

*Evening*  
*Chanting Guide*

*Wat Lao Buddhamaḱaram*

*3624 Bexvie Avenue, Columbus OH 43227*

*March 2008*

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Many thanks for the kind assistance of:

Bhante Thavorn, Bhante Khamtan, Bhante Suriyan, Chris Aust and Eddie Bowles.

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 “Offering of Merit” & “Closing” used from Chanting Book of Wat Pradhatu Sri Chomtong Voravihara by Phra Claus Pabhankaro (Dr. Clause Sandler) Chomtong Thailand, V 2.2 Gotzenhain Germand, Feb 2004.  
 Excerpts on Chanting and notes on Bowing taken from WWW.

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All sections in Pali except for (\*) which is Pali alternating with Thai. Thai portion is not included in this booklet.

## Pronunciation 🗨️

Paali is the original language of the Theravadin Buddhist scriptures, the closest we have to the dialect spoken by the Buddha himself. It has no written script of its own, and so every country that has adopted Theravada Buddhism has used its own script to transcribe it. In Thailand this has meant that Paali has picked up some of the tones of the Thai language, as each consonant & consonant cluster in the Thai alphabet has a built-in tone — high, medium, low, rising, or falling. This accounts for the characteristic melody of Thai Paali chanting.

### *Vowels*

Paali has two sorts of vowels, *long* — aa, e, ii, o, uu, & ay; and *short* — a, i, & u. Unlike long and short vowels in English, the length here refers to the actual amount of time used to pronounce the vowel, and not to its quality. Thus *aa* & *a* are both pronounced like the *a* in father, simply that the sound *aa* is held for approximately twice as long as the sound *a*. The same principle holds for *ii* & *i*, and for *uu* & *u*. Thus, when chanting Paali, the vowels are pronounced as follows:

**a** as in father  
**o** as in go  
**e** as in they  
**u** as in glue  
**i** as in machine  
**ay** as in Aye!

### *Consonants*

Consonants are generally pronounced as they are in English, with a few unexpected twists:

**c** as in ancient  
**p** unaspirated, as in spot  
**k** unaspirated, as in skin  
**ph** as in upholstery  
**kh** as in backhand  
**t** unaspirated, as in stop  
**.m** & **"n** as ng  
**th** as in Thomas  
**ñ** as in cañon  
**v** as w

Certain two-lettered notations — **bh**, **dh**, **.dh**, **gh**, **jh** — denote an aspirated sound, somewhat in the throat, that we do not have in English and that the Thais do not have in

their language, either. The Thai solution to this problem is to pronounce *bh* as a throaty *ph*, *dh* as a throaty *th*, and *gh* as a throaty *kh*.

Paali also contains retroflex consonants, indicated with a dot under the letter: **.d, .dh, .l, .n, .t, .th**. These have no English equivalent. They are sounded by curling the tip of the tongue back against the palate, producing a distinct nasal tone.

### ***Meter***

The meters of Paali poetry consists of various patterns of full-length syllables alternating with half-length syllables.

#### **Full-length syllables:**

contain a long vowel (aa, e, ii, o, uu, ay); *or*

end with .m; *or*

end with a consonant followed by a syllable beginning with a consonant (e.g., Bud-dho, Dham-mo, Sa"n-gho).

In this last case, the consonant clusters mentioned above — bh, dh, .dh, gh, jh, kh, ph, th, .th — count as single consonants, while other combinations containing h — such as lh & mh — count as double.)

**Half-length syllables** end in a short vowel.

Thus, a typical line of verse would scan as follows:

Van - daa - ma - ha.m ta - ma - ra - .na.m si - ra - saa ji - nen -  
da.m  
1 1 1/2 1 1/2 1/2 1/2 1 1/2 1/2 1 1/2 1 1

In this book, wherever possible, many of the long compound words have been broken down with hyphens into their component words to make them easier to read and — for anyone studying Paali — to understand. This creates only one problem in scanning: When the hyphen is preceded by a consonant (usually *m* or *d*) and followed by a vowel, the consonant forms a syllable together with the vowel following the hyphen and not with the vowel preceding it. Thus, for instance, *dhammam-eta.m* would scan as *dham-ma-me-ta.m.*; and *tam-ara.na.m* as *ta-ma-ra-.na.m*.

If all these rules seem daunting, the best course is simply to listen carefully to the group and to chant along, following as closely as possible their tempo, rhythm, and pitch. All voices, ideally, should blend together as one.

## *Evening Chanting*

*(bow down 3 times)*

### **(Imina sakalena tam buddham abhipujayama)**

Through these offerings, I pay respect to the Buddha.

**[*Araham sammaa-sambuddho bhagavaa.*]**

The Blessed One is Worthy & Rightly Self-awakened.

### **Buddham bhagavantam abhivaademi.**

I bow down before the Awakened, Blessed One.

*(bow down)*

### **(Imina sakalena tam dhammam abhipujayama)**

Through these offerings, I pay respect to the Dhamma.

### **Svaakkhaato bhagavataa dhammo.**

The Dhamma is well-expounded by the Blessed One.

### **Dhammam namassaami.**

I pay homage to the Dhamma.

*(bow down)*

### **(Imina sakalena tam sangham abhipujayama)**

Through these offerings, I pay respect to the Sangha.

### **Supatipanno bhagavato saavaka-sa"ngho.**

The Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples has practiced well.

### **Sa"ngam namaami.**

I pay respect to the Sangha.

*(bow down)*

---

INVOCATION (by leader):

**Handadaani mayanta.m bhagavanta.m vaacaaya abhigaayitu.m pubba-bhaaga-  
namakaarañceva buddhaanussati-nayañca karoma se:**

Now let us chant the preliminary passage in homage to the Blessed One, together with the guide to the recollection of the Buddha:

*Preliminary Passage in Homage (to the Buddha)*

(ALL):

**[Namo tassa] bhagavato arahato sammaa-sambuddhassa.**

(Three times.)

Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Rightly Self-awakened One.

---

Refuge:

**[Buddham saranam gacchaami]**

I go to the Buddha for refuge.

**Dhammam saranam gacchaami.**

I go to the Dhamma for refuge.

**Sa"ngam saranam gacchaami.**

I go to the Sa"ngam for refuge.

**Dutiyampi buddham saranam gacchaami.**

A second time, I go to the Buddha for refuge.

**Dutiyampi dhammam saranam gacchaami.**

A second time, I go to the Dhamma for refuge.

**Dutiyampi sa"ngam saranam gacchaami.**

A second time, I go to the Sa"ngam for refuge.

**Tatiyampi buddham saranam gacchaami.**

A third time, I go to the Buddha for refuge.

**Tatiyampi dhammam saranam gacchaami.**

A third time, I go to the Dhamma for refuge.

**Tatiyampi sa"ngam saranam gacchaami.**

A third time, I go to the Sa"ngam for refuge.

---

*A Guide to the Recollection of the Buddha*

**[*Tam kho pana bhagavantam*] evam kalyaano kitti-saddo  
abbhuggato,**

This fine report of the Blessed One's reputation has spread far & wide:

**Itipi so bhagavaa araham sammaa-sambuddho,**

He is a Blessed One, a Worthy One, a Rightly Self-awakened One,

**Vijjaa-carana-sampanno sugato lokaviduu,**

consummate in knowledge & conduct, one who has gone the good way, knower of the  
cosmos,

**Anuttaro purisa-damma-saarathi satthaa deva-manusnaanam  
buddho bhagavaati.**

unexcelled trainer of those who can be taught, teacher of human & divine beings;  
awakened; blessed.

---

*Verses in Celebration of the Buddha*

(LEADER):

**Handa mayam buddhaabhigiti.m karoma se:**

Now let us chant in celebration of the Buddha:

(ALL):

**Buddha vaarahanta-varataadigunaabhiyutto,**

The Buddha, endowed with such virtues as highest worthiness:

**Suddhaabhiñaana-karunaahi samaagatatto,**

In him, purity, supreme knowledge, & compassion converge.

**Bodhesi yo sujanatam kamalam va suuro,**

He awakens good people like the sun does the lotus.

**Vandaam'aham tam-aranam sirasaa jinendam.**

I revere with my head that Peaceful One, the Conqueror Supreme.

**Buddho yo sabba-paa.niinam,  
Saranam khemam-uttamam.**

The Buddha who for all beings  
is the secure, the highest refuge,

**Pathamaanussatitthaanam,  
Vandaami tam sirenaham,**

The first theme for recollection:  
I revere him with my head.

**Buddhassaahasmi daaso (WOMEN: daasii) va,  
Buddho me saamikissaro.**

I am the Buddha's servant,  
the Buddha is my sovereign master,

**Buddho dukkhassa ghaataa ca,  
Vidhaataa ca hitassa me.**

The Buddha is a destroyer of suffering  
& a provider of welfare for me.

**Buddhassaaham niyyaademi,  
Sariirañjiivitañcidam.**

To the Buddha I dedicate this body  
& this life of mine.

**Vandanto'ham (Vandantii'ha.m) carissaami,  
Buddhasseva subodhitam.**

I will fare with reverence  
for the Buddha's genuine Awakening.

**N'atthi me saranam aññam,  
Buddho me saranam varam:**

I have no other refuge,  
the Buddha is my foremost refuge:

**Etena sacca-vajjena,  
Vaddheyyam satthu-saasane.**

By the speaking of this truth,  
may I grow in the Teacher's instruction.

**Buddham me vandamaanena, (vandamaanaaya)  
Yam puññam pasutam idha,**

Through the power of the merit here produced by my reverence for the Buddha,

**Sabbe pi antaraayaa me,  
Maahe sum tassa tejasaa.**

may all my obstructions  
cease to be.

---

*(bow down and say)*

**Kayena vacaya va cetasa va,  
Buddhe kukammam pakatam mayaa yam,  
Buddho patigganhatu accayantam,  
Kaalantare samvaritum va buddhe.**

Through action, speech, or thought,  
Whatever bad kamma I have done to the Buddha  
may the Buddha accept my admission of it,  
so that in the future I may show restraint toward the Buddha.

