

Forest Wat, Wild Monks

by

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Today, I'll speak about "Forest Wat Wild Monks." A topic like this is easy to remember and understand. It's straightforward and clear. Since you only have a month left as monks, I think you ought to live as "forest wat wild monks," correctly and completely, for at least a little while. Later, it will probably be beneficial, that is, it might make you fit and adequate after you have disrobed. Even ordinary householders should know something about "forest wat wild monks."

These words may sound ugly, but the Buddha and the Arahants (Worthy Ones, Perfected Ones) lived in this way. Please realize that originally all of the wats, monasteries, and ashrams were outside the cities and villages. None were within the city walls. They were forest wats implicitly and in truth. To say "wild monks" is a bit hard on the ears, because the word "wild" can have bad connotations. Here, however, "wild" means the opposite of cities. Town wats and city monks are the opposite of "forest wats and wild monks." Take the meaning of "wild monk" merely to be the opposite of "city monk."

Consider Suan Mokkh a bit. We've intended for it to be a forest wat from the very start. Things I had studied led me to know more about how the Buddha lived. Understanding how he lived, I wanted to have a lifestyle like his. So I thought of supporting the forest style of living. Then, we went even further using the words "to promote *vipassana-dhura*." We used the phrase that was common then. They called the practice in solitary and quiet places, such as in forests, "*vipassana-dhura*."² We intended to promote *vipassana-dhura*, or the meditation-duty, to revive it, so we thought of having a place in the forest.

Now, although the village is encroaching, we can probably maintain the condition of a forest wat. To do so, the monks must have a discipline or system of living which is most intimate with nature. This means being comrades with nature, to sit and talk, to sit and watch, to sit and listen, together with nature. The meaning of "wild monk" is to live naturally.

In the past, the elders and old teachers called the monks who live in the forest "nature monks," while the monks in the towns and cities, especially Bangkok, were called "science monks." This is a rural way of speaking, we need not judge whether it is right or wrong: "science monks" and "nature monks." Here, we are nature monks, living in harmony with nature, close to nature, studying nature, until realizing *nibbana*, which is the pinnacle of nature. Please understand the words "forest wat" and "wild monks" like this.

Please take only the essential meaning of these words. If we take the essence of "forest wat," it means "the most simply way of living" and "wild monks" means "to live most simply." You can blend the two together, they mean the same thing.

So, would all of you please live in the most simple way. So far, you're not yet living most simply, although you may be close. Try to readjust things yourself, through the end of the Rains. From now on, make your living even more easy. The more simple, the more natural it is. The more natural it is, the less opportunity for "I" and "mine" to be born. Thus, it automatically becomes correct and beautiful according to our monks' way.

This is an extremely important and genuine fact. Live naturally and it will be Dhamma (Natural Truth) and Vinaya (Natural Discipline), or Nature, in and of itself. Living naturally is near to *nibbana*, more so than living scientifically, because *nibbana* is already the highest nature: naturally clean, clear, and calm. Live naturally, it helps make us clean, clear, and calm more easily.

Now, I want you to hold the general principle that Nature, the Law of Nature, Duty in line with the Law of Nature, and the Fruit received from doing Duty according to the Law of Nature, are the most important matter. This is Buddhism, it's the essence of religion without needing to call it religion. It's better to call it "Truth of Nature" or "Natural Truth."

Now, don't have regrets about anything. There isn't much time left, so you won't be missing much. Just sacrifice your pleasures and comforts. Try out this natural living which automatically has lots of cleanness, clarity, and calm. You've had enough time to read, hear talks, and study the basics of being a monk. Henceforth, know especially the things which will have the most benefit. Then your time as a monk will be over, you will have beneficial knowledge which is complete, that is, you know in general and in specifics, you know loosely and strictly, until you know how the Buddha lived.

When we speak of the Lord Buddha, never forget that he was born outdoors, awakened outdoors, realized *nibbana* outdoors, taught outdoors, lived outdoors, had a hut with an earthen floor, and so on. We give it as much of a try as we can. Even now, we see that we're sitting on the ground, which is much different than in the city wats. There they sit on wooden floors, on mats, on carpets, depending on the status of each wat. Some wats spread expensive carpeting in the temple building for all eternity. So they sit in their chapels on carpets. Here, we sit on the seat of the Buddha -- the ground. This is one example for you to understand what nature is like, and how different it is from the cities, and how different are the hearts of those who come sit and interact with Nature.

