



Where is *Suan Mokkh* ?



Buddhadasa Bhikkhu

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Where Is Suan Mokkh?

by Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu

Translated from the Thai by Tanya Brockelman

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Anumodanā

To all Dhamma Comrades, those helping to spread Dhamma:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Heartiest appreciation from Buddhādāsa Indapañño,
Buddhist Science ever shines beams of Bodhi long-lasting.

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

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

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

from

Buddhādāsa Indapañño

Mokkhabalārāma

Chaiya, 2 November 2530

Preface

If you've been to Chaiya or have a guidebook you might answer the title question without thinking. Please think again. While the question may seem straightforward, the talk translated here quickly moves beyond the obvious answer to explore deepening levels of meaning. From Suan Mokkh as a physical place arrived at by physical travel, Ajahn Buddhādāsa outlines a progression of Dhamma understanding and practice that aims at the heart of the Buddha's liberating Dhamma.

Here, Ajahn Buddhādāsa again examines how creative understanding and skillful use of language aid in pointing out the truths of Buddha-Dhamma. He employs characteristic tools of inquiry such as his distinction between people language and Dhamma language. Happy to welcome visitors to his garden of liberation, he is even more happy to point to the gardens within all of us and, further, the ultimate garden that permeates all realities.

Many thanks to Tanya Brockelman for this excellent first translation that introduces English readers to another aspect of Ajahn Buddhādāsa's Dhamma creativity. Further thanks to Paco, Juree, and others with The Buddhādāsa Indapañño Archives who are arranging these new digital publications. May the merits of their good intentions benefit gazillions of beings.

Santikaro
Series General Editor

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Where Is Suan Mokkh?

*A Dhamma lecture to monks ordained for the Rains Retreat
presented on 4 October 2526 (1983)*

Today I will speak on a special subject, a different topic than usual. I am hoping that this talk will help you gain some special knowledge about both Dhamma and skillful ways of speaking. Please listen carefully. I believe that the subject will be especially beneficial because I will discuss two things at the same time. One is Dhamma, and the other is ways of speaking about Dhamma. I will explain these by speaking on the topic “Where is Suan Mokkh?”

Please don’t take this topic lightly. It can help you understand both Dhamma and the ways of communicating Dhamma. You might have already heard that there are two ways of speaking, which are people language and Dhamma language. Actually, there are more than two ways, because Dhamma language includes many ways of speaking whereas conventional language seems to have only one way.

If you ask, “Where is Suan Mokkh?” there are four ways to answer this. Please listen attentively so that you understand. Of the four ways, one way is people language, or conventional, everyday language, and two or three are non-conventional. When asked, “Where is Suan Mokkh?” if we answer in people language, it is 68 Moo 6, Tambol Lamed, Amphoe Chaiya, Suratthani, in the south of Thailand.

This is how we would answer in the most normal way. This is easy for anyone to understand.

The second way is not full-scale conventional language. It could be called Dhamma language, though not the deepest level. It could be called mind (*citta*) language. Everything is experienced by the mind; if there's no awareness, it's as if there's nothing. This is because mind comes into contact with things, and inside the mind those things are actually experienced or felt. In this language of mind, we can say that Suan Mokkh exists in the mind that perceives it. This is called 'mental language' or 'inner language.' As for the real Suan Mokkh, we don't really know where it might be, but with no mind to make contact, it practically doesn't exist. If the mind comes into contact with Suan Mokkh, and Suan Mokkh appears in awareness as an object of experience or sense object, complete with everything the mind can perceive, then it is true that Suan Mokkh is in the mind.

Now, if we go into a deeper level of Dhamma language, we would answer in another way: "wherever there is a spotless, liberated mind, there is Suan Mokkh."¹ This is because a liberated mind is called a *mokkha* mind. Such a mind is spotless and free from defilement (*kilesa*) or contamination. Wherever a person with a liberated mind (*citta-mokkha*) goes, whether it's a forest or garden or

¹ The different answers to the question "Where is Suan Mokkh?" involve elaborate wordplay on the word 'mok' in Thai. 'Suan Mokkh' was chosen as the original name of the hermitage due to the many Mok (Water Jasmine) trees there, and because 'mok' is a homonym of *mokkha*, the Thai pronunciation of the Pāli word *mokkha*, which is used to describe the liberated mind.

anywhere at all, that place is called ‘Suan Mokkh’ or ‘Garden of Liberation.’ It could be in this forest or in any other place.