---

*A Guide to the Recollection of the Dhamma*

(LEADER):

**Handa mayam dhammaanussati-nayam karoma se:**

Now let us recite the guide to the recollection of the Dhamma:

(ALL):

**Svaakkhaato bhagavataa dhammo,**

The Dhamma is well-expounded by the Blessed One,

**Sanditthiko akaaliko chipassiko,**

to be seen here & now, timeless, inviting all to come & see,

**Opanayiko paccattam veditabbo viññuhiiti.**

leading inward, to be seen by the wise for themselves.

*Verses in Celebration of the Dhamma*

(LEADER):

**Handa mayam dhammaabhigiiim karoma se:**

Now let us chant in celebration of the Dhamma:

(ALL):

**Svaakkhaatataa diguna-yogavasena seyyo,**

Superior, through having such virtues as being well-expounded,

**Yo magga-paaka-pariyatti-vimokkha-bhedo,**

Divided into Path & Fruit, study & emancipation,

**Dhammo kuloka-patanaa tadadhaari-dhaarii.**

The Dhamma protects those who hold to it from falling into miserable worlds.

**Vandaam'aham tama-haram vara-dhammam-etam.**

I revere that foremost Dhamma, the destroyer of darkness.

**Dhammo yo sabba-paaniinam,  
Saranam khemam-uttamam.**

The Dhamma that for all beings  
is the secure, the highest refuge,

**Dutiyaanussatitthaanam,  
Vandaami tam sirenaham,**

The second theme for recollection:

I revere it with my head.

**Dhammassaahasmi daaso (daasii) va,  
Dhammo me saamikissaro.**

I am the Dhamma's servant,  
the Dhamma is my sovereign master,

**Dhammo dukkhassa ghaataa ca,  
Vidhaataa ca hitassa me.**

The Dhamma is a destroyer of suffering  
& a provider of welfare for me.

**Dhammassaaham niyyaademi,  
Sariirañjiivitañcidam.**

To the Dhamma I dedicate this body  
& this life of mine.

**Vandanto'ham (Vandantii'ha.m) carissaami,  
Dhammasseva sudhammatam.**

I will fare with reverence  
for the Dhamma's genuine rightness.

**N'atthi me saranam aññam,  
Dhammo me saranam varam:**

I have no other refuge,  
the Dhamma is my foremost refuge:

**Etena sacca-vajjena,  
Vaddheyyam satthu-saasane.**

By the speaking of this truth,  
may I grow in the Teacher's instruction.

**Dhammam me vandamaanena, (vandamaanaaya)  
Yam puññam pasutam idha,**

Through the power of the merit here produced by my reverence for the Dhamma,

**Sabbe pi antaraayaa me,  
Maahe sum tassa tejasaa.**

may all my obstructions  
cease to be.

---

*(bow down and say)*

**Kaayena vaacaaya va cetasaa vaa,  
Dhamme kukammam pakatam mayaa yam,  
Dhammo patigghanhatu accayantam,  
Kaalantare samvaritum va dhamme.**

Through action, speech, or thought,  
Whatever bad kamma I have done to the Dhamma  
may the Dhamma accept my admission of it,  
so that in the future I may show restraint toward the Dhamma.

---

*A Guide to the Recollection of the Sangha*

(LEADER):

**Handa maya.m sa"nghaanussati-naya.m karoma se:**

Now let us recite the guide to the recollection of the Sangha:

(ALL):

**Supatipanno bhagavato saavaka-sa"ngho,**

The Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples who have practiced well,

**Uju-patipanno bhagavato saavaka-sa"ngho,**

the Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples who have practiced straightforwardly,

**Ñaaya-patipanno bhagavato saavaka-sa"ngho,**

the Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples who have practiced methodically,

**Saamiici-patipanno bhagavato saavaka-sa"ngho,**

the Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples who have practiced masterfully,

**Yadidam cattaari purisa-yugaani attha purisa-puggalaa:**

i.e., the four pairs — the eight types — of Noble Ones:

**Esa bhagavato saavaka-sa"ngho —**

That is the Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples —

**AAhuneyyo paahuneyyo dakkhineyyo añjali-karaniyyo,**

worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of respect,

**Anuttaram puññakkhettam lokassaati.**

the incomparable field of merit for the world.

*Verses in Celebration of the Sa"ngha*

(LEADER):

**Handa maya.m sa"nghaabhigiitim karoma se:**

Now let us chant in celebration of the Sangha:

(ALL):

**Saddhammajo supatipatti-gunaadiyutto,**

Born of the true Dhamma, endowed with such virtues as good practice,

**Yotthaabbidho ariya-puggala-sa"ngha-settho,**

The supreme Sangha formed of the eight types of Noble Ones,

**Siilaadidhamma-pavaraasaya-kaaya-citto:**

Guided in body & mind by such principles as morality:

**Vandaam'aha.m tam-ariyaana-ganam susuddham.**

I revere that group of Noble Ones well-purified.

**Sa"ngho yo sabba-paaniinam,  
Saranam khemam-uttamam.**

The Sangha that for all beings  
is the secure, the highest refuge,

**Tatiyaanussatitthaanam,  
Vandaami tam sirenaham,**

The third theme for recollection:  
I revere it with my head.

**Sa"nghassaahasmī daaso (daasii) va,  
Sa"ngḥo me saamikissaro.**

I am the Sangha's servant,  
the Sangha is my sovereign master,

**Sa"ngḥo dukkhassa ghaataa ca,  
Vidhaataa ca hitassa me.**

The Sangha is a destroyer of suffering &  
a provider of welfare for me.

**Sa"nghassaaham niyyaademi,  
Sariirañjiivitañcidam.**

To the Sangha I dedicate this body  
& this life of mine.

**Vandanto'ha.m (Vandantii'ha.m) carissaami,  
Sa"nghassopatipannatam.**

I will fare with reverence  
for the Sangha's good practice.

**N'atthi me saranam aññam,  
Sa"ngḥo me saranam varam:**

I have no other refuge,  
the Sangha is my foremost refuge:

**Etena sacca-vajjena,  
Vaddheyyam satthu-saasane.**

By the speaking of this truth,  
may I grow in the Teacher's instruction.

**Sa"nghan me vandamaanena, (vandamaanaaya)  
Yam puññam pasutam idha,**

Through the power of the merit here produced by my reverence for the Sangha,

**Sabbe pi antaraayaa me,  
Maahe sum tassa tejasaa.**

may all my obstructions  
cease to be.

---

*(bow down and say)*

**Kaayena vaacaaya va cetasaa vaa,  
Sa"nghe kukammam pakatam mayaa yam,  
Sa"nghe patigghanatu accayantam,  
Kaalantare samvaritum va sa"nghe.**

Through action, speech, or thought,  
Whatever bad kamma I have done to the Sangha  
may the Sangha accept my admission of it,  
so that in the future I may show restraint toward the Sangha.

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*Invocation and Prayer (Paritta-parikamma)*  
*Inviting the Devas to Hear the Dhamma*

**\*\*\*Not always recited**

\*Chanted by one monk only

**Samanta cakkavalesu**  
From all round the world systems

**atthara gachantu devata,**  
may the devas come here to this place

**saddhammam munira cassa**  
the true Dhamma of the king of sages

**sunantu saggamokkhadam,**  
is to be heard; leading to heaven and liberation

**sagge kame ca rupe      giri-siharatate      c'antalikkhe vimane,**  
Those in the heavens of sensuality and form,      on peaks and mountain precipices,  
in palaces floating in the sky,

**dipe ratthe ca game      taruvana-gahane      geha-vatthumhi khetto;**  
in islands, countries, and towns,      in groves of trees and thickets,      around home sites and fields.

**bhumma cayantu deva jala-thala-visame yakkha-gandhabba-naga,**

And the earth-devas, spirits, heavenly minstrels, and nagas in water, on land, in badlands, and nearby:

**titthanta santike yam      muni-vara-vacanam sadhavo me sunantu.**

May they come and listen with approval

As I recite the word of the excellent sage.

**\*Dhammassavana-kalo ayam bhadanta,  
Dhammassavana-kalo ayam bhadanta,  
Dhammassavana-kalo ayam bhadanta.**

The time for hearing the Dhamma is here, Venerable Sirs.  
The time for hearing the Dhamma is here, Venerable Sirs.  
The time for hearing the Dhamma is here, Venerable Sirs.

\*or: **Buddhadassana kalo ayam bhadanta,  
Dhammassavana kalo ayam bhadanta,  
Sanghapayirupassana kalo ayam bhadanta.**

The time for seeing the Buddha is here.  
The time for hearing the Dhamma is here.  
The time for honouring the Sangha is here

*Through the speaking of this truth....*

**[N'atthi me saranam aññam],  
Buddho me saranam varam.**

I have no other refuge,  
The Buddha is my foremost refuge.

**Etena sacca-vajjena,  
Sotthi te hotu sabbadaa.**

Through the speaking of this truth,  
may you be blessed always.

**N'atthi me saranam aññam,  
Dhammo me saranam varam.**

I have no other refuge,  
The Dhamma is my foremost refuge.

**Etena sacca-vajjena,  
Sotthi te hotu sabbadaa.**

Through the speaking of this truth,  
may you be blessed always.

**N'atthi me saranam aññam,  
Sa'ngho me saranam varam.**

I have no other refuge,  
The Sangha is my foremost refuge.

**Etena sacca-vajjena,  
Sotthi te hotu sabbadaa.**

Through the speaking of this truth,  
may you be blessed always.

---

*Reflection after Using (The Requisites)*

**-[Ajja mayaa apaccavekkhitvaa] yam ciivaram paribhuttam,**

Whatever robe I used today without consideration,

**Tam yaavadeva siitassa patighaataaya,**

Was simply to counteract the cold,

**Unhassa patighaataaya,**

To counteract the heat,

**.Damsa-makasa-vaataatapa-sirimsapa-samphassaanam patighaataaya,**

To counteract the touch of flies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, & reptiles;

**Yaavadeva hirikopina-paticchaadan'attham.**

Simply for the purpose of covering the parts of the body that cause shame.

