

Why suffering ?

Luangpor Khamkhian Suvanno



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In Gratitude to Luangpor Khamkhian

- 9 -

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Preface

Suffering is not something that arises spontaneously or depends solely on fate. It occurs from causal factors. Physical suffering arises from diseases, toxins, hunger, heat, or sharp weapons, and others. On the other hand, mental suffering arises from delusion. The first form of delusion is getting lost in thoughts or being carried away by emotions due to ignorance or unawareness of those thoughts and emotions. The second form of delusion is attachment or being driven by desires because of not understanding the truth. In other words, not realizing that everything is impermanent, hard to endure, and not the true self. Consequently, it is impossible to cling onto anything.

Physical suffering is not difficult for most people to understand, while mental suffering is perceived to be caused by illness, old age, poverty, loss of beloved things, or separation from loved ones. In essence, it arises from experiencing instability in life or encountering negative worldly conditions. In fact, even if we lose wealth, social status, or endure illness, our mind does not suffer unless we attach to those wealth, social status, and physical body. The less attached we are, the less our mind suffers when such situations occur.

Although completely letting go of things is challenging for human beings, it does not mean we are incapable of starting from this moment. While we are still unable to detach from everything, one thing we can do is let go of the thoughts and emotions that arise during times of instability. Even if we cannot prevent their occurrence, we have the ability to be aware of those thoughts and emotions by being mindful and observing them. Once we truly see and become aware, those thoughts and emotions cannot overpower our mind or cause mental suffering.

Old age, illness, loss, and separation are things we cannot avoid, but we are able to protect our mind from suffering. This is one of the “rights” that we have since birth—the right not to suffer. However, we can truly exercise this right only when we cultivate awareness and deepen our realization of the truth in order to expel both forms of delusion, starting with the delusion in thoughts and emotions, followed by the delusion of attachment. In other words, we cultivate mindfulness and wisdom respectively until they reach their full potential.

Luangpor Khamkhian Suvanno dedicated his life to guiding people towards the understanding that everyone has the right not to suffer through the cultivation of mindfulness. By being aware of every movement, we can realize the truth that there are only *Rūpa* (*Physical form*), and *Nāma* (*Mentality*). Nothing is our true self or belongs to us. The various sensations that arise are simply *Ākāra* (*Condition*), not the self, not us, and not belonging to us. Even when *Dukkha-vedanā* (*Painful feeling*) occurs, no one suffers. In other words, suffering exists, but no individual who suffers.

The content of this book is teachings by Luangpor, which were published by followers on the occasion of the 9th anniversary of his passing. Its purpose is to motivate everyone to be diligent in our practice, enabling us to gain the greatest benefits of being born as a human in this lifetime. I hope everyone realizes that we have the right not to suffer and we should exercise this right to eventually free ourselves from suffering.

Phra Paisal Visalo

12 August 2023





Let's listen to the *Dhamma*.

Luangpor will speak to you.

Listen to the teaching,
and act upon it.

Do not just listen for the sake of memory.

Listen not only to understand,
but to put it into practice,
to experience it,
and to embody it into our being.

This is the practical aspect,
not the theoretical understanding.

We cultivate mindfulness. The primary practice is not to pray, worship, or wish to gain something out of curiosity. We do not need to think, but rather rely on our actions as guidance. Use our body and mind, which are referred to as *Citta (Mind)*, *Cetasika (Mental factors)*, *Rūpa (Physical form)*, and *Nibbāna (Enlightenment)*. These are *Paramattha-sacca (Absolute truth)*, not *Sammati-paññatti (Conventional term)*.

We bring our body and mind;
Rūpa to experience it directly,
without any sense of seriousness, desire, or caution.

We simply immerse ourselves in the action
and allow our body to connect with awareness.
Make them bound together.
Bring our mind, consciousness,
and awareness stick together.

Previously, our body was trapped in ignorance or delusion, and our mind was lost in emotions. We allowed emotions to take control, becoming the master of our mind.

Meanwhile, our body was attached to delusion,
causing wasted actions,
wasted walking,
and wasted breathing.
Every movement was useless,
without any benefit gained.

Thus, we must make use of our body and mind. Do not allow delusion to compound and carry them away. Instead, bring awareness to intervene with delusion. We must pay attention and look after our body and mind. Do not turn our back on them, but confront them. Transform our physical eyes into inner eyes to observe both body and mind. Do not hide or run away, but rather look at them right here. Watch them, call them out, and respond to them.