If we look even deeper, at a more subtle level, where is this mokkha, or spotless state of liberation free from contamination? As it turns out, it’s in the mind. Thus we say that Suan Mokkh emerges in a mind that has become spotless. If you understand these four meanings well, that means you really understand Dhamma, and you also know the different ways of speaking Dhamma.

First is the conventional way of speaking as known and spoken by ordinary people. Where is Suan Mokkh? It is at the Suan Mokkh Temple, Moo 6, Tambol Lamed, in Chaiya district. If we use better and truer language, which is called mental language, we say that Suan Mokkh is found in the awareness which perceives it, so Suan Mokkh is in the mind. This is still not all that Dhammic — it is more like science of the mind or normal psychology lingo, but it can be used in Dhamma as well.

In one Zen story which uses this kind of language, two monks are arguing about a flag. One monk says that “the wind is making the flag wave.” He’s using conventional language. The flag is being moved by the wind, that’s why it’s waving. The other monk says, “That’s crazy, it’s your mind that’s waving.” This is deeper language. Your mind is waving with the feeling that the flag is waving. It’s not the flag that is waving, but your mind. Please realize that this is another way of speaking, called speaking the language of mind.

Now, we can also speak normal Dhamma language, which is used quite a lot in the Pāli scriptures. If we’re using the meaning of mokkha, which means ‘spotless,’

we say that wherever there is a person whose mind is free from defilement, that place is Suan Mokkh, a place of liberation. Basically, wherever this type of person is found, that place earns this name. This is Dhamma language. It is not limited to an area or space, and isn't based on assumption, but is rooted in Dhamma. Wherever there is a person with a spotless mind, that place becomes Suan Mokkh. It could be anywhere. Your house could be Suan Mokkh if you have a pure and undefiled mind.

Last is an even more subtle level of Dhamma language. The fourth answer is that Suan Mokkh exists in a spotless, liberated mind. This means a state of mind free from the binding chains of illusion and attachment. We could say it is a state of mind or it is a state *in* the mind. That's why we say that Suan Mokkh has come into the mind.

Are You in Suan Mokkh or Is Suan Mokkh in You?

Now if we take all four meanings and put them together, arguments can start. It is like the simile of a group of blind people examining an elephant — each person has a different experience and describes it differently. What is worth debating about — what I'd like you to think about — is the question “Are you in Suan Mokkh or is Suan Mokkh in you?” Are you in Suan Mokkh or is Suan Mokkh inside of you? Please think about this.

If we speak according to normal feelings, then we're at Suan Mokkh, meaning we've come to Suan Mokkh, and we are on the Suan Mokkh grounds. This is conventional language. There's nothing profound or clever if we just say we're staying at Suan Mokkh. However, the meaning is totally different if we say that Suan Mokkh exists in a

spotless mind, that Suan Mokkh is in such a pure mind. This contains more truth, but is seldom heard because people do not normally have spotless minds. In common minds there is no Suan Mokkh. We can either say that we're in Suan Mokkh or Suan Mokkh is in us, so please understand. If we speak in a general sense, we say that Suan Mokkh is in the heart of one with a spotless mind, which is the most accurate. It is also the deepest and most profound way of speaking Dhamma language. Please carefully examine the different ways of speaking, as this will be beneficial.

Mind Is Full of Monkeys, So How Can It Be Spotless?

Now let's talk about the mind being pure or impure. What are our minds like? Our minds are crowded with gangs of monkeys — monkeys of 'I' and 'mine.' How can such a mind be spotless? It can't be pure. If one is not listening well, this may sound like joking; then one gets angry and stops listening. That would have no benefit, neither for the speaker nor the listener. Don't take it as a joke. Though it sounds like a joke that our minds are crowded with monkeys of 'self,' this is truer than true.