**-Ajja mayaa apaccavekkhitvaa yo pindapatto paribhutto,**

Whatever alms food I used today without consideration,

**So neva davaaya na madaaya na mandanaaya na vibhuusanaaya,**

Was not used playfully, nor for intoxication, nor for putting on bulk, nor for beautification,

**Yaavadeva imassa kaayassa thitiyaa yaapanaaya vihimsuparatiyaa  
brahma-cariyaanuggahaaya,**

But simply for the survival & continuance of this body, for ending its afflictions, for the support of the holy life,

**Iti puraa.nañca vedana.m patihankhaami navañca vedanam na  
uppaadessaami,**

(Thinking,) Thus will I destroy old feelings (of hunger) and not create new feelings (from overeating).

**Yaatraa ca me bhavissati anavajjataa ca phaasu-vihaaro caati.**

I will maintain myself, be blameless, & live in comfort.

**-Ajja mayaa apaccavekkhitvaa yam senaasanam paribhuttam,**

Whatever lodging I used today without consideration,

**Tam yaavadeva siitassa patighaataaya,**

Was simply to counteract the cold,

**Unhassa patighaataaya,**

To counteract the heat,

**.Damsa-makasa-vaataatapa-sirimsapa-samphassaana.m patighaataaya,**

To counteract the touch of flies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, & reptiles;

**Yaavadeva utuparissaya-vinodanam pa.tisallaanaaraam'attham.**

Simply for protection from the inclemency of weather and for the enjoyment of seclusion.

**-Ajja mayaa apaccavekkhitvaa yo gilaana-paccaya-bhesajja-parikkhaaro paribhutto,**

Whatever medicinal requisite for curing the sick I used today without consideration,

**So yaavadeva uppannaanam veyyaabaadhikaanam vedanaanam patighaataaya,**

Was simply to counteract any pains of illness that had arisen,

**Abyaapajjha-paramataayaati.**

And for maximum freedom from disease.

---

## Five Subjects for Frequent Recollection

At Wat Lao Buddhamamakaram: \*\*\**Pali alternate with Thai*

**[Jaraa-dhammomhi jaram anatiito].**

I am subject to aging. Aging is unavoidable.

**Byaadhi-dhammomhi byaadhim anatiito.**

I am subject to illness. Illness is unavoidable.

**Marana-dhammomhi maranam anatiito.**

I am subject to death. Death is unavoidable.

**Sabbehi me piyehi manaapehi naanaa-bhaavo vinaa-bhaavo.**

I will grow different, separate from all that is dear & appealing to me.

**Kammassakomhi kamma-daayaado kamma-yoni kamma-bandhu  
kamma-patisarano.**

I am the owner of my actions, heir to my actions, born of my actions, related through my actions, and live dependent on my actions.

**Yam kammam karissaami kalyaanam vaa paapakam vaa tassa  
daayaado bhavissaami.**

Whatever I do, for good or for evil, to that will I fall heir.

**Evam amhehi abhinham paccavekkhitabbam.**

We should often reflect on this.

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## Contemplation of the Body

At Wat Lao Buddhamamakaram: \*\*\**Pali alternate with Thai*

<b>[Aya.m kho me kaayo,]</b>	This body of mine,
<b>Uddha.m paadatalaa,</b>	from the soles of the feet on up,
<b>Adho kesa-matthakaa,</b>	from the crown of the head on down,
<b>Taca-pariyanto,</b>	surrounded by skin,
<b>Puuro naanappakaarassa asucino,</b>	filled with all sorts of unclean things.
<b>Atthi imasmim kaaye:</b>	In this body there is:

<b>-Kesaa</b>	Hair of the head,
<b>Lomaa</b>	Hair of the body,
<b>Nakhaa</b>	Nails,
<b>Dantaa</b>	Teeth,
<b>Taco</b>	Skin,

<b>-Mamsam</b>	Flesh,
<b>Nha'aruu</b>	Tendons,
<b>Atthii</b>	Bones,
<b>Atthi-miñjam</b>	Bone marrow,
<b>-Vakkam</b>	Spleen,
<b>Hadayam</b>	Heart,
<b>Yakanam</b>	Liver,
<b>Kilomakam</b>	Membranes,
<b>Pihakam</b>	Kidneys,
<b>Pappaasam</b>	Lungs,
<b>-Antam</b>	Large intestines,
<b>Antagunam</b>	Small intestines,
<b>Udariyam</b>	Gorge,
<b>Karisam</b>	Feces,
<b>Matthake matthalungam</b>	Brain,

<b>-Pittam</b>	Gall,
<b>Semham</b>	Phlegm,
<b>Pubbo</b>	Lymph,
<b>Lohitam</b>	Blood,
<b>Sedo</b>	Sweat,
<b>Medo</b>	Fat,
<b>-Assu</b>	Tears,
<b>Vasaa</b>	Oil,
<b>Khelo</b>	Saliva,
<b>Singhaanikaa</b>	Mucus,
<b>Lasikaa</b>	Oil in the joints,
<b>Muttam</b>	Urine.
<b>-Evam-ayam me kaayo:</b>	Such is this body of mine:
<b>Uddham paadatalaa,</b>	from the soles of the feet on up,
<b>Adho kesa-matthakaa,</b>	from the crown of the head on down,
<b>Taca-pariyanto,</b>	surrounded by skin,
<b>Puuro naanappakaarassa asucino.</b>	filled with all sorts of unclean things.

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Opening passages concluded

Middle section of nightly chanting  
is from the Sutta-Discourse Book,  
which rotates on the Lunar calendar  
and on a 15 day cycle.

Please see separate Sutta chanting book.

Concluding passages follow

*The Sublime Attitudes*

**Aham sukhito homi**

May I be happy.

**Niddukkho homi**

May I be free from stress & pain.

**Avero homi**

May I be free from animosity.

**Abyaapajjho homi**

May I be free from oppression.

**Aniigho homi**

May I be free from trouble.

**Sukhii attaanam pariharaami**

May I look after myself with ease.

(METTAA — GOOD WILL)

**Sabbe satta sukhita hontu.**

May all living beings be happy.

**Sabbe satta averaa hontu.**

May all living beings be free from animosity.

**Sabbe satta abyaapajjhaa hontu.**

May all living beings be free from oppression.

**Sabbe sattaa aniighaa hontu.**

May all living beings be free from trouble.

**Sabbe sattaa sukhii attaanam pariharantu.**

May all living beings look after themselves with ease.

(KARU.NAA — COMPASSION)

**Sabbe sattaa sabba-dukkhaa pamuccantu.**

May all living beings be freed from all stress & pain.

(MUDITAA — APPRECIATION)

**Sabbe sattaa laddha-sampattito maa vigacchantu.**

May all living beings not be deprived of the good fortune they have attained.

(UPEKKHAA — EQUANIMITY)

**Sabbe sattaa kammassakaa kamma-daayaadaa kamma-yonii  
kamma-bandhuu kamma-patisaranaa.**

All living beings are the owners of their actions, heir to their actions, born of their actions, related through their actions, and live dependent on their actions.

**Yam kammam karissanti kalyaanam vaa paapakam vaa tassa  
daayaadaa bhavissanti.**

Whatever they do, for good or for evil, to that will they fall heir.

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## Offering of Merit/Dedication

(without pause)

**[Iminā puñña-kammena]**

By this act of merit,

**ācāriyū pakārā ca**

teachers, benefactors,

**suriyo candimā rājā**

the gods of the sun & moon,

**brahma-mārā ca indā ca**

Brahmas, Māras, & Indras,

**yamo mittā manussā ca**

human beings friendly,

**sabbe sattā sukhī hontu**

may all beings be happy.

**sukham ca tividham dentu**

give threefold happiness.

(in this life, in future lives and in liberation)

**upajjhāyā gunuttarā,**

may my highly virtuous preceptors,

**mātā-(pitā ca nātakā) “piya taya taka”  
piya mamam,**

mother, father, & dear relatives,

**gunavantā narā pi ca**

virtuous people,

**(tu) lokapālā ca devatā**

devas who are protectors of the cosmos,

**majjhattā verikā pi ca,**

neutral, & hostile:

**puññāni pakatāni me**

May the meritorious deeds done by me

**khippam pāpetha vo matam**

May you all quickly attain your wish.

**iminā puñña-kammena**

Through this act of merit,

**khippāham sulabhe c' eva**

may I quickly & easily

**ye santāne hinā dhammā**

As long as I am on the way to Liberation,

**nassantu sabbadā yeva,**

character be entirely destroyed,

**uju-cittam sati-paññā**

May I have an upright mind, mindfulness, wisdom,

**mārā labhantu n' okāsam**

Through my effort, may Māra have no chance to do anything to me.

**buddhā dipavaro nātho,**

The Buddha is my foremost mainstay,

**nātho pacceka-buddho ca,**

private Buddhas are my mainstay,

**tesottamānubhāvena,**

Through their power,

**iminā uddisena ca**

through this dedication,

**tanh'-upādāna-chedanam**

cut through craving & clinging.

**yāva nibbānato mamam**

may any low qualities in my

**yattha jāto bhava bhava**

wherever I am born in one state after another.

**sallekho viriyamhinā**

austerity, and energy.

**kātuñ ca viriyesu me**

**dhammo nātho varuttamo,**

the Dhamma my excellent, high mainstay;

**sangho nāthottaro mamam**

the Sangha my superior mainstay.

**mār' okasam labhantu mā.**

may Māra get no opportunity.

*Break for 30 minutes of Meditation.*

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*Closing is on following page*

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## Closing

### **Ukasa vandami bhante**

Asking your leave, I revere venerable sir

### **cetiyam, sabbam sabbatha.thaane,**

(every) stupa (chedi), established in every place

### **supati.ttthi.ta'm sariranka dhatum,**

(every) relic of the (Buddha's) body,

### **maha-bodhim, Buddha-rupam sakkaratham sada**

(every) great Bohdi tree, (every) Buddha image that is an object of veneration

### **vacasa manasa ceva, vandam ete Tathagate**

by word and thought I revere these Tathagata's (one's thus gone)

### **sayane asane thane, gamane jahpee**

whenever I am lying, sitting, standing, or walking (coming or going)

### **sabbada**

always

*(bow once)*

***Asking For Forgiveness From The Abbot***

**Ukasa vandami bhante**

Asking your leave, I revere you, Venerable Sir

**sabbam aparadham khamatha me bhante,**

May you forgive me all my guilt, venerable sir.