I've tried my best in this matter. When Suan Mokkh was first started, I slept on the ground. I slept next to the grasses in order to know their flavor. I used to sleep on the beach, too. Then, when I first slept in the "middle hut" after it was newly built, I would stretch my hand out the window to fondle the plants next to the window. This completely different feeling is the meaning of "forest wat wild monk."

Everything changes. Feelings, sensitivity, standards, what have you, they change by themselves. Matters of food, shelter, clothing, rest, sleep, aches and illness: they changed completely. They caused us to understand Nature more than when we hadn't tried yet, until finally there were no problems at all. Things which I had feared all disappeared. Fear of loneliness in deserted places, fear of spirits, fear of anything, they didn't last more than seven days. They gradually disappeared themselves. This led to mental comfort, ease, and other fruits. The mind became strong, agile, subtle, and refined. Those were its fruits. Thus, whatever I thought of doing, I could do it better than before I came to the forest, better than in the city. There's no comparison between living in Bangkok and living here. They're totally different. I can say there's more ability, more strength, more of everything. One can do anything beyond expectations and personal limitations. Whether writing a book, reading, or thinking, much more can be done.

One lives in the lowest way materially and physically, but the mind ³ goes its own separate way. It takes a higher course, because when we live simply the mind isn't pulled in. The heart is released so that it lifts up high. If we sleep comfortably, like wealthy householders, that comfort grabs the heart. It traps the heart, which can't go anywhere, can't escape, is stuck there. So live and sleep more lowly, since humble things won't trap the heart. Live humbly and the mind will rise high, will think lofty things.

Living in a humble condition, in one that can't fall lower, the mind can only proceed in a higher way. It's easy because we needn't carry or load down the mind with anything. The mind can be "normal" and free. It is free in its movements, reflections, and actions. Thus, we can freely do anything of the sort which is not like anyone else. Through the power of nature, there isn't any carelessness, we don't make mistakes. Since the mind is heedful there are no mistakes.

That the heart can find a way out like this must be considered freedom. Know the mind that is independent, that isn't caught and held by deliciousness and pleasure, by the happiness and comfort of eyes, ears, nose tongue, body, and mind.

Here I want to make a distinction. If something is in line with original nature, and there's no indulgence in new pleasures, we'll call it "natural." If it goes after new pleasures, if newly concocted for more tasty pleasures than nature, we'll call it "unnatural." They're truly different. If going naturally, the defilements arise with difficulty, they can't arise. If acting in an unnatural way, it's easy for the defilements to be born, or else it's defilement from the very start. Thus, living as nature's comrade makes it hard for the defilements. It automatically controls and prevents against the defilements (*kilesa*).

This is the spirit of Suan Mokkh, of setting up a place like this. When you want this enough to come here, then you ought to get it. Besides this, there isn't anything. We've tried to prevent other things from happening, so that there are only these things: how to eat, how to live, and how to sleep. We've spoken many times of the specific details of each.

I've said it before, but nobody believes me that to take exactly what nature provides is sufficient, is good enough. When we must die, then die. Don't postpone and make it difficult. It's like the medical care that has progressed to the point that people are unable to die, they can't drop. They live inhumanly, but not dead. That's too much. Heart transplants, liver transplants, and all that exceed nature. It's better not to. And please look, it doesn't make humanity any better. It doesn't create peace in the world. If mental matters don't progress, if there's only defilement -- delusion and all -- there'll be no end.⁴

In summary, make things humble so that they don't trap the mind. Then this heart of ours is free to think, consider, decide, and choose. Please use the mindfulness and wisdom that you receive from this style of living to choose and decide what you must in the future.

If you were born in Bangkok, you were surrounded by man-made things and raised far from the forest, much more than people born in the forest. Those born in towns and cities hardly know the meaning of "forest" or "wild." Those born in the sticks know something, but don't pay any attention. They must work, must always be doing something according to their moods, so they hardly notice how calm and clean it is. Sometimes they are even dissatisfied with it, although born in the country. Our hearts don't like it and always aim to get into "developed and beautiful" areas in the cities and capital. Thus, we don't know the taste of the forest and of Nature, even if born in the forest, even when splattered with mud, because the mind is occupied in another way.

