

WORDS THAT
Brighten the Mind

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*Wisdom from the Illiterate Nun
Who Built the World's Largest Buddhist
Temple*

Teachings of Khun Yay Achan
Maha Ratana Upasika Chandra Khonnokyoong

Originally compiled by
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The Wonder Seed

Words That Brighten the Mind

Wisdom from the Illiterate Nun Who Built the World's Largest
Buddhist Temple

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English translation and adaptation © Dr. Yaa Benywarath

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*If there were no Khun Yay,
there would be no Luang Por.
No Wat Phra Dhammakaya.
None of us building goodness
with happiness, to this day.*

— Phra Rajabhavanavisudh (Luang Por Dhammajayo)

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Introduction

She couldn't read a single letter. She never attended a day of school. She grew up barefoot in the rice paddies of Nakhon Pathom, a farmer's daughter who was the fifth of nine children in rural Thailand.

And yet, Khun Yay Achan — the woman her students simply called “Yay” (Grandmother) — became the spiritual architect behind the creation of Wat Phra Dhammakaya, the largest Buddhist temple complex in the world. Under her quiet guidance, a movement grew from a handful of students meditating in a rice field to a global community of millions.

How does someone who can't read or write build something that scholars, engineers, and CEOs could not? How does an illiterate woman train and develop people from every social class and every level of education?

The answer, in her own words, is simple: meditation.

“Yay never needed anyone to teach her. Yay could do everything — even though she didn’t know a single letter. She observed everything carefully and taught herself.”

This is the part that should stop you in your tracks. In a world that worships credentials, diplomas, and expertise, here is a woman who accessed a kind of intelligence that no university could teach. She called it “the wisdom that comes from sitting in Dhamma.” We might call it natural human intelligence at its deepest operating level — the kind that AI, for all its power, cannot replicate.

Khun Yay spoke rarely. But when she did, every word carried weight. Her students — including monks with the highest levels of Pali scholarship — described her teachings as “a map that guides those who build goodness to walk the right path.” Her compiler, Phra Maha Suwit, noted that over time, as he studied more and understood the world more

deeply, Khun Yay's simple, direct words only grew more profound.

The 188 teachings in this book were originally recorded in Thai and compiled in 2002 to commemorate the establishment of the Mahavihara at Wat Phra Dhammakaya. They span decades of Khun Yay's life — from the temple's founding in the 1970s through the 1990s. They were organized into fourteen thematic categories, covering everything from self-knowledge to karma, from discipline to contentment, from perseverance to humility.

What you are holding is the first complete English adaptation of those teachings, translated and reframed for Western readers who may have no Buddhist background whatsoever. You don't need to be Buddhist to benefit from what Khun Yay has to say. What you need is simply the willingness to consider that a woman who never read a book might have understood the operating system of reality better than most of us ever will.

Each teaching is presented with a brief contextual note to help Western readers connect the dots,

followed by Khun Yay's own words — translated to preserve her characteristic directness, warmth, and zero-tolerance-for-nonsense delivery.

Welcome to a different kind of wisdom tradition.
One that doesn't require a single book to learn.

The Life of Khun Yay Achan

Maha Ratana Upasika Chandra Khonnokyoong (1909–2000)

Founder of Wat Phra Dhammakaya

Birth and Early Life. Khun Yay Achan was born on January 20, 1909, in Nakhon Chai Si district, Nakhon Pathom province, into a farming family. She was the fifth of nine children born to Ploy and Pan Khonnokyoong. From an early age, she was known for her extraordinary work ethic, helping her parents with housework and serving as a primary worker in the family's rice fields. She received no formal education and remained illiterate her entire life.

Leaving Home. In approximately 1935, at age 26, Khun Yay made the pivotal decision to leave home and travel to Bangkok. Her driving motivation was deeply personal: as a child, her father had cursed her with deafness for 500 lifetimes after a misunderstanding. When he died before she could ask his forgiveness, she became determined to find

a way to reach him through spiritual practice. This quest would shape the rest of her life.

Finding Her First Teacher. Khun Yay met Khun Yay Thongsuk Samdaengpin, a meditation teacher from Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen, and began practicing Dhammakaya meditation. Through this practice, she attained the Dhammakaya — the inner body of enlightenment at the center of the human being. Using this attainment, she was able to locate her deceased father, ask for his forgiveness, and help release him from his suffering.

Meeting the Great Master. In approximately 1938, at age 29, Khun Yay was brought to meet Phra Mongkol Thepmuni (Luang Pu Sod Candasaro), the abbot of Wat Paknam and the rediscoverer of Dhammakaya meditation. Upon meeting her, he immediately accepted her as a student and admitted her directly into his advanced meditation research facility — bypassing the extensive testing process required of all others. This was unprecedented and reflected his recognition of her exceptional purity and natural attainment.

The Meditation Research Years. With extraordinary diligence, Khun Yay mastered advanced Dhammakaya meditation practices rapidly, becoming one of the most proficient practitioners in Luang Pu’s research team. She practiced six hours during the day and six hours at night throughout the World War II period. She was appointed head of a meditation shift and earned Luang Pu’s famous praise: “My student Chandra — she is one without a second.” She remained at Wat Paknam for the rest of Luang Pu’s life, never leaving, never wavering.

Carrying Forward the Mission. Before Luang Pu’s passing, he entrusted Khun Yay with the mission of continuing and expanding the Dhammakaya meditation tradition. She accepted this charge and dedicated the rest of her life to fulfilling it. She became the spiritual mentor to a new generation of monks, most notably Luang Por Dhammajayo and Luang Por Tattachivo, who would go on to formally establish Wat Phra Dhammakaya.

Building the Temple. In 1970, Khun Yay and her students acquired 196 acres of land in Pathum

Thani province, north of Bangkok, to establish what would become Wat Phra Dhammakaya. She oversaw every aspect of the temple's development — from construction to food preparation, from financial management to spiritual training — all while maintaining her own intensive meditation practice. The temple grew from a rice field into the largest Buddhist temple complex in the world, attracting millions of practitioners.

Her Teaching Legacy. Despite her illiteracy, Khun Yay trained people from every walk of life: monks with the highest Pali scholarship, professionals, farmers, housewives, children. Her teaching method was direct, personal, and grounded in her own practice. She spoke rarely but with absolute authority born of direct experience. Her 188 recorded teachings, compiled in this book, cover every dimension of the spiritual life and remain a guide for practitioners worldwide.

Final Years and Passing. Khun Yay continued teaching and overseeing the temple community until her health declined in her final years. She passed away on September 10, 2000, at the age of

91, leaving behind a global spiritual movement, thousands of trained practitioners, and a body of teachings that — in the words of her compiler — “will endure forever.”

Her life stands as proof of a radical proposition: that the deepest human intelligence is not acquired through books, schools, or credentials, but through the direct cultivation of the mind itself.

Know Yourself

*Teachings on Self-Examination, Self-Reliance, and
Inner Intelligence*

If Khun Yay’s entire teaching could be reduced to a single principle, it might be this: start with yourself. Before you try to fix the world, fix your own operating system. Before you try to understand others, understand yourself first. Before you try to lead, learn to follow — specifically, learn to follow the truth you find inside.

For a woman who lived in community her entire adult life — building temples, managing teams, feeding thousands — this relentless focus on self might seem contradictory. But Khun Yay saw it as the only logical starting point. As she put it: “The world is you. Look inside yourself and you’ll see everything clearly.”

What follows are fifteen teachings on the theme of “self” — ranging from her daily self-review practice

to her philosophy of self-reliance, from her belief that you can teach yourself anything to her conviction that the Dhamma (the truth of how things work) is the only reliable refuge.

Notice her characteristic style: direct, practical, no filler. She speaks the way someone who has genuinely seen the truth speaks — without needing to prove it, convince you, or dress it up.

• • •

1. Run Your Daily Diagnostic

Think of this as Khun Yay’s version of a nightly system scan. Before you sleep, don’t just collapse into bed — review your day. Not with guilt, but with the precision of someone checking their own code.

“Before you sleep, examine yourself carefully through the lens of Dhamma.”

Start by reviewing everything you did from morning to evening — from the moment you woke up, through meals, work, meditation, keeping the precepts, and acts of generosity.

Look honestly at how much good you accumulated. Look at what negative actions you took. Then set a strong intention.

Let go of harmful patterns. Don't carry them with you — not even for a single night.

Keep releasing, day by day. Release harmful tendencies, release negativity of every kind, release whatever is holding back your practice.

Examine yourself. Correct what needs correcting. Improve what needs improving. Let go of what's unwholesome completely, and keep doing good — every single day.

Because this life is our last chance. We must accumulate nothing but goodness.

August 31, 1976

2. Evaluate With the Dhamma

When something happens to you — good or bad — don't just react. Khun Yay had a specific protocol: bring it to the Dhamma and examine it.

When something happens in your life, you must always bring the Dhamma up as your lens. Examine it: what is this, really?

Don't let yourself be carried away by your impulses. If you do, you'll just become prey to your own cravings — for nothing.

You must keep your thinking anchored in the Dhamma at all times. When something arises, the wisdom that comes from meditation practice will help you see what's truly right.

Days pass so quickly. In a blink it's day, then night, then a week, a month, a year. Stop and ask yourself: as time slips by, what have I actually done?

Am I living according to my true purpose?

What should I be doing? What should I be avoiding?

Is what I'm doing right now actually suited to who I am and where I stand?

You must keep asking these questions. Don't fool yourself.

Date not recorded

3. Save Yourself First

This teaching might sound selfish to Western ears trained on altruism. But Khun Yay's logic is airtight: you can't rescue anyone from a burning building if you're on fire yourself.

Think of yourself as a baby chick. You haven't escaped the hawk's beak yet. Focus on getting yourself to safety first.

Then you can think about helping others, worrying about others.

When Yay left home, she never looked back. Never thought about home. Never went back — until the day her mother died, and she returned for the cremation. As soon as it was done, she left again.

All of Yay's worldly possessions, she gave away. Fifteen rai of rice paddies to her younger sister, because the sister took care of their mother. Twenty rai to her brother who'd become a monk, so he wouldn't struggle.

May 16, 1981

4. **Rely on Yourself**

Four lines. That's all she needed. This is Khun Yay at her most essential.

Khun Yay reflected to herself:

“In all the world and all the Dhamma, you cannot depend on anyone else. You must depend on yourself. You cannot depend on others at all.”

May 23, 1981

5. The Remedy for Suffering

When someone asked Khun Yay how to deal with suffering, she didn't offer therapy, journaling, or a TED talk. She offered a protocol.

When you're suffering, chant a lot. Sit and meditate deeply — as much as you can.

Nobody can help you as much as you can help yourself.

February 27, 1982

6. Teach Yourself

This is the teaching that encapsulates Khun Yay's entire life philosophy — and the one that makes the strongest case for meditation as a form of intelligence that transcends literacy.

If you're born into this world, you should learn to teach yourself. Yay never needed anyone to teach her. She could do everything — even though she didn't know a single letter. She observed everything carefully and taught herself.

Take cleanliness, for example. Nobody taught Yay that. Not her father, not her mother. She taught herself.

Even as a child in Nakhon Chai Si, when she finished eating and washed the pots and dishes, she'd wash them inside and out, every surface spotless.

When she mopped the house, she'd clean both the top and underside of the stairs. Her older siblings would say: "Why don't you just wash the side we use? Why clean under the stairs?"

Yay said: “I don’t know why either. I just want to clean it all. I want it completely clean.”

Something inside her taught her to clean everything thoroughly — outside and inside.

Later, when she sat in deep meditation and could recall her past lives, she went inward to investigate: Why am I like this?

And she realized: the ability to teach herself came from having practiced meditation extensively in previous lives. The merit from meditation itself is what produces the wisdom to teach yourself.

So all of us must practice meditation diligently — so we can teach ourselves too.

November 6, 1980

7. Look Inward First

This is arguably Khun Yay’s most profound philosophical statement — and she delivers it in a

handful of sentences. If you understand yourself, you understand everything.

Yay looks at herself. She looks until she sees through herself completely, understanding herself with total clarity. She starts with the coarse level — what’s this, really? — until she genuinely understands. Then she moves to subtler levels, step by step.

Once she understands herself, she can understand everything else — every other person, every other thing.

This is how the Dhamma works. It’s strange, but it’s absolutely true.

If you truly understand yourself, you will understand everyone and everything else — because the world is you. Look inward and you’ll see everything clearly.

But that’s not how the world operates. People keep looking outward at others, trying to understand

others. They look and they feel anxious. They see but they don't understand. They want to understand others but forget to look at themselves. No matter how long they do this, they'll never understand.

For Yay, she just looks at herself first until she understands. Then she understands everyone.

May 5, 1980

8. Do It for Yourself

When the great meditation master Luang Pu (Luang Por Wat Paknam) asked his advanced students why they practiced, everyone gave the “right” answer: for the religion, for the temple, for the teacher. Everyone except Khun Yay.

During the time Luang Pu was guiding the meditation research, he once asked every practitioner, one by one: “Do you know why we’re doing this work?”

He went down the line. Each person answered: “For Buddhism... for the temple... for you, Luang Por.” Everyone gave that kind of answer.

When he came to Yay, she answered: “I’m doing this for myself.”

It was the answer that pleased him the most.

He said: “Yes! That’s the right answer. We’re here to help ourselves. Who else is going to help us? We do this to free ourselves from suffering — to free ourselves from being slaves to Mara.”

August 20, 1982

9. The Dhamma Is Your Only Refuge

Notice how she scans the entire universe before arriving at her conclusion. She doesn’t say this casually — she says it after looking everywhere.

Yay has looked everywhere — everywhere in the world, in every realm of existence.

And she sees clearly: there is no one in all the world, in all the elements, in all the Dhamma, who can help Yay. Only Yay can help herself.

So she has always tried to help herself.

Who can help us with our suffering? We must always be thinking of ways to help ourselves. We rely on ourselves. We rely on the Dhamma within ourselves.

That Yay has survived everything — it's because she has the Dhamma as her refuge.

May 5, 1980

10. **What It Really Means to Love Yourself**

In the age of self-care and self-love, Khun Yay had a very specific definition: loving yourself means building up your invisible account.

Build up your goodness as much as you can. When your merit is as vast as a mountain, nothing can

obscure it, nothing can hide it. Everyone will see your goodness.

Remember what Yay says. We build our goodness, we build our merit — and that is what it means to truly love yourself. To truly support yourself.

Keep building merit. One day your account will be full. When that day comes, everything is easy. There is nothing but happiness.

November 17, 1982

11. Fill Yourself With What's Good

Being born human means you must seek out what's auspicious and bring it into your life. That's the only way your life will prosper.

You must think and seek and bring auspiciousness into yourself. Think only good thoughts — thoughts that are wholesome — and your mind will prosper.

If your mind is good, your words will be auspicious too. And whatever you do will be auspicious as well.

November 7, 1980

12. This Is Your Last Chance to Fix It

Khun Yay frequently spoke as though this life were the final iteration — the last chance to debug the code before the product ships.

We must understand clearly: this life is the last one. The last chance we have to fix ourselves. It's the last life.

