

Wisdom as Essence of Buddhist Life

*Assoc. Prof. Dr. Pataraporn Sirikanachana
Thammasat University*

Introduction

Being a Buddhist cannot be taken for granted. In Thailand, it is generally believed that a Buddhist is one who professes the refuge in the Triple Gem (the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha). We never know whether or not a Buddhist really understands its meaning. If we ask, the answer will be given traditionally. For example, the refuge in the Buddha is shown by a veneration of a Buddha image. Similarly, the refuge in the Dhamma and the Sangha is shown superficially. The Triple Gem play no role in the cultivation of a Buddhist's mind because of the lack of true understanding of its meaning.

As to the true meaning of the Triple Gem, the reference goes to the explanation of Buddhādāsa who may be called the Father of Thai Intellectual Buddhism. Buddhādāsa (1906–1993), a famous Thai monk who is the founder of Suan Mokkha Hermitage in Southern Thailand, once gave his remark as follows:

In everyday language (worldly language, the language of people who do not know dhamma), a refuge or support is some person or thing outside of and other than oneself on which one may depend for help. For instance, a person may depend on his boss, spirits, good luck omens, or guardian angels. Anything or anyone at all other than oneself taken as a point of support – this is the meaning of refuge or support in everyday language.

The refuge or support of dhamma language (the language of people of wisdom or deep insight into the truth) is one's own self rather than someone else. Even when we speak of going to Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha for refuge, what we ought to have in mind is the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha that are to be found within ourselves, within, our own consciousness. The refuge or support of dhamma language is one's own self. It is within oneself, not somewhere outside.¹

The significance of wisdom in penetrating the true meanings of the Triple Gem and the role of Buddhists is also emphasized in the writings of Phra Brahmaganabhorn (P.A. Payutto). The Venerable Payutto (1939–) asserts that Buddhism is the religion of wisdom and Buddhist practices cannot be deprived of wisdom. Through wisdom, one is able to have the right faith in the Triple Gem. One will see the Buddha as an exemplar of human beings who can develop the capacity of his wisdom until he can attain Nibbāna (Nirvāna). Moreover a wise man/woman can penetrate the truth of the Dhamma as the law of Nature and the truth of the Sangha as the ideal community of human beings. The right knowledge of the Triple Gem then encourages everyone to practice accordingly in order to find peace and happiness for his/her own self and for his/her society. An ideal society or an ideal world can thus be realized through wisdom.²

¹ Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu, "Everyday Language & Dhamma Language", in Donald K. Swearer, ed., *Me and Mine* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 137.

² P.A. Payutto, *Buddhadhamma* (Bangkok: Darn–Suttha Printing Press, 2529/1986), pp. 418 – 419. (In Thai).

Without wisdom, Buddhists cannot implement the Buddha's teachings in their daily lives. In other words, wisdom is the essence of Buddhist life. Many popular Buddhist practices, e.g., an invocation of Buddhist amulets and sacred objects for one's happiness and success, are not based on the use of wisdom and thus cannot yield the expected results. Many passages in the Tipiṭaka (The Buddhist Scriptures) advocate the supremacy of wisdom as an example as follows:

Monks, foot – prints of any animal can appear in foot-prints of an elephant because of the latter's large size. Similarly, all Buddhist dhamma(s) for the enlightenment can be included in wisdom which is the apex of all dhamma(s).³

In addition, the Saṃyutta-nikāya of the Tipiṭaka records the Buddha's words as follows:

As, monks, the lion, king of beasts, is reckoned chief among animals, for his strength, speed and bravely, so is the faculty of wisdom reckoned chief among mental states helpful to enlightenment, for its enlightenment.⁴

It is obvious that Buddhists cannot develop themselves through the Buddha's teachings and achieve their Buddhist goal without any assistance of wisdom. This paper thus attempts to assert that wisdom is the essence of Buddhist life and the only means to peaceful happiness of an individual and the entire world.

The Meaning of Wisdom

The meaning of wisdom is explained, illustrated, exposed, and elaborated in the Tipiṭaka, Buddhist commentaries, and Buddhist texts written by later masters and scholars. Its meaning can be classified into 2 levels, mundane (lokiya) and supramundane (lokuttara). Wisdom in the mundane or worldly meaning relates to morality. On the other hand, wisdom in the supramundane meaning relates to the enlightenment and the end of suffering which is the Buddhist ideal.

