

Out from the Cave



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There are three Buddha statues at the opening of a cave at the base of a very tall mountain in the south of Thailand. The cave is located near the town of Aou Luk in Krabi Province. You are at Wat Thom Khao Phra, the monastery of one of the elder disciples of Luangphor Tee-an whom originated a method of the development of awareness that is based on observation of movement.



Luangphor Somboon has his own way of pointing to what it means to truly be free from suffering. This goes to the very heart what the Buddha discovered 2,500 years ago. There is a lightness and at the same time an exuberance about Luangphor Somboon, that is transmitted to anyone whom is open to receive it.

First meeting with Luangpho Somboon

The Spring of 2009 was the first time I saw Luangphor Somboon. It was at Wat Sanamnai in Nonthaburi. A foundation for Buddhist meditation had already been laid from several retreats at monasteries in Thailand , the primary being a stay at Wat Pa Nanachat in Ubon Ratchithani that has as its purpose to train Monks in the Thai Forest Tradition whom come from the west . The origins of the teachings there , come from Achaan Cha and farther back to Luangphor Munn . Later I discovered about the teachings of Luangphor Teean on the internet at my home in America . The web site I stubbled across was called awareness with movement and there was a video teaching from a western monk named Achaan Tone that described Maha Sati



Meditation practice . It caught my attention as it described the knowing and seeing of Rup (the body) and Nam (the mind) in a very simple and direct way . I decided to go to Wat Sanamnai in Thailand and give it a chance .

After practicing there for a few weeks and as my time there was coming to an end , Laungpho Somboon came. The very first time I saw him there was a feeling that this was a man that was truly free from suffering. I did not understand anything he said as he did not speak English but it did not matter and I felt an instant heart connection to him as I studied his every movement and facial expression as well as the sound of his voice that emanated a feeling of ease and joy with a lack of any kind of strain or the slightest discomfort . This was a man who had gone through 12 kemo therapy treatments for Lymphoma cancer and was 80 years old ! I had my photo taken with him that I put in my meditation room back in America .

When returning to Thailand in Febuary 2010 I was so lucky to be given a Kuti next to his at Wat Sanamnai and told that he would be arriving the next day . Many visitors came to see him each day . One morning as I was sitting on my porch, feeling a lot of rapture and lightness , he came straight to me and motioned from the sky to my heart with a big smile and tapped my chest . I called to someone near by whom could speak a little english and he translated that Luangphor wanted to take me to a University in Bangkok with him and I jumped at the chance. In a short time I was telling my story and describing my meeting with luangphor and Maha Sati practice to a room full of students of Buddhist studies whom mostly could speak english. After returning to the monastery , Luangphor asked me to come with back to his monastery (Wat Tham Kao Pra) in Krabi . With the translation from a very dedicated and immeasurably helpful friend (Lek) I was able to finally have a very close dayly comunication with Luangphor for the 2 or 3 weeks I was there.

A note about my talking with Luangphor:

I only speak a little Thai and he speaks no English. There is someone translating who speaks a little English. When I write about my time with him, i am trying keep it to how I understand what he is saying. A lot my understanding comes from his body language and a kind of symbiosis we have. Understand that there is a practice that is going along with my time with him.



Two kinds of Thought

1. Directed thought : When examining something to gain deeper understanding or for articulating an insight. In this case I chose thought itself as an object of contemplation this morning and have been directing my attention to exploring it. This is useful thought. This is also how we communicate with others and function in the world. This is thinking when we have something useful to think about.

2. Unintended thought : These are the sneaky thoughts that come in uninvited that we are barely aware of as they carry us into the past or future and away from being fully present here and now. They may be a sweet day dream or worrying or anger about something or someone. Usually they are about something we have no control of and they carry some kind of defilement. These are a source of suffering, the pleasant ones are the most deceitful as they blanket themselves as happiness though there is no real happiness at all. They only leave us in a state of clinging or aversion. These kind of thoughts take us away from being conscious of life as it is unfolding. It is a dream world that they offer and an escape to somewhere that does not even exist. They have seduced us and only leave us with suffering .

Over time through the development of awareness accompanied with mindfulness we eventually come to a point when we can see thought. In the same way as being aware of sensations in the the body or to be aware when we raise and lower our hand or the breath coming in and out. As this awareness becomes strong it changes ones experience of life in a profound way.