We must fix ourselves as thoroughly as possible. We must build merit massively — until our merit is like a mountain.

If you want to build massive merit, you must meditate extensively. And set powerful intentions. Lock them in well.

Date not recorded

13. Trust the Merit, Not the Credentials

Here, she reduces the human condition to its simplest formula: you have your goodness and your resolve. Everything else is external.

In the end, only we ourselves can help us. We cannot depend on anyone else.

We must rely on our own merit and our own determination.

If you bring your awareness to the center of your body, your knowledge becomes vast and limitless.

If you place your awareness outside yourself, your knowledge gets compressed and narrowed.

September 3, 1988

14. For Yourself and for Others

Yay does it for herself. And for the many as well.

We're born into this world — we should do something worthwhile. At the very least, do it for

yourself. If you can do that, and still help others too — then this life was worth being born.

March 4, 1980

15. What Matters Is Right Now

A boy once asked Khun Yay what he'd been in a past life. Her answer was classic Yay: practical, deflective of curiosity for curiosity's sake, and laser-focused on what's actionable.

A young boy came to ask Khun Yay: in past lives, who was he? What had he been?

Khun Yay answered:

“Past lives — whatever happened, happened. Set that aside. What matters is who you are right now. What are you going to do for yourself? Get yourself to safety.”

March 10, 1991

Don't Waste Your Time Alive

*Teachings on Non-Complacency, Urgency, and the
Preciousness of a Human Birth*

Khun Yay had an unusual relationship with time. She thought about death constantly — not with morbidity, but with the urgency of someone who understood exactly what was at stake. Every day that passes without building merit is a day wasted. Every hour spent on frivolity is an hour you can't get back. And the clock is always ticking, because you have no idea when it stops.

She started thinking this way remarkably early. As a young woman, she already told herself she was old — a psychological trick that kept her building goodness at maximum intensity. Her phrase for

urgency was vivid: “Row fast, paddle hard — the market is closing, the lotuses are wilting.” Time is the river, and you’re in a boat heading for a destination you can’t afford to miss.

The thirteen teachings in this chapter hammer one message from every angle: you were born alone, you’ll die alone, you don’t know when, and the only thing you’re taking with you is what you’ve built on the inside. Act accordingly.



16. **Born Alone, Die Alone**

The opening teaching of this chapter is a wake-up call disguised as a meditation on solitude. Khun Yay doesn’t soften it.

We were born alone. We’ll die alone. We can’t afford to worry about others when we haven’t saved ourselves yet.

If we still can't save ourselves — if we don't have solid ground under our feet yet — then we're clearly not ready. We could fall to Mara at any moment.

We've been born. We've found the Buddhist teaching. We've found the most important and beneficial knowledge there is. And we're not scrambling to make use of it while we're still young and strong? When exactly are we planning to start?

When we're old, we won't be able to do anything. And we don't even know when we'll die.

What if we die suddenly and fall straight to the lower realms? Aren't we afraid this life will be wasted? Don't we regret the time that's already passed?

This life is for building goodness. The merit we've gained — guard it well. Only merit can save us.

February 9, 1975

17. Scramble While You Can

The Dhamma is profoundly deep and subtle. It's not easy for ordinary people to reach or understand quickly. And being born human is incredibly rare and difficult. Don't take it for granted.

Since we've been born and we've found the teaching, we must build goodness worthy of this opportunity. We must fill our merit to the brim so we can find the way out of suffering.

Whatever our circumstances — whatever our status — we endure it. We've been born; we can't change what karma brought us. But if we want something better, we must do more good.

Everyone dies. We will too. And we don't know when. We must scramble to fill ourselves with merit.

We can't take any other kind of wealth with us. Do your best. Make yourself as good as possible. Make everything around you as good as possible. Then the future will be good.

We'll die whether we do good or not. So we might as well do good — with everything we have. Don't be lazy about meditation. Practice extensively so the mind becomes firm and steady.

January 31, 1975

18. Don't Be Fooled by Youth

We're old now. Don't think you're still young. Think about aging all the time.

If you keep telling yourself you're still young, you'll easily fall into complacency and end up in the lower realms.

Prioritize refined merit over coarse merit — because refined merit is what frees you from defilements.

February 16, 1975

19. Yay Has Thought She Was Old Since She Was Young

A characteristically Khun Yay move: she hacked her own psychology by telling herself she was aging even when she was still a young woman.

Consider this: we're getting older every day. Don't think you're still young.

Yay has thought of herself as old since she was a young woman. This is what drove her to build goodness with such urgency.

March 24, 1981

20. Prepare Your Mind

Yay sets this intention: even if she becomes gravely ill, she asks the doctors never to hide anything. Tell her everything. So she can prepare herself mentally and spiritually.

March 24, 1981

21. Row Fast, Paddle Hard

One of Khun Yay's most vivid metaphors, drawn from Thai folk wisdom: the market is closing, the lotuses are wilting. Move now.

While you're still strong and solid — row fast, paddle hard. The market is closing. The lotuses are wilting.

We must hurry. Let others slack off if they want. For us, we must be complete. This is the last life — take only good things forward. Capture the victory flag of your life. There is no going back. Only forward.

This is the last life because all previous lives were done with mixed sincerity. But this life must be the most sincere of all. No more compromises.

Set your intentions thoroughly. Lock the fence. May we encounter only good things, always. May we live in purity every life, to the end, all the way to Nibbana.

August 5, 1979

22. **We Are Puppets of Merit and Sin**

Yay thinks about death. That's why she sponsors robe offerings and merit ceremonies. Time doesn't wait — day and night, day and night, tomorrow comes fast. She doesn't know when she'll die, so she hurries to build merit.

When we die, we take nothing. Only merit and sin. We are like puppets — merit and sin pull our strings. Build merit, and merit lifts you. Build sin, and sin drags you down.

October 28, 1992

23. **Don't Let Time Pass for Nothing**

Our lives are diminishing every day. Hurry to do as much good as possible. Don't let time pass for nothing. Regret the time that's already gone — because it took a piece of your life with it.

September 8, 1982

24. **Time Waits for No One**

The lazy ones — they have no wisdom to think.
Wake up and consider: days become months
become years. Time passes and doesn't wait.

Whatever good you want to do, hurry. Build merit
— and take it with you. Build sin — and carry that
instead.

May 10, 1992

25. Priceless Treasure

Khun Yay describes her teachings as the most precious treasure she can give — more valuable than any material gift — and reveals her plan to “offer the entire temple to the Buddha on Nibbana” once construction is complete.

While Yay is still strong, still able to speak, she speaks. She is giving you treasure — the most priceless treasure there is. Remember her words. Guard this treasure well. In the future, it will save you.

Yay has only good wishes, always. Always seeking to give the highest benefit.

Commit yourselves while you have strength. Build merit to the fullest. When the temple is complete, Yay will offer it to the Buddha on Nibbana — one more time. The refined merit from that will follow all of us. A great merit opportunity. We must do it well.

November 5, 1979

26. Day and Night, Day and Night

Nobody knows when they'll die. So hurry to the temple — before someone has to carry you there. Day and night, day and night — life drains away. Fill yourself with merit.

Merit has no defilements. People have defilements. When you're in trouble, think of merit. Earn merit, and know how to use it. Earn money, and know how to use it.

January 11, 1991

27. Enter the Temple While You Can Still Walk

Khun Yay's logic is airtight: love it or hate it, everyone ends up at the temple eventually. Better to go while you can still choose.

You should come to the temple while you're still alive and well. One way or another, you'll end up here. Parents love their children more than anything — but when the child dies, they carry them to the temple. Children love their parents — but when the parent dies, they carry them to the temple.

Come while you still have your wits, while you're strong. If you wait until you're old, you won't have the strength.

When we die, we don't disappear. Those who did good and whose last thoughts are good — they go to heaven. Those who did evil and whose last thoughts are bad — they go to the lower realms. Some who

did neither good nor evil simply wander the world as spirits.

June 10, 1991

28. Prepare Yourself

An 80-year-old grandmother came to Khun Yay upset about her disobedient youngest son. Khun Yay's response was characteristically direct — and included a parable about cats.

Why be upset? He's grown. Once they can fly, they go their own way.

When Yay lived in Nakhon Chai Si, she raised a cat. The cat had five kittens. She raised them until they grew up — then they left. She reflected: ah, these cats and dogs are actually people too, born into animal bodies to work off their karma. When the babies can fly, they fly away.

You're elderly now. You must prepare yourself. You must build merit. When we die, we can't take

anything with us. Build merit — take merit with you. Build sin — take sin with you.

February 24, 1991

C H A P T E R
T H R E E

Enough Is Enough

*Teachings on Contentment, Ambition, and the Quiet
Power of Not Wanting More*

In a culture that celebrates hustle, ambition, and relentless upward mobility, Khun Yay’s teachings on contentment might sound like the opposite of motivational. She tells you not to crave fame. She tells you not to chase prominence. She tells you that wanting to stand out is, in fact, one of the fastest ways to fall.

But here’s what makes her version of contentment different from the passive, “settle for less” version the word usually implies in English: Khun Yay was phenomenally ambitious — about one thing. She

was content about worldly status but absolutely relentless about building goodness. The distinction matters. She didn't say "stop trying." She said "stop trying to be famous, and pour that energy into being genuinely good."

The Thai word she uses — *santosa*, from the Pali — doesn't mean giving up. It means having the clarity to see what's worth pursuing and what isn't. It means understanding that the foundation must be laid before the house is built. Anything else is just a collapse waiting to happen.

What's remarkable about these teachings is that they come from someone who had every reason to seek recognition. She'd built a temple from nothing. She'd trained thousands. And yet her instinct was always to deflect attention and stay quiet — not out of false modesty, but out of a strategic understanding that genuine merit doesn't need a spotlight. It creates its own.

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29. **Contentment**

This is the teaching that defines the chapter — and notice the critical exception at the end. You can be greedy for exactly one thing.

Don't be ambitious in the worldly sense. Don't be greedy. Practice contentment. Want less.

Greed makes a person dishonest. It leads to cheating. And dishonest people — Yay can't stand them.

If you're greedy for things that aren't good, you'll never find happiness. Try your best to keep your heart clean, deeply pure.

If something is truly your merit, it will come to you on its own. No need to scheme and strategize for it.

But if you aspire to build more and more goodness? That's fine. That kind of ambition is permitted.

Be content. Want less. And learn to use what you have wisely.

November 24, 1979

30. No Interest in Being Famous

A rare autobiographical window: Khun Yay describes her own personality at the temple where she first practiced — quiet, focused, zero interest in standing out. And then she explains exactly why fame-seeking backfires.

Yay is someone who has never been ambitious, never wanted to be famous, never wanted to stand out like others do. This temperament has been part of her nature for a very long time.

When she came to Wat Paknam to practice advanced meditation with Luang Pu, she was a quiet person. She only spoke about what was substantive. In the meditation research hall, she rarely talked. But when she did speak, everyone listened.

She didn't meddle in others' affairs. But when it came to the meditation work that Luang Pu had

assigned, if someone made a mistake, she'd correct them. In the research hall, she spoke only about the work. Outside of that, she said nothing. She just did her duty, steadily.

When Luang Pu asked her a question, she'd answer that question — nothing more. She never volunteered unsolicited opinions. She spoke only when spoken to. Her only job was to report accurately.

Yay has none of the ambition that other people have. If you chase fame, in the end you won't get it. Because the merit you've built isn't enough to support it. The foundation is weak — and weak foundations collapse.

October 22, 1980

31. Accumulate Goodness Quietly

This teaching contains one of Khun Yay's most powerful personal revelations: she has no "inferiority complex" because every victory in her life was clean.

Once you're born, you must build goodness. Yay has accumulated goodness a little at a time, doing it steadily and consistently. No desire for fame or prominence ever mixed in.

When you accumulate goodness long enough and the goodness grows, the results appear on their own. You get to enjoy the fruits of what you've built. And this kind of goodness — no one can hide it. You don't want to be famous, but you become known anyway.

People in the world do a little good and when they don't see results immediately, they complain. The truth is, they've barely done anything yet — and they're already complaining.

Yay has built goodness continuously until the results became visible. When she looks back at everything she's built, she feels joy — joy in the merit and in victories that were clean and pure every single time.

That's why Yay has no inferiority complex whatsoever.

May 5, 1980

32. Goodness Must Come First

Six lines that function like a startup founder's warning against premature scaling. Without a foundation of genuine goodness, growth is just a faster route to failure.

People who don't yet have real knowledge, who don't yet have real goodness, but who already want to be famous, who already want to be prominent, who already want to be a leader —

It won't be long before they crash.

Because there's no foundation of goodness to support them. And the more they advertise themselves like this, the faster they destroy themselves.

October 12, 1980

33. Wanting Nothing That Isn't Yours

Pure Khun Yay: fierce independence, zero envy, and a karmic forgiveness policy that would make most of us uncomfortable.

Yay is someone who built a temple. She relies on merit. She has food, water to bathe, a place to live.

She doesn't covet anyone's possessions. She doesn't steal from anyone.

Whatever anyone does to Yay — let them carry it all away. Let them bear the weight of their own actions.

Yay will never cause anyone heartache.

Date not recorded

C H A P T E R
F O U R

Choose Your Circle

*Teachings on People, Discernment, and the Art of
Strategic Silence*

For someone who couldn't read, Khun Yay could read people with terrifying precision. She said it herself: "Yay can't read books, but Yay can read people." She attributed this ability not to some innate personality trait, but to meditation. Deep practice, she said, gives you the ability to see through surfaces to what's actually going on inside a person.

These seven teachings on relationships cover surprisingly practical territory: how to evaluate who's trustworthy and who isn't, why you need to get along with everyone (even people you don't like), why holding grudges is strategically foolish, and — perhaps most remarkable — how to handle conversations with people who come to you with

problems without letting them pull you off your own center.

The last teaching in this chapter is the longest and most complex in either of our sample chapters. It's essentially a masterclass in what we'd now call "emotional intelligence" — except Khun Yay was practicing it decades before the term was coined, without a single book or workshop to guide her. Her source? She scanned her own past, present, and future through meditation, and acted from that comprehensive view.

Notice the running theme: Khun Yay was not naive. She understood human nature with a clarity that could be devastating. But her response to that understanding was never cynicism. It was strategic compassion. She saw people's flaws clearly and chose to help them anyway — while being careful never to get pulled down in the process.

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34. **Choosing Your Company**

Khun Yay's framework for evaluating people is elegant in its simplicity: some people you can invite inside your fence; others you keep outside. The key insight is that bad influence works exactly like a drug — it seeps in slowly until you can't pull free.

When choosing who to associate with, you must be selective.

Some people you can be friends with outside the fence. Some you can let inside.

Bad people you shouldn't associate with, because you might catch the infection. At first you can see clearly that they're not good. But the longer they whisper in your ear, the more you start to think they're fine.

It's like heroin. At first you know it's bad, you refuse. But after being asked again and again, you try it.

That's what they call catching the infection.
Keeping bad company means catching the infection
— the infection of ruin.