**maya katam puññam samina anumoditabbam**

May the master rejoice in the merit I have done.

**samina katam puññam mayham databam**

May the master transmit the merit to me, he has done.

**sadhu, sadhu, sadhu**

Well (said), Well (said), Well (said)

**anumodami**

I rejoice in it.

*( all bow 3 times to Buddha)*

*(monks bow 3 times to most senior monk, laypeople do not)*

*(laypeople bow 3 times to monks)*

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“Requesting permission to leave and farewell”

*laypeople chant to monks*

**Sadhu** *well (said)*

**Namo tassa bhagavato arahato samma sambuddhassa \* (3 times)**

*Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Rightly Self-awakened One.*

**Sadhu** *well (said)*

**Handadani mayam bhante** *we address you venerable sir*

**apucchama** *asking for permission to leave*

**bahu-kicca mayam** *for we have many duties*

**bahu-karaniya** *and much to do*

-Monk responds:

yassadani tumhe kalam maññatha  
*please, do as you think appropriate.*

**Sadhu bhante** *well (said) venerable sir*

*(laypeople bow 3 times)*

*Evening Chanting is Concluded*

## Appendix

## The Precepts

*BuddhaDharma web site*

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In Pali, the word for the five precepts is "*pancasila*." The five precepts are simple moral guides that remind us to mindfully practice a virtuous life. These precepts guide one to conduct a way of life every lay Buddhist should follow.

A person can take the precepts by making a resolution with herself or himself that s/he will refrain from unskillful actions.

It is also not unusual have the precepts given to one by a monk or nun, or, where one is not available, by a novice.

When one want to take the five precepts from a monk or nun, one first recites, with folded palms, the request passage which runs as follows:

<p><b>Mayam bhante, visum visum rakkha-natthaya, tisaranena saha, Panca-silani yacama.</b></p>	<p><i>Venerable Sir, we do seek from you, for individual observance, the five precepts along with the Three Gems.</i></p>
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<p><b>Dutiyampi, mayam...</b></p>	<p><i>For the second time, ...</i></p>
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<p><b>Tatiyampi, mayam...</b></p>	<p><i>For the third time, ...</i></p>
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The monk or nun would then recite three times the acknowledgement of the Buddha, the Tathagata, and the disciples then devotees repeat after him or her:

<p><b>Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa. (x3)</b></p>	<p><i>Homage to Him, the Blessed One, the Exalted One, the Fully-Enlightened One.</i></p>
--	---

What follows is the acceptance of the Three Gems as Refuge, to be repeated sentence by sentence after the monk or nun.

<p><b>Buddham saranam gacchami.</b></p>	<p><i>I go to the Buddha for refuge.</i></p>
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<p><b>Dhammam saranam gacchami.</b></p>	<p><i>I go to the Dharma for refuge.</i></p>
---	--

<p><b>Sangham saranam gacchami.</b></p>	<p><i>I go to the Sangha for refuge.</i></p>
---	--

<p><b>-Dutiyampi buddham...</b></p>	<p><i>For the second time...</i></p>
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<p><b>-Tatiyampi buddham...</b></p>	<p><i>For the third time...</i></p>
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Then the monk or nun concludes at this point: *Tisarana-gamanam nittitam*. (The Going for the Three Refuges is now complete.) And we respond with, for example: **Ama bhante** (So it is, Venerable Sir.) This summing up is omissible, but we should still learn it. Many monks do include it in the procedure.

Now the monk or nun recites the five precepts one by one, to be repeated likewise by the lay devotees:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. <b>Panatipata veramani<br/>sikkhapadam samadiyami.</b>  | 1. <i>I observe the precept<br/>refraining from killing;</i> |
| 2. <b>Adinnadana veramani...</b>                           | 2. <i>... stealing;</i>                                      |
| 3. <b>Kamesu micchacara<br/>veramani...</b>                | 3. <i>... sexual misconduct;</i>                             |
| 4. <b>Musavada veramani...</b>                             | 4. <i>... falsehood;</i>                                     |
| 5. <b>Sura-meraya-majja-pamada-<br/>tthana veramani...</b> | 5. <i>... intoxicants that cause<br/>carelessness.</i>       |

Having completed the five precepts, the monk then concludes by advising us as follows:

- |                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <i>Imani pancasikkhapadani.</i> | <i>There, then, are the five precepts.</i>           |
| <i>Silena sugatim yanti.</i>    | <i>People attain a happy state<br/>through sila.</i> |
| <i>Silena bhogasampada.</i>     | <i>People prosper through sila.</i>                  |
| <i>Silena nibbutim yanti.</i>   | <i>People attain peace through sila.</i>             |
| <i>Tasma silam visodhaye.</i>   | <i>Therefore, keep sila ever pure.</i>               |

The devotees respond with: **Sadhu!** (Very well!). Then they prostrate three times. The procedure is now complete.

These precepts are not commandments imposed on us by any dogmatic system. They are, in fact, clearly the morality or ethics that we willingly undertake to observe out of clear understanding and firm conviction that they are good for ourselves, as well as for everyone on the planet. Life would be truly less complicated, and more happy, certainly less problematic, and international society would become a much safer and more peaceful place to live in if these precepts are observed in earnest.

## The Practice of Chanting in Buddhism

*Bhikkhu Dhammasami*

Sri Saddhatissa International Buddhist Centre, London

Chanting is very common to any religion. Buddhism is no exception in this regard. However, the aim and purpose of chanting is different from one religion to another. ***Buddhism is unique in that it does not consider chanting to be prayer.***

The Buddha in many ways has shown us to have confidence in our own action and its results, and thereby encouraged us to depend on no one but ourselves. This in fact is the sum and substance of His last message in the Mahaparinibbana Sutta. One of the passages in this discourse reads: "Ananda, be dependent on yourself, take refuge in yourself and not in others, by this mean be dependent on the Dhamma, go for refuge to the Dhamma -- the righteous principles".

When a Buddhist does chanting, he is not asking some one to save him from evil nor is he hoping to be given a place in heaven as a result after he dies. Instead, through chanting he may be *learning, teaching, philosophising* or *re-memorising* the discourse.

Actually, in the Anguttara Nikaya there are some discourses dealing with chanting like Dhammavihari Sutta. It mentions five categories of people who make use of the discourses.

The first one studies it just for the sake of study without putting it into practice or explaining it to others. He even does not reflect deeply on what he has studied. He is known as 'Pariyatti-bahulo' who is keen on studying it alone.

The second one preaches or teaches what he has learnt from the discourses but does not follow it himself. He is 'Pannyatti-bahulo' who is keen only on teaching.

The third one does chanting. He philosophises about the discourses, trying all the time to satisfy his philosophical thirst. He forgets to make use of as mode or life. He is called 'Vitakka-bahulo' who is eager only to indulge in philosophical aspects of the Suttas (Discourses).

The fourth one is the one who chants the discourses to make them last for a long time in his memory. He memorises and re-memorises. Nevertheless, he does not go further to follow it in

daily life. He is 'Sajjhayaka-bahulo' who is enthusiastic only in memorising or chanting the teachings of the Buddha, He may even expect some magical power from chanting.

The fifth and last one is who studies the discourses, teaches them to others, reflects on their philosophical points, chants them regularly and above all actually practices it in daily life. He is the one the Buddha praises to be 'Dhammavihari' -- a practitioner of the Dhamma, which he has learnt from the discourses.

*Having reflected on this Sutta, it is left to us to judge ourselves to which category we belong and why we study or chant the discourses.*

I would like to dwell a bit more on *chanting* in general. This is, after all, an All-night Chanting ceremony. It is nothing but right for us to be fully convinced of what we are doing. Initially I did mention that Buddhism is unique because it does not consider chanting to be a form of prayer.

### **Then why do we, Buddhists, chant?**

In the olden days, before there were sufficient support materials for study like books, translations and computers we had to memorise to learn a discourse. After we had learnt it, we still had to chant regularly to protect it and hand it down to future generations. If we did not recite it daily we might forget it and omit some part of it. The Anguttara Nikaya says that ***if the discourses are poorly maintained this will lead to the disappearance of the Sasana.***[1] It was so important those days to memorise and chant it regularly. This must have definitely contributed in developing chanting practice. Chanting meant almost for the survival of the Dhamma itself.

Now we have sufficient support materials, why we should then be still chanting? Is there any more reason to do this?

There are some reasons sufficient to continue chanting practice. Regular chanting gives us confidence, joy and satisfaction, and increases devotion within us. This devotion is really a power. It is called the Power of Devotion (Saddhabala). It energises our life in general. I do not know about the others. For me I often have a joyous feeling when the chanting goes right. I become more confident of myself. I see it as a part of developing devotion.

In Buddhist monastic education tradition, chanting and learning by heart still forms a part of it. We study some of the Theravada Abhidhamma texts -- *the highest teachings of the Buddha which deal with the ultimate nature of things* -- in that way in Burma. We are explained the meaning and how the logic develops in the Abhidhamma. In the night we try to chant without having learnt it by heart. We could do it because of the technique. It is known as evening-class (nya-war) over there. It means a certain technique of studying the Abhidhamma and some of the Suttas. It is very helpful as it helps you to reflect very quickly.

When we examine the nature of the discourses, the reasons for chanting will become clearer to us than ever.

### **THE NATURE OF THE DISCOURSES**

A Sutta (Discourse) like *Mangala Sutta* was an answer to the Deva who asked the Lord Buddha about the real progress in social, economic and spiritual life. It is the vision of the Buddha on those issues as much as his advice to all of us who genuinely want those progresses in social and spiritual life. It is some thing that we should follow throughout our life starting from childhood to the day we take our last breath. Most of the Suttas are of this nature. They are descriptions as well as prescriptions for the common diseases like Lobha, Dosa and Moha (Greed, Hatred and Delusion).