Ajahn Da and practicing in America

When staying at Wat Sanamnai the first time my concern was how to best maintain the practice upon returning to America. I was told there was an Ajahn whom stayed with Luangpho Teean for a long time and happened to be living very near my home in Connecticut.



It is very interesting that in all of the world, how this teaching has come to me! As soon as I arrived I went to see him and am very lucky to have this highly respected teacher to see on a weekly basis. The Redding Meditation Center is a lovely, quite place for practice with a very important Monk in the Luangpho Teean tradition. Ajahn Da teaches in the most simple way with no ritual or frills added. He does not want to impose his buddhist tradition on the Americans whom come to practice with him. He is showing the way to freedom from suffering..... One does not have to change religion or have any religion at all to benefit from cultivating the awareness of body and mind in the present moment.



Early experiances with Vipassana in America

I was laying on my bed as a teenager, maybe 13 or 14. Just feeling the body from inside it, mostly the legs, fee, arms and hands. I was also aware of my mothers voice in the other room talking with friends. Only listening to the sound of voices and not what the words meant. I was aware of sound and the sensations in the body. The mind became very still and the feeling of lightness as if floating above the bed. A feeling of rapture filled my being. This lasted for an hour or so until I became frightened because I thought that I had stopped breathing and could not move my body. I did not understand what had happened and there was no one to talk to about what had happened. Any one that I mentioned it too, just dismissed it as some kind of dream. Over the years, similar experiences happened though I had no ability to control or predict when. Sometimes while being in a room full of people talking and being aware of just the sound without becoming involved with the what the words meant would produce a similar experience to what would happen while laying on the bed. Now I understand this as Vipassana. This experience is actually what



Luangpho Teean called normality. It is when one is aware of rup and nam and stops identifying with the body or the mind and does not get caught up in thought but just sees it all as just part of nature. There is an insight that is had at this time. The practice of Maha Sati Meditation is a way to develop this understanding at anytime or place.

Being Aware and Awake

I am heading into a retreat that will be divided between two different monasteries in Thailand The intention is to clear the deck and have an extended period of only doing the practice. I am blessed to have this opportunity to strengthen awareness. This whole thing is about the insight that comes from being aware and



awake. The mind wants to always carry us away from this. As we can see this happening and the suffering it causes it is cut at the root before it can grow.

I just had a short conversation with Luangpho Somboon on the phone. He said just relax. There is nothing to get. I am looking forward to see him again and will be traveling with him on an airplane to the south of Thailand. His voice was very strong and light at the same time (kanglang, Sabai) Very much full of life and relaxed!

Just Knowing

In Thai language choi choi means normal. Laungpho Tee-an, who developed what became known as Maha Sati meditation referred to "just knowing." In this way, when you move your arm, you just know it. When you feel movement in the body, you just know it, blinking, you just know it and virtually this happens for all sights, sounds, sensations, smells, tasteseverything that goes through the senses.

This is the beginning of the practice. As we go deeper into the practice it gets more subtle but this is the easiest place to start for the obvious reason, that it is going on all of the time and is very accessible. It can be done all the time and eventually with diligence.



When this awareness includes the body, mind and mental objects and is continual like an unbroken chain it is referred to as normality. This is the natural state of us all! Free of greed, anger and delusion. Deep inside we all know this.....

luangpho's talking about the body

Today Luangpho was talking about this body as being the same as a boat for crossing the ocean of samsara and how it is very important to know this. It is not possible to become free from suffering without it. Even the Gods and Goddesses and Naga's cannot be free from suffering because they do not have a physical form. To be awake and aware of the body and mind is the key. Otherwise it is like being asleep. Everyone is drowning in the ocean of samsara and they don't even know it! The first step is to know one is suffering and to see it as part of nature. This is seeing the physical form as only part of nature (no me, no mine) then you can cross ocean of samsara. The Buddha is holding a light to show the way to the other shore and our practice is the boat (just knowing rup and nam).