Ruin is like a curse. You don't even know when you caught it, because these things seep in gradually. By the time you notice, you can't pull free.

February 8, 1981

35. Learn to Read People

Khun Yay uses one of the most vivid (and blunt) animal fables in Buddhist culture to make her point. The jackal can dress up as a lion, but its true nature will always reveal itself.

We must learn to read people properly. Consider the story of the jackal and the lion.

A jackal's nature is to eat dung. You can raise it and try to make it into a lion, and it may act the part for a while. But the moment it comes across dung, it forgets everything and goes straight for it. That's

what people mean when they say “you filthy jackal.”
No matter what, it’s still a jackal at heart.

So we must know how to look. We must see clearly
who is who.

Look carefully at what they truly are. Like the lion
and the jackal — a person’s true nature will betray
them.

If you want to know what someone really is, look at
their nature.

March 1, 1981

36. Stay With the Group

*Three sentences on why arrogance is a survival
risk. Khun Yay frames community not as a feel-
good concept, but as a practical safety net.*

Yay is someone who keeps the group together. We
must make ourselves get along with everyone.

If you go around puffing yourself up, acting tough — you won't have a group. And when something goes wrong, nobody will come to help.

October 28, 1992

37. Human Relations

Practical wisdom that doubles as a survival guide. Get along with everyone — not because it's nice, but because one day you'll be sick in bed and need someone to bring you water.

We must learn to get along with people. If they won't talk to us, we talk to them. Eventually they'll come around.

The proud ones, the ones who think "I'm too good for this, he's too good for that" — those types end up on opposite sides of the world.

We must learn to get along with everyone, every level, every kind of person. Because when we fall ill, we'll need to be able to rely on them.

May 5, 1995

38. Hate No One

This teaching is stunning in its causal logic. Khun Yay doesn't say "don't hate because it's wrong." She says "don't hate because it'll come back to you in your next life." It's not ethics — it's physics.

Yay doesn't hate anyone. Not a single person.

Because Yay is afraid that in the next life, people will come to hate her.

Yay looks far ahead. She doesn't just look at what's right in front of her.

That's why Yay hates no one. Yay loves everyone.

January 1, 1991

39. Even When You See Through Them, Stay Silent

One of the most revealing teachings in the entire collection. Khun Yay admits she possesses a kind of

intuitive sight — and then says the smartest move is usually to say nothing.

Yay — it's as if she has a kind of intuition, a knowing.

Even though Yay can't read books, Yay knows people. She can see right through them.

But Yay doesn't like to say anything.

If she couldn't see through people, she could never have built this temple.

But she thinks to herself: speaking is worth two pennies. Staying silent is worth a gold bar.

February 15, 1992

40. The Art of Receiving People

This is the longest and most sophisticated teaching in either of our sample chapters. It's essentially a manual on emotional intelligence, spiritual

counseling, and maintaining your own center while helping others — all from a woman who never read a book on any of those topics.

Receiving visitors is difficult work. You have to maintain your own quality first. And even after you've achieved that, you have to guard it — especially when it comes to the Dhamma.

The people who come to see you — many of them bring their problems. They come to unload their burdens. They bring their family troubles. Most of the time, these conversations pull your heart away from the Dhamma, away from your center.

We live in the Dhamma. So we must speak in ways that pull their hearts toward the Dhamma, not let them pull ours away.

If we're not careful in how we engage, if we lack mindfulness, they'll pull our hearts outward. But if we're skillful and mindful, we can gradually draw their hearts inward. Think of it simply: it's like a tug-of-war. Whoever has more strength wins.

There are many types of visitors, so be careful.

The most important thing is to get yourself right first. Understand yourself thoroughly, with complete clarity. Once you understand yourself well, you can understand others. That's what they call: know them, know yourself — know everything.

Once you know this, you'll be able to understand the problems people bring to you.

You must keep your heart deeply in merit, in compassion. Then look at yourself. Recall your own past lives. Look within the Dhamma and trace back: how much goodness have I built? Then look at the present: how much have I purified myself? And assess your position: am I in a place where I can pull this person up?

This person can be pulled up — so pull them up.
This person can't be pulled up — let them go.

Because if you keep trying to pull someone who's too heavy, you won't save yourself. They'll drag you down instead.

Then look to the future: what do I want to become? Where do I want to go? Look at past, present, and future carefully when receiving visitors. That way you won't drop your guard. You won't waste your time.

If you do this, you'll perform your duty well, and your heart won't falter. Most importantly: you must meditate extensively — only then can you manage your heart this way. Otherwise, it's very difficult.

The ancient teachers used to say: chanting is the ointment you apply; meditation is the medicine you take internally. If you both apply and take the medicine, the disease heals faster.

People who come with suffering are like people who are sick. We must guide them. For those with serious problems, encourage them to both chant

and meditate. Then they'll have enough merit to help themselves.

December 10, 1980

C H A P T E R F I V E

The Inner Technology

*Teachings on Meditation, Inner Sight, and the Practice
That Made Everything Else Possible*

This is the chapter where Khun Yay reveals her source code. Everything else in this book — her self-reliance, her contentment, her ability to read people, her understanding of karma — traces back to one practice: Dhammakaya meditation. She sat. She went inward. She saw things directly. And from that direct seeing, everything else followed.

For Western readers, some of these teachings will strain credulity. Khun Yay talks about seeing through all phenomena, about “no secrets even as thin as a hair,” about scanning past lives, about navigating inner realms the way a sailor navigates

the ocean. She speaks of meditation sessions lasting six hours at a stretch — twelve hours a day during wartime. She describes withdrawing from the coarse physical world into subtle inner dimensions, then re-emerging to handle practical matters, then diving back in.

You can approach these claims however you like. What's harder to dismiss is the evidence of the results: a woman with no formal education who outperformed scholars, outlasted adversaries, built a global institution, and trained generations of leaders — all while claiming that her only tool was sitting still and letting her mind stop.

The key word in Khun Yay's practice vocabulary is "hyut" — stop. The mind must stop. Not suppress, not control, not redirect. Stop. She quotes her teacher's famous distillation: the entire 84,000 sections of the Buddhist canon can be reduced to three words (purity of body, speech, and mind), which can then be reduced to one: stop. When the mind truly stops, everything becomes accessible.

Twenty-five teachings follow. They are the engine room of Khun Yay's life.

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41. **No Secrets, Not Even a Hair's Width**

Khun Yay opens the chapter with a declaration that sets the tone for everything that follows: the Dhamma, when practiced deeply enough, leaves nothing hidden.

There are no secrets in this world.

The Dhamma of Luang Pu at Wat Paknam is extraordinarily refined and deep. Yay has experienced it firsthand. There are no secrets — not even as thin as a hair. Everything becomes completely clear.

So whatever anyone does, do it well. You cannot hide anything. Because there are no secrets in this world.

Yay went and experienced this directly. It took two weeks of intensive meditation work, assigned by Luang Pu.

Yay can answer any question. She survived everything because of the knowledge transmitted by Luang Pu at Wat Paknam.

December 21, 1976

42. **Straight Into Advanced Practice**

A rare moment of Khun Yay explaining why she was exceptional: her purity of body, speech, and mind was so established that she bypassed the normal testing process entirely.

Because Yay is someone pure in body, speech, and mind — she has integrity, she has truthfulness, and she loves the Dhamma above all else.

When she arrived at Luang Pu's temple, she went straight into advanced practice. Normally, anyone who wanted to do that work had to be tested

repeatedly — examined extensively before being allowed in.

But Yay arrived and went straight in.

November 5, 1979

43. Loving What You Do Is the Key to Mastery

A teaching that any modern performance researcher would recognize: mastery comes from genuine love of the craft. Khun Yay illustrates it by observing her own doctors.

Yay has been watching her doctors. Doctor Piya, Doctor Khwan, Doctor Charoen — each one is skilled in a different specialty. Doctor Piya is an expert in teeth. Doctor Khwan in general medicine. Doctor Charoen in eyes.

People excel at whatever they love most. Whoever loves something will do it well, with refinement, subtlety, and excellence.

It's the same with Yay. She loves the Dhamma enormously — loves it above all else. That's why her Dhamma practice is so refined and deep. Because in all of life, she loves the Dhamma the most.

November 12, 1977

44. Love It the Most, and You'll Be the Best

Yay has been observing: whoever loves the Dhamma the most will practice it the best. Whoever loves the Dhamma the most gets the finest results.

Like Yay — she loves the Dhamma above everything. And that's why her practice is subtle, refined, and masterful.

November 12, 1977

45. There Are No Secrets for Those Who See

Yay's Dhamma is extremely refined. So refined that she sees everything. There are no secrets for Yay.

It's true what the ancients said: there are no secrets in this world. This is a fact — there are no secrets for someone whose Dhamma is deeply refined. Nothing can be hidden.

Things can only be hidden from those who still have thick defilements.

So whatever anyone does, wherever they are — Yay knows everything. It's just a matter of whether she chooses to speak or not.

November 5, 1979

46. **Seeing the Truth of What We Eat**

One of the most startling teachings in the collection. Khun Yay describes what she directly perceives when she looks at the reality of eating — and it's not comfortable.

When they say the Dhamma is refined, it truly is. So refined that when you eat, you see: animals eating animals. You look inside yourself while eating and you see: people eating people.

Because the animals you eat — they're people too, just like us. They're merely wearing the body of a pig, a duck, a chicken — according to their karma. That's all.

November 5, 1979

47. **People Who Don't Really Know**

A pointed teaching about intellectual humility vs. spiritual bragging. Khun Yay distinguishes between people who claim knowledge and those who actually have it.

When it comes to the Dhamma of Luang Pu at Wat Paknam, Yay knows it best. She knows the most. Because she practiced with Luang Pu continuously, never leaving. From before World War II, through the war, and after the war ended — she was still practicing.

The people who take Luang Pu's knowledge and go around talking about it here and there — they don't really know. They just want to be famous.

Yay herself, even though she knows deeply — in her position, she can't speak about it. Because people in the worldly realm are coarse. They listen but they don't understand.

October 12, 1980

48. More Than 200 Acres Could Hold

An extraordinary moment of self-disclosure. Khun Yay describes the vastness of the knowledge she received — then says she can't share it, because only people with deep practice would understand.

Yay has done good continuously for decades. She practiced with Luang Pu throughout, receiving the knowledge directly from him. What she knows and has seen is real.

The knowledge that was transmitted to her is so vast she doesn't know how to express how much there is.

When they first got the land for the meditation center — 200 acres — Yay looked at the entire property and thought to herself: this enormous area isn't big enough to hold all of Yay's knowledge. It would fit only a pinky finger's worth.

But she can't say this. Others wouldn't understand. Only those with deep Dhamma practice would know. Only they would comprehend.

October 12, 1980

49. **Ready for Any Battle**

Yay's Dhamma can take on a hundred battles.

Nobody else understands this. But Yay herself knows clearly what is what.

Because she has practiced so extensively, and because she relies on the Dhamma within herself — that's how she has survived everything.

Date not recorded

50. Hold On to the Vehicle

A vivid vision recounted by one of Khun Yay's senior monks: he saw a vehicle bursting from the ocean at incredible speed, with people clinging to it. Those who held on loosely fell off. The vehicle was Khun Yay.

How do people fall off? One of the senior monks had a vision during meditation: a vehicle rising from the middle of the ocean, people clinging to it, moving at tremendous speed across the water. Those who didn't hold on tightly fell off.

That fast vehicle is Yay. She builds goodness with total commitment — whatever she does, she does for real. That's why she moves so fast.

This center is like a mountain. Some people see the mountain and don't dare climb. Others climb partway, then see distractions — they want this, they want that, this looks interesting, that looks appealing — and they fall off.

Hold on tightly, dear ones. Don't fall off under any circumstances. Meditate extensively. Make your heart, your mind, your entire being into merit. Keep practicing. Sooner or later you will see the Dhamma.

Yay endured enormously — truly enormously, a hundredfold, a thousandfold. That's how this center came to exist.

March 21, 1980

51. No Need for Pampering

Don't feel sorry for yourselves. Understand that our teacher has enormous responsibilities. He can't come pamper everyone.

Yay never liked being pampered. But some people compete for attention, always wanting the teacher to coddle them. Fighting over it back and forth.

And so their Dhamma practice never advances.

November 17, 1982

52. Charge Straight Into the Dhamma

One of the most vivid descriptions of Khun Yay's inner life. She describes moving between coarse and refined dimensions of experience the way someone might describe switching between apps.

When it comes to the Dhamma, Yay has practiced until she knows everything — what is what, what is where. Like finding a needle or a plate in a house: you search until you find it. The Dhamma is the same — you must search with that same determination.

In meditation, Yay is very skilled. When she enters practice, she drops everything. She goes for the Dhamma only. She charges straight in.

When you see Yay dealing with practical matters, she has withdrawn from the subtle dimensions step by step — body by body — from the body of the Arahant all the way back to the coarse human body. Once she's back in the coarse body, she handles the situation.

When the external matter is settled, she drops it immediately. She goes back to the Dhamma. She charges in and forgets everything external.

Since Yay still lives in the world, she must sometimes withdraw to the coarse level. She still has to eat.

In the coarse realm, there's fighting to do. In the subtle realm, there's fighting too. But when she enters her room and sits in meditation, everything else is dropped completely. There is only the Dhamma.

She divides her time precisely. When she meditates, she lets the mind settle at the center of the body, step by step, through all eighteen bodies, until she reaches the body of the Arahant. Then she knows and sees everything.

When she dives deep, it's like going out to sea. You can't see the shore anymore. So Yay sets her

compass and goes straight. She sets it on her target — this hour, she'll pursue this — and she goes.

We on the Dhamma path must do the same. Divide your time well. Set aside everything else for a while. Sit in meditation. Only then will you make progress.

If you don't, your meditation will be interrupted by thoughts of home, of work, of this and that. The mind never stops. But meditation requires the mind to stop.

March 1, 1981

53. Drop Everything Else

Just meditating — just saying “Samma Arahant” — already earns merit. Attaining the Dhammakaya is not easy. Our minds race around the entire world. We must pull them back.

Let the mind stop, let it be still, right at the center of the body — two finger-widths above the navel.

Don't think about anything else. Drop it all.

When the mind stops and is truly still, it will become bright inside. Make the mind stop. Make it still. Visualize the crystal sphere until it's clear.

Date not recorded

54. Stop. That Single Word Is the Key to Everything.

This may be the most important teaching in the entire book. Khun Yay distills the entire Buddhist canon into one word — and illustrates it with the dramatic story of Angulimala, the serial killer who became a saint.

“Stop.” That single word is the key to all success. Success in the worldly sense and in the spiritual sense.

In the world, if you want to go somewhere fast, you get in a car, you take a plane. But in the Dhamma, you must stop. If you don't stop, you can't go

anywhere. The more completely you stop, the faster you travel.

Consider the story of Angulimala, as Luang Pu used to teach it. Angulimala was chasing the Buddha, wanting to cut off his finger to complete a collection of a thousand. He shouted: “Stop, monk! Stop!”

The Buddha replied: “The monk has already stopped. It is you who have not stopped.”