Now you're in robes and needn't work like lay folk. The heart has a chance to know the peaceful flavors and quiet nooks of Nature, which is the cause of the mind's freedom in the first place. You ought to use this final chance here to keep walking until knowing the heart that is naturally pure, which is something like the heart of the Arahant. The Arahant's

heart is just like that -- natural -- except it's that way totally. Now, we may have a heart like that, but only momentarily, temporarily. The next moment it changes off in another direction, and we can't pull it back. Try to penetrate this heart of nature.

In clear and simple terms, we call it pure nature, nature which isn't concocted ("cooked and seasoned") by anything. And we don't concoct that nature either. It exists simply, humbly, freshly, peacefully, coolly, however you want to describe it. If you know this flavor, you know the flavor of Dhamma, in its aspect of the only fruit worth having, because Dhamma's reality (literally, "body") has been captured. Those who just study and take exams never receive Dhamma's reality. All they can do is holler about it. If somehow you can catch Dhamma itself, it's like catching a crab or fish, it's something tangible. Here we can catch the substance of cleanness, clarity, and calm -- the body of Dhamma. Even temporarily is worth it. To have grasped it and seen it just once is better than never having grasped, known, or seen it at all.

The academics only memorize and recite, then take examinations, then memorize and recite some more. They think only according to what they're told. Their minds don't reach cleanness, clarity, and calm at all. From the theoretical studies or scriptures, one just gets stories and information. To phrase it more politely, one gets only a map. Actually, they don't even get the map. I know this well because I've tried that way myself. I've taken the full Dhamma Course, studied the Pali language (in which the Theravada scriptures are written), and researched continuously. It seems I got only complicated stories -- mostly mixed up and confused to boot -- without getting even a map. Those who talk of scholarship, of being Pali experts and Dhamma Masters, of having a map, they make it up, imagine, and arrange it themselves.

Actually, the real map is much clearer than all that. We must pass through, must arrive at, and receive "something" -- appropriately and sufficiently -- in order to know the correct and true map. It's as if we're making a map and must wade through that respective subject or area in order to draw the map. If we draw it from guesses and imagination, it will be a mess. If we try to make a map of everything, it's a huge mess. These scholars who have finished their studies end up with a scholarly map that's a mess. It's a mess because it is wrongly explained, wrongly remembered, wrongly taught, and, especially, wrongly interpreted. Who knows what kind of map it is. These literary maps according to the study books are a mess because they're all mixed up.

That's not our way. We'll do something, find some method, which takes the heart all the way to that city: the city of peace, the state of peace, the nature which is peace. This short cuts the map. This is the methodology of "forest wat wild monks": keep looking for and aiming at only the peaceful mind.

Just this single word "peace" has multitudinous meanings. It's easy to say "peace," but it's hard to understand and difficult to practice. But you must try. Therefore, please try to continually follow and search: "Is this peace? Is this peace?"

The word "peace" means "not troubled, not anxious, not agitated, not disturbed, not painful, not pierced." To begin, remember these meanings. On the other hand, the minds of most people are troubled, stabbed, cut, and roasted by desires, by doubts, by worries, by the kind of wishes that build castles in the sky. They usually happen all the time; you ought to get rid of them. I'm not forbidding you to want anything or do anything. I only want things to happen peacefully.

Some people may think that this runs counter to human existence in the world. Listening superficially, it may sound like that. When human beings in this world don't want peace, they will want stimulation, they will want the state that stimulates pleasure through the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, whichever way, all ways. They want to get excited, they don't want peace and calm. This makes it somewhat difficult to speak about these matters.

We have a choice. Stimulation, the state of having *kilesa* always waiting to drive and manipulate us, what's that like? And we must ask, which direction will it lead? How far will it reach? It has no end. So we could exploit this and make some money from the fact that humanity has endless wants, make a business out of humanity's endless wants, and get rich ourselves. The rich have wants that never end. They follow after these endless desires, then what kind of world will that be? This is how different it is in the cities, totally opposite from "forest wat wild monks," who want to stop, to be cool, and to be calm.

The problem is like this: the world's people don't want peace. How will we pursue peace? And when living in the middle of people who don't want peace, how will we live peacefully? Another way is to live by making money off the people who don't want peace. Now, however, we should focus on the fact that it is necessary to live in the midst of such people. How can we be peace? How can we use our understanding of this peace to solve those problems?