Notes from Wat Tham Khao Pra 1



Coming from a primarily Christian Country and having no knowledge of Vipassana Meditation let alone anyone one to teach it to me has made it even more precious to me. Traveling half way around the world each year has added to the importance these teachings have in my life. Laungphor said that most of the people who come to see him are only interested in making some merit and getting a blessing and are not interested in really putting fourth the energy to practice what he has been

teaching for the past 30 years, namely the way to be free from suffering. Knowing Rup (which is the Pali word for the body and really all of the forms of nature) .

Knowing Nam (the mind, thought and mental formations). This is the practice that Luangpho Teean developed and is being practiced to this day. Knowing Rup and Nam from a place of no self, with nothing added (just knowing). A living master whom Knows and demonstrates the way to be free from suffering is very rare in our world. I have been very lucky to have met him and spend this time at Wat Thom Kao Phra .

Luangphor Somboon pointing to the Dhamma

Luangphor is not only talking for you to listen but he is pointing the way for you to see for yourself. Most of us rarely see the body and mind but only see outside and do not turn to see ourselves. The emphasis is on awareness or mindfulness, seeing and knowing the feeling.

- Now, do you know you are sitting?
- How to sit in a comfortable way. This is starting to know the Dhamma.
- How do the legs overlap? Sit up straight. Move the legs to make comfortable. Adjust the body.
- Know this, this is called knowing the body, knowing the mind.
- Blood circulation will flow easily, it is therapy itself.
- The mind comes to see the in and out.
- Do not try to control the breath.
- No push, no press.
- Breathe in a long and relaxed way.
- Let the feelings be bright and clear, very light.
- Know how to breathe to be bright, how to breathe to clear the mind, how to breathe to be light in body and mind.
- Know how to relax and see continuously.
- Check the body, do not stress the body. Check the mind, do not stress the mind.
- Just see.....so many things to see.
- In a comfortable calm way.
- Awake! no stress. no pressing.
- It is cheerful and bright.
- Alert, joyful and active.
- Lively, clean, bright and calm.
- When you see in this way, there is no opinion. This will stop.
- We see the feeling, there is just knowing.



- No being critical or imagining, This will stop.
- Nothing, no wanting or not wanting. No like or dislike.
- No clinging to anything.
- This is called peace. Nothing to do. Nothing to leave.
- Knowing this and there is nothing left.
- All is put down, light and not attached to anything.
- This is called a free mind.
- Just knowing, the mind stops and then it knows.
- Knowing this and all is finished, this is the Dhamma
- Eyes see everything, ears hear everything.
- We see the feeling and are still and calm.
- Sit in a comfortable way.
- This is the real happiness with no suffering.
- Know this and there is no suffering.
- Is the feeling calm? Is it at rest?
- See the calm feeling and "We" are calm are not the same thing.
- See carefully.....see the feeling. It is just nature.
- There is no self in it, just a feeling.
- The emphases here is to see the feeling.
- In the ancient Chinese alphabet, consciousness and awareness are the same.
- People stay with the awareness and become....we are feeling.
- We are sad, we are happy.
- Masters say " Lets see the feeling."
- When we see the feeling.....oh, the feeling is just like this.
- It is all just like this.
- It is all nature and only a condition.
- We will get out of the feeling. This is called out of the suffering.
- If you do not see the feeling , the mind will be created.
- love-hate, want -not want, craving-not craving, happy-sad, calm-busy.....
- There are many thing. It is all dual.
- It goes like this.
- How do we live with this thing without suffering?
- By not being in conflict with anything.
- Can be cold or hot.... these things are impermanent.
- It rolls in a cycle.....now happy , now sad.
- We will detach from compounded things.
- We come back to this.....how we sit? where do we contact?
- Breathe in and out long.....it will release and rest.
- See equanimity, know equanimity, see continually.
- This is called practicing awareness.



- When we see the feeling, it is awareness, it is right awareness.
- Because it releases, it puts down.
- It knows duty, it knows everything well.
- This is the human benefit!
- What do you search for? What do you want?
- Stop it, cut it, it is useless.
- Practicing does not hope for or aim for anything.
- No hoping to be this or that.
- See the truth only.
- Most want calm but it must get busy, they stay together.
- If you make the mind right, it will be light.
- Unless it sticks to what it wants to be. It's an illusion.
- The original mind has nothing, empty from everything.
- Things happen, they occur. They are compounded things.
- It creates itself..... see it carefully.
- It creates itself because we do not know Dhamma.
- No one want suffering, everyone wants happiness.
- No one wants the busy thing. Everyone want the calm but do we get it?
- We get it and it disappears.
- We make it again and it disappears again.
- Do not try to solve anything, just know it.
- What does it look like? learn it.
- Just see it, just know it and it will stop.
- Stop choosing..... it is just like that.
- It will start to pale and then it will unleash!