In the mundane level, morality (sīla) cannot be fulfilled without wisdom. For example, as a Buddhist, s/he should be merciful to others. When a Buddhist meets those who are unfortunate and miserable, s/he should help them. Nevertheless, s/he should know how much s/he can help them. If s/he does not wisely handle the situation, s/he may be bankrupt. Wisdom is thus the life of morality in practice.

Buddhaghosa (ca. the Fifth Century C.E.), the most famous Buddhist commentator in Theravada tradition once said: "Wisdom is knowledge consisting in insight and conjoined with meritorious thoughts."⁵ How one can be meritorious without wisdom? Venerable Narada Maha Thera, a well-known Sri Lankan monk, also gives his affirmation as follows:

Beyond morality is wisdom (paññā). The base of Buddhism is morality, and wisdom is its apex. As the pair of wings of a bird are these

³ Ibid., p. 665.

⁴ Samyutta-Nikaya V, 227, in Edward Conze, ed., *Buddhist Texts through the Ages* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1964), p. 64.

⁵ The Visuddhimagga, Chapter xiv, in Henry Clarke Warren, *Buddhism in Translations* (Forge Village, Mass: The Murray Printing Company, 1974), p. 330.

two complementary virtues. Wisdom is like unto man's eyes; morality is like unto his feet. One of the appellatives of the Buddha is *Vijjācaraṅka-sampanna* endowed with wisdom and conduct.⁶

Wisdom in the supramundane meaning, however, does not concern good and bad actions. It transcends morality. Here, wisdom is the only efficient means to penetrate the truth and lead one to the Buddhist goal. The meaning of wisdom is exposed in the *Tipiṅka* as follows:

What is the faculty of wisdom? Whatever is the wisdom that is comprehension, investigation, close investigation, investigation of mental states, discernment, discrimination, differentiation, cleverness, skill, subtlety, clear understanding, thought, examination, bread, sagacity, leading, insight, clear consciousness, which is as a goad, the wisdom that is wisdom as a faculty, as power, as sword, as terraced heights, as light, effulgence, splendor, as a jewel; lack of confusion, investigation of mental states, right view – this is the faculty of wisdom.⁷

This faculty of wisdom in penetrating the truth can be compared with that of Aristotle (384-322 B.C.E) an eminent Greek philosopher. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle presents the world an account of value in which happiness (*eudaimonia*) is presumed to be the goal of life, while pleasure is merely the concomitant of successful functioning. We can achieve happiness only when we successfully fulfill our duties. Happiness is properly pursued when it is the outcome of reason. Reason separates human beings from other creatures. Human happiness thus must include the development of reason. For Aristotle, wisdom, reason, and intellect share the same meaning. Reason is the seat of intellect. Development of human rational nature leads to the intellectual virtues of wisdom and insight. Intellectual virtues lead human beings to moral virtues through the implementation of proper actions and the establishment of norms of conduct, e.g., the prohibition of killing and the promotion of loving kindness and compassion. Aristotle differentiates virtues into intellectual virtue (*dianoetic virtue*) and moral virtue. Intellectual virtue involves human ability to determine the golden mean (the mean between extremes). For example, intellectual virtue tells us that courage, a virtuous state, lies between the efficiency of cowardice and the excess of foolhardiness. Moral virtue, on the other hand, involves the rational control of desires. Aristotle encourages us to develop the intellectual virtue to be the basis of moral virtue so that we can do things properly and yield the most benefits to ourselves and to others.⁸

The commendation of wisdom or intellect above other virtues is called intellectualism. In Thai Buddhism, intellectualism can be found in the work of *Buddhadāsa* and P.A. Payutto.

It is widely accepted that Intellectual Buddhism in Thailand began with teachings and writings of *Buddhadāsa*, officially *Phra Dharmakosajarn*⁹ (*Ngerm Indapañño*) *Buddhadāsa* points out that Buddhists, generally, cannot truly benefit from Buddhism in

⁶ Narada, *The Buddha and His Teachings* (Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 1998), p. 291.

⁷ *Dhammasangani*, 16, in Edward Conze, ed., *Buddhist Texts through the Ages*, p. 65.

⁸ W.L. Reese, *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion: Eastern and Western Thought* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, Inc., 1980), pp. 28 – 32.