Another nature of the discourses is protection or healing. *Ratana Sutta* is one of the best-known examples here. It was first taught to Venerable Ananda who in turn chanted in Vaisali to ward off all the evils and famine the people were then facing. *Angulimala Sutta* also falls into this category as it relieves the pains and trouble of a would-be mother. *Mahasamaya Sutta* and *Atanatiya Sutta* come under the same category because they emphasise much on protection and healing. Remember that Venerable Ananda and Venerable Angulimala did cultivate love and compassion before they chanted the discourse for this particular kind of blessing.

The three *Bojjhanga Suttas* [2] (*Maha Kassapa/Moggallana/Cunda*) [3] have been in common use to help relieve the suffering of a patient. This is the third nature of the discourses I am trying to understand and reflect. Even the

Buddha asked Venerable Cunda to chant this Bojjhanga Sutta when He was ill. He himself did the chanting of the Bojjhanga Sutta when his senior disciples, Venerable Maha Kassapa and Venerable Maha Moggallana, were sick. These are the kind of Suttas that have both instructions for meditation practice and healing power. Karaniyametta Sutta has these same natures: instruction for daily practice to develop our spiritual benefit and to ward off the evils.

In other words, Buddhist chanting serves as a reminder of the practice we need to follow in daily life. If we understand and learn how to do it properly, it is another type of meditation in itself. It is also at the same time a healing or blessing service.

The last benefit we may get from chanting discourses is meditative one. When we chant if we try to concentrate well on the chanting, our mind becomes contemplative, not wandering, not engaging in unwholesome thoughts. The late Venerable Dr. H. Saddhatissa Mahanayaka Thero, the founder of SIBC [4], has rightly remarked in his work [5] that almost all Buddhist practices are nothing else but some form of meditation./.

***Bhikkhu Dhammasami, 1999***

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[1] *"Dve 'me bhikkhave dhamma saddhammassa sammosaya antaradhanaya samvattanti. Katame dve. Dunnikkhittam ca pada-byancanam attho ca dunnito."*

[2] *Samyutta Nikaya*, In the *Mahakassapa Sutta*, the Buddha chanted the Sutta to ailing Venerable Maha Kassapa while the second to another patient, Venerable Maha Moggallana, His own chief disciple. In the Mahacunda-bojjhanga Sutta, Venerable Cunda was asked by the Buddha who was then ill to chant (expound) the Bojjhanga. All were reported to have recovered at the end of the Sutta.

[3] Also *Girimananda Sutta, Anguttara Nikaya*; Girimananda bhikkhu was ill. That was reported to the Buddha by Venerable Ananda who was then taught this Sutta and asked to go back to Girimananda for expounding, reminding him of ten factors. At the end, he got recovered.

[4] Saddhatissa International Buddhist Centre. London

[5] Facets of Buddhism by Venerable H. Saddhatissa; World Buddhist Foundation, London, 1991; p. 267.

-ooOoo-

## Chanting the "Mirror of the Dhamma"

*Ajahn Punnadhammo*

In all Theravada countries chanting is a large part of the religious observance, both for the laity and in the monastic life. Morning and evening chanting is pretty well universal in the monasteries in Asia. What's usually chanted are passages either taken directly from the suttas or worked over a bit for phonic and mnemonic reasons to create a chant that has some musical quality to it.

The act of chanting is a devotional meditation practice. It is a form of contemplation. The centerpiece of our own morning and evening chanting is built around the contemplation of the Three Jewels or Three Refuges: Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha. These contemplations are three of the forty contemplations listed in the commentarial texts, so they are very traditional.

The benefits of contemplating the Three Jewels are manifold. We experience an uplifting sensation in the heart as we align ourselves with that which is higher and nobler. We're tuning in to the frequency of our highest potential -- the Buddha being representative of a human being who achieved his full potential; the Dhamma being the expression of ultimate truth; and the Sangha being the body of enlightened beings, past, present and future.

By aligning the deepest aspect of ourselves with the highest potential through the contemplation of the Three Jewels, we overcome negative mind-states. *Buddhanusati*, the contemplation of the Buddha, is one of the meditations called the Four Protections. They protect us from all manner of unwholesome mind-states, lift us out of dullness and depression, and bring us into joy and light. Joy is a very strong characteristic of devotional practice. It helps us to overcome the self-view and ego-clinging through the surrender to that which is the highest potential.

So, I thought I'd go through the words for what's called "*The Mirror of the Dhamma*," which is the chant that begins with "*itipi so*." It is the formal contemplation of the Three Jewels and occurs in our evening chanting.

The basis for this passage occurs several times in the Pali Canon. Perhaps the most important is in the Mahaparinibbana Sutta of the Digha Nikaya, the sutta concerning the death, or parinibbana, of the Buddha. At that time, when he was close to death, many of the bhikkhus were asking the Buddha what happened to such and such a monk or nun who died last year. The Buddha replied, "Well, she was an anagami; she's gone to the highest heavens and will have one more life there and then go on to final liberation." Or, "He was a stream-enterer; he has seven more births." He then went on to explain the characteristics of a sotapanna, a

streamenterer. In this formulation he described four traits, the first being very good morality, or sila, and the other three being faith in the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha and their attributes. He listed these attributes, and this is the passage that begins "*itipi so bhagava araham.*"

I'll start with the attributes of the Dhamma, which is the shortest list.

*Svakkhato bhagavata dhammo.* The Dhamma is well expounded by the Blessed One. The Dhamma is well expounded because it's meant to be perfect in meaning and perfect in letter. It's quite an amazing body of literature -- a huge corpus of texts with a very high degree of internal consistency, a brilliant structure, and a lot of natural cross-references between teachings. When you study the texts in depth, you'll find all kinds of nuances: the way the different elements in a list of dhammas are ordered, the rich and very evocative similes and metaphors, even humor. Take advantage of this feature: the well expoundedness of the Blessed One's teachings. I encourage everyone to dip into this treasure house of spiritual literature and read the Pali Canon.

The next characteristic of the Dhamma is *sanditthiko*, which is translated as apparent here and now. This is a slightly loose translation. Basically, it means "visible." The root -- ditthi -- is "view." The Dhamma is something that can be seen. It's not some abstruse theory; it's immediate reality, and we can experience it.

*Akaliko* is timeless. That's a very literal translation. There are many levels and layers to this word. The Dhamma is timeless because it expresses universal truths that were valid 2,500 years ago, are valid today, and will be valid 2,500 years from now. The Buddha made it clear that the Dhamma was not something he invented; it's something timeless that he discovered. He gives the analogy of uncovering a lost city in the jungle -- overgrown with creepers and discovered by archeologists. This is what the Buddha did; he discovered an ancient truth.

Another meaning of timeless is that the Dhamma is immediate. The realization of nibbana is always just an instant away. The ultimate Dhamma is also timeless in the sense that it is outside of samsaric concepts such as space and time. It is completely "other"; it can't be framed in terms of time.

The literal meaning of *ehipassiko* is come and see. *Ehi* is an imperative verb that means "come." There is another use of this verb in the Canon; it's what was called the "*ehi bhikkhu*" ordination. In the early days of the Buddha's teaching, he would simply say, "Come, bhikkhu." It's said that the person would miraculously lose all their hair and have robes. So the verb *ehi* is an invitation. *Passiko* is another form of the verb to see. It means "come and see."

The quality of Dhamma is that it's inviting us to check it out. This is a very strong characteristic of the Buddha's teaching. There's no heavy-handed demand: "Believe this." The faith element doesn't have the same role as in some other religions. We're asked, we're invited, to examine the teachings to see whether they fit. This is also an expression of the confidence that the Buddha and arahants had in their Dhamma; they realized it for themselves

and know that we can, too.

The translation of *opanayiko* is undecided in our community; it's either leading onwards or leading inwards. I'm not quite sure what's the current "high church" dispensation on the issue, but both inwards and onwards are quite reasonable. In terms of the Dhamma the two are almost synonymous. It's a characteristic of the Dhamma that it leads us into our depths, which is where truth and liberation and relief are found. They're not found anywhere else.

*Paccattam veditabbo vinnuhi'ti* is all one phrase. It means that the Dhamma is realizable for oneself by the wise. The Dhamma is of benefit for those with little dust in their eyes.

Taken together, these characteristics of the Dhamma emphasize its immediacy and possibility. This is very important.

Next, I'd like to speak about the characteristics of the *Sangha*. The meaning and usage of the term sangha is sometimes a bit confused and controversial. The original meaning of the word was simply "community" in the loosest possible sense. In some modern Indian languages it's still used in a similar way. But like many common words of the time, the Buddha gave them technical meanings. In the Pali Canon these are two: there's the *Bhikkhu Sangha* and the *Ariya Sangha*. The Bhikkhu Sangha is the order of bhikkhus and bhikkhunis, the monks and nuns, the fully ordained ones. The Ariya Sangha, or the Noble Sangha, has a higher meaning; it's the sangha of beings who have obtained some degree of enlightenment on the Buddhist path. These are the stream-enterers, once-returners, non-returners, and arahants, whether they are lay or ordained, male or female, past or present.

The current American Buddhist usage of the term refers to the people we practice with -- our sangha. Some "purists" object to that usage because it's looser than the narrow, technical meaning. But it's close to the original broad meaning of sangha, so I really don't have an issue with it. But in terms of this passage in our chanting, the reference is clearly to the *Ariya Sangha*, and this will become clear below.

The first characteristic of the Sangha is *supatipanno bhagavato savakasango*, the Blessed One's disciples who have practiced well. The word savaka literally means "one who listens, one who hears." Those beings who became enlightened from following the teachings of a buddha are classed as savakas. Among the classes of enlightened beings there are also paccakabuddhas and buddhas. A paccakabuddha and a buddha are beings who became enlightened by their own effort without hearing a teaching, so they had a more difficult path. Well-practiced means they practiced the eightfold path to its completion.

The word *uju* means "straight," as in upright as opposed to crooked. In English the word crooked has the connotation of being criminal or dishonest. The opposite is straight or upright. It has that sense in Pali, too.