Something is always intended to command us, but we do not necessarily need to obey. Be aware of it and call it out. For example, while we are sitting and practicing rhythmic movements, a thought of standing up arises. It is commanding us to do so. Recognize the thought but do not stand up as commanded. We can stand up on our own with awareness, rather than follow the thought. This is the mindfulness practice. Let awareness lead our actions, not thoughts, not feelings, or other factors.

It is similar to monkey training, in which a monkey obeys only one specific person, its owner or trainer. If someone else gives orders, the monkey becomes confused. Like when it climbs a coconut tree, and someone says “Get a coconut over there”. The monkey will be upset and shake the tree, refusing to do so. It waits for the owner to command. If the owner says “Come on, try again. Get that coconut”, the monkey will go and touch it. Then, the owner approves “Yes!”. It will grab that coconut right away. However, if anyone else tries to order it around, the monkey will stop and not respond. This is monkey training and also applies to elephants, cows, buffaloes, pigs, dogs, and other wild animals. Sometimes, the animals can recognize the command “Stop”. They will immediately stop their action.

To train ourselves is the same. We must allow mindfulness to take lead, take control, and always make it applicable. Be aware of what we are about to do, whether it is thinking, standing up, walking, or moving. Allow mindfulness to guide our body and mind. This is *Kammaṭṭhāna (Meditation)*.

Without starting in this way, it is not *Kammaṭṭhāna*. It becomes *Cinta-ñāṇa* (*Knowledge resulting from thoughts*) and *Vipassanūpakilesa* (*Imperfections of insight*), which rely on understanding and reasoning. The reasoning is not *Paramattha* (*Absolute truth*), but *Sammati-paññatti* (*Conventional term*), which is different. Liking is one thing, disliking is another thing. But at *Paramattha* level, they are all one. They are all awareness. Observing the body, we see this; observing thoughts, we also see this; observing *Vedanā* (*Feeling*), we see this; observing actions, *Rūpa* (*Physical form*), and *Nāma* (*Mentality*), we see the same thing. It is not seeing something different.

If we are mindful, the mental illusions will not arise often. Even if they do arise, just notice them and illusions will suddenly fade away. Moreover, if our mindfulness is powerful, it can serve as our inner eyes. They have the ability to see thoughts, emotions, and *Vedanā*. Our physical eyes cannot see them. They are limited to seeing only *Rūpa* (*Physical form*). We must keep our inner eyes open; do not let them close. Closed means deluded. Meanwhile, awareness is being conscious through the opened inner eyes. Even with closed eyes, we can be simply aware.

For example, when we practice rhythmic movements, we can still be aware of our moving hands with closed eyes in the dark, without any light. During walking meditation, we can also walk without looking at our feet. Just be simply aware. Be aware of the existing body.

Let's practice this together. This is not a university study, finished with a graduation. But it is finished through our actions. Start with actions and end with actions. It is not concerned with beliefs, religions, genders, races or languages. It is entirely about actions. Do not get caught up in any views, let them go. Take actions instead.



Focus on actions, which are concrete and tangible.

We have our own hands,

and the movements they make are genuine.

This is the real action.

Likewise, our breath is with us all the time,

but we rarely breathe with awareness.

We tend to waste it.

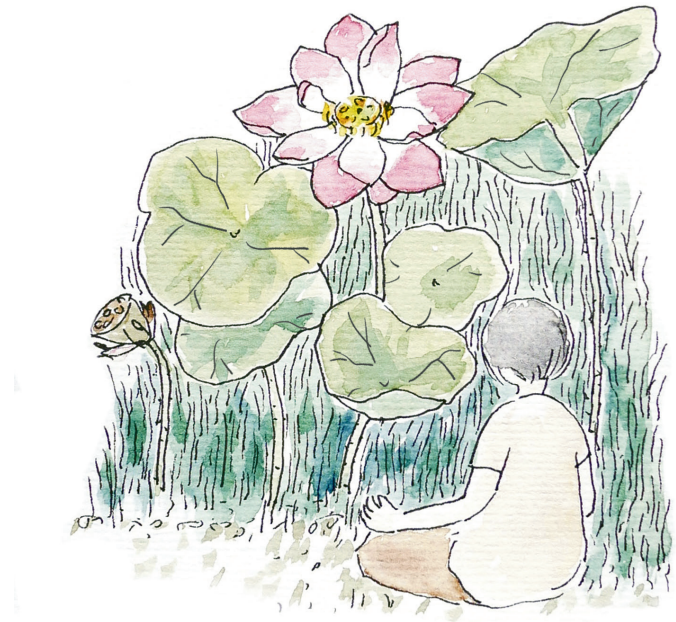
Even grabbing something can create awareness as well.