I still think that it can work. Please know how to calm the mind; then work with those non-peaceful people in those incredibly chaotic cities and capitals. We can have minds that are under control, are "normal,"⁵ are on track, are disciplined, are at peace; they do what they should. Finally, if we must work for people who are not calm, we are up to it.

In the scriptures there's a story of a woman Stream-Enterer⁶ whose husband is a hunter. They still were able to live together. It doesn't sound believable, and probably nobody will believe it, but that's what the scriptures say. She wasn't tainted by her husband's sins. They could live as husband and wife without losing her Stream-Entry. Think about it. You must know how to take special care of the heart. Guard the condition of peace according to your own particular skills.

Close your eyes and imagine this scene. One person is "normal" and able to smile. He works with another who always acts like a demon or devil. How can he do it? I say he can. If a person is at peace, has sufficiently trained, he can do it. But he probably wouldn't want to bother. He's more likely to find another place to work. Here, we're just trying to show that if one tries, it is possible. If one's heart is secure and "normal," there's nobody who could shake him. If anyone tried to get him to do something wicked, he wouldn't do it and would probably run away.

This talk is to help you begin to see that this matter of calmness is no obstacle. Further, it's beneficial in that it gradually transforms those who aren't calm, making them more calm and in love with calmness. One makes blessings without being conscious of it. People with Dhamma who work together with people who lack Dhamma will do good without being aware of it. They'll cure the people without Dhamma, so that Dhamma develops in them steadily.

I have seen people who have gone to work as clerks or officials, who are calm, humble, and have Dhamma. They are able to cool down bosses who fly into rages, are hurried, and lack Dhamma. Know that if we have an employee who is cool and calm, and shows it, we can't explode. We would be too ashamed, or else feel pity for him.

Even with these wat boys, some have something cool about them and others are almost the opposite. We must have our own sensitivity for this: "Ahmm, they're totally different. With that boy there we act in one way, with this one we must act another way." Such cool kids will help to cool down the old folks and grey-hairs, if the kids have cool characters.

I believe that Dhamma isn't likely to be objectionable for use in a world lacking peace and coolness. A monk coming from correct "forest wat wild monk," who stays at a city wat with a totally different style, will have an immediate influence on the city folk. They'll notice that "we're hot and he's cool." The only question is whether or not the cool monk from the forest can guard that calm and correctness all the time. Mostly they lose it, change, and are swallowed up. If not, they must escape back to the forest. They can't handle the city, it's full of annoyances. No harm done, because we ought to be able to choose in this world. If we want peace, we have the right to find a peaceful place. But wherever the wild monk goes, he automatically teaches the "Peaceful Creed" right there. There will be some success, and some automatic "blessings," too. Make an example of peace for them to see, be truly happy for them to see, they'll be interested and some will even follow. You'll get "merit" and the world becomes a better place.

If we speak of the Arahant, various principles show that such a human being can never get hot again. So she can go to the city, to the capitol, to any chaotic place, without dying. He wouldn't die, but probably would get fed up beyond toleration, then have to flee. If she couldn't escape, she might die. But I don't think so, because he'd adjust his heart inside in an unbelievable way. There's no need to get hot with those people. Yet, what's the point of being troubled by it all, avoid it to find an appropriate place.

This talking and raising examples back and forth is to increase understanding of "forest wat wild monks." Do you know the difference between living as a forest wat wild monk and living as a city monk? You've never lived as forest wat wild monks. There's only a little time left, you better try it out quickly. Quickly live up to its standard, you'll understand the matter well. Although you return to the city later, you won't be the same. It will change you from how you were. You'll change in a good and useful way, too. So I felt we should talk about this for the sake of the time left in the Rains, that you might get more interested in the "forest wat wild monks" style.

At the beginning of the Rains, I already told you about these things, such as, don't laugh a lot, speak only a little, try to stay with Nature. But I understand you couldn't do it, and just let it go. More than enough time has passed, now you ought to be able, at least a little more than before. This means just "live like a monk (*Phra*)" ⁷ more and more. You'll know the flavor of the monk's life which we call "forest wat wild monks." You'll never have a chance to try living like a wild monk in the city. You must come to the forest, to a naturally free place, to taste and to try it, to know Dhamma of the sort the Buddha realized and proclaimed.