Alright, let's try to be more clear. Let's compare a spotless mind and a contaminated mind, because that's easy to understand. A spotless mind has nothing overgrown or messy in it. But just because thoughts exist doesn't mean that the mind is necessarily messy. For the mind to be contaminated, the thoughts have to be of the disorderly type, which means thoughts of the self — thoughts containing the delusion of 'I' or 'mine.'

Please try to understand the meaning of messiness. In the mind, there is a lot of clutter and disorder, so it is

not clear and spotless. There is a subtle hidden meaning here. You might not realize what actually makes up the disorder. For example, it is said that a forest is overgrown. The disorder is in the essence of the forest, not in the individual trees and vegetation. Trees make up the disorderly forest, but the clutter is not in the trees. That's why there is a Buddhist teaching that says, "Cut the forest, but don't cut the trees." It refers to the elimination of clutter and disorder, not of trees. Another example is in one of the pictures in the Spiritual Theater. It illustrates how crookedness is found in the river, but not in the water. "The river is curved but the water is not." The river bends to and fro, but the water flowing in it is neither bent nor crooked. The water cannot be crooked.

A messy mind is the same way. Thoughts don't make the mind messy unless they are thoughts of 'I' or 'mine.' Such thoughts clutter the mind because they are full of defilement (*kilesa*). If the mind has thoughts which are free from defilement, such as thoughts of wisdom or mindfulness, then it is not messy. Therefore, a spotless mind means awareness that does not contain thoughts of 'I' or 'mine.' I've already spoken to you about this 'I' or 'mine,' so I won't waste more time on it now.² When there is any thought of self, or 'I,' there's no doubt that the possessive 'mine' will follow like a shadow. If the mind has other types of thoughts, such as intelligent ones or thoughts that don't have any meaning of 'I' or 'mine,' then there is no defilement, no clutter. The mind is free from delusions of self. The word 'spotless' means free from self.

² For example, see *The Prison of Life*.

The mind before the notion of self arises is the original mind, because in truth, in the way things naturally are, mental contents do not necessarily give rise to a feeling of self. There is a natural mind and natural thoughts that are not of 'I' or of 'mine.' Only when something aggravates, lures, or distorts the mind do notions of self arise. I have already explained in detail that, through the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body or mind, objects come into contact (*phassa*) with the original mind. This leads to feeling (*vedanā*), which leads to craving (*taṇhā*), which leads to clinging to a notion of self. In the mind's original, normal state, there is no notion of self, but when it experiences contact via the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body or mind, the process of mental concoction and distortion happens and leads to the illusion of a self. Because of this, we ought to hold that the mind that has given rise to the notion of self is a new mind, full of clutter and no longer spotless. Originally, it wasn't polluted with issues of 'I' or 'mine' — it was spacious and clear. However, when distorted like this, the mind becomes cluttered and contaminated, wrapped up and entangled in self.

Whether we call it original mind, pure mind, or natural awareness, mind that is still empty and has not been distorted is a spotless mind. Then, when mind is not pure, what should we call it? Cluttered mind or disordered mind will suffice. Once self enters the picture, there is a new fabrication of mind. This mind loses its original natural state. It becomes distorted by defilement, or its distortion results in defilement, depending on how you look at it. The result is a chaotic mind, with contaminated awareness.

We should derive a lot of meaning from the word 'spotless,' because what we really need is freedom from

distortion. Whether we are here, or at home, or anywhere at all, having a pure mind is always best. Why? First of all, because it is joyful. When the mind is pure, there is a kind of happiness that is peaceful and cool. If the mind isn't pure, it is heated, turbulent, and restless. The pure mind is peaceful and happy because it is unattached, because it doesn't cling to anything. And so the pure mind is liberated. It does not become a slave to false expectations. We call it free or liberated and say that it has the wisdom of a free mind in its natural state. If we make the mind free from defilement, its wisdom will be complete. The mind will be supple and fast, not clumsy in performing its duties. It will be courageous and stable, and will have a high capacity for work. The pure mind is clean, bright, and peaceful. It can experience the state of liberation (*vimutti*), which is freedom from all pressures and entanglements, that is, free from suffering (*dukkha*). There is a quality of Nibbāna within it. The word *nibbāna* means quenched and cool. Even a brief moment is still Nibbāna if there is no heat of defilement present.