Every movement we make,

whether blinking or swallowing,

can become tools for cultivating awareness.

Practicing rhythmic movements may cause some body pains and aches. For newcomers, *Vedanā* (*Feeling*) can be more overwhelming compared to those who have been training for a long time. They cannot sit or walk in a meditative posture for so long due to the intensity of *Vedanā*. Newcomers can easily get lost in these physical sensations as *Vedanā* tries to distract and lead them towards delusion. This is similar to infiltration or transformation, such as how diseases spread, and our bodies work to resist infection.



The awareness and *Vedanā* are similar. *Vedanā* always uses its greatest power to force us until we surrender. If we are not conscious or not aware of this, we will easily get caught up in *Vedanā*. It will command us, become stronger, and make us submissive to it. We have to realize it.

Newcomers sometimes get lost and fall into *Vedanā*, experiencing physical pains, pleasure, and suffering. Some people may struggle with pain and suffering. They eventually raise the white flag. Do not surrender in this sense; observe it closely. The wisdom will manifest right here. Even if it is pleasure, do not smile at it just yet. Keep an eye on it. The observation will lead us to wisdom.

Do not trust in *Sukha-vedanā* (*Pleasant feeling*),

Dukkha-vedanā (*Painful feeling*),

and even *Adukkhamasukha-vedanā* (*Neither-pleasant-nor-painful-feeling*).

Recognize them for what they really are.

In fact, *Sukha-vedanā* is just one condition,

Dukkha-vedanā is another,

and *Adukkhamasukha-vedanā* is yet another.

These sensations are not the true self.

So, we look at these feelings; observe them. When they reveal themselves, we have to see them. Actually, these are what we will encounter when we take this path of the mind. We face obstacles along the way, much like when traveling from Buriram to Sukato. We have to hike up mountains and pass through difficult journeys until we finally arrive at Sukato. We climb mountains and slowly go against the slope, just as a car gradually loses energy. Once we reach the top, we can take a breath of fresh air. The weather is different from down below.

Similarly, in *Dhamma* practice, we sometimes go against the current as *Vedanā* pulls us down. Just be aware of it. Also, the mind that has been like a servant to thoughts, naturally thinks. Even though the mind and thoughts seem to be the same, they are not. The thought is one thing, seeing the thought is another. We can realize how our mind actually works. During awareness practice, it (thoughts) may suddenly appear as if emerging from a cave. The body is like a cave, with the mind inside. It comes out fast, enters fast, goes fast, and appears fast.



We try to observe.

Observe and then come back.

Avoid justifying the thoughts as right or wrong.

No matter what arises,
smile and laugh at them,
and return to awareness.

Do not allow thoughts to become so strong that they can
command us to give up,
to practice, and even to sleep.

We do as commanded but it is not always right.

Instead, we must perform these actions with *Cetanā* (*Volition*), starting with *Cetanā, Cetanāhaṃ bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi*—*Cetanā* is *Kamma* (*Action*). Without *Cetanā*, the actions have no consequences, which is called *Katattā-kamma* (*Casual act*). If we act with *Cetanā*, it will lead to *Phala* (*Fruition*). This can be considered as *Magga* (*Path*).

Knowing with *Cetanā* is *Magga*, and awareness is *Phala*. Our actions can become *Magga* and *Phala*. Raising our hands is *Kamma*, and being aware of hand movements is *Magga* and *Phala* combined. We can really feel the sensation when putting our hands on our knees. We can also be aware when tilting and raising our hands up. During the practice of 14 rhythmic movements or 15 movements counting with our hands on our knees, we precisely sense the gestures. The objects we perceive do exist and they are not an illusion like what we see in crystal ball gazing.

Crystal ball gazing is to create visions by staring at an object, but it is unnecessary for us. Instead, we count on what is real: *Rūpa*, body, *Citta*, and *Cetasika*. We consider *Rūpa* as *Nimitta* (*Sign/Mental image*). Rely on what is real to perceive the truth. Wisdom arises from observing *Rūpa*, *Nāma*, and *Saṅkhāra* (*Formation*): *Kāya-saṅkhāra* (*Bodily*

formation) and *Citta-saṅkhāra* (Mental formation). This is wisdom, which is thoroughly knowing the mass of *Saṅkhāra*, rather than thoroughly knowing *Nimitta* from crystal gazing. Even seeing the Buddha or a Buddha image is still *Nimitta*.

Thus, we must focus on the body or *Rūpa*.

Consider *Rūpa* as *Nimitta* and be aware of *Nāma*,
the mind or thinking mind.

This is how we realize *Rūpa* and *Nāma*.

See their conditions, recognize their pleasure and pain,
and observe their actions.