That word — “stop” — is the key. The Buddha’s mind had stopped. If the mind doesn’t stop, you can’t reach the Dhamma.

All the Dhamma is within us. To reach it, the mind must stop. If it doesn’t stop, you won’t arrive.

The entire Tipitaka — 84,000 sections of the Buddhist canon — can be reduced to three: purity of body, purity of speech, purity of mind. Reduce those further and you get one word: stop.

When the mind stops, the body is pure, speech is pure, the mind is pure. So we must practice. This is where the greatest merit lies.

Do what Yay says. Divide your time well. When you sit to meditate, don't think about anything. Think only of the Dhamma. Don't retreat. Hold your compass steady.

March 1, 1981

55. **Only the Dhamma Can Save You**

In all the billions of world systems, in all the infinite universes — nobody can free us from suffering. Only the Dhamma can.

Hold on to the Dhamma tightly. Even seeing brightness for just a flash — the merit from that alone is immeasurable, vast as the sky.

When Yay meditates, her mind settles at the center of the body, passing through the various bodies inward until reaching Nibbana. Then her mind

stays there. She can see anything she wishes. There are no defilements.

It's not hard to attain the Dhamma — if you truly love it. Don't think about others. Just think about yourself. Because no one else can help you.

March 11, 1981

56. **Attach to the Dhamma, Not to People**

A teaching with profound implications for spiritual communities everywhere: follow the teaching, not the teacher.

This life is for building goodness. Give it everything you have.

If you want to truly build well, attach yourself to the Dhamma, not to individuals. Then you can keep building indefinitely. You'll bring prosperity to yourself and to your community.

If you attach to individuals, you can't sustain it. You'll suffer later — you and everyone around you.

If you attach to the Dhamma and rely on it, you'll overcome wrong views. Because you'll accumulate clean, pure merit every day.

Remember this well, and put it into practice. Yay is old now — getting older every day. While she still has the strength to speak, she'll keep teaching. Please take this and practice it, so you can save yourselves.

December 15, 1980

57. **Fist Into Dirt**

A wonderfully earthy metaphor: meditation is like punching the ground. You literally cannot miss.

Meditation is like punching dirt with your fist. Everything depends on the ground — you need ground to build a house, you need ground to launch into the sky. The ground is fundamental.

So when you practice, don't think "I'll never see anything, I'll never get it, I can't do what others do." Don't think like that.

Think instead: every single time I say "Samma Arahang," I earn merit. Every time. Every time I close my eyes, I earn merit. It's like punching dirt — you hit the target every single time.

On this Dhamma path, don't be complacent. Keep going. Don't be afraid of what anyone says or thinks. Just think: I'm doing this for the Buddha's approval, and that's enough.

Keep going. Think: "Success, success." And everything will succeed.

January 19, 1975

58. The Most Important Duty in Life

In our lives, we must have the determination to meditate more and more. Before Yay had seen the Dhamma, she kept trying — practicing while walking, while sitting.

She kept going, kept going, until her mind stopped.
She broke through to the Dhamma.

Breaking through to the Dhamma — that is the
most important duty in life.

December 2, 1982

59. Meditation Is Life's Most Important Work

Meditation is the single most important thing in
life. We must always be thinking: I must break
through to the Dhamma.

We must keep it in mind constantly — whether
walking, driving, whatever we're doing. Whenever
we have time, think about it intensely.

Just like Yay. Before she saw the Dhamma, she
practiced and practiced until she saw it. From
seeing it, she went deeper. Yay's practice advanced
because she sat for real.

May 10, 1992

60. Guarding the Dhamma

At Wat Paknam, practicing with Luang Pu, Yay never left. Not once. Others would go home occasionally, or travel here and there.

But Yay guarded the Dhamma. She loved the Dhamma. She never left.

That's why others don't know as much as Yay.

November 5, 1979

61. Those Who Truly Know Don't Show Off

People who show off their knowledge waste their time competing with each other. People who truly know don't need to prove anything to anyone.

That's why they win in the end.

August 17, 1980

62. She Sees Through Everything

Yay was the first person to conceive of building this temple. She has fought every battle from the beginning until now. Because once she started, she was determined to see it through.

Every problem that arose, Yay had to go into deep meditation to resolve it. The older she gets, the more exhausting it is.

Yay sees through everything. It's just a matter of whether it's the right time to speak.

That's why Yay says: there are no secrets in this world. It's just that we haven't bothered to look. If we really look, we'll know.

February 10, 1982

63. Silent and Still — Looks Like Losing, But Wins

A student asked Khun Yay for Dhamma advice. What she described is a conflict resolution strategy that most leadership coaches would envy.

No matter who criticizes Yay, argues with Yay, or fights with Yay — whether it's a close student or someone senior — when they're emotional, telling her she must do this or that:

Yay goes quiet. She yields first. She lets them talk and talk.

Yay defeats everyone with silence first. They talk until they're tired, then they stop on their own. She lets them be angry, be emotional, vent — all by themselves.

Yay stays silent.

Yay has defeated everyone this way.

She goes quiet. She dives inward into the Dhamma. And then she wins.

January 11, 1991

64. Meditation Solves Problems

Khun Yay once gave this advice to an engineer who was stuck on a construction problem. Her prescription: stop thinking, go sit, bring the whole problem inside you, and the answer will appear.

When you can't figure something out, go somewhere quiet and sit in meditation. Bring your mind inward. Bring your entire project — all of it — inside with you. You'll find the answer. You'll see clearly what needs to be done and how to do it.

Meditation produces wisdom. Yay uses this same method herself.

Problems in the kitchen — issues anywhere — Yay goes back to her room, sits quietly for a while, and the plan emerges. She sees how to solve it.

August 9, 1991

65. Set Your Mind Before You Speak

Advice to a businessman. Notice how Khun Yay frames meditation not as spiritual practice, but as a competitive advantage.

When you're working with people and you can't figure out what to do, step away to somewhere quiet. Close your eyes and let your mind become still.

Soon the answers will rise up and tell you what to do. Then, with a settled mind, go speak.

If you think speaking would be a loss, don't speak yet. Go back and meditate again until your mind feels comfortable. Then return and speak.

Only speak when it's a win. If it's a loss, don't say a word.

Life goes fast — day and night, day and night. Whatever you're going to do, do it quickly. Get your footing right. Don't waste the chance to leave this life with profit — and that profit is merit.

October 9, 1991

The Merit Operating System

Teachings on Merit, Karma, and the Invisible Architecture of Your Life

If Chapter 5 reveals Khun Yay’s inner technology, this chapter shows what that technology produces when applied to the question of how reality actually works. For Khun Yay, merit (bun in Thai, puñña in Pali) isn’t an abstract religious concept. It’s the operating currency of reality. It determines who leads and who follows, who prospers and who suffers, who can help others and who can’t even help themselves.

What makes these teachings extraordinary is their source. Khun Yay wasn’t quoting scripture. She was describing what she directly observed through the

meditation practice described in Chapter 5. She could see, as she put it, “spheres of merit and spheres of sin” attached to each person. She spoke about karma the way a radiologist reads an X-ray — matter-of-factly, diagnostically, without drama.

This is the longest chapter in the book — forty-five teachings that form a complete operating manual for understanding how invisible actions produce visible results. Whether or not you believe in literal karma, the principles here — that your current situation reflects prior investments, that consistency beats intensity, that helping yourself is the prerequisite to helping others — are principles any systems thinker would recognize.

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66. **Be Great Through Merit, Not Ego**

Whatever you do, consider your actual position. Look at your merit. Assess the capital you’ve built. Don’t overreach — do what’s appropriate to your actual level.

If you want to be great, be great through merit. Don't be great through ego. If you're great through merit, you'll be truly great. But if you're great through ego, you'll crash. It's like a house built on a thin foundation — the bigger you build it, the harder it falls.

People look at Yay now and want what she has. But they don't know she endured enormously, built goodness across lifetimes until it was like a mountain. Yay's reputation and her many students exist because of the goodness she stored in the past.

January 12, 1975

67. Every Drop Fills the Jar

*One of Khun Yay's most beloved metaphors.
Patience plus consistency equals fullness.*

Water drips one drop at a time, and still it fills the jar. So keep practicing. Whatever merit arises, keep doing it. One day you'll be full — just like water filling the jar drop by drop.

If you don't practice at all, it's like having no water — not a single drop. If you keep at it steadily, one day you'll truly know for yourself. Right now your capacity isn't full — so keep working, little by little.

Never be lazy. Don't worry too much about others. Focus on building yourself. Because when you die, nobody can help you. You do the work, you get the results.

February 2, 1975

68. When You Have Merit, Everything Succeeds

In this life, Yay fears only one thing: that she'll accumulate too little merit. That her merit will be less than everyone else's.

Because when you have great merit, everything you wish for succeeds. Everything you attempt succeeds. Nobody can stand in your way — through the power of merit. Having enormous merit is the best possible thing.

August 31, 1976

69. **Born to Build**

Three lines that reveal Khun Yay's extraordinary relationship with rebirth. Most people dread it. She chose it on purpose.

Yay doesn't want to stay in heaven too long. She wants to be reborn in the human world quickly — so she can keep building merit.

January 3, 1977

70. **How Merit Pays Out**

An investment primer from an illiterate nun.

However much merit you accumulated in the past, that's how much it pays out now. Build 10, get 10. Build 100, get 100.

Merit built right now pays only 10–20% in this lifetime. But it pays out fully in the future — making your next life extraordinarily good.

So practice being content with less. If you have 100 but spend 1,000, you'll go bankrupt. If you have 1,000 and spend 100, it compounds. When you receive more, maintain equanimity. That's just merit paying out.

August 16, 1979

71. A Clean Heart Stays Close

Those who want to walk the path with Yay — to build goodness together lifetime after lifetime — must have a clean heart. Whatever you do, do it purely for merit. That's all.

Only people with clean hearts can stay close to Yay. Dirty hearts can't stay. It's like water and oil — they can't mix.

November 20, 1979

72. Proximity Doesn't Equal Merit

A gentle but devastating correction for people who thought being near the teacher was enough.

Don't think that being near Yay means you'll automatically get great merit. The person who gets great merit is the one who remembers to think about merit. We must rely on merit. Relying on anything else doesn't work. Yay is telling you.

Date not recorded

73. Build Merit All the Way, Then You'll Win

If we're grounded in the Dhamma, we can read people through the Dhamma clearly. Then reading people in worldly terms becomes easy — because the world is coarser than the Dhamma.

If we can't win everything in this life, then think: next life, I must win. Build merit even more heavily. Fix yourself. Increase purity of body, speech, and mind. And you will win.

November 25, 1979

74. The More You Intend, the More You Get

Khun Yay describes her vision of the future: she'll look at each person's face and recall exactly what they did in their past life. She promises to bring everyone along.

Come on! Let's build merit together. You're still young and strong. Work for the religion, then set powerful intentions for great merit. Whoever intends the most gets the most. Whoever intends little gets little.

In the next life, Yay will look at each person's face and recall their past life — what they did, what their name was, where they came from.

When Yay comes back to be reborn, she'll follow all of you down. She'll bring everyone along. Going to heaven — she'll bring everyone. Going to Nibbana — she'll bring everyone. Coming back to build more merit — she'll follow everyone down.

October 28, 1980

75. Never Surrender Your Merit

*Three lines. Probably the most quotable thing
Khun Yay ever said.*

You can surrender on anything. But never
surrender on your merit.

February 11, 1981

76. You Do the Work, You Get the Reward

Those of us at the temple have sacrificed everything
in the worldly sense to be here. We must commit to
doing good — worthy of the sacrifice we made.

Every job needs doing. Help each other. Don't
neglect any duty. Don't say "That's not my job."
Just do it. You do the work, you get the merit.
Nobody else gets it for you. What you do becomes
your permanent asset — it follows you across
lifetimes.

Everything in this temple belongs to the religion, to
the Buddha. Whatever we do here is merit — big
tasks, small tasks, all of it. When there's work, we

work together. When it's done, sit in meditation.
Read. Expand your knowledge.

March 1, 1981

77. Do Good to the Very End of Your Life

When we enter the temple, we aim for one thing: to build as much goodness as possible. To accumulate merit. To benefit ourselves fully.

So commit completely: we will do good to the very end of our lives. We've sacrificed our time, our opportunities, everything. Now fill ourselves with merit to the fullest.

August 20, 1982

78. Bringing Merit to Help

Khun Yay reveals how she accomplished the impossible: by sitting in meditation and calling on her accumulated merit to solve practical problems. She also describes why others failed where she succeeded.

Yay planned everything — even the temple’s construction. She established a feeding program. She succeeded because she modeled herself on Luang Pu at Wat Paknam, who fed hundreds.

Others wanted to do the same but couldn’t. Even Khun Yay Thongsuk, who was a brilliant preacher — so skilled that even high-level Pali scholars couldn’t match her — even she couldn’t establish a feeding program. Because it’s that hard.

Yay wanted to do it, so she focused on merit. During meditation, she set intentions and called on her merit to help. In the end, it succeeded through merit.

Those with great merit govern those with less. Everything depends on merit alone. Humans are merely puppets. We must seek as much merit as possible. Yay sustains everything by thinking about merit — using merit to hold everything together.

March 1, 1981

79. Come Get Merit

Bring the younger ones to come get merit. Yay worries they might fall to the lower realms. Bring them to build merit — so they'll have a chance to go to heaven, to reach Nibbana.

March 26, 1981

80. **Everything Succeeds Through Merit**

Whatever you're doing, think about merit. Stay in merit. If you have merit, it will succeed. Merit is our refuge. Think about merit as much as possible. Everything will work out.

April 4, 1981

81. **Spheres of Merit and Spheres of Sin**

Khun Yay describes something she claims to have seen directly.

Take lots of merit with you. In the next life when you meet Yay, she'll recognize you: "Oh, that one — I told them to come build merit and they wouldn't. Now their merit is tiny. They can't keep up."

Right now, with these physical eyes, we can't see what we've accumulated. But when we die, freed from the physical body — that's when we'll see our own spheres of merit and spheres of sin. We'll see exactly how much we've got.

April 5, 1981

82. **The Front Lines**

Ah! We take our merit from the kitchen just like this. And in the next life, we'll be at the front lines. Do you want to be in front, or behind?

April 8, 1981

83. **Earn Merit, Spend Merit**

Khun Yay as strategic operator — someone who fought real battles and won them with merit, not weapons.

It took enormous effort to build this center. Yay fought constantly — from boat thieves at the

beginning to other battles now. All she has is a pure heart.

She calls on her merit from the past, the present, and the future — gathers it all and fights with it. That's what it means to earn merit and know how to spend it.

We must help ourselves. In all the universe, nobody can help Yay. She helps herself — by filling herself with goodness, washing away what's bad, filling herself with merit.

May 24, 1981

84. **Accumulating Merit**

Coming to the temple for one day earns one day's merit. If you don't come, you don't get it. If you come, you do. Merit accumulates and compounds — like saving in a piggy bank.

