

ABOUT

L.P. KAMKEE-AN

SUVANNO

For most people the monk Kamkee-an is a simple, ordinary monk; there is nothing different about him.

But in social-development-groups he is well known as a humble and gentle cultivator with progressive vision who keeps up with modern society.

A large number of practitioners hold him to be a meditation teacher who is filled to the brim with wisdom and compassion. His conduct is worthy of emulation.

But for the villagers on the 'Poo Kong' mountain range, particularly at Tah Mafy Wahn village, he is known as 'fat *LOO-ANG POR* (venerable father)'.

He is respected as a leader as well as a guardian who sincerely cares for people's happiness and suffering.

Among the villagers, the elders in particular remember how a change took place in their village due to this fat monk.

From being a gambler's den it turned into a place where virtue is upheld and the consumption of alcohol has gone down drastically.

In the old days people would refer to the village as 'the bloody jungle' because so much fighting and killing went on.

But due to *LOO-ANG POR's* influence, teachings and living example, things calmed down and these days those words are long forgotten. The villagers therefore respect *LOO-ANG POR*

as being father and mother to them, having shown them the right way. *LOO-ANG POR* never dreamed that he would get involved with building projects such as making a road or digging a well but he realized that these things also were part of his responsibilities to raise the standard of living in the village a bit.

One thing that roused him to help society was the problem with children. Most kids would be taken along to the fields while their parents worked. There they were exposed to the heat and in some cases got malaria.

LOO-ANG POR established a daycare center at the monastery where he personally looked after the children in its early years. His next project was a rice-cooperative. Tah Mafy Wahn village is up in the mountains and it wasn't easy to go down to the city to buy rice, so in the village it was more expensive. With borrowed money the cooperative was established in 1970 in order to provide the villagers with rice for a reasonable price. At one point *LOO-ANG POR* was accused of being communist and threatened heavily but it failed to frighten him. Even though *LOO-ANG POR* is regarded by many as a social worker-monk, he does not claim to be one himself. Rather, he acts spontaneously, responding appropriately to circumstances as they arise.

Another problem was the forest fires every year set by villagers who wanted to enlarge their fields. *LOO-ANG POR* tried to deal with it by clearing stretches of land in order to prevent the fires from spreading and planting new trees each year, . An important principle of which *LOO-ANG POR* reminds people regularly is to be one's own refuge and not to rely or depend on external matters or people. For *L.P.KAMKEE-AN* meditation is his life and the reason his life has culminated in everything up to now is because practice is the foundation for it.

- condensed from a much longer essay by Ajahn Pysahn,
abbot of Wat Pah *SUGATO* -

Loo-ang por doesn't have his own hut; there are two places where he takes a rest: the outside meditation hall and the 'chicken temple'.

He usually goes to sleep before nine at night and gets up at three A.M. He recommends letting the body have a good rest but not for more than six hours. When one is aware of falling asleep, that is to say to remain aware until one naturally falls asleep, on waking up one finds that the body wakes up by itself and one is immediately and automatically aware.

After waking up Loo-ang por drinks five glasses of rainwater every day, which is a way of preventing illness.

Loo-ang por's health is very good;
it's very rare for him to be sick.

3.30 A.M. is the time to do morning chanting.

Even though it's rather cold in the winter people have to take off their hats out of respect and one shouldn't speak during the chanting and the following *DHAMMA* talk.

Loo-ang por teaches about the method to develop awareness, techniques in dealing with obstacles, about the results of practice, his experiences and so on.

He sums it up thus: 'Nature is the greatest of all the scriptures; it teaches us best because we live with nature 24 hours a day'.

We can learn from simple things like eating, walking, lying down, sitting, cleaning up or relating to other people.

When we are aware we'll see that all things have their own 'art'.

At five, the morning meeting is finished and the monks get ready to go on alms round in the nearby villages.

Everybody else helps out sweeping the paths and cleaning up.

During this time, Loo-ang por exercises by digging the earth, cutting grass or watering the trees, especially in the dry season.

He carries water when the sun is not yet up, to the various places it's needed.

When there are many lay people staying in the monastery Loo-ang por goes on alms round too because he's afraid there may not be enough food brought back to feed everyone. The meal is around seven O'clock. These days some extra food is prepared in the monastery kitchen every day because of the increase in people coming to practice. Loo-ang por eats together with the other monks in the meditation hall.

He eats rather slowly, taking his time to chew and swallow.

Loo-ang por encourages the practitioners to be aware while eating: holding the spoon, raising it to the mouth, opening the mouth, chewing and swallowing.

The kind of food that Loo-ang por likes best is peppers and chilies.

After the meal, Loo-ang por usually goes to check on monastery work projects that are going on, solving any problems that may occur immediately. If there are no projects underway, he'll do something on his own such as woodwork or building maintenance. As for the meditators, they go and develop awareness. If people volunteer to help with the work that's fine but it is not expected.

Loo-ang por usually eats only once a day, but if there is not a whole lot of food in the early morning

he will occasionally have a late morning meal as well.

At midday the weather begins to heat up and for most practitioners it is hard to maintain awareness clearly.

One has to be clever in finding ways to deal with sleepiness and drowsiness. What can help is to change the posture and do some little job, such as cleaning the toilet, carrying water or whatever. Sometimes Loo-ang por will take a nap but not as long as an hour.

Loo-ang por tells us, 'The mind that has been well trained is extremely fit and able to be engaged in activity and work while maintaining awareness'.

Six O'clock is the time to do the evening chanting and so everybody takes a bath before that.

It sometimes happens that there is some complication with the day's work or it is not yet finished. In those cases Loo-ang por will let one of his monk-disciples lead the chanting and give some instructions on practice instead of him.

During the three month period of the rains retreat he trains the monks in leading the chanting, giving the blessing before the meal and speaking on the *DHAMMA* by giving them the opportunity at random.

During this period, Loo-ang por will regularly give teachings in the mornings and evenings.

But outside of the rains retreat he is often not at the monastery because he receives so many invitations to teach etc.

Back in 1983-1984 not many people traveled to the monastery; it wasn't well known then. In those days there were only five or six people there, counting the monks, novices and lay people.

Living together like that was like children with their father.

There was a naturalness, love and warmth just like in a family.

Later on Loo-ang por was invited away more and more often and the number of visitors increased, so the chance to have a nice chat in the way it used to be is getting more and more rare.

But L.P.'s disciples still feel a warmth and love for him because he has given us the foundation of a new refuge, namely, the *DHAMMA* - which is awareness!

When visitors come to practice *DHAMMA*, Loo-ang por welcomes them with his friendly manner and is an example to everyone else. It's an opportunity to give, rather than receive.

- shortened from an article by a nun living at
SUGATO Forest Monastery -