The true nature of mind is like clear water.



We do nothing.... just see it with no I. To see it with no I or with an I is this point only. When you see this, there is no doubt. It is our nature to put it down. When I explain it like this nobody understands. This is my experience. When you see it, there is no doubt. Just

relax. It is our nature to put it down. There is no I want to put it down.



You will feel very lively. At 80 years old there is no I doing the work. The young one can not compete with me. The work is done very quickly and neat. Two hours of sweeping and not tired, even four hours because the mind is empty. The body moves but the mind is still. If the mind is not empty you will create a lot of thought. Turning over and over again.

With an I, there is heaviness. With no I, it is light. Nothing to carry. For most people the mind never stops. Even when the body stops, the thoughts keep coming again and again.

Questions to Luangphor Somboon from a Chinese man on retreat C.M.

question- You have been practicing a long time and how has the practice developed over the years?

L.P.S. answer- In the beginning I taught from what Luangphor Tee-an was teaching directly. Sometimes I had peace and sometimes not but now has become clear and I can see movement and thinking all the time. After the second ordination I became very diligent, walking long hours to the point of becoming sore and tired. I would stop and massage my body and keep going. There was still wanting in this and there for still had some suffering. It was not comfortable in Isaan and sometimes I even wanted to stop. There was still wanting but I was able to just relax and see it. I could see that in the wanting there was a me and mine. There was the false feeling of self and the feeling was very heavy. After relaxing with no wanting everything was opposite and became very much light. Luangphor Tee-an would say to just know and there would be calm but sometimes I did not feel this way because there was still and I in the feeling. After six or seven years the rope that Luangphor Tee-an spoke about was cut. When Luangphor Tee-an was alive no one but himself gave the Dhamma talk. I felt that I understood and why could I not give it but then I came to understand the reason Luangphor Tee-an did not allow this and I could just let it be. As long as someone felt he could give it, there was a trace of me and mine.

L.P.S asked the Chinese man- Now, is it your feeling or is a feeling without the you in it? Do you feel heavy or not? Every one can know the feeling but the difference between feeling with no self and feeling with a self, they are very close to each other. With knowing feeling with no self and you can let go of everything. When you see with no self, your mind is clear and you see your own



nature. If your mind is clear, you will be a Buddha. In this moment there is no me, no you, no her, no him, all is empty. The Diamond Sutra says, no animal, no human, no me, no him, just feeling only. Everything just feeling. Wei Lang said If one is not awake one can not understand the Diamond Sutra. Now I understand what Wei Lang said.

C.M. question- When we practice the the method of Luangpho Tee-an what nis most important?

L. P.S -The most important is to see it as only feeling and slowly from that point , just let it grow. To see with no self. If only doing the movement with the hand and you can not see this point, it is very difficult. If you are thinking I am empty or I am calm or I am moving. There is an I. Step back and look again.

C.M. question- Like a witness? L.P.S.- yes

L.P.S.- It is the nature of the mind that its clear. We do nothing.....see it With an I or not an I is this point only. When I explain like this, nobody understands. This is my experience When you see it, there is no doubt. Just relax. It is our nature to put it down. No I want to put it down . You will feel very lively. At eighty years old if there is an I doing the work, there will be suffering. The young one can not compete with me . Very quick and neat ! Two hours sweeping, not tired. Even four hours because the mind is empty. The body moves but the mind is empty. This is called nirvana. You stay hear forty days, you can see this. If the mind is not empty you will create a lot of thought. Very close together. With an I there is heaviness . I have been talking along time and not tired . Nothing to carry. Most people, the mind never stops. Even when the body stops, the thoughts, again and again. When thinking - no feeling . When feeling -no thinking. People are just living in a dream and cannot wake up. When you know it is just a dream, you are awake. You are clear. You have been dreaming but now the mind has stopped.