August 29, 1981

85. **A Pure Heart**

Khun Yay describes her inner state during conversation: her mind rests in merit, free of greed, anger, and delusion. From that clarity, she can diagnose anyone.

When Yay talks with anyone, her heart is pure. Her mind rests in merit, rests in the Dhamma. No greed, anger, or delusion in her heart.

Because her heart is pure, she can read people. She can see what's wrong with each person — what karmic illness they carry. Then she advises them with compassion.

If they follow her advice or not — that's up to them. It's their karma.

December 11, 1981

86. Even When Sick, She Stays in Merit

Even when Yay is sick, she stays deeply in merit. She never abandons merit.

One day, newly ill, Yay looked at her inner Dhamma and saw the Dhammakaya shining with extraordinary clarity — the clearest, the brightest. She kept gazing inward. When she opened her eyes and looked at the world in daylight, it seemed dark compared to what she'd seen inside.

The Dhamma is the most important thing. Remember what Yay says. Practice meditation extensively.

November 20, 1982

87. Living in Merit

Khun Yay describes her constant practice: when serious things happen, she calls on all her merit from every lifetime to help. When supplies run low in the kitchen, she sits in meditation and “tracks” resources.

When serious things happen, Yay thinks about merit constantly — all the goodness she's built across every lifetime. She calls it all to help, so the work succeeds.

Merit is what matters. When your merit is great enough, you win. Nothing shakes her. Yay lives in merit always.

Even when the kitchen runs short, Yay stays in merit. She tracks resources through meditation — calling on the wealth of a universal monarch. May there always be more than enough.

The word “not enough” — may it never be known. Whatever happens, Yay lives in merit. External events are just surface. The heart stays in merit. It doesn't get involved.

April 4, 1979

88. The Power of Merit

Everything depends on the power of merit. When you have merit, everything succeeds.

In this life, Yay set out to build goodness to the utmost. Her only fear: that her merit might be less than others. So she has applied intense effort

throughout her entire life. She doesn't want to lose to anyone. She wants to be at the very front of doing good.

November 5, 1979

89. Use Merit Properly

A teaching that frames generosity as supplies for the journey and meditation as the vehicle to freedom.

Generosity is your provisions. Meditation is what sets you free. Both must be done extensively.

Getting merit requires effort, faith, a worthy recipient, and everything in alignment. Since merit is this hard to earn, don't let it spill or leak. Use merit properly. Because merit will carry you to happiness.

December 1979

90. Hold Merit as Your Refuge

Yay holds merit as the highest thing. She loves merit. Loves it the most. Because merit can help her.

People still have defilements — sometimes good, sometimes bad. Yay holds her merit as her refuge.

January 26, 1991

91. Merit Is Non-Negotiable

Being born human is hard. Once you're here, do plenty of good. Give according to your means. No matter what, Yay does merit. There's no way she won't.

Yay can't read, but she built a temple. She practiced so deeply she could do advanced spiritual work. Even after all that, she still wants to do more — robe offerings, everything. Both coarse merit and refined merit.

November 7, 1980

92. Take Both Coarse and Refined Merit

A correction for practitioners who only want to meditate and avoid physical work.

Some people only want to meditate — they don't want to do the physical work. Khun Yay taught: Yay takes both — coarse merit and refined merit. Coarse merit trains the body. Refined merit trains the mind. But if you attain the Dhammakaya, even the coarse work becomes easier.

Date not recorded

93. What You Do Is What You Get

You can't escape what you've done. Try to run from your merit — you can't. Try to run from your sin — you can't. Both are stored at the center of your body. There is absolutely no escape. Whatever you accumulate, that's what you get. Build good — get happiness.

August 23, 1979

94. Carrying Merit, Carrying Sin

Whoever creates karma carries it themselves.
Whatever someone does to you — they carry it.
When someone says hurtful things, don't hold on.
Don't get angry. Forgive them. Then it's over. Let all
debts end in this lifetime.

May 10, 1992

95. **Think Long-Term**

Yay thinks long-term. When we die, we take
nothing — only merit and sin. So build goodness
and stockpile it. Whatever anyone says, stay calm.
Let them talk. They'll find out when they die.

We die and are reborn. Death is not the end.
Whatever anyone says — stay calm. Don't argue.
There's no point.

October 1, 1992

96. **Everyone Wants to Be Friends With Someone Good**

We must build merit. Build our merit massively —
like a mountain. Whatever others do, we keep

building our goodness. If others don't see it, that's fine.

People who build goodness — everyone wants to be friends with them.

November 17, 1982

97. **Do Only Good Karma**

Build only good karma. Let this life be the last one where anything bad exists. Clear it all out. Then every future life will have nothing but good karma.

We must come back — our defilements aren't fully gone yet. But we won't do bad things. We'll do only good.

February 14, 1982

98. **The Merit of Cleaning Sacred Ground**

A teaching about the specific karmic rewards of cleaning the temple grounds — including details about how it affects your celestial home.

Those who clean the temple grounds — wherever they go in heaven, Catummaharajika, Tavatimsa, Yama, Tusita — their celestial mansions will be brilliantly radiant. Their complexion will glow more brightly than other celestial beings.

Few people come to clean like this. Few celestial beings have that kind of radiance. If you have the strength, do it. Whoever does it, gets it. Accumulate and take it with you.

January 29, 1983

99. Those With More Merit Lead Those With Less

A remarkable teaching that includes Khun Yay's account of rescuing her father from the lower realms — the event that launched her spiritual career.

Those with great merit lead those with less. Slowly, gently, pulling them along. Because those with less

merit can't go on their own — they need to rely on those with more.

Few people can go to the lower realms and bring back a parent. Almost no one. When Yay rescued her father, she felt tremendous relief and happiness — a happiness she carries to this day. Because deafness is the worst suffering — you can't hear, you can't understand, you're lost.

To reach the lower realms, Yay had to walk through the states of meditation, purifying every body until they were all radiant. Only then could she go. She even looked up the buffalo she'd once beaten as a child to see where it had been reborn, and shared merit with it.

November 22, 1981

100. **Old Merit, New Merit**

Yay has compassion for both the poor and the rich. Rich people built good merit in the past — that's why they have wealth. But if they don't keep

building, their old merit runs out. Next lifetime, they'll struggle.

Poor people built little in the past. If they don't start now, it gets worse. Yay has compassion for both. We must invite everyone to build merit — so they'll have assets that stay with them.

Date not recorded

101. To Help Others, You Must Have Great Merit

Yay feels compassion for people. She wants to help. But to help others, you must have great merit yourself. That's why Yay urgently builds merit for herself.

Date not recorded

102. Earning Merit Every Day

Those who build a temple earn merit continuously. Because they've created a place where people come and find comfort. As long as the temple stands, as

long as each building hasn't crumbled, the builder receives merit every single day.

May 16, 1991

103. **You Get What You Intend**

Khun Yay describes her intention-setting during a robe ceremony, broadcasting her merit to every celestial realm — and explains that your merit corresponds to how full your “cup” of intention is.

She brings her awareness to the center of the body, visualizes brilliance, and broadcasts her merit to tree spirits, sky spirits, earth spirits, celestial beings of all six levels, all sixteen Brahma realms, all four formless realms, across a hundred billion universes — inviting everyone to share in the merit.

Whoever intends with 100% commitment gets full merit — like a full cup of water. Whoever intends halfheartedly gets less — like carrying water that sloshes until only a little remains.

February 11, 1991

104. **Merit Never Goes to Waste**

Khun Yay traveled to provincial cities to invite people to build merit. Her teaching was practical and vivid.

Merit stays with you. If you have little, do a little. Do it often and it adds up — like putting coins in a jar. Even if you're worth a billion — if you haven't built merit, you can't take it when you die. It's not yours yet.

But if you've built merit, your wealth is truly yours. It follows you across lifetimes. Merit never goes to waste. Without merit, the people left behind will spend your wealth — or it'll just fill in the ground.

November 13, 1989

105. **Because of Merit**

Yay invites people to build merit because she loves merit. Merit is goodness — it will free her from suffering. She wants merit because she must be reborn again.

The reason some people are poor is that they didn't practice generosity. Invite them to build merit — they get merit, we get merit, we go as a group. Next lifetime we'll meet again. No need to encounter fools. Meet only people of merit — no trouble.

November 17, 1989

106. Merit Will Help

When a layperson asked how to call on Khun Yay's help from far away, she redirected them to their own merit.

A layperson asked: when I face obstacles far from you, how do I call on your help? Khun Yay answered:

Think about the merit from your generosity. Call on your merit. Merit will help you. If you keep company with fools, fools can't help. Merit will bring you good people who can.

November 13, 1989

107. Age Doesn't Matter — Merit Does

A lay student worried about managing people older than her. Khun Yay's response reframes authority entirely.

Don't be afraid. Being young doesn't matter. What matters is having plenty of merit. Merit runs things — not age. You're just the puppet. Merit pulls the strings. If you have more merit, you lead. Merit controls everything.

September 23, 1991

108. Short Life, Long Life

A widow asked why her husband died young. Khun Yay's answer is direct and structural: lifespan is determined by past-life conduct toward other beings.

He died young because his lifespan ran out. People live short lives because in past lives they killed and harmed many creatures. They must pay for that karma, so their lives are cut short.

People who live long, like Yay, didn't kill or harm much in past lives. We must accept that everyone dies — sooner or later. Even the person we love most, we can't hold on to.

January 20, 1991

109. **Build Merit Massively**

A woman wanted to practice but couldn't let go of her grown children. Khun Yay's response was characteristically blunt.

Men and women — when they're in love, it's like caramel. After one child, they fight every day. If you don't want burdens, don't have children. If you have them, you're responsible. You can't abandon them.

Yay worries about merit, not people. Inside us are spheres of merit and spheres of sin. We must build our merit massively.

Yay fights everything. Whatever happens, she looks, she solves, she doesn't retreat. When you want to help someone, first assess yourself. Then assess them — can you handle it? If not, maintain equanimity. If they won't listen to warnings, accept it — it's their karma. Whatever we take on, we do our very best.

February 9, 1991

110. **The Only Thing You Take With You**

Khun Yay once told a former mayor this directly, stripping away every worldly pretension.

When people with titles come to the temple, leave your rank at the door. It's worldly. When you die, you can't take it. The only things you take are merit and sin.

A person with a title is someone wearing a costume. Take it off and nobody cares. Just like someone who's left office. Nothing is certain. The only certain things are merit and sin. Everything depends on those two.

November 13, 1989

C H A P T E R
S E V E N

Living With Purity

*Teachings on Celibacy, Integrity, and the Power of an
Uncompromised Life*

This is the chapter most likely to make Western readers uncomfortable — and also the one that reveals the most about why Khun Yay achieved what she did. She lived as a celibate practitioner from her mid-twenties until her death at 91. She wasn't a nun in the formal sense (women cannot be fully ordained in the Theravada tradition), but she lived with a rigor that most ordained monks would struggle to match.

For Khun Yay, purity wasn't a moral restriction — it was a power source. She saw a direct, causal relationship between the purity of one's conduct and the depth of one's meditation. The cleaner you live, the deeper you see. The deeper you see, the

more effectively you operate. It's not about being "good" in a repressive sense. It's about maximizing bandwidth.

She was also strikingly matter-of-fact about it. She didn't moralize. She observed — clinically, almost humorously — that attachment to sensuality is the single biggest reason spiritual practitioners derail. She'd seen it repeatedly. Her metaphor was precise: "Don't build the bridge. If you don't build it, they can't cross."

Whether or not celibacy is your path, the underlying principle — that uncompromised integrity is a competitive advantage in any domain — is universal.



111. **Going the Distance**

A teaching given to men preparing to ordain as monks. Khun Yay's advice is strategic, not moralistic: don't build the bridge, and they can't cross it.

If we enter the temple truly determined to build our goodness to the fullest, we must be completely serious about it. Only then will we go the distance.

Yay wants everyone to make it all the way through. Whether you do or not depends entirely on you.

The thing you must be careful about is relationships with the opposite sex. This is critical.

Don't lead with compassion. Lead with wisdom. Lead with equanimity. If you lead with compassion, you'll fall.

Yay has seen it happen to many people.

So guard your heart carefully. Don't build the bridge. Don't extend it under any circumstances. Because once you're close, it's very hard to stop.

If you don't build the bridge, they can't cross.
Problem solved.

Spiritual practitioners fall to this more than anything else. It cuts directly into your merit. There's no benefit at all — tiny upside, enormous downside.

Prevention is better than cure. Not having it at all is best. Then you can keep building goodness indefinitely. Great purity leads to great insight, and the ability to overcome everything.

January 5, 1975

112. **Blissfully Free**

Three lines. Possibly the most carefree thing Khun Yay ever said.

Why do people even get married?

Living alone is blissfully free. Like a little bird — you can fly wherever you want.

November 6, 1981

113. Greater Purity, Greater Merit

To sit in meditation and see the Dhamma clearly and brightly, you must live a pure life. You must have great purity of body, speech, and mind. No attachments. No heaviness in the heart. No meddling in others' affairs.

Focus only on merit. Help yourself. Don't wait for anyone to pamper you. Hold merit as your highest value.

Keep your heart clean, pure. Keep building goodness steadily. The merit you receive will be clear and pristine — with no defilements mixed in, and none of it spilling or leaking away.

Date not recorded

114. Lift Your Mind Higher

Khun Yay's perspective on sensuality is unusual: she doesn't condemn it morally. She says it's simply low ground. Lift yourself to higher ground and you'll see that for yourself.

Lift your mind higher. Then you'll see that sensual desire is suffering. People living in the world can't see this because they're all at the same level.

If we train ourselves to raise our minds above the ordinary, above sensuality, we'll see clearly that it's low — it's something that drags you down. You'll see it as clearly as looking down from a high place.

People in the world live together at the same level, so they can't see it.

Yay has looked into her own past — both coarse and subtle, tracing all the way back — to check whether she's been clean. And she sees: across incalculable lifetimes, clean throughout.

Looking at this present life, from childhood onward — born as a woman, yet she never had romantic feelings for anyone. Never loved anyone in that way. Yay is very proud of this.

December 3, 1980

115. Nothing Beautiful About It

Khun Yay in contemplation mode: she describes looking at physical beauty with the eyes of someone who sees its underlying reality. The result is not disgust — it's clear-sightedness.

Yay lives in a state of constant contemplation. She looks at women and doesn't see beauty at all. She doesn't know why — no matter how many she looks at, none are beautiful.

She sees only suffering. She sees the consequences. She sees the karma. She sees nothing attractive.

They try to adorn everything from head to toe, and still she sees nothing beautiful.

Yay truly sees the downside. She sees that anyone who gets attached to this will eventually fall. The risk of failure is the highest here.

That's why she sets her intention again and again and again.

November 5, 1979

116. **She Sees It Clearly**

Khun Yay uses the Dhammakaya tradition's term for Mara — “the Dark One” (ai dam) — to frame sensual attachment as a form of voluntary enslavement.

Yay sees clearly: if you indulge in sensual desire, you're volunteering to be a slave to the Dark One. You're letting yourself be chopped and battered.

Yay refuses. If you surrender, you've lost before you even started. How could you ever fight them?

