang Mai town. This group put out a magazine, published books, and maintained a printing press, following the example of the Dhammadāna Group. Consequently, Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu was required to travel to Chiang Mai frequently in order to give advice and encouragement. On these trips, he also accepted the numerous invitations to expound the Dhamma at places throughout the North and Central Regions.

Beginning in 1956, Venerable Buddhādāsa was asked to lecture on Dhamma during the annual training of prospective judges. For fourteen consecutive years, he presented and explained the fundamental principles of Buddhism to Thailand's future justices in a systematic, concise, and illuminating manner.

Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu's spoken and written work has led to the publication of different series of books. One of the most important is the "From His Own Lips" series. In them are translations solely of the Lord Buddha's own words as recorded in the Pali Tipiṭaka. Venerable Buddhādāsa has selected and arranged these according to subject matter, rather than in the traditional order, so as to bring out more clearly the essential message and teachings of the Lord Buddha. These translations, while carefully accurate, are in a language understandable to the ordinary reader. He has worked on this series since the beginning of Suan Mokkh, periodically publishing it in ever expanding editions, until completing it only a few years ago. This series contains the book with which he is most satisfied, "THE NOBLE TRUTHS FROM HIS OWN LIPS." He worked on this book for fifty years. Other important works in this series are "THE BUDDHA'S LIFE FROM HIS OWN LIPS" and "DEPENDENT ORIGINATION FROM HIS OWN LIPS."

[books shown:] NOBLE TRUTHS FROM HIS OWN LIPS  
 THE BUDDHA'S LIFE FROM HIS OWN LIPS  
 DEPENDENT ORIGINATION FROM HIS OWN LIPS

Another significant branch of Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu's work has been to integrate the Dhamma back into a society which is losing it. He teaches the principle that "the world and the Dhamma must be one and the same." The living of worldly life must be under Dhamma's direction.

35 Further, Venerable Buddhādāsa has proposed an approach to education which is relevant and practical for Thai society, rather than merely mimicing foreign models. Such an approach is moral and in line with Dhamma.

He also proposes a choice for the national development of Thailand, as well as other countries, which he calls "Dhammic Socialism." In such a nation, all people work for the good of society, according to spiritual values rather than material values.

Through many years of study, research, experiment, and personal practice, many varied aspects of the Dhamma have been digested and crystalized in Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu's spiritual life. This bears fruit in another important set of talks, "THE SATURDAY DHAMMA LECTURES." These began in 1973 to respond to the large numbers of weekend visitors coming to Suan Mokkh.

Works in this series are being published continuously, some which are already in print include:

[book shown:] IDAPPACCAYATĀ (Conditionality)

"IDAPPACCAYATĀ," is about the Natural Law of Conditionality. This helps us to look at the world, and our lives within it, according to the actual conditions on which they depend, in a way that really helps us to understand life and nature.

[book shown:] BUDDHA-CARIYĀ (The Buddha's Behaviour)

"The Buddha's Behaviour" collects various stories about the Lord Buddha which point out the Dhamma principles applied to specific situations by the Blessed One, and the way they were applied.



[books shown:] SANDASSETABBA-DHAMMA

(Dhamma Which Ought To Be Seen)

OSĀRETABBA-DHAMMA

(Dhamma Which Ought To Be Fathomed)

"Dhamma Which Ought to Be Seen" discusses how to know whether something is Dhamma or not, from a broad perspective. It goes together with "Dhamma Which Ought To Be Fathomed," which discusses the deep penetration and thorough understanding of those issues.

In addition to the many series of books in the Thai language, an increasing number of Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu's works are being translated into foreign languages. For instance:

English	more than 20,
German	at least 5,
Chinese	2 so far,

as well as one each in Laotian, Indonesian, and French.

Nowadays, the European and American colleges and universities which offer programs and curricula in Buddhist Studies, include some of Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu's writings in their reading lists.

At this time, all the thoughts and writings of Venerable Buddhādāsa are being published in permanent form in the "DHAMMA PROCLAMATION SERIES." Eventually, this series will be a complete collection of all his written work.

In addition to his principle work, the oral and written transmission of Dhamma, Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu has undertaken a number of other valuable and beneficial activities. For example, he works to build mutual good-understanding among the various schools of Buddhism. He has studied Mahayana Buddhism, and even has translated passages from the Lankavatara Sutra. Zen Buddhism was unknown in Thailand until he translated "THE HUI NENG SUTRA" and "THE ZEN TEACHING OF HUANG PO" from English to Thai. He has read some Vajrayana Buddhist works as well.