⁹ [Editor's Footnote: This is a Royal Title, given by the King of Thailand... there have been others with the same title, including the current Rector of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.]

their lives because of their lack of wisdom. He thus encourages Buddhists to cultivate wisdom in order to penetrate the truth of all phenomena and the Buddha's teachings.

“Wisdom” in the light of Buddhādāsa, is “the insight” or “the ultimate understanding of all things as they really are.”¹⁰ It is neither an academic understanding nor a plain reasoning. Wisdom can be cultivated through contemplation until one realizes that all things are subject to the Three Characteristics (Tilakkhana), i.e., impermanence, the state of being oppressed, and no-self. Having realized that, one is able to detach oneself from all phenomena, including one's own self. Buddhādāsa asserts the significance of wisdom (paññā) as follows:

1. Wisdom supports the fulfillment of meditation. Wisdom leads a meditator to practice properly. Some mediators keep sitting cross – legged for a long time until they have permanent knee problems because they lack wisdom.
2. Wisdom frees us from bad faith and attachment which are causes of problems and trouble in the world.
3. Wisdom assists us to live and achieve the Buddhist ideal in this world.¹¹

Phra Brahmagunabbhorn (P.A. Payutto), similarly, explains that wisdom is human capacity to attain truth. When the ultimate truth is attained, one will feel free from all oppressions, e.g., hatred and greed. This final freedom is called the Emancipation from Suffering or Nibbāna.¹² We can practice ourselves to know things as they are through studying, listening, and observing things around us. After having collected knowledge of all phenomena, we then consider them carefully until we realize their true nature, i.e., the Three Characteristics. The knowledge of the true nature of all things can be achieved by wisdom which finally gives the knower ultimate freedom.¹³

According to P.A. Payutto, one can find several meanings of wisdom (paññā). In the Buddhist ethics, wisdom is knowledge and insight which can differentiate good and evil by means of reasoning. In its final step, wisdom can destroy ignorance (avijjā) and turn one to be an Arahant (a liberated holy person). The roles of wisdom are to know, to understand, to think carefully, to find solutions of problems, and to be creative, which bring one who possesses it good and happiness. Wisdom is an essential virtue of the Buddha whose name, “buddha,” means “the awakened one,” signifying his awakening from delusion and ignorance through wisdom.¹⁴ While wisdom in Aristotle's philosophy leads human beings to happiness in this world, wisdom in the Buddhist teachings can lead human beings to both worldly happiness and the end of suffering and turn a person into an Arahant who finally attains Nibbāna. Wisdom (paññā) takes 3 levels:

- 1) Wisdom resulting from reflection (Cintāmaya-paññā)
- 2) Wisdom resulting from studying (Sutamaya-paññā)
- 3) Wisdom resulting from mental development and spiritual practice (Bhāvanāmaya – paññā)¹⁵

¹⁰ Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu, *Handbook for Mankind* (Bangkok: Mahachula Buddhist University Press, n.d.), p. 75.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 109 – 112.

¹² P.A. Payutto, *Education, Development, or Integration* (Karma-suksa, Pattanakarn, ru Buranakarn), 2nd. Editor (Bangkok: Sahadarmic, 2540/1997), p. 87. (In Thai)

¹³ P.A. Payutto, *The Proper Dhammic Practice* (Patibat Tham Hai Took Thang), 70th Edition (Bangkok: Pimsuay, 2547/2004), pp. 88-81. (In Thai)

¹⁴ P.A. Payutto, *The Development of Wisdom* (Pattana Panya) (Bangkok: Amarin Printing Group, 2531/1988), p. 8. (In Thai)

¹⁵ P.A. Payutto, *Dictionary of Buddhism*, 16th Edition (Bangkok: S.R. Printing Mass Products, 2551/2008), p. 96.

It should be noted that the Buddhist Scriptures (Tipiṅka) and the Buddhist Commentaries (Attha – kathā) arrange the three types of wisdom in a different order from other Buddhist texts in Thailand. P.A. Payutto explains that the Pali texts put Cintāmayapaññā in the first order while the Thai Texts put Sutamayapaññā first. The Pali Texts (the Buddhist Scriptures and Commentaries) give more attention to types of people. Some people can contemplate and develop their own wisdom to the highest level, e.g., the Buddha who is enlightened by himself. The Thai Buddhist texts, on the other hand, consider that the roles of a master are crucial for his disciple's success. The master's teaching and the student's listening to the master's words are important in the cultivation of wisdom.¹⁶

P.A. Payutto points out that the highest level of wisdom is insight (vipassanā) which can destroy all fetters that bind human beings to the cycle of birth and death (Saṃyojana). The practice of vipassanā is exclusively the Buddhist practice. Wisdom in this meaning thus possesses a special meaning in Buddhism.¹⁷

No Wisdom, No Better Life

The most serious problem which obstructs Buddhists today from their self – development toward the Buddhist ideal is the problem concerning the understanding of the Buddha's teachings. For example, according to the Buddha's teachings, one should not tell a lie but should speak the truth. If our true words harm others, should we still say them? Certainly, moral acts cannot be fulfilled without wisdom.