If not that, then why ordain?⁸ Each of you ought to ask yourself why you ordained? Why did you take leave to do this temporary going forth? To understand what? To sample what? To get what? With certainty -- like pounding a fist into the ground -- we answer, "to get exactly what we've been talking about." Without leaving home, you couldn't get it. You would have no chance even to see or sample or give it a try. Ordination was necessary.

Now that you've ordained, to get what the Buddha got, you must live close to how the Buddha lived. He lived and maintained life in such a way that we turn back to the "forest wat wild monks" life-style. If we don't live this way, we couldn't get, experience, or sample the Buddha's life.

The monks in the Buddha's time, the Buddha himself, and whichever founder of whatever religion, all got started in a life intimate with Nature. All of them awakened in forests surrounded by Nature. Whether the Buddha, Jesus Christ, or the prophet of any religion, they lived close to nature. To awaken as a Perfectly Self-Awakened Buddha; or to become One with God, to communicate with God, according to the religions that have a God; that moment is living as a comrade of nature. So try to remember the words: how good it is to be nature's comrade."

This means that you have accepted, have believed, and have seen that the Lord Buddha is a real Buddha (Awakened Being), the highest sort of person, who knows the best thing that humans ought to know, and you want to know that, too. This is why we make this effort. We shouldn't be tricked into believing that the Buddha taught only "householder virtue" (*gharavasa-dhamma*) for the lay folk.⁹

If he only taught ordinary household matters, he would have served no purpose, since anybody could and was teaching

those things well enough already. Although the Buddha sometimes taught about householder subjects, it was solely the sort of Dhamma fit for lay folk who were looking for *nibbana*. The lay folk already were being taught well enough. For the Buddha to help teach these matters, he would teach the type of lay person who is ready to discover Dhamma, to reach *nibbana*. This brings us back to our subject.

There's merely a small amount which the Buddha taught lay folk for the sake of being lay folk. But what he taught with the fullest satisfaction of his heart was the matter of *suaññata* (voidness). Some householders asked him for the Dhamma most beneficial for the household life and he came back with voidness. He told them to have voidness, namely, a heart void of "I" and "mine." Then they could do anything in the form of a householder, thus becoming householders who are ready to be Arahant, or more than half ready to proceed along the Arahant's line.

Thus, that we live like "forest wat wild monks" to understand voidness well is in the same line. It follows the trail of householders who should study voidness. You can read in all the books about voidness that they've printed how the Buddha taught voidness to lay folk.

Now, I'm afraid that those who will return to lay life, or already are householders, have not yet found voidness at all. Because the customs and traditions have changed, there's no Buddha to teach voidness to lay folk. Nor are any of the monks in the cities likely to teach voidness to householders. Then, how are lay folk going to understand voidness?

I insist that by trying to live like "forest wat wild monks" for a little while, you'll understand voidness. Although you don't call it voidness, although you don't feel you're practicing voidness, you still will get the results of practicing voidness: a heart which is void and cool, which is clean, clear, and calm.

Do your work with a heart that doesn't suffer. Receive the fruits of labor without making it a problem, not dancing with joy or going crazy over the benefits received. You can work more, until however wealthy you want, but with a different heart, that is, a cool and peaceful one. It's a heart that always wins, nothing can make it anxious. Nowadays, people can work, earn money, find status, and gain fame, but they're always losing. They're always hot, always made and kept hot. What's good about that? Before long, they'll have some nervous breakdown or drop dead.

Very few people are naturally -- "accidentally" or "flukishly" -- cool. That lay folk can have cool hearts naturally in line with Dhamma principles is, of course, possible. It isn't beyond or against their nature, but it seldom happens. It can happen with good surroundings, with good genes, or with a nervous system that nature coincidentally built to be like that. But don't cross your fingers and wait, because it's rare. Let's just say most of us are born ordinary.

What can we do to become special individuals, that is, unable to suffer? No matter what happens, we can't suffer and can't get hot. Whether rich or poor, we are unable to get hot or anxious. Who can insure that the wealthy will always be wealthy or that the poor will always be poor? Things change constantly. Especially this modern world, it changes so easily, so fast, so suddenly. Regarding the progress of humanity which is quickly, violently destroying the world with War and what have you, both changing up and changing down, don't be the least hot or anxious about it.