Luangphor Somboon's history leading to the Dhamma - part 1

In the past Luangphor understood about making merit by building the monastery, giving food, doing good things and not doing bad things. He did not truly understand. He did what he heard in Dhamma talks. They where talking about how to make merit. When he heard there was a Dhamma talk at a different monastery he went there. He wanted to know the real Dhamma. The monk that was teaching was Boddihrak. He taught vegetarianism, not smoking or drinking alcohol. At that time Luangphor was smoking two packs of cigarettes a day. He had been smoking since he was 17 years old. He had been smoking for 23 years. He felt very ashamed and upset. Since that day he stopped. For two years he still had craving but did not smoke but after two years the craving was gone. At that time he did not know how

to practice vipassana and thought the way to practice was to be a monk and that kind of life. His father had said that monks were lazy like the caterpillar. Why give food for them? Luangphor still wanted to be a monk. He wanted to wait until he was 50 or 60 years old and then go to the forest and ordain. He thought it was best to be a monk after the duties of a lay person's life were finished. At that point he read a book by Buddhadasa Bikku. In the book Luangphor Buddhadasa talked about the way to be free from suffering. Then he did not understand freedom from suffering but he saw the way to practice. After he heard Boddhirak, at the rains retreat of that year he began vegetarianism. He was working very hard and the vegetarian diet did not give him enough energy although he still kept to vegetarianism. Boddhirak also



taught him to put everything down and practice diligence and frugality. He was still oiling his hair, shining his shoes and having his clothes ironed. If his clothes were not ironed well he would not be satisfied. After hearing Boddhirak he let go of all of this. He then had three sets of clothes. One for wearing, ones for washing and one for

change. He needed no cupboard. He had already cut smoking, drinking and anything that produced desire. Also he cut entertainment luxury and even delicious food. After cutting all of these things, Luangphor still had suffering inside.

Luangphor Somboon's history leading to the Dhamma - part 2

After practicing meditation on the breath, he got only a little bit of calming. At that time if he heard of any other practice he would go there and try it. It was not easy to travel in those days. Every Saturday and Sunday in the early morning he would go to the monastery far away and return in the night. He was very hungry for the Dhamma. Buddhadasa Bhikku said the mind is empty. He heard this but at that time did not understand. It was not until 5 years later after meeting Luangphor Tee-an that he understood. Luangphor Tee-an was invited to speak and Luangphor Samboon went there. Luangphor Samboon was 45 years old then. Luangphor Tee-an was touching a young man's hand and asked, do you know it? Luangpho Samboon was very far away but when he saw this, he said, this is correct! This is the correct way! He had been following the path of Boddhirak and all day long



thought this was the correct way but after he met Luangphor Tee-an everything changed. Every method he had tried was not correct. Everything was misunderstanding. In the past it was his vision that everyone should have a family and children that would take care of them in their old age. Because of this he married at the age of 20. His father was 39 when he was born. He listened to his father. His father told him that he should take care of his parents and also help to take care of his siblings. He was the eldest and had eight siblings. He pitied his father and how much he had suffered in his life. His father was an orphan from China and came to Thailand. His father wanted the children to grow up and take care of the parents so that they could have a good life in their old age. Luangphor had a small business and was very careful about money. He would travel six hours by rowing a boat to buy vegetables to sell. At that time he was still single. After he was married he would still travel by boat to buy rice for selling. One bag weighed ninety kilos. He carried on his shoulder to the boat. Twelve bags and he got 15 bot. In the night he would sell it to the rice mill. He had no extra money at all so he would work in the night carrying bags of rice at the rice mill. This would also include sowing the bags of rice. The bags weighed 100 kilos. You had to go in a hole and have someone put it on your shoulder because it was so heavy. In six hours he carried seventy bags after working all day long. He was paid 14.5 bot per bag and thought that was a lot. One bag of rice could feed eleven people in his family. They had no money for meat and only bought pork oil to fry with vegetables. His father also had a small family business for selling things and he helped with this. Luangphor then married a Thai woman and planted rice on her family farm before coming to Bangkok. He then had his own vander business and made seventy to eighty bt. per day. He always gave some money to his parents. His parents lived far away. This business was not so good so he changed to selling ice cream by bicycle. and later learned carpentry. He made nothing while learning for one month but then got 50 or 60 bot per day. Later he got more. He worked from 7 a.m until 9 p.m. . At that time he was 23 years old and had one baby. All of this work and so much suffering! He wanted to know the answer. All of this led to his searching for the dhamma.