We also see *Sīla* (Morality),

Samādhi (Concentration),

and *Pañña* (Wisdom),

arising in *Rūpa* and *Nāma*.

Similarly, we see *Puñña* (virtue) and *Pāpa* (non-virtue)
manifesting in them,

not in the temple or in Luangpor.

In fact,

both *Puñña* (virtue) and *Pāpa* (non-virtue) exist in *Rūpa* and
Nāma.

Rūpa and *Nāma* are capable of doing good things. The cultivation of mindfulness is also a good deed. Being aware of our actions does not do any harm. It causes no harm at all as we remain conscious of our body, speech, and mind. When thoughts arise, simply return to awareness. Do not allow thoughts to command us. Recognize them immediately, just like putting out the fire before the wind blows.

Whenever the fire breaks out, extinguish it right away. Through experience in extinguishing, eventually it may not arise. In the end, we may experience a sense of calm, which is called *Nibbāna*. *Nibbāna* is within our mind. We can also recognize it through our breath. It exists right here. Do not look for *Nibbāna* anywhere else.

This is why we have to be aware and observe our body and mind, considering them as *Nimitta*. Bring awareness in our fieldwork, that is the primary practice. Allow actions to guide us rather than reasoning. This is *Kammaṭṭhāna*, the base of action. It is a complete learning, similar to the university education, in which we can gain knowledge and skills to work. Nevertheless, the complete learning of life is about the body and about awareness. It is accessible to everyone, whether young or old, male or female, monk or

laity, no matter what nationality, beliefs or religions. This is all about the body and mind.

Everyone has a body and mind, regardless of their nationality. We experience awareness, ignorance, *Vedanā*, thoughts, and *Dhamma*, which can appear as positive or negative. They all arise within our mind. Whether it is anger, heat, cold, hunger, headache, or stomachache, these sensations are equal as they are all *Vedanā*. Thus, let's have fun with it. Learning the truth is enjoyable. We are observing the real things, such as really seeing the body, really seeing *Vedanā*, and really seeing thoughts.

When thoughts arise, they can become so overwhelming that we cannot resist. Thoughts may even blend with emotions. We cannot overcome them without strong mindfulness and awareness. We always sense *Itthārammaṇa* (*Pleasant condition*) as positive and *Aniṭṭhārammaṇa* (*Unpleasant condition*) as negative. Pleasure is positive, while displeasure is negative. They shift back and forth continuously, and they become stronger. However, if we look carefully into these sensations, they will lead us to wisdom. Both pleasure and displeasure can turn into wisdom. Thus, we have begun (on the path).



For example, during rhythmic movements practice, thoughts may carry us away.

Turn these thoughts into awareness.

Whether we experience suffering or happiness, we can change both into awareness.

Even heat and cold, ache and fatigue, can also be changed into awareness.

Awareness has the ability to transform any conditions that occur in our body and mind. When we are hungry, we may eat until we are full. However, turning hunger into fullness is just an action with no benefit. Instead, we have to be aware. Both hunger and fullness are bodily conditions or *Ākāra*, not a self. Similarly, heat and cold, ache and fatigue are all just bodily conditions. They belong to the body, not to the self. When we feel pleasant or unpleasant with these conditions, we become lost in delusion. To gain wisdom, we must realize that they are just bodily conditions.

Anger, anxiety, and sadness are mental conditions, or *Ākāra* likewise. Pleasure that is derived from fulfillment is also a mental condition, not a self. We allow these conditions to develop their influential power, commanding us to keep climbing higher without ever stopping.

If we look at it, we will see.

Whatever we see, it all becomes awareness.

Whatever we see, it creates awareness.

Awareness provides us with answers and guides us towards life's solution. Life can be revealed. Still, some people are unable to do so, such as those who follow anger or drown in pain. They cannot get over the feelings. For them, life has no way out. It is blocked as a dead end. If we have awareness, life can be revealed. It has passed. It has gone and become *Vimutti* (Freedom). With awareness, we can approach *Magga* and *Phala* immediately. Moreover, studying what we see with our eyes, hear with our ears, and touch with our hands is studying the truth.

We simply realize whatever happens and allow them to pass. We can even get through thoughts as well. Just be aware. Let's cultivate awareness. It is necessary for us to practice. Do not seek any reasons or attach to any thoughts. It is not like that. Take actions. Focus on actions instead. Experience them and embody them into awareness. Allow the body and mind to connect with awareness.

So, Luangpor started by saying that, at the beginning, if the body is connected to ignorance, then all the causes of ignorance are with the body. If the mind is connected to ignorance, then all the causes of ignorance are with the mind. Ignorance overwhelms us. We may ask someone whether it is

awareness or delusion that has played a greater role in their life up until now.