Once again, if the mind is spotless, it is *mokkha*. Mokkha means released or liberated. Such a mind does not cling to anything and isn't attached to anything. It is liberated and free and full of wisdom. It is fast, courageous, and stable, with a high capacity in performing its duties. It is clean, bright, and peaceful. A spotless mind is free from the power of defilement, free from the influence of suffering. In that moment, it has the characteristic of coolness of Nibbāna. When it loses this purity, mind is no longer cool. In this sense, Nibbāna is only momentary. It can be called *sāmayika-*

nibbāna, or *tadanga-nibbāna* (coincidental Nibbāna).

If the mind is not mokkha, or not liberated, it will have the opposite characteristics. If the mind isn't spotless, if it is clinging to something, it is not free, which means it is ignorant. It is slow, tentative and weak, and has a low capacity to do its duties. It is neither clean, nor bright, nor peaceful. It is still influenced by defilement and suffering. It does not have the coolness which is characteristic of Nibbāna. This we call an impure mind.

The True Suan Mokkh Is in the Spotless Mind

Now that we know quite well what a spotless mind is, we will examine the implications of having spotless awareness in one's heart and body. In the actual meaning of Dhamma, true 'Suan Mokkh' is inside the spotless mind. According to the external meaning, a person with a pure mind goes to sit in some garden or forest somewhere, and that forest becomes 'Mokkh Forest' or that garden becomes 'Mokkh Garden,' Suan Mokkh. To call a place 'Suan Mokkh' in this manner of speaking is to say that there's a person with a pure mind coming to live there. Or else Suan Mokkh is in the mind that has pure awareness. Then, we come to the most external layer, which is that Suan Mokkh is located at Moo 6, Tambol Lamed, Chaiya District.

I'd like you to examine this until you understand the essence and substance of the Dhamma, along with understanding these different ways of talking, different implications, and different perspectives. As I said before, I would like to give two kinds of knowledge today: knowledge of Dhamma and knowledge of the different levels of communication.

On a deep level, you are not in Suan Mokkh if your mind is not spotless. I do not say this to be condescending. It's just that if your mind is impure, you could be sitting right here and still not be in Suan Mokkh, because the true meaning of mokkha is liberation of the mind. However, if we are speaking conventional language, it is correct to say that you are at Suan Mokkh. You've come to stay at Suan Mokkh and are sitting right here. That is people language. Having come from Bangkok or wherever and now sitting here at number 68 Moo 6, Tambol Lamed, Chaiya District, you can say you're at Suan Mokkh in *lokiya-vohāra* (mundane, conventional language). In Dhamma language, however, it is not acceptable to say that you are in Suan Mokkh unless your mind is clear and spotless.

Please try to understand the meaning of Dhamma and the different ways of speaking so that you know which type of language is being used. This way, we won't get into arguments like the monks in the Zen story: one says, "The flag is waving on the flagpole," and the other says, "It's actually your mind that is waving." Because the two monks are observing things from different angles, they disagree. There's no need for that.

To summarize, the question "Where is Suan Mokkh?" can be answered in four ways of speaking. One: it is at a certain physical plot of land, which is the common way of speaking. Two: it is in the mind of the person seeing and experiencing it. This is still mundane language, it cannot quite be called Dhamma language yet. Three: it is in any place where a pure-minded person can be found, or where such a person lives. Four: in the subtlest, deepest meaning, Suan Mokkh exists in the mind of a person whose mind is spotless.

The next thing is that you might even take Suan Mokkh with you to Bangkok, which is possible if you have spotless awareness. When you return to Bangkok, for instance, Suan Mokkh goes with you. How can it go with you? Because, in truth, Suan Mokkh is inside the spotless mind. If you go back to Bangkok and your mind is clean and clear, Suan Mokkh will be there in your mind. An impure mind doesn't have Suan Mokkh even when it's here at Suan Mokkh. There is no Suan Mokkh for that person. Suan Mokkh exists only in the place where a pure-minded person lives or where the spotless mind lives.