*Nyaya* is "with knowledge" or "with wisdom." The disciples of the Blessed One have practiced

with knowledge. Samicipatipanno: they practice the Eightfold Path completely. The description of enlightenment in some contexts -- particularly in the commentarial and Abhidhamma texts -- is based on two moments. The path moment occurs when the factors of the Eightfold Path are perfected and reach into the transcendental level, which results in the fruition moment. The path moment is considered karmically active, and the fruit moment is considered karmically resultant, or passive.

This leads to the next line: *Yadidam cattari purisayugani attha purisapuggala*. That is the four pairs, the eight kinds of noble beings. This refers to the four levels of enlightenment -- stream-enterer, once-returner, non-returner, and arahant -- multiplied by two since each level has a path moment and a fruit moment. There is an interesting and controversial technicality here. In the orthodox Theravada interpretation, fruit moment always follows path moment instantaneously, so in any given moment the odds that there's anybody at path moment are pretty small. Some of the other early schools of Buddhism taught that it was possible for a path moment and fruition moment to be separated, that there may be beings who have perfected the path at one of the levels and are waiting for the fruition moment. In that sense, there could be eight types of noble beings. This is controversial, speculative stuff, which probably leaves you just as confused as ever!

*Ahuneyyo pahuneyyo dakkhi-neyyo anjalikaraniyo*. Worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of respect. Anjali is the gesture of placing one's palms together in respect.

*Anuttaram puññakkhettam lokassa'ti*. They give occasion for incomparable goodness to arise in the world. Khetti means "field," like a farmer's field. The metaphor that's being alluded to here is that gifts, offerings, or respect given to noble ones is like throwing seeds into a field. They will fruit into meritorious karma or an "incomparable field of merit." Some texts describe the multiplication factor of giving: if you give food to an animal, the karma is such that the results will come back to you 100 times; if to an unworthy human, 1,000 times; if to someone who is practicing on the path to liberation, 100,000 times; and if to an enlightened being, myriads and myriads of times.

Finally, I saved a discussion of the characteristics of the Buddha for last because it's in some ways the most interesting of the three. *Buddhanusati*, or contemplation of the Buddha, is a highly recommended meditation. It's one of the protective meditations. When we contemplate the Buddha, we're contemplating the highest potential of a human being. What I find inspiring about the Pali Canon's descriptions of the Buddha is that they combine the attributes of a very human individual with those of a marvelous, liberated mind.

There is a discourse by the medieval Zen teacher Dogen in which he talks about seeing the Buddha and seeing the old man Shakyamuni at the same time. That is, when you see the old man Shakyamuni, do you also see the Buddha? And when you see the Buddha, do you also see the old man Shakyamuni?

In a certain phase of Buddhist history -- medieval times -- there was a tendency in India to reify and deify the Buddha. It was a gradual thing. First, they said that his feces didn't stink, next that he didn't defecate at all, then that he didn't need to eat but did so only out of compassion for sentient beings to allow them to make merit by offering him food. At the extreme, one particular text describes the Buddha as appearing miraculously on this earth -- he had been enlightened from beginningless time -- sitting in full lotus in a golden pavilion, remaining there for forty years without moving a muscle, continually emitting a single tone in which all the teachings and discourses could be heard by highly evolved beings who then wrote them down. This is an exaggerated example of seeing the Buddha but not seeing the old man Shakyamuni. There's no contact with humanity left in that sort of conception.

In modern times, I fear that some are swinging to the other extreme. There's a kind of mean-spiritedness; people love debunking and knocking their heroes down off the pedestal. It's almost a fanatical egalitarianism: if people raise their head above the common level, we've got to drag them back down. I've heard people say things like, "Well, the Buddha was, after all, a man of his times. He had some opinions that were incorrect because they didn't know any better in those days, and he didn't rise above that." This despite the Pali Canon's teaching that there's nothing the Buddha isn't enlightened about and that the teaching is perfect in word and letter. Whether one believes that or not, it loses the point if all we see is the old man Shakyamuni without seeing the Buddha.

The attributes of the Buddha included in the chanting emphasize the marvelous, but it's important to bear in mind that the vehicle for these attributes was a human being. He suffered in his old age from backaches and dysentery -- very human, earthy experiences -- and he obtained his enlightenment after great struggle and sacrifice. Yet a buddha is someone who has reached the full, absolute human potential, and the idea behind this is that our deepest level is intrinsically pure. The Buddha is someone who has removed all the obscurations and demonstrated the potential of a human life.

The first characteristic is *araham*, which is another grammatical form of the word arahant. This word was used prior to the Buddha's time in general Indian religious discourse to mean "a perfected one." Its technical meaning in the Buddhist texts is "someone who has eliminated all the defilements," or someone who has reached the state of great purity and perfection. Gotama Buddha is a special arahant because he's a buddha. All buddhas are arahants, but only a few arahants are buddhas.

*Sammāsambuddho*. Fully enlightened by himself. In the classification of enlightened beings there are paccekabuddhas and sammāsambuddhas. A paccekabuddha is someone who does not establish a teaching, sometimes called "silent" or "solitary" buddhas. They may teach in a small way -- perhaps to a few individuals -- but they don't establish a dispensation and are forgotten after their own time. Whereas a sammāsambuddha establishes a teaching -- a Dhamma and a Sangha -- and their influence survives their time. The influence of Gotama Buddha is still vast in the world today.

*Vijjacarana-sampanno*. Impeccable in conduct and understanding. Carana literally means "walking fair in traveling." The Buddha walks through the world perfectly. This includes the concept of keeping perfectly all ethical principles, but it goes beyond that. It also includes being perfectly mindful. The Buddha makes no mistakes; he is flawless. *Vijja-sampanno* means "perfect in knowledge."

This leads into areas that are somewhat controversial historically. There's been debate within Buddhism about the range of a buddha's knowledge. To my mind, it is a particularly pointless discussion for those of us who are not buddhas to speculate on the range of a buddha's knowledge. There is a strong tendency within the Theravada to want to give the Buddha one form or another of omniscience. In the commentaries, the official definition of the range of the Buddha's knowledge is that anything he wanted to know he could know -- like the number of fish in the Ganges. He didn't automatically know it to start with, but if he turned his mind toward that question, he could find the answer.

What the Buddha actually said about his own knowledge is marvelous enough. He spoke particularly about the Three Knowledges he obtained on his enlightenment night. The first was the penetration of his past lives for hundreds of thousands of world eons. He saw the pattern of his own karma and the enfoldment of his journey in great detail and in great depth. In the second watch of the night he obtained the knowledge of the rising and falling of beings, seeing beings taking rebirth in various lower and higher realms. This was a generalization of the first knowledge -- of his own special case to universal law. In the final watch of the night, he came to the knowledge of the extinction of the asavas, sometimes called the taints or out-flows. He knew that he had destroyed all the defilements to the depths. This was the moment of attainment.

This points to the Buddha's understanding that the mind is intrinsically enlightened -- intrinsically void, blissful, and immeasurably, infinitely radiant -- but obscured. We don't experience the mind's radiance all the time because of defilement on the surface of the mind. There are lists and lists of unwholesome mind-states, but they all boil down to ignorance, desire, and ill will. Not knowing, wanting, and repelling. In fact, they all really boil down to ignorance, not knowing. At that point, the Buddha had eliminated all the defilements. That's essentially all he did for buddhahood to arrive. It was not something created, something new. It was just allowing the deepest truth of his own nature to shine forth through the extinction of the asavas.

*Sugato* means "well-going." Su is "well, good," and gato is the verb "going" or "walking." This is a very commonly used epithet of the Buddha in the Canon. It is sometimes translated as the well-farer.

*Lokavidu*. The Knower of the Worlds. This again points to the Buddha's knowledge and his penetration. Whether or not we take it that he was omniscient, the potential that he unleashed with buddhahood allowed him to know and experience many, many things and have a wide range of what we would call psychic powers, which are really just a natural potential. He

could know things like whether someone coming to the discourse that evening that was ripe for enlightenment. If that person was late for some reason, the Buddha would make everybody wait until this one person arrived because the Buddha knew that he or she was just on the brink.

*Anuttaro purisadamma-sarathi.* Anuttaro means "supreme, without a superior." Sarathi is a charioteer. Purisadamma is a compound word meaning "human, person." Damma is not the same as dhamma with a dh. It's a different word entirely and is used to refer to horses and cattle and so on. The metaphor is of a trainer of horses. The Buddha came out of the noble warrior class, so this sort of imagery occurs fairly commonly. The idea is that his teaching is like a training, and as a charioteer trains horses, so he trains men and women to practice and attain on the path.

*Sattha deva-manussanam.* Teacher of gods and humans. Sattha is a word meaning "teacher," and it's pretty well restricted to references to the Buddha. When you see "The Teacher" in texts, it's a translation of sattha. That the Buddha was a teacher of gods and humans is very significant praise. There are many, many places in the Canon describing the Buddha teaching in the various heavenly realms. He spent an entire Rains Retreat in Tushita Heaven teaching the Abhidhamma. Whether or not you want to follow the mythology, it's very evocative. I encourage you not to be too dismissive of these stories, because we don't know the full range and potential of this universe and what other kind of possible existences there may be. In the Buddhist conception of the universe, the Buddha is the teacher of the gods. This was an important statement for religious understanding at the time, and later. Human beings were not helpless pawns of the gods, and the gods had something to learn from the Buddha.

The attribute *buddho* is the same form as buddha. This is a particularly beautiful word; it simply means "awake." This is what we call the Buddha today. It's an oddity, though, that in the Canon he is seldom referred to by this epithet. In the Canon he refers to himself as Tathagata, and other people refer to him very often as *Bhagava*, or Blessed One. If you want a simple form for contemplation of the Buddha, repeat the syllables bud-dho while visualizing the Buddha and thinking of "awake." One of the times this term does occur in the Canon is shortly after his enlightenment. A wanderer asks him, "Are you a god?" And he replies, "No, I'm not a god." Then, "Are you a demon?" "No, I'm not a demon." Then, "Are you a human being?" "No, I'm not a human being." And finally, "Well, what are you?" And he says, "I am Buddho."