In Normative Buddhism, wisdom is the last step following morality (sīla) and concentration or meditation (Samādhi) in the procedure of the Threefold Training (Tisikkhā) toward the End of Suffering (Nibbāna). In Intellectual Buddhism, on the other hand, Buddhādāsa explains that wisdom is the most important. It can exist by itself. Moreover, it sustains the roles of morality and concentration in the Buddhist practice.¹⁸ Intellectual Buddhism reacts to misconceptions of many Thai Buddhists. It rejects literal meanings of the Buddhist texts. It encourages the use of wisdom in the understanding of the Buddhist texts by means of the dhamma language. Besides, it puts an emphasis on the doer's intention rather than his external deeds. The virtue of telling the truth cannot be estimated by one's external deed. What really counts is one's intention.

Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu attempts to lead all Thai Buddhists to the essence of Buddhism as originally appeared in the time of the Buddha and as recorded in the Tipiṅka. He thus prefers living moderately and peacefully in a hermitage to being in town surrounded by a crowd of faithful laypeople and material conveniences. He rejects materialistic life and worldly properties. His hermitage is simple and without donation boxes. His teachings are delivered to people not only through his words but also through his personal practices. The legacy of Buddhādāsa can be seen in his 3 solutions as follows:

- To lead all Buddhists to the essence of Buddhism: The essence of Buddhism, for Buddhādāsa, is “emptiness”. It is to empty one's mind from all defilements and all attachments. If we use our wisdom to attain the meaning of Idappaccayatā (causation, the state of having something as its cause), we shall find emptiness. Buddhādāsa asserts that throughout the Tipiṅka, the Buddha teaches only the Idappaccayatā. Idappaccayatā or Paṅicca-samuppāda illustrates the relation of cause and effect and

¹⁶ P.A. Payutto, *The Development of Wisdom (Pattana Panya)*, pp. 46-47.

¹⁷ P.A. Payutto, *The Characteristics of Buddhism (Laksana Hang Phra Puttasasana)*, 4th Edition (Bangkok: Sahadhammic, 2539/1996), p. 41. (In Thai).

¹⁸ Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu, *Idappaccayatā* (Bangkok: Arun – vittaya, 2545/2002), p. 230. (In Thai).

the truth of all phenomena that are effects of their causes.¹⁹ If the cause is destroyed, its effect will be no more. If the cause is changed, its effect will change too. If we want to have anything, we should consider its cause and work accordingly. Having known the meaning of *Idappaccayatā*, Buddhists can penetrate the truth that everything arises, exists, and deteriorates according to its causes. It is not worth attaching and missing. Having detached from things subject to change, Buddhists can free themselves from suffering.

- To try to understand other religions: Wisdom can bring all religious followers together. Intellectual Buddhists should not consider Buddhism the best religion for all human beings. Instead, they should find harmony with other religious teachings. Therefore, all religious followers can live together in peaceful happiness. *Buddhadāsa* believes that the objective shared by all religious teachings is the eradication of human selfishness.²⁰
- To free the world from materialism: In the light of *Buddhadāsa*, apart from being anti-egoism, all religions oppose materialism. Here, materialism means thought and practices promoting sensuous pleasure and material possession which lure human beings to trouble. He observes that all religious teachings propagate spiritual happiness, a sufficient life, altruism, and anti-materialism. The more material possessions we have, the less we can find God and/or *Nibbāna*. *Buddhadāsa* thus encourages Buddhists to do their duty for duty's sake but not for money or fame.²¹

Buddhadāsa's resolutions can be realized if all Buddhists seek the truth of their lives and the world through wisdom. Such truth is *Idappaccayatā*. Those who thoroughly see it will detach themselves from all clinging. They will see all in harmony and be absolutely free from misconceptions.