Is Suan Mokkh in a mind that's clear or is the clear mind in Suan Mokkh? When this kind of question arises, be careful. Answer it carefully. Your answer might be very ignorant or very intelligent. Is Suan Mokkh in a mind that's spotless or is the spotless mind in Suan Mokkh? Be sure to answer this correctly.

The answer depends on the kind of meaning you're talking about. It depends on the language the speaker is using. "Suan Mokkh exists in a spotless mind" is a high level of Dhamma. To say "There is a spotless mind at Suan Mokkh," though, is not based on evidence; it has no higher logic. There is nothing impressive about it. A clear mind is in Suan Mokkh, because a clear mind always contains Suan Mokkh. So it's not necessary to go to any external Suan Mokkh. You might think that I am just playing with words, but that is not my intention. I just want you to see the different interpretations and know the deeper meanings. Many implications can be drawn out depending on the intelligence of the speaker.

If you understand it this way, you can make Suan

Mokkh last forever. You can be in Suan Mokkh forever. Wherever you go home to, wherever you go in life, Suan Mokkh will follow you. It stays in the awareness of a person with spotless mind. When the mind becomes contaminated, Suan Mokkh will run away from you. When the mind becomes spotless again, Suan Mokkh comes back. Sounds like joking, doesn't it? Actually it's a very serious matter, not a joke. The important question is, how do we make the mind spotless?

To phrase the question differently, where and how do we build Suan Mokkh? Where should we build Suan Mokkh? Many people try to do this. They want to build a new Suan Mokkh in this or that province. They talk and they plan ignorantly. To go and build a new Suan Mokkh somewhere would be the most foolish thing. If the building is not in the mind, it's useless. So I ask, where should we build Suan Mokkh? The most correct answer is to build it in the mind. In Chiang Mai and in the northeast there are people planning to build new Suan Mokkhs. They are speaking mundane language. Speaking in Dhamma language, the true language, we build Suan Mokkh in the mind. Everyone should build it in the mind. It is most important to make the mind spotless.

Knowing the Contaminated Mind

Let's get to know what a contaminated mind is. If you don't know the state of contamination, you can't know the state of liberation, because they are opposites. An impure mind is one where 'I' or 'mine' has arisen. The mind that has 'I' or 'mine' is a mind that's not spotless. How is mind spotless, and how is it contaminated? If we come to know the self and know that it's a burden, we start to have contempt

for it. We get sick of these issues of self and get tired of not having clarity.

You should get to know what defilements (*kilesas*) are; then you will come to hate these contaminants. These days, people do not hate defilements because they are not familiar with them. So the mind keeps generating even more defilement. The whole world is like this. It's practically a world of defilement, a world of chaos resulting from mental restlessness. Only Arahants have completely clear minds. For other people, mind can be sometimes clear and sometimes not clear, or it can be in between, not completely spotless yet. Sometimes it is definitely starting to become clear, so at least it's in the process of becoming spotless.

In everyday life, the process of mental concoction goes on until the feelings of 'I' and 'mine' are created in the mind. I beg you to closely observe this. I would like you to catch these thoughts that are constantly concocting and fabricating the feelings of 'I' and 'mine.' In some places the fabrication happens very easily because the environment pushes things in that direction. In some places it doesn't happen as easily because the surroundings don't encourage it. The task becomes easier when you come to stay in a place like Suan Mokkh, which is designed specifically to encourage the process of liberation. The environment here will take you towards purity, so it's a bit easier. If you spend time in a seductive environment full of temptations, it will be more difficult for your mind to become clear.