The final attribute is *bhagava*, which means "the Blessed One." In the Indian languages it is a very common title of respect for holy people. One aspect of this term is that the Buddha was blessed by the previous buddha or, to be more accurate, by a previous buddha many, many buddha's ago not even on this earth. The Theravadan understanding is that the Bodhisatta vow is only considered binding when it's made before a fully enlightened buddha. The Buddha made his supreme Bodhisatta vow before Dipamkara Buddha many eons ago, and Dipamkara said, "Yes, indeed, you shall attain." So, this was the seal, this was the esoteric transmission that goes back beyond the origins of this earth. That's one meaning of *bhagava*, but the more

mundane level of meaning is simply as a title of respect for a Holy One.

So, taken together, this entire *"Itipi so"* passage that we chant, this list of attributes, is a formula of recollecting the Three Jewels. When we recite this chant, we are practicing a form of contemplation of Buddha, contemplation of Dhamma, and contemplation of Sangha.

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## Meditation 🧘

— *Phra Ajaan Lee Dhammadharo*

### Breath Meditation: Seven Steps 🧘

There are seven basic steps:

1. Start out with three or seven long in-&-out breaths, thinking *bud-* with the in-breath, and *dho* with the out. Keep the meditation syllable as long as the breath.
2. Be clearly aware of each in-&-out breath.
3. Observe the breath as it goes in & out, noticing whether it's comfortable or uncomfortable, broad or narrow, obstructed or free-flowing, fast or slow, short or long, warm or cool. If the breath doesn't feel comfortable, change it until it does. For instance, if breathing in long & out long is uncomfortable, try breathing in short & out short. As soon as you find that your breathing feels comfortable, let this comfortable breath sensation spread to the different parts of the body.

To begin with, inhale the breath sensation at the base of the skull and let it flow all the way down the spine. Then, if you are male, let it spread down your right leg to the sole of your foot, to the ends of your toes, and out into the air. Inhale the breath sensation at the base of the skull again and let it spread down your spine, down your left leg to the ends of your toes, and out into the air. (If you are female, begin with the left side first, because the male & female nervous systems are different.)

Then let the breath from the base of the skull spread down over both shoulders, past your elbows & wrists, to the tips of your fingers, and out into the air.

Let the breath at the base of the throat spread down the central nerve at the front of the body, past the lungs & liver, all the way down to the bladder & colon.

Inhale the breath right at the middle of the chest and let it go all the way down to your intestines.

Let all these breath sensations spread so that they connect & flow together, and you'll feel a greatly improved sense of well-being.

4. Learn four ways of adjusting the breath:

- a. in long & out long,
- b. in long & out short,
- c. in short & out long,
- d. in short & out short.

Breathe whichever way is most comfortable for you. Or, better yet, learn to breathe comfortably all four ways, because your physical condition & your breath are always changing.

**5.** Become acquainted with the bases or focal points for the mind — the resting spots of the breath — and center your awareness on whichever one seems most comfortable. A few of these bases are:

- a. the tip of the nose,
- b. the middle of the head,
- c. the palate,
- d. the base of the throat,
- e. the breastbone (the tip of the sternum),
- f. the navel (or a point just above it).

If you suffer from frequent headaches or nervous problems, don't focus on any spot above the base of the throat. And don't try to force the breath or put yourself into a trance. Breathe freely & naturally. Let the mind be at ease with the breath — but not to the point where it slips away.

**6.** Spread your awareness — your sense of conscious feeling — throughout the entire body.

**7.** Unite the breath sensations throughout the body, letting them flow together comfortably, keeping your awareness as broad as possible. Once you are fully aware of the aspects of the breath you already know in your body, you'll come to know all sorts of other aspects as well. The breath, by its nature, has many facets: breath sensations flowing in the nerves, those flowing around & about the nerves, those spreading from the nerves to every pore. Beneficial breath sensations & harmful ones are mixed together by their very nature.

To summarize: (a) for the sake of improving the energy already existing in every part of your body, so that you can contend with such things as disease & pain; and (b) for the sake of clarifying the knowledge already within you, so that it can become a basis for the skills leading to release & purity of heart — you should always bear these seven steps in mind, because they are absolutely basic to every aspect of breath meditation.

## Mindfulness of Walking/Walking Meditation

Venerable Ajahn Sucitto

from <http://www.forestsangha.org/sucitto2.htm>

Now, to practise mindfulness of walking, we find an open space. Ideally we should try to have a path of about twenty paces, but in a house we'd probably have to circumambulate, to walk around a room, rather than backwards and forwards. We have to do the best we can if we're inside, but if there is a garden or driveway we can use that. It may drive the neighbors absolutely crazy, they may wonder what we're doing, and generally think we've lost something! Because what we do if we are doing walking meditation is stand, and then walk straight forwards for about twenty paces, and then stop, stand still, turn round and walk back again - and we keep doing this, walking back and forth. While walking we keep the gaze, the attention of the eyes, lightly focused on the ground in front, say about two to three meters away, so that the head is ever-so-slightly angled down. Rather than looking at anything in particular, we are just collecting attention; this is quite important because if we're just looking at everything around then we can get very distracted. What happens in walking meditation is that there are so many things that come through the mind anyway that it is very helpful to learn to sustain just a light, focused gaze that is not looking at anything in particular. While walking up and down we very quickly notice that when we see things, the mind picks up: "Ooh, look at that flower, that bird...", and the same with hearing, thinking or feeling; but the idea is to maintain a central position so that things are just passing through that central position of walking.

To heighten it a little more, generally we try to focus the attention on the feelings in the feet as we walk along. As with breathing meditation when we go, "in breath, out breath", with walking, the feeling's in the foot, the left foot, then the foot hits the ground, then the right foot hits the ground. So that rhythm acts as a sort of base line, or underlying theme, that we keep referring to and bringing the attention back to through this changing realm of sense-consciousness. Then when we get to the end of the path we stand still, trying to expand the whole awareness from the soles of the feet up to the top of the head, so we can imagine ourselves like a pole or a tree, or the whole body just standing, so that the whole body is attentive. We close the eyes, breathe in and out a few times, feeling what it is like to stand still. Then we turn around and walk back again. Stop at the end of the path, stand still, we give ourselves two or three breaths, turn round and then walk back again; stay cool with it all. The mind will run all over the place, apparently, but instead of thinking of it as my mind running all over the place, think of it as the place is running all over the mind - just letting stuff run through as it will - and staying centred and peaceful about it; and then contemplating and noticing the experience of the change of it all, the flow of it all.

Clear comprehension can be seen as reflecting, considering, and there are four ways of doing this. Firstly, there is clear comprehension regarding purpose. So, for example, when you sit to meditate, just notice what your intention is. This may not be something that you have much feeling for. You might think, "Well, I suppose it seemed like a good idea at the time", or, "it's seven-thirty". But if you're not clear about intent then in a way the mind is not fully attentive, and things get done in an habitual way. One can certainly do this with meditation, it can become just a something one does, without really knowing why, or what one is doing.

This doesn't mean that you need to have an intellectual analysis of motivations, but just to get the feeling of purpose that is there as one sits down to practise meditation. There may be a feeling of wanting to look at what one is doing, and being attentive to where one is at or of coming to terms with oneself - some feeling that the mind is inclining towards attentiveness in a particular way. This can also help us to consider what we should be focusing upon, which is important because it can sometimes be the case that we focus upon things in order to not be aware of what's going on. We might try to use meditation as a way of blocking out, perhaps focusing on the breath because of not wanting to be aware of guilt or fear. We can twist meditation into a way of suppressing things that should actually be acknowledged and investigated; so instead of looking at the mind-state we're in, we might look at a physical experience, whereas actually what would be more significant would be to look at the mind-state. So we have to look at our sense of

purpose: do we wish to understand, or are we trying to avoid something?

Another basis for clear comprehension is regarding domain or resort. This refers to where you place and sustain your attention: are we going to contemplate body, feeling, mind, or what? And then to make a practice out of that so that one can really experience a bodily or mental process through a range of times and energies.... it means knowing what to focus on, and how to stay with it. And in the course of doing that, mental habits will bring up all kinds of challenges that will test one's skills. These obstacles are all things that we can look at with mindfulness, so the on-going practice is to be able to open up the fears and worries and nagging thoughts and moods that we have - to open up the Pandora's box of the mind and let a few things out to be examined, to be noticed and be seen as that which arises and ceases. That entails staying within the meditation theme so that aspects of consciousness that normally we either act upon or repress can be seen coolly and objectively. That allows us to let them go. To stay within the domain means to abide in the direct experience, rather than in conceptual interpretations. Then an understanding will arise that allows the heart to find peace, rather than explanations or criticisms or speculation. This is what is meant by finding the right resort, the right place, the right foundation as a basis for clear comprehension.

Another one is suitability, the suitability of the meditation object - choosing an object which will bring around the right results. So, for example, maybe there's no point in focusing on the breath if you're very tired - you'd just fall asleep; neither is there a lot of point if the mind is very agitated, because we just can't get to it. In such cases it's best to find a meditation object such as the feelings in the hand, or the feelings in the head or body, or just the bodily posture. With sexual longing, contemplate the body in its constituent parts and elemental forms; with grudges and aversion reflect on the personal harm that these states cause and exercise a broader viewpoint. Such exercises free up the mind's energy for more far-reaching goals. So what is suitable in terms of the meditation object or in terms of effort means it's possible through meditation to bring up the right kind of effort that's neither strained nor forced, but it's enough so that your mind can apply itself purposefully.

And the fourth consideration, which in a sense, covers the others, is just to be undeluded, clearly comprehending the state of mind. In other words, to be experiencing these in and of themselves rather than as aspects of a personality. This is tricky. It often entails, first of all, coming to terms with why we take the energies and permutations of mind so personally. What do we base our self-esteem on? What have we been trained to think, or stimulated to feel? Are those programmes and messages created and owned by our personality - or isn't it the other way round? This doesn't mean denying personality, but noticing that it is the agent rather than the author of our lives. If you have self-pride you have self-aversion.