Further, he has gone so far as to study the Christian Bible. In 1967, he was invited to deliver the Sinclair Thompson Memorial Lectures at the Christian Theological Seminary in Chiang Mai. At Suan Mokkh itself, groups of Christians, including lay people,

students, nuns, and priests, regularly visit to study and practice Dhamma.

As for Islam, Venerable Buddhādāsa has read and studied The Qu'ran. He has a number of Islamic Dhamma Friends, with whom he meets regularly to exchange perspectives on Dhamma. Further, the "Buddha-Sāsana Quarterly" prints articles written by Thai students of Islam.

The thoughts and studies of Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu are not limited merely to the sphere of religion. He has been interested seriously in archeology, and was even appointed the Director of the Surat Thani branch of the National Museum. He also has published a few articles and books based on his research of local archeology.

Back in the religious sphere, he has been given special assignments by the Sangha authorities. He was asked to train monks going abroad as "Dhamma Ambassadors" to spread the Buddhist teachings. The instruction and training which he gave them was direct, intimate, and inspiring.

Another special occasion was when he went to Burma in 1954. The Thai Sangha chose him as one of their representatives to the Sixth Buddhist Council in Rangoon. There, Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu delivered a lecture on the subject of "Certain Wonderful Characteristics of Theravada Buddhism."

The extent and quality of these works, continued over many years, has interested a wide variety of people in the activities of Suan Mokkh. During a visit to Thailand, the Dalai Lama, the Supreme Head of Tibetan Buddhism, met Venerable Buddhādāsa in Bangkok. On a subsequent trip, he made a special point of coming down for a visit at Suan Mokkh.

Due to the fact that it must receive a continuous stream of visitors from around the world, Suan Mokkh is more than just a Wat, or residence for monks. It offers far more than just a place for people to come and perform religious ceremonies. Suan Mokkh has the steadfast purpose and responsibility to carry on the duty of serving Dhamma to all. All the various things at Suan Mokkh, those constructed by human hands and those built by

nature, exist in order to transmit Dhamma.

This is "The Theatre of Spiritual Entertainment." Inside, the walls and pillars of the building are covered with paintings. The purpose of the pictures is to illustrate Dhamma, in many ways, on many levels, so that people may understand the nature of their world, and their lives within it. Here the old custom of teaching Dhamma with pictures is continued, sometimes by using modern equipment, such as slides, movies, and tapes.

All around the outside walls of the Theatre are reliefs illustrating the Life Story of the Lord Buddha. These were reproduced from photographs of the ancient Indian Buddhist sculptures at Sanchi, Bharhut, Amaravati, and Buddhakaya.

45 The reproduction of these sculptures was the cause behind the Modeling Workshop.

Later, after the reproductions were finished, Luang Ta Sawai, the head of the workshop, converted the workshop to the production of plaster statuettes and coin banks, balloons, and other objects used in teaching Dhamma to children, and their parents.

[Luang Ta:] This young fellow here, do you like soft drinks? Pepsi, Coke, Sprite--do you like them, or not?

[Child:] Not very much.

[Luang Ta:] Not very much? Ah, you really do like them. Can you make a promise to Luang Ta, if you like the stuff? How much do they sell a bottle for?

[Child:] Five baht.

[Luang Ta:] Suppose you drink one bottle a day. Five baht each day, how much would that be over a month?

[Child:] Uhmhhh, 150 baht.

[Luang Ta:] And how much for one year? Many hundreds of baht. What about ten years? Now it's thousands of baht. And for twenty years? It's too much to figure out, but we can be sure the businessmen made a lot of money, and that mother and father are in bad shape. Can you promise Luang Ta? When you get back home, start things over again. Just a second, Luang Ta will give you a Lion bank. Whenever you're thirsty for a soft drink, drop some money into the bank--3 baht, or 5 baht. Then go drink some nice, clean rain water, or some cool water from the refrigerator instead.

With the adults, Luang Ta Sawai will persuade them to give up their bad habits like smoking, drinking, gambling, and other addictions that ruin the family's health and economy. His persuasive powers are attested to by this memorial of poisons surrendered under his prompting.

Another prominent work of art is the statue of Avalokitesvara Bodhisatva. It is a copy, made by the former Pra Kowit Khemananda, of a Sri Vijaya masterpiece. The original was found at Chaiya and is now in Bangkok's National Museum. This statue wasn't made as an idol to worship in response to superstitious beliefs. Rather, it was made as an object for reflection on the Dhamma Virtues of the Bodhisatva.