P.A. Payutto also shares the same viewpoint with *Buddhadāsa*. He states that wisdom is the apex of Buddhism. It is the ultimate factor and the indicator of the attainment of *Nibbāna*. Besides, he affirms that wisdom is the best tool to solve human problems and to accelerate human development. The Buddha is an example of a human being who can ultimately develop his wisdom and use his wisdom to successfully solve all problems. He thus reminds us of our potentiality to develop ourselves to the utmost.

According to P.A. Payutto, if we develop our own wisdom, we can be the Buddha ourselves.

The Buddha once said that this (*tathāgata - bodhi - saddha*) is the primary faith of all Buddhists. Buddhists should begin with faith in self-development. The essential means of development is wisdom. Human wisdom can thus be developed until a human being becomes the Buddha who is venerated by deities and other human beings.²²

The acceptance of human potentiality to develop oneself to the utmost is the declaration of human liberty, i.e., human liberation from all defilements and suffering.

The Buddhist attitude of human development is "melioristic." The word "melior" in Latin means "better." Meliorism is the doctrine that human beings, while incapable of perfection, is capable of an indefinitely extending series of improvements.²³ The word was coined by George Eliot, the pseudonym of Marry Ann Evans (1819-1880), a famous

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 26 - 27.

²⁰ *Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu*, "No Religion!" in Donald K. Swearer, ed., *Me and Mine*, p. 155.

²¹ *Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu*, "Till the World is with Peace," in *ibid.*, p. 205

²² P.A. Payutto, *The Characteristics of Buddhism (Laksana Hang Phra Puttasasana)*, p. 53. (In Thai).

²³ W.L. Reese, *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion: Eastern and Western Thought*, p. 348.

English novelist. George Eliot's writings generally show a simple life and human struggle which encourage us to improve our own lives and social environments through our education and wisdom.

P.A. Payutto advocates the melioristic view in many of his Buddhist writings. His meliorism is shown as follows:

- Human beings can fulfill their self-development: Many Buddhist passages state that human beings can be trained to the utmost of their potentiality. For example, "the Buddha, who is merely a human being, is well-trained and thus respected by deities."²⁴
- Human beings can develop themselves through education, i.e., the Threefold Training (Ti-Sikkhā): Here, education means spiritual training as revealed in the Threefold Training. According to the Buddhist teachings, the spiritual training is the foundation of good words and good deeds of all people. The Threefold Training, consisting of morality, concentration, and wisdom, is a systematic education which promotes the harmony and integrity of human development. P.A. Payutto explains that the discipline (Vinaya) is necessary for the training of morality. One needs to control one's words and actions in order to be morally good. The discipline is also important in the training of concentration. It prepares our lives and our minds to be ready in control. Finally, the discipline can facilitate the work of wisdom in our daily lives. It guides us to do things properly and consistently. Owing to wisdom, human beings can overcome defilements and develop themselves to the utmost.²⁵
- Self – development yields self – reliance: The development of ourselves, physically and mentally, makes us strong enough to depend on our own selves. Being self – reliant, we can be free. The Buddha does not merely teach us to depend on ourselves. He teaches us to continue with our self - development in order to be self - reliant.²⁶ Consequently, instead of praying for divine assistance, one can work hard and efficiently by oneself in order to get over one's difficulties.
- The Buddha should be taken as an exemplar of self – development: It is noticeable that Buddhism puts the emphasis on the history of the Buddha's self - development from his birth as animals, ordinary people to the Buddha. Gradual development of the Buddha through his past lives reminds us that everyone can be the Buddha if one continues to develop oneself.
- A well - trained and self - developed human being does not need any god: Ordinary people who have not properly trained themselves still need a supernatural being and a sacred object to provide them anything they want, e.g., money, power, and success. Those who are well-trained are equipped with wisdom and able to rely on themselves.
- A human being should hope for the best that life will be better: We should keep on with self-training. Even though we are happy and successful in life, we still keep developing ourselves. Those who stop training and developing themselves are heedless of their lives. Whenever they keep training themselves, all defilements have no chance to harm them.
- Those who train themselves gain the best benefits: Those who keep on with their self-development are happy in their work and in their daily lives. They will be able to solve their own problems. Besides, they can attain the truth of life through their

²⁴ P.A. Payutto, *The Characteristics of Buddhism (Laksana Hang Phra Puttasasana)*, p. 49-50.