So there is always that need to keep a fresh angle on this stuff. We can start to use a suitable object for meditation, such as the breath - the full breath - breathing in and out and notice what comes up. We may feel happy, calm, confused or restless; and then, if we can actually just sustain mindfulness that notices these mental experiences coming and going, then all is well and good. However, if, after some attempts, we just can't keep our sense of balance then we have to change and find another meditation object, such as just listening to the sound of the mind, or focusing on another aspect of the body.

## Questions

Q. Is meditation just introspective and self-obsessed, just a study of the self?

A. This kind of meditation helps us to centre on how things are to us, which is quite valid, because actually, what seems to be the world out there is really just our picture of it. It is strongly affected by what we choose to be aware of, how we receive that, and what we do about it; so really the idea of the world and the self as separate is very misguided.

What is the world? Well, for a start, it's what you choose to look at. For example, blue-green algae may not mean very much to you, but it might mean something to a biologist. It might be his whole world - he knows blue-green algae, but knows nothing about legal systems. If you're in the teaching profession your world is very much that, or you read the newspapers and then the world

seems to be Yugoslavia, Iraq or Somalia and an endless series of woes and horrors. So the world is what we choose to look at, or what is directed to us.

The world is also the way we perceive things. We can perceive things in terms of ambition - how we're getting on at it - or we can perceive it in terms of how we feel about it. We can see it as a frightening place, a place where you've got to get ahead. Or we can perceive the world as a place where we're supposed to be compassionate and kind. Those very attitudes will naturally affect the way we perceive the world. Now, this can go on and on, but the point really is that we can't really understand the world until we understand ourselves, but that we don't really understand ourselves until we understand the world! Because the two are a totality, a continuity, different ends of the same thing. So you can look at one end of a stick or the other end, but they're still the same stick.

It is certainly the case that some people who meditate can get intensely obsessive and self-conscious, but that's not the idea of it. That's getting it wrong - that's where we don't understand it; so meditation does involve an element of reflection. Learning is important, because otherwise we do find ourselves getting obsessed or stuck into selfishness which becomes refined in particular terms, such as wanting to get away from it all, or to have some kind of pleasant experience, or become somebody special, with some special esoteric knowledge. Those drives and instincts can happen in us, it's true, but the aim in this meditation is not to develop those, but to understand and transcend them. When there's mindfulness and clear comprehension, when we're mindful of the mind, then we're also looking at the kind of desires we have. This is not to start being moralistic about desire, but just to notice what desire feels like, with the mind reaching out. The point is to understand that movement of trying to hold something and have something, to be somebody or to get somewhere - to really notice that feeling as not being what mindfulness is about. Mindfulness actually sees it, and we let go.

So we are always coming back to the ground in meditation - to the place of stability and coolness and steadiness and non-acquisition, non-achievement, non-becoming, non-obsession. It's a great earther. So the more we can do that, the more we actually can be open to what apparently is the external world, because we're letting go of our defensiveness or our greed, our selfishness with it. We're more able to avoid following those habits - those patterns of mental behaviour - so we really can be much more open and responsive to the world through this kind of meditation, if it's done properly.

But it's also very much the case that we do have to go through these obsessive states. Sometimes the mind comes up with the most foolish obsessions, ridiculous stuff that doesn't even make sense. So when we get an obsessive nagging thought the thing to do is not to get irritated by it - thinking we're going crazy, or asking what it means - but to notice and stay centred. We notice the thought arise and, instead of following it or believing in it or denying it, we just notice it as a thought that moves through the mind. The mind can think of anything, and will do so once we start to deprive it of anything in particular to think about. So the practice is one of non-obsession and non-self - of seeing it all as just stuff, and letting it go.

## Notes on Bowing:

### • Why do Buddhists bow?

In Buddhism, the traditional gesture of reverence to the Triple Gem is to place the palms of both hands together and raise them high in front, usually up to the level of the forehead. In order to express deep veneration, a Buddhist may bow or prostrate before the image of the Buddha, members of the Sangha (monks) and the masters of the Teaching. When a Buddhist prostrates before an image, he acknowledges the fact that the Buddha has attained the perfect and supreme Enlightenment. Such an act helps the Buddhist to overcome egoistic feelings and he becomes more ready to listen to the Teaching of the Buddha.

(fr. [Buddhanet.net FAQ on Buddhist Culture](#))

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This is not "surrender," as such an action might be in a "devotion-only" religion, nor of course is it an abject debasement of oneself, a sort of fawning of favors, since Buddhists do not approach their shrines with such ideas. And of course it is not "bowing down to idols." It is rather the bowing down of one's own idol — self-pride — to Enlightenment.

Bhikkhu Khantipalo

Source: *The Wheel* Publication No. 206/207 (Kandy: [Buddhist Publication Society](#), 1982). Transcribed from the print edition in 1995 by David Savage under the auspices of the DharmaNet Dharma Book Transcription Project, with the kind permission of the Buddhist Publication Society. Copyright © 1982 Buddhist Publication Society Access to Insight edition © 1995

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Despite its non-theistic nature, however, Buddhist practice does call for a certain kind of faith. It is not blind faith, an uncritical acceptance of the Buddha's word as transmitted through scripture. Instead it is "saddha", a confidence born of taking refuge in the Triple Gem (the Buddha, the Dhamma/Buddhist teachings, and the Sangha/its followers); it is a willingness to trust that the Dhamma, when practiced diligently, will lead to the rewards promised by the Buddha.

"Saddha" is a provisional acceptance of the teachings, that is ever subject to critical evaluation during the course of one's practice, and which must be balanced by one's growing powers of discernment.

For many Buddhists, this faith is expressed and reinforced through traditional devotional practices, such as bowing before a Buddha statue and reciting passages from the early Pali texts. Despite a superficial resemblance to the rites of many theistic religions, however, these activities are neither prayers nor pleas for salvation directed towards a transcendent "Other". They are instead useful and inspiring gestures of humility and respect for the profound nobility and worth of the Triple Gem.

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Excerpt below from: Lay Buddhist Practice  
The Shrine Room, Uposatha Day, Rains Residence  
by Bhikkhu Khantipalo

Source: The Wheel Publication No. 206/207 (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1982). Transcribed from the print edition in 1995 by David Savage under the auspices of the DharmaNet Dharma Book Transcription Project, with the kind permission of the Buddhist Publication Society.

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## Gestures of Respect

Dhamma (Buddhist teaching) is the way for training mind, speech and body. But the Buddha dhamma is sometimes regarded in a way which is too intellectual and theoretical so that there is a danger that it is not practiced as a way of training. To help with the training of the body there are various gestures which are expressions of one's confidence in and reverence for the three Treasures. These actions when performed with due mindfulness are wholesome kamma (actions) made by way of the body. Repeated frequently they become habitual bodily kamma and it is good to have the habit of reverence as part of one's character. The Buddha, soon after his Enlightenment, thought that to live without reverence was not suitable, so he looked around with the divine eye to find some teacher under whom he could live, revering him and his teachings. But he found no teacher superior to himself, nor any teaching superior to the Dhamma which he had discovered. But out of reverence for that Dhamma he decided to make the Dhamma his Teacher and to live revering Dhamma. We who are his followers should follow in his footsteps and live with reverence for those three aspects of Enlightenment: Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.

The gestures used for this are mainly two: respectful salutation with the hands (*añjalikamma*), and the five-limb prostration (*pañc'anga-vandana*).

The first of these, which may be remembered as "añjali" as there is no satisfactory English equivalent, is made by bringing the palms of the hands together, and raising them to the region of the heart or higher, according to circumstances. For instance, in the shrine room after kneeling down in front of the Buddha image, one makes añjali before offering flowers, lights and incense. And as the Teacher was the highest in the world and one to go beyond the world, so one respects him by placing one's hand in añjali to the forehead. But while chanting, the hands are held in añjali at heart level. This action and others described here, should be done with mindfulness and therefore gracefully. And one should be careful to see that exaggerated and impetuous movements are avoided. As we remarked before, the Dhamma does not encourage unrestrained expressions of emotion, rather with its aid one endeavors to calm one's heart.

After all these preliminary remarks, we have just got into our shrine room, knelt down, made añjali and offered the three offerings. Now there are flowers placed in their vases or upon some offering tray, candles or lamps burning brightly and a blue column of incense smoke rising to the ceiling. It is time to pay one's respects with the whole body to the Teacher. When afterwards one says "Namo tassa..." that word "namo" (homage) comes from the root *nam* meaning "to bend." So now one bends oneself, one's mind and body, down and acknowledges that the Buddha was indeed the Perfectly Enlightened One that one's own understanding of Dhamma is insignificant. In the kneeling position, one's hand in añjali are raised to the forehead and then lowered to the floor so that the whole forearm to the elbow is on the ground, the elbow touching the knee. The hands, palm down, are four to six inches apart with just enough room for the forehead to be brought to the ground between them. Feet are still as for the kneeling position and the knees are about a foot apart. This is called the prostration with the five limbs, that is the forehead, the forearms, and

the knees. This prostration is made three times, the first time to the Buddha, the second to the Dhamma, and the third to the Noble Sangha.

Some people feel that this prostration is "foreign" and not at all important. They say that it may discourage people from the practice of Dhamma if their first sight of it is so alien a custom. As there are a few points to discuss here another digression must be made. Prostration in this way, or similar ways which may be more complicated (as in Chinese and Tibetan traditions) do not seem "foreign" at all when seen in a Buddhist country. There they are just the traditional ways of paying respect and western people, even some non-Buddhists, seldom have any difficulties. In these days when there are so many Asian religious and cultural movements in western countries, a practice of this sort loses its strangeness. Certainly it is a practice which any able-bodied Buddhist may do in the seclusion of his shrine room and not feel embarrassed but at public meetings where non-Buddhists may be present it is better perhaps to restrict one's courtesies to the añjali and a simple bow. It is well to consider whatever one's beliefs about this practice, that it is a long established way of showing respect in every Buddhist tradition, both in the Sangha and among lay people. It is part of the common inheritance of all Buddhists in Asia, while practices of this sort may be expected to spread in time to new Buddhists in other parts of the world with the increase in the number of Buddhist temples, images, stupas, and above all, with the gradual establishment of the Sangha in those countries.

## Notes