Venerable Buddhādāsa explains that an Avalokitesvara image which is sufficiently and appropriately beautiful must exhibit Purity, Wisdom, Friendliness, and Patience. When we look at it correctly, our hearts are at ease. It acts as a potent reminder of these important Virtues.

Another tool for teaching Dhamma at Suan Mokkh is the NALIKE POND. It was built according to the message of a local lullaby, as a memorial to the moral standards and wisdom of past generations. These ancestors understood Dhamma so profoundly that they could explain the sublime reality of NIBBĀNA through a children's lullaby.

Dearest little one,  
     the coconut palm stands,  
 One lonely tree,  
     midst the ocean of wax.

Rain doesn't touch,  
     thunder doesn't reach,  
 Midst the ocean of wax,  
     reached just by those who transcend all merit.

The various constructions within Suan Mokkh were built solely for the needs of the Dhamma work. As the faithful visit Suan Mokkh in continuous and ever increasing numbers, whether merely to have a look or to study and practice Dhamma, they require a place to sleep, for a few days, few months, or even years. Thus, huts in the forest, dormitories and houses, toilets, and water for washing and drinking must be provided.

This DHAMMA-NAVA, or Ship of Dhamma, is a storage tank for rain water. And to give it value as a Dhamma Puzzle, it was built in the form of a boat, to be a symbol for the Dhamma Ship which carries all beings across the Sea of SAMŚĀRA to the safety and peace of NIBBĀNA.

Because the first ship could not hold enough water, a second was built. Both were built with the sweat and labor of the monks, novices, and villagers. The bow of the ship is the Mokkhabalabaanalai Library. Inside is a meeting hall and place to chant when it rains. Upstairs is lodging for visiting monks and laymen who have traveled here to study Dhamma.

50 Foreign Friends enter Suan Mokkh to receive Dhamma training and instruction, also. The monastery, under the direction of Ajahn Poh Jantasaro, is involved in staging Dhamma Courses every month from the first to the eleventh. Separate lodgings and facilities are provided for them.

[Ajahn Buddhadasa's short talk to the foreigners isn't translated here. Tan Santikaro's original translation is on the tape.]

After these Dhamma Courses began to receive growing interest

from foreigners, the monastery acquired land to build a new Dhamma Practice Center. Not very far from Suan Mokkh itself, it is located in a coconut palm grove beside two limestone hills from which flow hot springs. It is called the "International Dharma Hermitage," and is intended for the monthly courses and other group trainings. Venerable Buddhadaśa also plans to host meetings between groups from the different schools of Buddhism, and the different religions as well.

Furthermore, within Suan Mokkh there are yet many more accommodations for those who come to practice. The UPASIKĀ's Area is set aside especially for women devoted to Dhamma.

Of course, there also are meditation huts in the forest for plain and simple living, to answer the need for quiet and solitude in the midst of natural surroundings.

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55 At Suan Mokkh, the day begins at 4 a.m.. The monks, novices, and laymen, coming in ones and twos from the different corners of the Wat, meet together at the LAN HIN KONG, or Curved Rock Court, for the morning chanting service. The laywomen have their own special place for meeting.

[[[Sound of monks chanting.]]]

[[[Rooster crows.]]]

Once the chanting is completed, the monks and novices prepare to go out on alms round. The lay devotees and practitioners, both women and men, disperse in order to do their personal duties.

The number of monks and novices staying at Suan Mokkh is large, especially during the three months of the annual Rains Retreat. If they were to depend solely on the homes around the Wat for all their food, it would burden the villagers too much. Thus, a kitchen is needed to prepare some additional food. This food from the Suan Mokkh kitchen, however, is very simple and inexpensive. Only a few dishes are cooked each day.

60 When the monks return from alms round, they generally attend to personal duties or help to sweep the public areas of the Wat.

When the time reaches eight o'clock, the monks and novices come to eat together at the main dining hall. While the monks are eating, any supporters who have come to offer food chant the morning service. Having the people chant was Venerable Buddhādāsa's idea, a skillful way to hold their attention on something useful, rather than letting them make a lot of noise talking about unimportant matters.

[[[Mae Chi(nuns) and layfolk chanting.]]]

On special occasions, a "Demonstration Meal" is held at the LAN HIN KONG. Demonstration meals are a certain way of feeding the monks on special days, such as religious holidays. At Suan Mokkh, they are officially known as "Demonstration Food Offerings." This means that these meals show how monks were fed in the Lord Buddha's time, so that a large number of monks could be fed in a short amount of time, with minimal difficulty, minimal disorder, and minimal waste.