Anyone caught in sensuality can't sustain their spiritual path. They can't save themselves.

June 24, 1980

117. If It's Not Substantive, She Won't Say It

A delightfully human admission from Khun Yay: even talking about this topic makes her uncomfortable.

There are some topics that aren't substantive — like sensuality. Yay has never talked about it. She's too embarrassed.

When Yay was young, she was even more embarrassed. But now that she's old, she dares to speak about some things.

June 24, 1980

C H A P T E R
E I G H T

The Power of Intention

*Teachings on Adhitthana — the Practice of Setting
Unbreakable Resolve*

If the last chapter was about maintaining purity, this one is about deploying it. In the Dhammakaya tradition, adhitthana (intention-setting, or resolve) is one of the Ten Perfections — the ten qualities that, when fully developed, lead to the highest spiritual attainment. It’s not wishing. It’s not affirmation. It’s a precise, meditative act of programming your trajectory across lifetimes.

Khun Yay practiced adhitthana with extraordinary specificity. She didn’t just say “may I be happy.” She listed exact conditions she wanted to guarantee for herself in every future life: perfect health, freedom from enemies, meeting only good people, having resources for generosity, never experiencing decline. She called this “locking the fence” —

building an intention so comprehensive that nothing unwanted could slip through.

For Western readers familiar with “manifestation” or “law of attraction,” Khun Yay’s version will feel both familiar and vastly more rigorous. She grounds intention in specific merit, connects it to meditation depth, and treats it as a technical skill that improves with practice. It’s not magic thinking. It’s strategic design applied to the architecture of your future lives.

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118. **How to Make Your Intentions Stick**

Khun Yay reveals a technique taught to her directly by her master, Luang Pu at Wat Paknam: set your intention at the precise moment monks are chanting the blessing, and it will carry all the way to Nibbana.

Luang Pu taught Yay that the most powerful time to set an intention is during the monks’ blessing chant. When the monks begin chanting, you bring

your awareness to the center of your body, visualize the crystal sphere as brightly as possible, and begin setting your intention.

Luang Pu said: during the blessing, your intention rides along with the chant. The sound of the blessing reaches all the way to Nibbana — and carries your intention with it.

Try to set your intentions carefully. Practice often, and it will become second nature.

January 26, 1975

119. **No Tolerance for Sloppiness**

We know the pinnacle of life is practice. But the messy things must be sorted out first.

Yay can't stand sloppiness. Whoever makes a mess, Yay will correct them — no exceptions.

Yay sets her intention: in the next life, anything that would trouble me, trouble others, or trouble us both — may I never think it, say it, or do it.

October 1, 1976

120. Lock the Fence

The signature Khun Yay practice: adhitthana lom khok — “intention that locks the fence.” She sets conditions for every future life with extraordinary specificity, leaving nothing to chance.

This life is the last one. We must lock the fence with our intentions — cover everything.

May I have good hearing, good eyesight, no illness of any kind. May all 32 parts of my body be complete and perfect. May I be born male, with a pure form, never infatuated with the opposite sex.

Before dying, may I have full awareness. May I have enormous merit in every life. May I meet only good, teachable people.

Even planting a tree, set an intention: may this tree grow beautifully, give shade and comfort. May anyone who sits beneath it see the Dhamma.

At bedtime, set an intention to rest within the crystal sphere at all times. Then you're protected. Whatever happens, you're safe.

July 27, 1977

121. **Khun Yay's Cleaning Intention**

Even sweeping the walkway at her teacher's residence became an occasion for intention-setting.

Wherever I go, may the path be smooth and easy. May my home always be clean. May there always be someone to care for it and keep it clean.

March 25, 1980

122. **Teach With Purity**

Khun Yay observes others setting themselves up as teachers without real attainment — and her response is not anger but an intention for her own future.

These days, Yay sees everyone wanting to be a teacher. It makes her sad. She doesn't know what they're teaching from. They see Yay teaching people to stop the mind, and they ask why bother stopping.

Yay says: if you don't stop, how will you ever see the Dhamma? You must stop to see the truth.

So Yay sets her intention: in whatever life I'm born, if I become a teacher, may I teach my students with complete purity of body, speech, and mind. May I be born already knowing the precepts, the scriptures, everything — expert from birth. May I be born knowing the entire Tipitaka by heart.

March 1, 1981

123. **The Perfection of Resolve**

As we go about our work, we should be setting intentions alongside it. Set the intention: may I encounter the true teaching in every life. May I never commit harmful actions.

If you can read, use that ability to set intentions. Intention-setting is one of the Ten Perfections — it's right there alongside generosity, morality, renunciation, wisdom, effort, patience, truthfulness, loving-kindness, and equanimity.

Every time you set an intention, merit arises. Being born into this life, Yay already has profit. She's already ahead.

Date not recorded

124. **Capture the Victory Flag**

A sweeping autobiographical teaching where Khun Yay traces her entire moral trajectory — including the charming story of how she decided at 26 to stop killing mosquitoes.

Being born human is the greatest luck. We're here to build goodness, to fill ourselves with profit. So let nothing bad cling to us. Take only good things forward.

Yay herself: at age 26, she could keep the Five Precepts perfectly. She'd been breaking only one — she liked to swat mosquitoes. But at 26, she taught herself: “Look, mosquitoes are so much smaller than us, and we bully them? We've been swatting them for 26 years and they haven't decreased by a single one.” After thinking this, she committed to the Five Precepts completely. By 28, she kept the Eight Precepts perfectly, until now.

Yay has captured her victory flag. She will filter out everything bad and take only good things forward. Life will advance and never decline.

So set your intentions well: may the words “not good” and “decline” never apply to me. May only good things — things that propel me forward — follow me in every life, all the way to Nibbana.

November 12, 1979

125. **Complete and Perfect**

This life is the last for Yay. In the next life, may not even the tiniest blemish exist. May everything be

complete and perfect. May she be born ready to build goodness to the maximum. Ready in every way.

June 24, 1980

126. **The Karma of Killing**

Khun Yay's intention against violence is both practical and dramatic — including a clause about the earth swallowing would-be attackers up to their necks.

Lately, Yay keeps hearing about murders. People who kill each other are locked into a cycle of vengeance across lifetimes — taking turns, endlessly.

So Yay sets her intention: may I never kill anyone, and may no one ever kill me, in any life, all the way to Nibbana.

If anyone even thinks of harming Yay, may that evil thought vanish instantly. If it doesn't vanish, may the earth swallow them up to the neck — so they

have time to repent and publicly warn others never to follow their example.

December 3, 1980

127. **Defeat Mara With Goodness**

Yay has done nothing but good her entire life, and intends to do more — to purify body, speech, and mind ever further. It is this goodness that defeats Mara.

Beyond doing good, Yay constantly sets the intention: may Mara never be able to block my insight. If my insight cannot be blocked, I'll see everything as it truly is — correctly, completely.

May the word “defeat” never be known to me. May I never know what it means to lose to Mara, in any life. May I keep winning until Mara is fully overcome and I enter Nibbana.

After setting this intention, Yay looks within — at her own purity, at her sphere of merit, at the

Dhamma light inside. She sees it blazing with brightness. And she is glad.

Looking back at everything she's built, she sees no impurity at all. Only goodness. Only purity throughout.

Yay has captured the victory flag. She is certain of it. All she needs to do is sustain it to the end of this life. Every future life will be complete. She will encounter nothing bad. Because she has locked the fence around herself with absolute thoroughness.

Yay will win. Mara will be defeated. Because she has accumulated so much goodness.

March 4, 1980

128. Set Intentions for Even the Smallest Merit

Even a small act of goodness — set an intention for it. May I never encounter fools. May I meet only good people with integrity.

Trust Yay. Even the tiniest good deed — set an intention for it. Lock it in.

October 1, 1992

129. **See the Dhamma Clearly in Every Life**

Whenever you do any good deed, Khun Yay taught, set this intention:

In every era, in every age — may I be free from fools. May all my karmic debts be settled. May I see the Dhamma clearly and brightly in every single life. May I have wealth for generosity that never runs out. May I own land. May I build temples. May I have good health, long life, and when my time comes, may I go peacefully.

Date not recorded

133. **Who Can Follow Yay**

Khun Yay describes the entry requirements for her inner circle across lifetimes. The qualifications are entirely internal.

Yay sets this intention regularly: the people who can follow Yay must have clean and pure body, speech, and mind. No desire for fame or prominence. Contentment. Wanting little. Honesty. Integrity. And extensive meditation practice.

Date not recorded

135. **Anchor Every Intention to Nibbana**

The final teaching in this chapter — and the capstone of Khun Yay’s adhitthana practice: whatever you intend, always tether it to the highest destination.

Intention-setting is critically important. When you go up to the meditation hall, set intentions along with the teacher’s guidance — and add your own as well.

Whatever you intend, always anchor it to Nibbana. Because when you tether your mind to Nibbana, Nibbana will teach you to do only good. It will keep you from declining.

When you anchor to Nibbana every day, your mind rises higher every day. And when it rises high enough, you will see the way out.

So whatever you intend — always keep your mind tethered to Nibbana.

March 4, 1980

C H A P T E R
N I N E

Endure, Fight, Do It for Real

*Teachings on Perseverance, Resilience, and the Refusal
to Quit*

If the previous chapters describe what Khun Yay believed and practiced, this chapter shows what it cost her. She endured ridicule, sabotage, poverty, illness, and loneliness. She was dismissed as low-class, uneducated, a former servant. She was given the filthiest quarters, served food with contempt, and underestimated at every turn.

She responded to all of it with the same strategy: endure quietly, dive deeper into practice, and outlast everyone. Her phrase for it was “fight silently” — yield on the outside, never yield on the inside. The people who mocked her are forgotten. She built a temple that changed millions of lives.

The chapter title in Thai — ออดทน สู้ ทำจริง — is three words that defined her life: endure, fight, do it for real. Not two out of three. All three, simultaneously, for seven decades.

The most revealing teaching in this chapter may be #138, where she states her competitive advantage in a single word: “real.” She had no degree, no credentials, no social standing. But she had authenticity of action — and it turned out that was the only credential that mattered.

• • •

136. **Endure**

Seven lines. A complete philosophy of conflict resolution.

Bear it. Endure it. Bear and endure.

Don't go creating more karma on top of it. If you do, you'll just suffer more. And it will never end.

Date not recorded

137. **Endure and Improve**

We've sacrificed everything to come build goodness. We must endure. Whatever anyone says — endure. And keep improving yourself.

Look at Yay: she constantly examines herself, corrects herself, adapts herself to the situation so she can keep building goodness as smoothly as possible.

In this life, we must endure and improve. Fill ourselves with good things. If we can fix it in this life, every future life will be good.

If we can't fix it now, we'll carry the burden into the next life to fix there. That's not ideal. So fix everything now, as thoroughly as possible.

August 20, 1982

138. **Just One Word: Real**

The defining statement of Khun Yay's life. She strips away every possible excuse and reduces success to a single variable.

Whatever you do, do it for real. Look at Yay — no knowledge, no degree. All she has is one thing: she's real. And she still managed to build a temple.

Then she looked at why others fail. They fail because they're not real. They hit a small obstacle and they quit. Even though they have bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, doctorates.

Yay has no knowledge. She can barely move her fingers to make a letter. She has no qualifications whatsoever.

Yay has just one word: real. And with it, she succeeds.

Then she looked into the future: if you're not real in this life, every future life will be a failure too. You'll never amount to anything.

So whatever you do, be real about it — starting now.

June 6, 1983

139. **Your Team Mirrors You**

When you work, work seriously. Don't be half-hearted. If you work half-heartedly, you'll end up with a team that's half-hearted too.

When you use things, use them properly. If you don't, you'll attract people who don't take care of things either.

When you die, you'll find yourself surrounded by exactly that kind of team. You are as you are — and your people will be the same.

So commit to your work. Use things well. That's how you attract good people.

Date not recorded

140. **Being Human Means Fighting**

Khun Yay reveals she once became so malnourished from overwork during the temple's construction that she developed a nutritional deficiency — and still didn't stop.

Being born human means you fight. Fight by doing good. You'll die wherever you are anyway.

Fight or don't fight — you're going to die. You don't know when. So fight.

When you're unwell, then rest. Yay fought throughout the entire temple construction — until she developed malnutrition.

While we're still strong, we must fight. Whatever there is to do, do it. Don't be lazy. Only stop when you physically cannot continue.

October 1, 1992

141. **Fight to the Absolute End**

Yay thinks to herself: win or lose, she'll fight to the absolute end. She will never surrender easily. Under any circumstances.

Others can go wherever they want. Yay stays right here. Doing her practice. Exactly like this.

November 5, 1979

142. **Don't Give Up**

Being human, don't give up. Whatever you're going to do, hurry up and do it. When you're old, you won't have the strength.

Yay is hardworking. She does this, does that, works all over the temple. Takes just a tiny rest.

You all — you do a tiny bit and then take a long rest.

April 19, 1992

143. **Never Surrender**

One of the most moving teachings in the collection. Khun Yay was ill and couldn't move her legs. She refused to accept it.

Yay has never surrendered to any obstacle that stood in her way. When something needs doing, she perseveres and pushes through. She tries every possible means to accomplish what she's set out to do.

When she fell ill, one day she felt she couldn't step forward. Her legs wouldn't move. But her heart refused to surrender.

So she inched her legs forward. They wouldn't budge. She tried moving her toes, just a fraction at a time.

Until finally, she walked.

September 15, 1982

144. **Whatever She Did, She Did for Real**

A teaching that reveals the discrimination Khun Yay faced — and how she responded by making herself unchallengeable through sheer devotion to the practice.

From the moment Yay entered the temple, countless people looked down on her. But the reason she rose as high as she did is that whatever she did, she did for real.

Her mind was fixed on the Dhamma — on giving Luang Pu the answers he needed. She never wavered.

Everything else, she looked past. Didn't care. Whoever bullied her, whoever looked down on her — fine. She could take it.

If she'd spent her time on jealousy and competition like everyone else, she'd have wasted it all for nothing. The "clever" people were busy fighting each other. But Yay focused only on the Dhamma.

If you're truly skilled, you don't need to compete with anyone. Yay didn't waste time on any of that. So she had more time to explore the Dhamma at deeper and deeper levels.

August 17, 1980

145. **See Through It — Don't React**

When serious things happen to Yay, she goes deeper into the Dhamma. The deeper she goes, the clearer her mind becomes. The clearer her mind, the deeper she can investigate.

Yay never retaliates against people who are angry with her. Instead, she looks for the root cause of why these things are happening.

From before she entered the temple, she was battered. After ordaining and practicing, she was

rejected — called low-class, a servant, diseased, uneducated. Given the filthiest quarters. Food thrown at her with contempt.

In this life, Mara has attacked Yay constantly. Even after entering the temple, it continued. Right up to now.

But this is the last life Mara will be able to do this. Because now Yay sees through it all. She will not surrender — and she is ready to defeat Mara once and for all.

Date not recorded

146. **Win With Merit**

Khun Yay's definitive statement on her strategy: yield on the outside, never on the inside. Let them think they've won. Dive deeper. Then win with the power of accumulated goodness.