One should be able to speak about Suan Mokkh in both conventional language and Dhamma language. There is Suan Mokkh in the material sense and Suan Mokkh in the spiritual sense. We could call them the

outer Suan Mokkh and the inner Suan Mokkh. Please try to understand these words well. If you do understand, Dhamma will appear bright and clear. You will become fluent in Dhamma language, and you will know the difference between the external Suan Mokkh and the internal Suan Mokkh. The external Suan Mokkh is the physical land. The internal Suan Mokkh is the clarity of mind in the core of the awareness. Know the outer Suan Mokkh and the inner Suan Mokkh until you realize that here we are merely in the outer Suan Mokkh. We have come to Chaiya, but we have only reached the superficial Suan Mokkh. There is still another Suan Mokkh to deal with. In order for the mind to enter the inner Suan Mokkh, it has to be trained until it becomes spotless and liberated.

Suan Mokkh Depends on Cultivation of Mind

Having Suan Mokkh or not depends on training the mind or what's called mental development (*citta-bhāvanā*). *Bhāvanā* means development, but not development in the chaotic, overgrown sense like modern economic development. *Bhāvanā* means to make the mind better and better until it no longer has problems, until it no longer has suffering. But the spoken language is difficult. Don't get too attached to spoken or written words. Try to grasp the real meaning behind the words. Mental development is the process of making the mind liberated. Or you could say that mental development brings the mind closer to Nibbāna. That is the most correct.

If you want to reach the real Suan Mokkh, you have to practice *bhāvanā* and develop the mind. If you do practice, mind will become clearer and clearer, potentially reaching the real Suan Mokkh. It turns out that there's no need to build

a place for Suan Mokkh, no need to build anything. Instead, you simply need to develop the mind. A developed mind is a spotless mind, perfectly clear and free from defilement, free from notions of self. The clearer the mind is, the more developed it is.

I have already spoken about the ways to practice and the details of practice in earlier talks. Those can also be found in books and manuals, but I can outline it again here. In Buddhism, mental development (*citta-bhāvanā*) involves training in morality (*sīla*), meditation (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). At times, it is called the Noble Path (*ariya-magga*) or the Eightfold Path (*aṭṭhaṅgika-magga*), or sometimes just *magga* (Path). Morality includes right speech (*sammā-vācā*), right action (*sammā-kammanta*), and right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*). Meditation includes right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), and right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*). Wisdom includes right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) and right aspiration (*sammā-sankappa*).

When we talk about the path in the practical sense, we can see that in the process of liberation, wisdom must come first, followed by meditation and then morality. That's what happens when it is actually applied in practice. If we speak in the theoretical sense, or only for the sake of talking, we say that morality comes first, followed by meditation and wisdom.

Alright, for now let's speak in the usual theoretical way — the trainings in morality, meditation, and wisdom are the tools for developing spotlessness. Morality cleanses the body and speech, meditation cleanses the mind making it clear and spotless, and wisdom brings about spiritual cleansing, the cleansing of our ability to

see and understand reality as it is. Body (*kāya*) and mind (*citta*) are easy enough to understand, but we must be more careful with spirituality, for which Thai doesn't have a good translation. Please don't confuse the different levels. The body is one level and deeper down is mind. Then there is the more subtle awareness or wisdom of the mind that functions at yet another level and is able to understand spiritual subtleties.

Spirituality

The body is the outer shell, 'corporeality' in English. Mind involves 'mentality.' They are not the same. Lastly we can use the convenient English term 'spirituality' to distinguish the three, because the separation is clear and concise. In Buddhist language, however, we normally have only the words 'body' and 'mind.' I'm not sure what to call the third one in Thai, so I borrow English term 'spirituality.' This is our capacity to understand the true nature of body and mind, of life and nature. This capacity must also be cultivated.

Once again, it is a matter of language. You will realize that we can't always take words too literally. For example, the word 'spirits' in English could mean ghosts or it could mean alcohol. It has various meanings. However, the word 'spiritual' isn't used for ghosts or alcohol — rather, it has to do with wisdom and higher consciousness. 'Physical,' 'mental,' and 'spiritual' are English words that help make the categories concise and easy. That's why we sometimes borrow the word spiritual and its cognates from English to save time.