When finished eating, the monks disburse to carry out their responsibilities depending on their particular work. The monks at Suan Mokkh can be divided into two groups. The first group is the resident monks. The other group is those monks who come to study Dhamma for a certain period of time. The resident monks usually have specific duties which they perform daily.

65 Some monks teach the Dhamma to people. [[[Monks teaching.]]]

Some monks help at the Workshop.

Some monks take care of the library.

Some monks do mechanical, electrical, and construction work.

At Suan Mokkh, the day before each of the four monthly holy days is Labor Day. The monks always work together on a project requiring a lot of labor and energy. Labor Day is a custom that goes back to the beginning of Suan Mokkh, according to the motto, "wash away selfishness with sweat."

Those monks who practice with an emphasis on formal meditation; train in huts up in the forest at the back of the Wat.

Every fortnight, on the full and new moon days, the monks gather on the top of Golden Buddha Hill to perform the Patimokkha recitation. This hilltop is the site of Suan Mokkh's temple. The Suan Mokkh style of temple is an example of how to economize, have a fully operational facility, and still be in line with the Lord Buddha's Dhamma and Discipline, as well as Sangha laws.

This temple is the natural, open air type that existed in the Buddha's time. The surrounding tree trunks and branches are the temple walls. The indigo sky and white clouds above are the temple roof. The tree tops bouncing in the wind are the living gable decorations. Stone pillars are planted in the eight directions to mark the boundary of the special meeting area used for important Sangha meetings, such as ordination ceremonies. In addition, the local villagers come here to celebrate the candle circumambulation ceremony on the Buddhist holy days.

Through the 50 years of Suan Mokkh, and the 80 years of Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu's life, time and the physical body have flowed along in ceaseless transformation. But one thing that has endured consistently is the life of service to the Lord Buddha and the Dhamma. The practice of Dhamma itself, the study and research of the scriptures, the collection of the knowledge gained from that practice and research, and the expression of that wisdom in order to help human comrades--Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu has dedicated his life completely to all aspects of this work. In line with the Buddha's teaching, and as truly fits the meaning of the name "Slave of the Buddha," this life of Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu has truly been lived for the welfare of others, as well as his own.

70

The life of Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu has always been a life of work in which Dhamma practice is the heart and essence. The life of work and service is spiritually both means and end. He stresses and demonstrates this untiringly, and invites us to join him.

[Tan Ajahn:] I want everyone to realize that Dhamma is duty, or to see that duty itself is Dhamma. Whether people in the past, or those living today, no one ever thinks that duty is Dhamma. Instead, we do our duties because necessity forces us. If we don't do them, we have nothing to eat. So we do

our duties by the force of necessity. This goes against our feelings and we are miserable at the same time that we do our duty. We call this "falling into hell while working." There is nothing cheerful about falling into hell while working. May all these people who have duties to perform please discover that these duties are Dhamma itself.

Dhamma is the thing that will help save people. And duty is the thing that will help save us, because the two are one and the same thing. If they say that God will save us, we must say that duty by itself is what saves us. If we do not do our duty, however many Gods you wish are powerless to help. When duty is done, that duty becomes the God that saves us. The meaning is exactly the same as Dhamma. Whoever has Dhamma is saved. Whoever does their duty is saved. Would you please observe carefully that any kind of saving duty should be respected as Dhamma.

You do not have to add anything to the everyday duties that you already have. But be careful. If you are going to do something, please see it as Dhamma. With one's best mindfulness and understanding, set one's heart and mind on doing those duties as well as possible, as correctly as possible. Then be content with those duties. That is how to be happy all the time one is doing those duties.

75 The result is that there is Dhamma in all movements. There is joy in all movements, because they are Dhamma. People do not need to do any extra duties beyond what they are doing already. But please learn to be aware and feel that duty is Dhamma. We must do our best until satisfaction and contentment arise; that will be happiness all the time the duty is done. To do our duty all day long is to be happy all day long. To do our duty the entire month is to be happy the entire month, even the entire year. This is called being happy in all movements, because we are able to turn our duties into Dhamma, through correct understanding.

Before, we never felt this way. When we said the word "duty," we always felt tired. And we felt like doing it only

to claim our right to get something in return. Even this is a kind of force, to be forced to do our duty, which makes it a burden most difficult to endure. Then, we are miserable in doing that duty, merely for the sake of having the right to demand something in return.

Now, it need not be that way anymore. We just do our duty and are satisfied, then we are happy. While doing just that duty we are happy, we are happy in that duty. Doing our duty all day long, we are happy all day long. Doing our duty all year, we are happy all year. These results mean, in short and simple terms, that "Duty is Dhamma."