No matter what anyone does — however they attack or batter her — Yay yields on the outside. On the inside, she never yields.

And in the end, she wins everything. Every time.
This is how it always goes, on every issue.

On the inside, Yay fights. Fights to the absolute
end. Fights with merit. Never retreats.

On the outside, it looks like she's losing. But on the
inside, she dives even deeper into the Dhamma.
The deeper she dives, the more refined it becomes.

In the end, she wins — through the power of her
own merit.

May 5, 1980

147. **The Last Life**

Yay reflects that in some past life, she must have
done something wrong and fallen under Mara's
control. That's why she's been battered throughout
this life.

Now that she knows this is the last life, she must do as much good as humanly possible. Time passes fast — day and night, day and night.

Fight or don't fight — you die either way. But if you fight, you have a chance to win. If you don't fight, you lose for certain.

Why would you accept death without a fight? We were born to defeat Mara — not to let Mara defeat us.

August 20, 1982

148. **Just One More Life**

Endure for just one more life. Whatever happens, Yay can take it. This is the last life of endurance. After this, it won't be like this anymore.

When the work is done, everyone will see who is who. Who is truly clean and pure, and by how much. Yay herself has no inferiority complex — only purity.

Everything will be decided when the work is complete. What everyone has done, what everyone has become — it will all be revealed. Nothing can be hidden.

That's why Yay is bold and fearless at all times. Because everything she has done is pure.

Date not recorded

149. **Keep Up**

If you're worried about falling behind Yay, then purify yourself as fast as you can. You need diligence and endurance.

May 5, 1980

150. **Fight Silently**

The most concise expression of Khun Yay's core strategy.

Building goodness — don't think it's easy. You must fight. You must endure. And you must be silent.

Yay built goodness by fighting — fighting with silence, all along. She used merit as her weapon. And she won with merit.

September 10, 1991

152. **Never Showed Her Power**

Khun Yay lived her entire life alongside her master, Luang Pu, at Wat Paknam — and never once pushed back against him, even when she could have.

Yay lived with Luang Pu her entire life and never once asserted herself. Whatever happened, she simply endured.

When Luang Pu scolded her, when he corrected her — she responded only with patience. She just kept doing good, steadily.

Others could not have endured this.

November 10, 1980

The Strength of Yielding

Teachings on Humility, Deference, and Why the Bowing Person Is the Strongest in the Room

Chapter 9 was about Khun Yay’s inner fire — her refusal to surrender. This chapter is its complement: her outer softness. Khun Yay bowed first, always. She bowed to monks, to visitors, to critics, even to people who came to find fault. She lowered herself so consistently that it became a kind of superpower.

Her logic was both spiritual and strategic. Spiritually, she understood that pride — “showing your power” — is the fastest way to derail your practice. Strategically, she understood that when you bow first, you disarm the other person. She describes greeting visitors who came to criticize the temple: by bowing before they could even speak, she effectively “closed the gates of hell” for them — because they had no choice but to bow back, and in

that moment, whatever hostility they'd brought dissolved.

This is not weakness. This is someone who can see exactly what she's doing and why. The yielding is calculated, precise, and devastatingly effective.

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153. **Never Lose Your Awareness**

Everyone — don't show your power. Even if you have it. Even if you've been given important work to do.

Be humble. Be patient. Our elders and teachers only wish us well.

Remember what Yay says. Set an intention alongside it: never lose awareness on this point. Ever.

Otherwise you'll ruin yourself. You won't go the distance. You'll have no real knowledge, no real insight.

November 10, 1980

154. **Always Humble**

Some people, once they're given responsibility, start throwing their weight around — showing off their power to this person and that person. This is unacceptable.

Even people trusted by the teacher can be like this. Given authority, they use it recklessly. They forget themselves entirely.

But Yay never showed her power to anyone. She has always been humble.

November 10, 1980

155. **Yield So Everyone Can Build Merit**

Khun Yay reframes yielding not as defeat but as an act of generosity. You bend so others can stand up straight enough to do good.

Yay is someone who yields. Wherever she is, she drops her pride. She is always humble and self-effacing.

We must yield to everyone — so that everyone can do good together. We must endure, bend in every direction.

Bend so they'll stay united. So they'll love each other. So they can all build goodness.

Once we yield, every task succeeds. And in the end, everyone gets merit.

October 22, 1976

156. However Hard It Gets, She Yields

A teaching that includes one of the most disarmingly clever social strategies in the entire collection: bowing first to disarm critics.

Yay builds goodness with one aim: Nibbana, once Mara is fully defeated. If Mara isn't fully defeated, Yay refuses to enter Nibbana.

Yay thinks about merit. This is the last life. However hard it gets, she yields. She drops every last bit of pride. It's hard to find anyone who does what Yay does.

No matter who comes to the temple — whether they come out of faith or to find fault — Yay bows to them first. Always. Because she's old, and old people are clumsy-looking.

When she bows first, the person who came to criticize has no choice but to bow back. In that moment, Yay has effectively helped close the gates of hell for them.

February 20, 1977

157. **Drop Your Pride**

Yay drops every kind of pride. She removes the bad kind from her heart and fills herself with the good kind.

Every monk in this temple — Yay defers to all of them. She drops her pride for anyone who genuinely wants to build goodness with her.

But if someone has malicious views, if they think destructively, if they want to fracture the community — then Yay must push back.

May 31, 1981

158. **Trust Through Humility**

The capstone teaching: Khun Yay explains how she earned the deepest trust of her master — through humility, honesty, and never saying anything but the truth.

Yay is always humble before her elders.

Humble, and honest. She speaks only the truth. She fears nothing else.

With her elders, with Luang Pu at Wat Paknam especially — Yay earned the deepest trust. More than anyone.

May 5, 1980

C H A P T E R
E L E V E N

Inner and Outer Cleanliness

*Teachings on the Sacred Practice of Keeping Things
Clean*

This is the shortest chapter in the book, and also one of the most revealing. For Khun Yay, cleanliness was not a personality quirk or a domestic virtue. It was a spiritual practice — one she traced back to her earliest childhood, long before she knew anything about meditation or Buddhism. She washed dishes inside and out. She mopped the tops and undersides of stairs. She scrubbed until there was nothing left to scrub.

Later, through deep meditation, she came to understand why she was like this: it was the residue of merit from countless past lives of practice. The same instinct that made her clean the underside of a staircase as a six-year-old in rural Thailand was the same instinct that would later drive her to purify her mind through twelve-hour meditation sessions.

For Khun Yay, the outer cleanliness was a mirror of the inner. She literally “fought” for the temple’s cleanliness, and she saw it as one of the foundations of people’s faith in the place. A clean temple communicates something about the quality of the practice happening inside it.

The teaching about brooms is small but perfect: put things back where they belong after using them, and in every future life, you’ll be surrounded by order. Leave a mess, and the mess follows you across lifetimes too. Karma operates at every scale, including the position of a broom.



159. Loving Cleanliness

Khun Yay frames her lifelong devotion to cleanliness as a battle — one she fought until the entire temple grounds became a place worthy of practice.

Yay started with nothing. But she loved cleanliness. She has loved cleanliness for as long as she can remember.

Yay fought until this place was clean. That cleanliness is what made people have faith. That cleanliness is what made this place a true sanctuary for practice.

So don't abandon the cleanliness that Yay has fought so hard to establish.

October 25, 1981

160. Praised by Humans and Devas

Khun Yay spots a misplaced broom during her daily temple inspection — and turns it into a teaching about karma, orderliness, and the standard by which both humans and celestial beings evaluate you.

While inspecting the temple, Khun Yay noticed a broom that had been left out of place. She told them to put it back properly, then taught:

Everything must be put away neatly. In every future life, you'll encounter only orderliness.

Things that have been taken out to use — fine, use them. But when you're done, put them back exactly where they were.

If we do things cleanly and neatly, we become an example of cleanliness and order. If we do things in a messy, cluttered way, we become an example of messiness and clutter.

Those who keep things clean and orderly are praised by humans and praised by the devas.

April 19, 1992

C H A P T E R
T W E L V E

Structure Creates Freedom

Teachings on Discipline, Rules, and Why the Most Rule-Abiding Person Was Also the Most Free

At first glance, a chapter on rules and discipline might seem like the least interesting in the book. But Khun Yay's relationship with discipline was anything but conventional. She didn't follow rules because she was told to. She followed them because she'd figured out — through direct experience — that discipline is a form of protection, not restriction.

Her logic was elegantly simple: when you follow every rule perfectly, no one can touch you. Your enemies have nothing to work with. She makes this explicit in Teaching 163: the people who tried to undermine her “couldn't catch her on anything, because she had never broken a single rule.” Discipline was her armor.

But it went deeper than strategy. Khun Yay saw discipline as the container that holds everything else together. Without it, merit leaks. Without it, communities fracture. Without it, the inner practice has no stable ground to rest on. She'd learned this at Wat Paknam under Luang Pu, where she studied every rule of the institution and followed them all — not just while her teacher was alive, but afterward, and in every subsequent place she lived.

The paradox she embodied: the most rule-abiding person in the room was also the most free, the most powerful, and the most trusted.



161. **Protect the Rules**

A teaching that acknowledges an uncomfortable truth: growth brings both quality and entropy. The more people come, the harder it is to maintain standards.

Wherever there is prosperity, there is also decline.
Wherever there are wise people, there are also
those who deteriorate.

As more and more people come to the temple, let us
all help protect its rules and discipline.

May 24, 1981

162. **Respect the Rules of Every Place**

Khun Yay describes her own approach to discipline: study every rule of wherever you are, follow them with full respect, and you'll live in complete comfort. She never broke a single rule — not at Wat Paknam, not in the meditation research hall, not at the new temple. Not once.

Wherever you are, you must learn the rules of that place. Once you know them, respect them. Then you'll live comfortably.

Yay has always set this example. When she first came to Wat Paknam, she studied every rule of the

temple. She followed them all with full respect, continuously.

She has never violated a single rule of the temple — not even one. However many rules Luang Pu established, Yay followed every one. She never transgressed. In the meditation research hall, she followed every regulation without exception. That's why she lived comfortably and at the highest standard.

Not only when Luang Pu was alive — even after he passed away, Yay continued to respect the rules. She never transgressed. And now, at the new center, she follows every rule here too, and actively promotes compliance.

Whatever can be done to maintain the rules, she does — no matter how exhausting.

She asks only this: be people who uphold rules and discipline. Yay is tired. She is old. If all of you respect the rules, others will follow your example. There will be no trouble. Help share the burden, so

the community can be happy and everyone can benefit.

June 7, 1980

163. **Never Broke a Single Rule**

The payoff of a lifetime of perfect discipline: absolute invulnerability to her critics. They couldn't find a single thing to use against her.

When Yay first began studying the Dhamma, she had to fight countless obstacles. People envied her. People harassed her. People sabotaged her.

But none of it affected her. They could never catch her on anything.

Because Yay had never broken a single rule. Never violated a single regulation. Never breached a single point of discipline.

June 7, 1980

C H A P T E R
T H I R T E E N

Use What You Have Wisely

Teachings on Stewardship, Resourcefulness, and the Sacredness of Other People's Money

Khun Yay managed the finances and physical assets of a major temple for decades, and her approach to resources was, characteristically, both intensely practical and deeply spiritual. She didn't distinguish between "sacred" and "mundane" resources. Water, fire, money, buildings — all carried karmic weight. Waste them, and you become their slave. Steward them well, and they serve you across lifetimes.

The most striking teaching in this chapter may be the one about construction oversight (Teaching 167). Khun Yay reminds her team that the temple's money came from ordinary people — people who had five baht or ten baht, who placed their coins on their heads in prayer, who set intention after intention. Wasting that money isn't just poor

management. It's a karmic crime: "you'll earn merit that doesn't cover the sin."

She also had zero patience for gambling. When a family brought their gambling-addicted relative to her, she cut straight to the diagnosis: gambling money is impure because every person at the table is trying to take from everyone else. It can never lead to wealth. Only to ruin.

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164. **Assets That Don't Deteriorate**

A simple principle with profound karmic implications: take care of other people's things as if they were your own, and in every future life, your things will be well cared for too.

Wherever Yay is, she protects the assets of that place. She cares for other people's belongings as if they were her own.

Yay's own things — she protects them. Other people's things — she protects them equally.

In future lives, we'll be able to protect our own assets, and there will be people who help care for them too. Our assets will not deteriorate.

June 7, 1981

165. Use Things Properly, or They'll Own You

One of Khun Yay's most quotable formulations: if you don't know how to use something, you become its slave. She illustrates it with water, fire, and money — and a tiny detail about never spilling a single drop.

If you have water, use it properly. If you can't, you become water's slave. If you have fire, use it properly. If you can't, you become fire's slave. If you have money, use it properly. If you can't, you become money's slave.

Once you've acquired something, you must learn to use it well. If you can't, you'll be enslaved to it for your entire life.

Watch Yay: even carrying water to the bathroom, she doesn't let a single drop spill.

So whatever you use, watch how Yay does it. Use things properly. Then you won't struggle.

Date not recorded

166. **The Value of Money**

Khun Yay reveals her dual method of “earning” — both in the worldly sense and through meditation. She sat in meditation every day specifically to attract the resources needed to support her community.

When spending money, you must understand its value. Don't spend recklessly. Don't be extravagant. Don't be someone who doesn't know how to save. That kind of person will be a slave to money for life. You must remember how hard it was to earn.

Yay earns money for everyone to use comfortably. She earns both through worldly means and through

meditation — she sits in practice every day, tracking resources.

If, after earning it, her community lives comfortably and can build goodness smoothly, Yay is at peace.

But if, after earning it, people use it wastefully — then no matter how much she earns, it's never enough. She'd have to exhaust herself earning until she dies.

When spending money, learn from Yay. Spend wisely. Make every amount count.

June 24, 1980

167. **Don't Let It Leak**

Perhaps the most morally charged teaching in the stewardship chapter. Khun Yay reminds construction supervisors that the temple's money came from people who prayed over every coin.

Oversee the construction carefully. Don't let anything leak or be wasted.

Because we're using wealth that sits on the heads of ordinary people. They have five baht, ten baht — and they place it on their heads in prayer. They have one baht, one quarter-baht — they place it on their heads and set their intentions. Again and again.

Then to come and waste it like this? Be very careful. Otherwise you'll earn merit that doesn't cover the sin.

1978

168. **If You Build It, Maintain It**

Anyone can build something. But the caretaker — that's what matters. Whatever you do, think first.

Having the wisdom to create but not the wisdom to maintain — that's unacceptable.

If you can build it, you must be able to follow up and maintain it. If you can't maintain it, don't build it.

Whoever creates something must follow through with care. If you can't maintain it, don't start.

Look at Yay: she built a temple, and she still follows through on maintaining it.

February 15, 1992

169. **Broke and Empty**

A layperson brought a gambling-addicted relative to Khun Yay for guidance. Her diagnosis was swift and structural.

However much money you earn, it all disappears. Your home burns with conflict.