In summary, training in morality purifies the body (*kāya*), training in meditation purifies the mind (*citta*),

and training in wisdom purifies the spiritual aspect of consciousness. Those who are stubborn, won't listen, won't cooperate, and won't try to interpret meaning in this way are unable to communicate about spiritual matters. The problem and confusion arises with the Thai word *winyan*, that I'm using for the third level. It has many different meanings and implications. We could use the word *ditthi* instead; the *ditthi* system meaning ways of seeing, thinking, and understanding. Kāya system, citta system, and *ditthi* system. While *ditthi* is not the mind, it is a property or capacity of mind. It has to go through its own level of cleansing.

A spotless body is called *kāya-viveka*, meaning a body that is free of disturbance, with nothing stimulating, grasping, or entangling. *Viveka* means solitude, seclusion, and aloneness. *Kāya-viveka* means seclusion of the body with nothing to disturb it. Then *citta-viveka* means mind all alone and independent, with nothing to disturb it.

Now, *upadhi-viveka* means undisturbed by wrong views and things that incite clinging. When the objects of attachment appear and stimulate clinging, we call this *upadhi*. *Upadhi* means heaviness. When there's attachment, it's heavy. When there isn't any clinging, it isn't heavy. *Upadhi* refers to the bases of attachment, the things to which ordinary people usually cling. That's why we call such things *upadhi*, which means heavy stuff. Even goodness, merit, and virtue turn into *upadhi* immediately when grasping occurs. People don't know about this and attach to things for the most part. They attach to goodness and merit as 'mine.' They develop attachment to honor, fame, status, and beauty. These things are taken as 'mine' and become heavy with *upadhi*. That isn't spiritual solitude. The spiritual aspect of

life, the capacity to understand, won't be liberated. It will be full of heaviness.

Life is spotless through viveka. Kāya-viveka is physical solitude. Citta-viveka is mental solitude. Upadhi-viveka is spiritual solitude with nothing heavy to disturb. We can say that the whole system of the sublime life is a method of purification. All of Buddhism involves making the mind spotless and undisturbed. We work with mind because it is the most basic factor. If the mind is clear, the body will also be clear, and the capacity to see truthfully will also be clear. To put it another way, you could say that the whole system of sublime life is a process that builds spotlessness in body, mind, and realization. Spotless in *ditṭhi*, thinking, seeing, and believing, also. The realm of spirituality is clear and clean in every way. Buddhism is all about spotlessness. It is simply about cleansing, about making things pure.

Dhamma Language & Conventional Language

There are many ways of speaking and many different words one can use, even when discussing the same topic. Nowadays, communication is at a standstill. We are unable to say what we mean. Sometimes the speaker is using one kind of language but the listener is listening with another. Sometimes a listener is unable to understand language that's different from what he or she has learned before. If the person speaking is speaking Dhamma language but the person listening only understands conventional language, there's no communication. For instance, take the example "Where is Suan Mokkh?" People who speak mundane language answer one way, and those who speak Dhamma language, or mental language, answer another way.

They are speaking different languages.

Dhamma language is not a foreign language or anything. It's a language that is hidden deep within the same tongue. In the Thai language alone, we can see that there are subtle and coarse levels of speech. There are deep and shallow levels of language. The term for the knowledge of different levels of language is *nirukti*, or *nirutti*. We use language according to what we want to say, so that people will best understand us. If we are not skilled in *nirukti*, or the art of *nirukti*, we can't make ourselves understood. These days it's even more difficult. The kind of *nirukti* that villagers use in everyday life is a different system. It's not the *nirukti* of Buddhism, which is spiritual language used to talk about Dhamma and religion. We end up with two or three types of *nirukti* and are unable to communicate.

Whenever there is misunderstanding, even among Thais speaking Thai, it is because we are unable to use language properly. There's no need to mention foreign languages. Even speaking Thai, we don't understand each other. How can we communicate with foreigners? There are some people who think that they can talk to foreigners even when they can't make themselves understood in Thai. I think that's arrogant. Anyway, they can go ahead and try. Perhaps if they speak long enough, someone will understand.

You are learning about how to speak or use language at the same time that you're growing in Dhamma. We have two duties: we must learn things for our own growth, absorbing them into our inner selves, and we also must share our knowledge with other people. If we are not skilled and articulate in language, there will be difficulties. To be successful in speaking, we must not be careless or

boastful. Instead, we should be meticulous, soft-spoken, and concise.