Would everyone please feel this way about doing their duties. Then those duties will be satisfying, they will be gratifying. We call this "being happy while working." This is the opposite of how it used to be, "falling into hell while working." Now we go to heaven while working. Please look at things in this way, understand life in this way, and transform your duties into heaven. Duty and heaven are together and become the same thing. You won't have to invest your money in heaven anymore. If there is satisfaction in doing our duty, there is happiness. When doing duty, that is true happiness. We refresh ourself, we respect ourself, and we honor ourself. This is the source of our best happiness.

The fruits of work, of duties, are not lost. They come as they always have and they can be used as needed. If they are genuinely used correctly, there will be other benefits, but happiness is already achieved when we do our duties, including the little ones. Duties start with waking up in the morning, brushing our teeth, and washing our face--we are happy the whole time we are washing our face. But fools never get it. Their hearts are floating around who knows where. They have no intention to wash their face as Dhamma, to do their best, to be content and happy all the time they are washing their face.

Fools cannot do it. Happiness and contentment are only for those who have the mindfulness and wisdom to see that even

washing our face is a duty. It is a duty that is Dhamma. Proud in washing our face as best as we can, do it correctly, contentedly happy the entire time of washing our face.

If we go to take a bath, it's exactly the same. From the first moment it's duty, it's Dhamma. We are contented with doing it as well and correctly as possible. Satisfied every moment of bathing means one is happy the whole time of bathing, which is something that fools cannot do. One must know this oneself, but whoever thinks about it?

We continue in the toilet as we defecate or urinate, which are duties we must do; if we don't we will die. So we do our best and are satisfied. Contentment is knowing we are correct in defecating and urinating. Make it satisfying and correct, then there will be joy the entire time one defecates and urinates. Fools cannot do it, because fools do not act with such a heart. Thus they suffer the entire time they are defecating and urinating.

It is the same while we eat, throughout the whole activity of eating. Even while washing the dishes, if one must, or wants, to help with the dishes, be satisfied with washing those dishes. That is the duty of washing dishes. Happy with washing dishes the whole time. If one helps to sweep the floor and clean the house, then one should be happy the whole time one sweeps and cleans.

The Thick Ones just cannot do it. All the fools who have these exact same duties cannot even do them. They don't have this feeling because they lack understanding. They don't know that duty is Dhamma. Once they know that duty is Dhamma, they are satisfied, content, and delighted. And that is happiness.

Don't bother asking anyone else, everyone must know this personally. When we are happy with everything, from washing our face, taking a bath, defecating, urinating, eating, cleaning the house, dressing for work, going out to work, and most especially at the office, we are correct and content. We do our best and are happy all the while we are working.

Returning home it's the same. To do anything, anywhere, the principle never changes. Thereby, we are happy in every movement. These are words that the Thick Ones won't accept. They don't believe that we can have Dhamma in every movement. They don't believe that we can be happy in every movement. That's up to them, they can suffer if they wish. But please go and examine this fact carefully.

If you have seen this truth you will be content, and contented you are happy. Farmers will work their fields and orchards happily. Traders will do business joyfully. Civil servants will serve the people happily. Laborers working bathed in sweat will be cool with happiness. Beggars will beg happily and coolly. No one will suffer if we see that duty is Dhamma, Dhamma is duty.

We do our best, our very best. We act as correctly as we can, we are as satisfied as we can be, and we are happy. The undeniable fact is that we can do duty in every movement, can have Dhamma in every movement, can be happy in every movement. There is only this matter. Dhamma is duty, duty is Dhamma.

80

The nature of all things, and all life, is to arise, exist, and pass away. But before the dissolving of this body-compound, what kind of life should we lead? What sort of life fits this opportunity of human birth? Do we live in order to be slaves to materialism, selfishness, and desire? Or do we live in order to be slaves of the Buddha-Dhamma? Do we dedicate ourselves to creating a life and world that is complete with Dhamma? In item 40 of the "legacy" which he humbly bequeaths to those who would carry on the work of serving the Lord Buddha and humanity, Buddhāsa Bhikkhu shares his hope that:

[Tan Ajahn:] Please, may we stick to one special goal.

Sooner or later, we are going to have a world that is fulfilled because of Dhamma, through everyone doing their duty. Aware in our hearts, with mindfulness and clear comprehension, that this correct duty is nothing less than the Dhamma which will lift us above all problems. All these things can happen because the world is always changing. We ought to provide the conditions for change that will fulfill this goal for the world.

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