²⁵ P.A. Payutto, *How to Work for Human Development (Cha Pattana Khon Kan Dai Yang Rai)*, 2nd Edition (Bangkok : Sahadhammic, 2536/1993), pp. 37-38. (In Thai).

²⁶ P.A. Payutto, *If Buddhism is known, Happiness Will Suddenly Comes (Tha Ru Chak Phra Puttasasana, Kham Suk Tong Ma Tantee)*, 17th Edition (Bangkok: Ruenkaew Karn Pim, 2553/2010) pp. 38–39. (In Thai).

wisdom which provide them virtues and goodness, freedom from pain, and sustainable happiness.

The Buddhist teachings encourage us to endlessly improve ourselves and assure us that, without wisdom, we can never attain a better life.

The End of Suffering through Wisdom

Many passages in the Buddhist Scriptures, the Tipiṅka, portray the role of wisdom in the attainment of the End of Suffering (Nibbāna). For example, the Aṅguttara – Nikāya of the Tipiṅka asserts the virtue of wisdom as follows:

Whenever, O priest, a priest knows the truth concerning misery, knows the truth concerning the origin of misery, knows the truth concerning the cessation of misery, knows the truth concerning the path leading to the cessation of misery, this, O priest, is called the discipline in elevated wisdom.²⁷

The role of wisdom in the attainment of the Buddhist goal or the Final Liberation or the End of Suffering is also supported by the writing of the Venerable Narada:

Wisdom is the apex of Buddhism. It is the first factor in the Noble Eightfold Path (sammā diṅhi). It is one of the seven Factors of Enlightenment (Dhamma Vicaya Sambojjhaṅga). It is one of the four means of Accomplishment (Vimaṅsā Iddhipāda). It is one of the five Powers (Paññābala) and one of the five controlling Faculties (Paññindriya). It is wisdom that leads to purification and to final Deliverance.²⁸

Wisdom is the only means to put an end to suffering. Wisdom helps us to see things as they are. In other words, it provides us the right view (sammā diṅhi). For example, wisdom reveals to us that gambling is a cause of our bankrupt, not our fortune. Thus, we should not have a hope in hell with it and should stay away from it.

P.A. Payutto points out that the highest level of wisdom is vipassanā which can destroy the Ten Fetters that bind human beings to the round of rebirth (saṃyojana), e.g., repulsion (paṅigha) and ignorance (avijjā). Vipassanā (insight development) is an exclusive practice in Buddhism leading to the enlightenment. All human beings possess the potential for the enlightenment. When we have a problem, we should

- 1) consider our problem, e.g., what our problem is.
- 2) find the cause of our problem.
- 3) know that there is the solution to our problem.
- 4) try to follow the good path leading to the solution of our problem.

This is the method to implement the Fourfold Noble Truth in our practice.

Buddhadāsa, on the other hand, always emphasizes in his teachings that scholarly knowledge of the Buddhist Scriptures by itself cannot lead anyone to the end of suffering (Nibbāna). He believes that the most important quality of arahatship or the capacity to reach Nibbāna is the true knowledge of the Fourfold Noble Truth, not an intellectual

²⁷ Aṅguttara–Nikāya, iii. 88, in Henry Clarke Warren, Buddhism in Translations, p. 330.

²⁸ Narada, The Buddha and His Teachings, p. 597.

capacity to preach or discuss the dhamma. If one's mind is pure and free from defilements, it will be luminous with wisdom which can penetrate the truth of dhamma.

Buddhadāsa uses many kind of symbolism to convey his dhammic teaching to Thai Buddhists. In the meditation and preaching hall at Suan Mokkha, his hermitage, he hangs 3 human skeletons: a male adult, a female adult, and a child, in order to remind the Buddhists of the Three Characteristics of human life and of the worthlessness of human body.

Conclusion

Wisdom is the essence of Buddhist life because a Buddhist cannot properly follow the Buddha's teachings without wisdom. In the politics, wisdom tells us to avoid bad politicians who seek only their own benefits. It encourages us to be altruistic and get rid of our own selfishness. Wisdom reveals to us that education without morality is in vain. It also keeps us from being materialistic in our worldly life. Most of all, it promotes friendship, peace in oneself and for others, and the eradication of ignorance, the root of all evils. Thus, let Buddhists cultivate wisdom in themselves and follow the light of wisdom in order to be real Buddhists.