Wherever There Is Purity, There Is Suan Mokkh

To sum up this discourse, we return again to the question, “Where is Suan Mokkh?” There are four answers. How can Suan Mokkh stay with you after you leave? Answer it yourself. How can you have Suan Mokkh follow you wherever you go? If we say this to children, they might think we sound crazy. How could Suan Mokkh stay with people and follow them wherever they go? The kids would think this is crazy and wouldn’t want to listen. In truth, it is possible for Suan Mokkh, the garden of liberation (*mokkha*), to follow people everywhere they go, wherever the clear mind happens to be. Thus, I say practice well. When you leave the Buddhist monkhood and go home, may Suan Mokkh go with you. Otherwise, your stay at Suan Mokkh would be useless.

I hope Suan Mokkh stays with you for your whole life. May you have a clear, spotless mind. Live a life that’s pure, keeping a clear mind until the end of your life. This would be very beneficial for you. Please take a deep interest in the ways to train the mind; learn to nourish, protect, and control the mind so that it is always clear. This is the basic lesson of today’s talk.

Speech is a way of conveying information. It is a tool for communication. If the tool is not good enough, or if people are not tuned in to each other, then the transmission of knowledge is not possible. There’s no reception happening. Just like if a radio is broken or not tuned correctly, it won’t receive any signals. Thus, you should study both Dhamma

and the ways of speaking and listening. Without proper listening, there is no successful speech. Good speaking requires good listening too.

To conclude briefly, Suan Mokkh exists wherever there is purity. Wherever spotlessness is, Suan Mokkh is there in that moment.

About the Author

Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu was born in 1906, the son of a southern Thai mother and an ethnic Chinese father. He followed Thai custom by entering a local monastery in 1926, studied for a couple years in Bangkok, and then founded his own refuge for study and practice in 1932. Since then, he has had a profound influence on not only Thai Buddhism but other religions in Siam and Buddhism in the West. Among his more important accomplishments, he:

- Challenged the hegemony of later commentarial texts with the primacy of the Buddha's original discourses.
- Integrated serious Dhamma study, intellectual creativity, and rigorous practice.
- Explained Buddha-Dhamma with an emphasis on this life, including the possibility of experiencing Nibbāna ourselves.
- Softened the dichotomy between householder and monastic practice, stressing that the noble eightfold path is available to everyone.
- Offered doctrinal support for addressing social and environmental issues, helping to foster socially engaged Buddhism in Siam.
- Shaped his forest monastery as an innovative teaching environment and Garden of Liberation.

After a series of illnesses, including strokes, he died in 1993. He was cremated without the usual pomp and expense.

Recommended Reading (Books)

- *Mindfulness With Breathing: A Manual for Serious Beginners*
- *Handbook for Mankind*
- *The First Ten Years of Suan Mokkh*
- *Heartwood of the Bodhi Tree*
- *Keys to Natural Truth*
- *Void Mind*
- *It All Depends* (forthcoming)

Online Resources

- www.suanmokkh.org
- www.liberationpark.org
- www.bia.or.th

Buddhadāsa Foundation

Established in 1994, the Buddhadāsa Foundation aims to promote the study and practice of Buddha-Dhamma according to Ven. Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu's teachings. It encourages compilation and translation of his works from Thai into foreign languages, as well as supports publication of translated teachings for free distribution.



Liberation Park

Liberation Park is a Dhamma refuge in the USA's Midwest inspired by Suan Mokkh. Here, Santikaro and friends work to nurture a garden of liberation along the lines taught by Ajahn Buddhadāsa, where followers of the Buddha-Dhamma Way can explore Dhamma as Nature and in the Pāli suttas.



Buddhadāsa Indapañño Archives

Established in 2010, the Buddhadāsa Indapañño Archives collect, maintain, and present the original works of Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. Also known as Suan Mokkh Bangkok, it is an innovative place for fostering mutual understanding between traditions, studying and practicing Dhamma.