Should war erupt and wipe out life on earth, such people don't give it any meaning. They can still laugh because they've reached Dhamma. They've attained the sort of Dhamma that makes further suffering impossible. They have no more problems here. Impoverished for necessary reasons, they don't suffer. Not anxious or miserable, they get out of poverty before you know it. If one has Dhamma, there's no suffering. If one lacks sufficient Dhamma, there's nothing but suffering and anguish. Rich and miserable, poor and miserable: they're hot no matter what. So take the side which is neither hot nor miserable while you've got the chance.

This is why I ask you to hurry up and study-practice, hurry to try it out, hurry to find the point where suffering can't exist, the point which can't get hot. Discover as much as you can, so that your life in the future can't get hot, or is hot as little as possible, or once hot can be dropped quickly.

They call this "The Noble One" (*ariya*), but I don't want to talk about that. Before you know it, all kinds of distracting thoughts will come up. To be incapable of hotness is to be a Noble One, according to the particular level or state: Stream-Enterer (*sotapanna*), Once-Returner (*sakadagami*), Non-Returner (*anagami*), or Worthy One (*arahant*). Ultimately, the mind can't get hot at all. It gets hot less and less until it's unheatable and nowhere hot. The Noble One's feelings¹⁰ are thoroughly cooled. That's the meaning of the highest level of "Arahant," the level of *anupadisesa-nibbana-dhatu* (the *nibbana* element with no fuel and heat remaining):¹¹ thoroughly cool. The rest are progressively cool; even when hot, they aren't hot like a thickster (*putthujana*, worldly person) is hot. The hotness of thicksters is like being singed by fire or scalded with boiling water. The first stages of Noble Ones might feel a bit hot sometimes, but never like the thicksters burn. Nevertheless, I don't want to use these words very much, or get you stuck on or attached to using them. So let's just say "human beings." Just people, just us, all the same. Yet, we can be less hot and more cool, until we can't get hot in ordinary situations, and until we can't get hot in even the worst situations.

There are loads of the Buddha's words recorded in the Pali which encourage us to think and train so that we need not get hot. I don't have to quote the Pali any more, you can believe me that they are there. If the scriptures aren't like that, what good would they be? They teach us to be cool.

If you get hot through carelessness, be very sorry. If you haven't felt these things, you're heedless, the same as dead. If you feel them but pretend that you don't, you're shameless, lacking in *hiri* (moral shame) and *ottappa* (fear of the results of evil). To get hotter with age, to get more angry, to get worse in any way, is to lack *hiri-ottappa*. You must know

spiritual shame and fear. The most frightening thing is to be a human who is hot, just a fool, a lost person who is full of defilement and selfishness. You can't call that a human being. Better call it a "fool."

So for the time that remains, test yourself as if taking exams. Is it hot or not? Even a small slip into hotness should make you quite sorry and ashamed. You ought to penalize yourself appropriately. You can do it without anybody knowing. But please penalize yourselves whenever careless, when going wrong on this point and becoming hot. Eventually the mind changes, becomes more careful, and can make progress along the Dhamma way.

Hot due to lust or greed is one form. Hot due to anger or hatred is another form. Hot due to delusion or ignorance is a third form. You've learned these names before, I shouldn't have to explain anymore. As soon as mindfulness is missing, ignorance takes over. It lusts and covets, it gets hot with the emotions of avarice and lust. In "negative" situations, it gets angry and hateful. It becomes hot with anger, with aversion, with malice. Then, in some cases we don't know anything: don't know the original cause, don't know what's up, don't know even what we want. We're full of doubts about what we ought to want. There's no certainty about how our life is, what should come of it, how it should be lived. This not knowing is delusion. It too is hot.

So if you want to test yourselves, it won't be difficult. The time remaining is enough to do some self-examination. Speak little, keep to yourself, and constantly observe the heart. Call it "constantly guarding the heart." It's automatic mental development, or meditation. When always watching over the heart, that's *vipassana*, that's meditation. If you find it's hot, then know it's hot, that it's still low, wrong, and must be cured. And you better have some regret. At the same time, know how it is hot and what caused the hotness.

In the end, you will find the truth exactly as the Buddha taught. Before, we didn't know it, we just heard about it. Now we know that thing truly. We understand Dhamma from ourselves, without needing to know the Buddha. And if they force us to speak, we automatically will speak the same as the Buddha regarding the nature of greed, hatred, and delusion.