Actually, let's not go that far. Let's take only this hour. During walking meditation, we can take about 3,000 to 4,000 steps per hour. If we walk just right with a suitable body swing, we will probably take about 4,000 steps. But will we be aware of every step? Perhaps we are distracted for half of it and are aware of the other half. In rhythmic movements practice, if we move our hands just right with a suitable gesture, we can become aware of a rhythmic movement in each second. Feel it. Feel it like a clock ticking. Tick, tick, tick. We can be aware of 3,000 to 4,000 motions. Sometimes, we may be more distracted than aware, with 4,000 to nearly 5,000 movements per hour.

If we observe closely, delusion can be frightening. While we continue practicing awareness, we may suddenly notice the thoughts and realize that we had never seen them before. It took us 30 years to eventually see our thoughts. We almost died; barely survived. It can be a shocking realization when we see them. Previously, we had never recognized delusion and thoughts as we believed we could live with them. We could think anything, even insane and ridiculous ones.



Once we become aware of thoughts, we can realize how much our life is affected by them. It is like walking on the edge of a cliff, where we can easily slip out and fall. If we are careless, we do not survive. This is very terrifying. The mind is capable of thinking about anything, including harmful thoughts. It keeps thinking without limits.

Even when we are angry,
we eat and sleep with anger.
Sometimes,
it is overwhelming to the point
that we cannot eat and sleep at all,
but we still hold on to that anger.



How can we be affected that much? The right of non-anger exists, why don't we exercise this right? Also, the right of non-delusion is here, why don't we experience it? We kept accepting every feeling that came our way. It used to be like that. Once we practice awareness, it makes our hair stand on end. We are granted a new life, a fresh start. It is called "Nawachiwan". "Nawa" means new ("chiwan" means life). It is truly a brand new life, not old anymore. This is the power of awareness. However, awareness is different from delusion. Every time we get lost in delusion, our life becomes messy, not new at all. Like a clean white cloth, when carrying thoughts, it becomes dirty, stained, spotted, and gloomy.

The Buddha once said, "A monk who is immersed and engrossed in thoughts, is considered to break his precepts, making them impure and tainted." Such is the power of thoughts over us. We may mistakenly believe that we are skilled practitioners just because we walk slowly, sit with our eyes closed, wear traditional monk or white robes, and shave our head. Nevertheless, these external actions are not enough. We must take care of our body and mind and remain aware. Sometimes, we boast about our religious doctrine, sects or status. We also identify ourselves to be attendants of this temple or students of that particular master. It is not like that. Awareness is what truly purifies us. It is not about praying through any worship or ritual.

Try to be aware of ourselves.

When thoughts arise, recognize them before they lead to immoral actions caused by ignorance.

Similarly, awareness always presents before it becomes meritorious.

Luangpor challenge you to do it. This is what the Buddha taught, not any rituals. We tend to value worship and religious ceremonies all along. We are good at these things. Like some environmentalists, they are activists who focus on advocacy but cannot even grow plants, vegetables, or preserve anything. This is not how it should be. Actions are required; do them well.

Mindfulness practice is taught through action, rather than knowledge. It is easy to teach someone to be knowledgeable. They just explain about 2 *Bahukāra-dhamma* (*Virtues of great assistance*), which consists of *Sati* (*Mindfulness*), the ability to recollect and *Sampajañña* (*Clear comprehension*), the ability to be aware. By emphasizing this 2-3 times, we can certainly understand and remember it. When put to the test, the question is, “What are the *Dhamma* that provide us with such great assistance?” We can say that *Sati* and *Sampajañña* are like our parents, providing great assistance to us. We can answer in this sense and pass the certificate. This is how we gain knowledge, but we still do not know how to put it to use. Where exactly is awareness?

This is why we are here.

We do not need to talk.

Just allow the body to connect with awareness.

Be aware of it, without using any words.

Bring the body to feel and experience awareness directly.

Know it.

Recognize it.

Be conscious before speaking, doing, and thinking.

Likewise, be aware while speaking, doing, and thinking.

Mindfulness and awareness will suddenly come together at the same time. Complete. *Sati* and *Sampajañña* do not separate; they exist together. When we flip our hand, we are aware of it. Even before flipping our hand, we can feel it. While flipping our hand onto its edge, we recognize it.

This is a sense of awareness.

Raise our hand up,

feel it.

Bring it here,

be aware of it.

Know it,

know it again.

Know it lightly,

know it fresh,

and know it purely.