Have a billion? You'll lose a billion. Every gambler has an impure heart. "I want to take. He wants to take. Everyone's plotting to take." The money you win is impure money. It comes, and it goes.

At first you might win. Later you lose. There is no path to wealth through gambling. If you stop

gambling, you have a chance at wealth. But if you continue, even with a billion, you'll end up broke and empty.

August 18, 1991

C H A P T E R
F O U R T H

Life Gems

*Miscellaneous Teachings on Living, Speaking, Thinking,
and the Extraordinary Privilege of Being Human*

This final chapter gathers the teachings that didn't fit neatly into the previous thirteen categories — and several of them are among the most memorable in the entire collection. Here you'll find Khun Yay's autobiography in miniature (the story of her father's curse), her management philosophy (speak gently or lose your volunteers), her instructions for dealing with negative thoughts (don't think ahead of the situation — Mara will hijack the narrative), and her final, glorious declaration: being human is the most extraordinary thing in all of existence.

The chapter also contains some of the most intimate glimpses of Khun Yay as a person: the little girl walking behind her mother, thinking “when I'm old, may I never struggle”; the old

woman who has never once carried a bad thought to bed; the spiritual warrior who says “Yay’s path to freedom from suffering — Yay has already seen it.”

This is where the book ends. But for Khun Yay, of course, it never ends. She planned to keep coming back, life after life, to keep building, keep teaching, keep bringing people along. The last teaching in the collection is a celebration of what it means to be human — a fitting conclusion from a woman who showed, more convincingly than perhaps anyone in modern history, just how far a human being can go.



170. **A Sanctuary of Merit**

When Yay came to this center, she had only one aim: make it a place of cleanliness and purity. A sanctuary of merit. A place where everyone could practice and carry as much purity with them as possible.

Date not recorded

171. **Trading Her Life**

Khun Yay describes nearly dying during the temple's construction — and surviving only by keeping herself “submerged in merit” at all times.

Yay had to trade her life to build this center. By the time it was nearly finished, she collapsed. That illness nearly killed her.

She had to keep herself immersed in merit at all times. That's how she survived. If it had been any other elderly person, they'd have been ashes already.

She's recovered now. But she's comfortable in the way old people are comfortable.

February 26, 1983

172. Don't Think Ahead of the Situation

A sophisticated teaching on cognitive hijacking: when something goes wrong, don't spiral. If you think ahead, Mara will write the script for you.

When you make a mistake, don't think ahead of the situation. Because once you start projecting, Mara will infiltrate and construct an entire narrative for you instantly.

The more you think, the worse it gets for you. Try instead to keep your mind at the center of the body.

Normally, when something goes wrong or an obstacle arises, people think ahead: they feel discouraged, deflated, defeated. They think only in negative directions. When they do this, their spirits sink and Mara succeeds in programming them immediately. Something that was nothing becomes a disaster. The more they think, the more they lose.

So when something happens, just bring your mind to stillness at the center of the body. Then you'll be able to resolve it.

September 20, 1976

173. Make the Present as Good as Possible

A sweeping autobiographical teaching that traces Khun Yay's philosophy of total presence through every phase of her life: rice farmer, servant, temple practitioner, meditation researcher, temple builder. At each stage, she dropped everything from the previous one and focused entirely on the present.

Most people don't know Yay. And Yay is someone who never feels sorry for herself.

She teaches herself constantly: whether she's foolish or clever, literate or illiterate, rich or poor — whatever. Since she's been born, she thinks only this: my duty is to do as much good as possible. So that in the next life, I'll get only good things. May I never know the word "bad."

She thinks only: make the present good. So the future will be good.

The past has passed. She never dwells on it. She thinks only: make the present the best it can be.

When she was a farmer with many friends, and then she entered the temple — she thought only of the Dhamma. Nothing else. She didn't even think of her friends. In the meditation research hall, when Luang Pu assigned her work, she thought of one thing: doing her duty perfectly. Answering every question Luang Pu asked. Nothing else.

When she moved to the first center, she thought only of making it clean and pure. When she moved to the new center, she didn't think about the old one at all. Only: make this place clean, pure, a place where people can build enormous merit.

At every stage, she focused exclusively on the present — and that's why the Dhamma advanced further for her than for anyone else.

August 1, 1977

174. Want to Take People to Heaven? Invite Them to the Temple

*A teaching that includes a charming anecdote:
Luang Pu once scolded Khun Yay for eating at a*

layperson's house. "My dear Chandra — eating enough for one person, owing gratitude to one person, isn't that enough? Why eat at other people's homes?" She never did it again.

If we want to take people to heaven, we have to invite them to the temple. Not let them drag us outside.

Luang Pu once told Yay: "My dear Chandra, eating enough for one person and owing gratitude to one person isn't enough for you? Why must you go eat at other people's houses?" From that day, Yay never ate at anyone else's home again.

It's the same for monks. Yay would say: you've ordained as a monk — why not invite people to the temple instead of going out? If people have faith, they'll bring offerings to you. But if you keep going outside, why would they bother coming to the temple?

January 10, 1981

175. Plant Your Taproot Here

Ah! May you all prosper. Don't go anywhere.
Whatever people say about other places being
better — let them talk.

We plant our taproot right here. Our deepest root is
planted at this center. Right here.

February 8, 1981

176. **Planning Every Phase of Life**

*A remarkable autobiographical teaching where
Khun Yay reveals she planned every major
transition in her life — from farming to domestic
work to temple life — including the detail that she
had to shave her head and escape in secret.*

You must know how to plan well. Look at Yay: she
planned everything throughout her entire life. Even
farming — she knew how to plan. She planned until
she could do everything.

While still at home, she was deeply capable. She
planned from when the family was in debt all the

way to having enough. Once the family could manage on their own, she planned to enter the temple.

When she came across the book “Walking the Path to Happiness,” she knew it was time. She met Khun Yay Thongsuk, began meditating — and before she’d even seen the Dhamma clearly, she kept going back and forth, until she saw it. Then she entered the temple for good.

She had to use a ruse — saying she was going home. Otherwise they wouldn’t let her leave. She had to shave her head and escape, with Khun Yay Thongsuk’s help.

The moment she entered the temple, she dropped everything from the outside. She focused on the Dhamma alone. That’s why her Dhamma became as masterful as it is.

March 1, 1981

177. **Leaving Home**

The origin story, in Khun Yay's own words. Her father cursed her with deafness for 500 lifetimes when she was a child. That curse became the driving force of her entire spiritual life.

When Yay was about 10 or 12, one night her father was drunk. He was poor and slept downstairs. Her mother slept upstairs with the nine children. Her father was grumbling, and her mother called him “a little sparrow” — it touched his insecurity about being poor.

He got angry and asked the children: “Did you hear what your mother called me?” The other children stayed quiet, but Yay didn’t understand the situation and blurted out: “Mom didn’t say anything about you, Dad.”

Her father cursed her: “May you be deaf for 500 lifetimes.”

Yay was truly terrified. When her father died, she was out looking at the rice fields. By the time she came back, they said he’d already passed. Every

other child got to ask for his forgiveness. But Yay didn't. All she could think was: she was going to be deaf for certain.

She thought of one thing only: she had to find a way to ask her father's forgiveness. Nothing else entered her mind. When she heard about Luang Pu at Wat Paknam, she arranged everything at home, and when the family was stable — she left.

June 7, 1981

178. **Think Only of Merit**

If you come here truly thinking only of merit, you'll never fall. But if you come wanting to be famous, to stand out, to show off, to indulge — you'll fall for certain.

Others may not know. But Yay knows herself well. And because she knows herself, she knows everyone else too.

She knows her own past: what she did in previous lives. She knows her present: what she's doing now.

She knows her future: what she'll receive. All the way through to Nibbana.

Yay already knows everything. It's complete. The path out of suffering — Yay has already seen it.

June 21, 1981

179. Yay Has Never Thought a Bad Thought

When someone asked Khun Yay if she ever suffered, her answer was almost impossibly simple.

Today someone asked Yay: do you ever suffer?

Yay answered: no. Because Yay has only ever thought good thoughts. She's never thought a bad thought. Ever.

She wakes up thinking good thoughts first. Bad thoughts never stick in Yay's mind.

Yay has accumulated nothing but goodness, thought nothing but good things, all along. When something bad happens, she fights it for the sake of the community, but she doesn't hold onto it. When the situation passes, she lets it go completely.

The moment she sits to meditate, she drops everything. She dives into the Dhamma alone. That's why she has nothing but happiness.

October 28, 1982

180. **Be a Good Template**

Khun Yay addresses her legacy directly: after she's gone, be the kind of person who can teach the next generation by example.

Ah! This is good. Do it just like this. We learn to keep things orderly, we learn to do things well, and we show the younger ones by example.

Later, when Yay is no longer here, we teach the younger ones ourselves. More people will come

after us. We can't expect Yay to keep teaching forever.

When we do things right, we tell the newcomers. We become a good template for others — just as Yay has always been.

When Yay is no longer here, you keep telling others. Keep going. Do the work yourself, and guide the younger ones alongside you.

July 18, 1981

181. **Stop Doing What's Not Good**

A playfully threatening teaching: Khun Yay promises that in the next life, she'll recall everyone's past actions — and she'll know exactly who listened and who didn't.

Remember what Yay says. Whatever isn't good — try to stop doing it. If you can stop in this life, you won't carry it forward.

And if you don't stop? In the next life, Yay will recall your past. She'll look and say: "This one — Yay told them to stop doing bad things. They didn't stop. That's why they turned out like this."

July 18, 1981

182. **Speak Gently**

Practical leadership advice: if you scold your volunteers, they'll stop coming. Then you've lost both the help and their merit.

We must learn to speak well. Speak gently to people. Don't scold, don't berate. Speak calmly, advise gradually — and they'll listen. They'll respect you and keep coming back to help.

But if you speak harshly, scold and berate them, they'll be afraid and won't come back. Then the work suffers and they lose their merit.

So speak gently. Don't scold. Advise gradually. They'll listen. They'll understand. The work gets done. And they get merit.

November 11, 1980

183. **Wanting Makes You Suffer**

People suffer today because they're full of wanting. Wanting is what creates suffering.

Want to be beautiful — suffer. Want to be rich — suffer. Want to be famous — suffer.

Because Yay doesn't want any of these things, she doesn't suffer. Yay has carried her contentment with her for a very long time.

Other people's possessions — she doesn't want them. She's satisfied with what's hers. No wanting at all, for anything, in Yay's heart.

Only wanting to build goodness. Building it steadily, into pure merit. Clean, pristine merit.

Whatever others do, that's their business. Just let Yay do good — as much as possible. Thinking only good thoughts is enough.

October 28, 1982

184. **Guard Your Heart**

Events come and go. Good and bad. That's how the world has always been. Sometimes we're happy and cheerful. Sometimes we're stressed, anxious, confused.

Let the world be however it is. Don't worry too much about it. Guard your heart instead.

Don't think about bad things — even if they're other people's problems. If you insist on thinking about them, the negativity will enter you.

Lose anything — that's fine. Let it go. But don't let your heart be lost.

February 17, 1982

185. **Can You Think This Clearly?**

A childhood memory: young Yay walking behind her mother, already planning for her old age. Then a pointed challenge to the listener.

When Yay was a little girl, she would walk behind her mother and think to herself: when Yay is old, may she never have to struggle.

Do people today know how to think this clearly? The reason they struggle now is that their sins have overwhelmed them. Seeing this, can they think clearly at all?

February 25, 1982

186. **Don't Look Down on Anyone**

When we encounter poor people, beggars, middle-class people, wealthy people, millionaires — never look down on any of them.

When Yay lived in Nakhon Chai Si, if a beggar came asking for unpolished rice, she gave unpolished rice. If they asked for polished rice, she gave polished rice.

September 10, 1992

187. **Just Right**

Whether it's food or anything else — too much is not good. Too little is not good. It must be just right. Just right is best.

Date not recorded

188. **Being Human Is the Most Extraordinary Thing**

The final teaching in the collection. Khun Yay closes with a celebration of humanity itself — and the marveling observation that we can even make iron float on water.

Humans — we're really something, you know. Nobody is as capable as humans. An entire block of iron — and we can make it float on water.

Being born human is the most extraordinary, the most excellent thing there is. Nobody and nothing is as capable — or as noble — as a human being.

October 1, 1992

A Note from the Translator

The woman whose words fill these pages was born in 1909 and passed away in 2000, at the age of 91. In between, without ever learning to read, she co-founded what would become the largest Buddhist temple in the world. She trained monks who held the highest levels of Pali scholarship. She managed construction projects, ran feeding programs for thousands, and navigated political and social challenges that would have overwhelmed most seasoned executives.

When asked how she accomplished all this, her answer was always the same: meditation. Specifically, the Dhammakaya meditation tradition, which she practiced with a diligence and depth that her own teacher — the renowned Luang Pu Sod Candasaro of Wat Paknam — praised by saying: “My student Chandra — she is one without a second.”

This English adaptation preserves the original Thai compilation’s fourteen-chapter structure while

adding contextual notes designed to help Western readers — particularly those with no Buddhist background — connect the teachings to their own experience. Every effort has been made to maintain Khun Yay’s characteristic voice: direct, warm, practical, and utterly without pretense.

The Thai originals were compiled by Phra Maha Suwit Wichachaysko (Pali Scholar Grade 9), who recorded Khun Yay’s words from memory across decades of close personal contact. The compilation was published in 2002 by the Dhammakaya Foundation in a beautiful Thai-language edition with photographs.

If an illiterate rice farmer’s daughter can access this level of wisdom through meditation, the question isn’t whether the practice works. The question is: what’s stopping you from trying it?

Dr. Yaa Benywarath
Chill & Shine

About Dhammakaya Meditation

The meditation practice that Khun Yay credited with everything she accomplished is called Dhammakaya meditation (Vijja Dhammakaya). It was rediscovered by Phra Mongkol Thepmuni (Luang Pu Sod Candasaro, 1884–1959) at Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen in Bangkok, and has since been taught to millions of practitioners worldwide.

The practice is deceptively simple. The practitioner sits comfortably, closes the eyes, and gently brings awareness to the center of the body — approximately two finger-widths above the navel. A mental object (typically a crystal sphere or a Buddha image) is visualized at this center point, and the mantra “Samma Arahang” is silently repeated.

The key instruction, as Khun Yay emphasized throughout this book, is to let the mind stop. Not to force it, control it, or suppress thoughts — but to let it settle naturally into stillness at the center point.

When the mind genuinely stops, practitioners report experiences of inner light, clarity, and access to deeper dimensions of awareness.

Khun Yay described this practice as “punching dirt with your fist — you hit the target every time.”

Every moment of practice produces merit, regardless of whether dramatic inner experiences occur. The key is consistency and sincerity.

For those interested in learning this practice:

Dhammakaya meditation instruction is available free of charge at Dhammakaya meditation centers worldwide. Group meditation sessions and retreats are offered regularly. Online instruction is also available.

For more information, visit the meditation center nearest you or explore online resources through the Dhammakaya Foundation.

As Khun Yay would say: “Just try it. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain.”