This very thing is the Buddha's supreme aim, yet the big monks never talk about it. They usually threaten us not to raise ourselves up as equals to the Buddha, not to insult the Buddha. In this matter, if you want to understand something, I can tell you straight that the Buddha wanted people to reach the Dhamma without needing to believe their teacher, and then are able to explain that Dhamma without needing to repeat their teacher's words. Did you listen right? Listen again: know the Dhamma without believing the Buddha. Because we know personally, then we know the same thing as the Buddha. Then, if we must speak for the sake of others, we needn't repeat after the Buddha, needn't quote Pali, needn't recite the texts. Just speak according to experience. Then it will be identical to what the Buddha said. Then, people needn't repeat after the Buddha, they can speak their own hearts. This state of affairs is what the Buddha himself wanted. You can find it in the Pali, in many places. That they must memorize and recite the Buddha's words, afraid of getting just one word wrong, that's merely a custom, a tradition of people who don't really know, or still don't really know, still don't understand Dhamma.

So we hurry to know Dhamma. That itself will be in line with what the Buddha realized. We can speak out according to what we know; it will be identical with what the Buddha said. It might look like one's a Buddha oneself, so they forbid anyone to do such a thing, afraid that one is raising oneself up equal to the Buddha or is disparaging the Buddha. This here is an obstacle preventing us from progressing along the Buddha's path.

OK, so we study Dhamma from within, by living in the midst of Nature which reveals and demonstrates the Dhamma all the time. Uphold a form of life which doesn't sound very good at all: live like a forest wat wild monk. It doesn't sound right, but it is most meaningful, most real, and most necessary to live in this way up until you must disrobe. You may change back to the householder's way of life, but this should stick with you: knowledge, understanding, and certainty about the Dhamma which makes us incapable of hotness. Take it with you. By bathing yourself in coolness until understanding coolness, you can't do wrong or get hot. You'll probably get cooler and cooler because it's something naturally attractive: the absence of *dukkha* (suffering). Please don't forget this short phrase: "forest wat wild monks" is the way of living for the person who wants to reach the Buddha quickly. </blockquote>

Translated by Santikaro Bhikkhu

Endnotes

1. A wat (Thai) is a place where monks (*bhikkhus*) live, study, and practice. The wat usually serves the local community and is treated as public domain. So, "monastery" or "temple" doesn't quite convey the atmosphere and purpose of a wat. This talk was given 9 September 1976 to a group of temporary monks, who ordained for the three month long Rains Retreat, following an ancient Thai tradition. (Short additions have been made from another talk, "Suan Mokkh and Nature," which was given to a similar group 30 July 1979.) This translation originally appeared in *Monastic Studies* (No. 19, 1989), The Benedictine Priory of Montreal, Montreal, Quebec. First electronic edition with kind permission.
2. Literally, the "burden (or task) of insight development," that is, meditation (as opposed to book study).
3. "Heart" and "mind" are interchangeable. Both are partial renderings of the Pali word *citta*. Similar Thai words don't make a distinction between heart and mind, as we do in English.
4. Tragically, when Ajarn Buddhadasa went into a coma just before his 87th birthday, this teaching and his personal

wishes were ignored.

5. The meaning of "normal" (*pakati*) here is not "common, typical, ordinary," but refers to the original, natural state of peace when mind is void of "I" and "mine".

6. *Sotapanna*: first stage of "nobility," arises from the first "glimpse of *nibbana*" which ends belief in oneself as an individual "personality."

7. *Phra* comes from the Pali *vara* which means "excellent, splendid, best, noble."

8. *Pabbajja*, to leave, to go forth from, the household life and its sensual concerns.

9. *Gharavasa* (household life, lay life) is traditionally opposed and considered spiritually inferior to the homeless life of monks. While admitting the external and social differences, Ajarn Buddhadasa emphasizes that spiritually everyone has the same duty.

10. *Vedana*: basic mental feelings of pleasure, pain, and neither-pleasure-nor-pain. Emotions are not included here.

11. The second of two distinctions in how *nibbana* is experienced. The first is *sa-upadisesa-nibbana-dhatu* (the *nibbana* element with fuel remaining). "Fuel" refers to the seeds of positive and negative which are the bases of desire, attachment, and suffering. There is no difference in *nibbana* itself.

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