Welcome Home Everything is very fresh and clear, a breath of spring! Visaka!!!

The things experienced look familiar but there is none of the heaviness that comes from the clinging to me and mine. It is easy to see that this comes from not holding onto the notion that I feel this or that or so and so did this or did not do that. By not interjecting an ownership to the feelings that come up but just seeing them as just part of nature that will arise and pass away. Everything becomes new and pleasurable.



Whether it be the everyday task of the painting work or a meeting with someone it makes no difference if they are approving or finding fault. When one sees clearly it doesn't matter about those things anymore. Being away from the work and life here in America for the last three months and immersing in the practice of meditation with out the idea that I'm an artist has brought a whole new beginning. Life has become an adventure with new discoveries at every turn with gratitude for everything that has happened and is happening.

Dear Luangphor

Gratefulness for what the Buddha has shown never leaves. Everything comes naturally from this place. Awareness of everything that is going on, through seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling and thinking. It is all the same. Watching everything arising and falling and becomes more and more predominant. The formal practice in the morning sets the tone to follow through out the day.

All of what is happening is seen as if from above. Observing it all from outside in a expansive way. This is something I knew all along but needed someone to confirm and help me to establish it as the ground for everything in the life. That is what I received from you at Wat Tham Khow Pra . How can I feel anything but gratitude to you? Curt



The foundation for the practice

Our true nature is clear and untainted with impurities. That means greed, anger and delusion. In other words our real home is clear and pure. Every thing is empty. Having even an inkling of this in the beginning is the foundation for the practice. That means there is nothing to get. To call it a path as the spiritual life is often referred, implies that one is going somewhere else when in fact we are already there. This is the truth and the truth has been simply clouded and we can't see it. To have this as a concept in the beginning is essential for the foundation of the practice. To awaken to the experience of this, not as a concept or something that a wise person said but as the ground of our being is the purpose of the practice.

Luangphor Tee-an is one whom awoke to this truth. Being awakened means being aware of this truth all the time. Free from the bondage of delusion. The practice he developed came to be called Maha Sati. It is basically accumulating moment by moment the experience of awareness. In most forms of meditation one is sitting still but with this practice there is movement and the eyes are usually open. One can practice while sitting, standing, walking or lying down. It involves certain hand movements done rhythmically. While walking the hand movements are left out because the legs are moving instead. While doing this practice one does not try to block out anything. Sounds, visual impressions, smells, feelings in the body, mental processes, literally everything becomes an object for our awareness. In other words we are not focusing on one point. When compared to one pointed meditation it is like coming out from the cave.



1. Rest the hands, palm down, on the thighs.



2. Turn the right hand onto its edge, aware, then stop, aware.



3. Raise the right hand, aware, then stop, aware.



4. Lower the right hand to rest on the abdomen, aware, then stop, aware.



5. Turn the left hand onto its edge, aware, then stop, aware.



6. Raise the left hand, aware, then stop, aware.



7. Lower the left hand to rest on the abdomen, aware, then stop, aware.



8. Move the right hand up to rest on the chest, aware, then stop, aware.





13. Move the left hand out, aware,
then stop, aware.



14. Lower the left hand to the thigh,
aware, then stop, aware.



15. Turn the left hand down, aware,
then stop, aware.
And repeat this cycle of movements again and again.

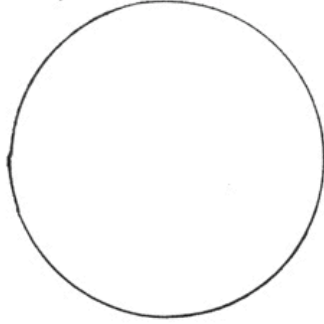


This little book is a compilation of my experiences related to the Venerable Luangphor Somboon. I have tried to translate accurately and keep to Luangphor's meaning. I apologize in advance for any inaccuracies.

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វិសុទ្ធិច្បាប់

Suññata
absolute truth
nirvana
emptiness



សុញ្ញតា

Anata
nature
no ego



ឧប្បតា

Ata
Delusion
ego



ចំតា