

Published for free distribution

Buddhism Course

Chan Khoon San

Sabbadanam dhammadanam jinati.
The Gift of Dhamma excels all gifts.

Compiled and published for free distribution by:

Bro. Chan Khoon San,
 91, Leboh Bagor, Taman Petaling,
 41200 Klang, Malaysia
 Email: bro.chan@streamyx.com

ISBN 13: 978-983-41633-1-0

ISBN 10: 983-41633-1-2

© Copyright 2006, Chan Khoon San

All commercial rights reserved. Any reproduction in whole or part, in any form, for sale, profit or material gain is strictly prohibited. The reprinting of this book in its entirety, for free distribution as a gift of *Dhamma*, is allowed after prior notification to the author.

Cover Design by Chan Khoon San

Cover photo shows the huge image of a seated Buddha carved into a high rock face of reddish colour which rises on the hillside to the south-west of Jehanabad near Mingora in the Swat Valley (ancient Uddiyana) of Northern Pakistan. This well-preserved Buddha figure dated 7-8th century AD is 7 metres in height and is certainly the most impressive sculpture that was seen by the author in the Gandhara region during a tour of Northern Pakistan in August 2005.

Printed in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia by:

Majujaya Indah Sdn. Bhd.,
 68, Jalan 14E, Ampang New Village,
 68000 Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia
 Tel: 03-42916001, 42916002, Fax: 03-42922053

Dedication

This book is dedicated to all my spiritual teachers who have helped me in one way or another in my progress towards understanding the *Dhamma*, in particular, the following teachers below:

Chanmyay Yeiktha Meditation Centre, Yangon, Myanmar

- Chanmyay Sayadaw Bhadanta Janakabhivamsa,
- Sayadaw U Sobhita
- Sayadaw U Rewata,
- Sayadaw U Wathawa,
- Sayadaw U Kittidhaja,
- Sayadaw U Rakkhita Dhamma,
- Ven. U Nyanaramsi,
- Ven. Ariya Nani,
- Mr. Khin Maung Win (formerly Sayadaw U Khemissara), and
- Mr. Jeff Oliver (formerly Ven. U Dhammarakkhita)

Chan Myae Myaing Meditation Centre, Yangon, Myanmar

- Sayadaw Ashin Indaka

Vishwa Shanti Vihara, Kathmandu, Nepal

- Venerable Bhikshu Jnanapurnik

Sri Lankan Buddhist Temple, Sentul, Kuala Lumpur

- Venerable Saranankara Mahathera

Ngakyanpyan Dhamma Yeiktha, Yangon, Myanmar

- Sayadaw U Dhammapiya

Santisukharama Meditation Centre, Kota Tinggi, Johore

- Venerable Sujiva

Preface

Over the last few years, several readers have indicated to me that the articles in the Introductory Course in Buddhism were too brief and should be expanded to provide more details. This new book entitled “Buddhism Course” is a carefully researched and upgraded version. It contains 17 chapters dealing with most of the relevant topics on Buddhism, such as: Life of the Buddha, Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Noble Path, Dependent Origin, Law of *Kamma*, Death and Rebirth, Five Destinations, World Cycles when Buddhas Appear, Ten Bases of Meritorious Action, Buddhist *Vipassana* Meditation, Recollection of the Buddha, *Dhamma* and *Sangha* and the Three Baskets (*Tipitaka*) in Buddhism.

In this book, reference material from various has been utilized to provide readers with some new interesting articles on Buddhism. “Death and Rebirth” describes the modes of death and objects presented to the mind before death such as the five visions of a dying person followed by the modes of birth. “Five Destinations (*Pancagati*)” describes in detail the Thirty-one Planes of Existence or planes of rebirth recognized in Buddhist Cosmology. “World Cycles When Buddhas Appear” describes the conditions for the rare appearance of a Buddha as well as the perfections (*parami*) that an aspirant has to practise to achieve the status of *Pacceka* Buddha and *Maha Arahant*. “Recollection of the Buddha, *Dhamma* and *Sangha*” describes in detail the Nine Supreme Virtue of the Buddha, the Six Virtues of the *Dhamma* and the Nine Virtues of the *Sangha*, respectively. Understanding of the virtues of the Triple Gem is a condition for success in the practice of the meditation of Mindfulness of the Buddha, *Dhamma* and *Sangha*.

“Three Baskets (*Tipitaka*) in Buddhism” is the longest article containing 50 pages chronicling the history of how the Pali Canon was preserved over the last 2500 years of its existence through the Buddhist Councils, starting from the Council of Rajagaha three months after *Parinibbana* to the Sixth Council in Yangon 2500 years later in 1956. Although a bit lengthy, the author decided to publish it

in this book to enable the reader to know, understand and appreciate the crucial role of the *Sangha* in the preservation, propagation and perpetuation of the Buddha *Sasana*.

Many articles have been expanded with detailed explanatory notes added, notably in Chapter I – Life of the Buddha, Chapter IV – Dependent Origination and Chapter XII – “Transference of Merits to Departed Relatives”.

The compilation of this book was a labour of love and a source of joy. It is hoped that readers will find pleasure in reading the articles and benefit from them.

Acknowledgements & Sharing of Merits

I am grateful to Sis Wooi Kheng Choo and Sis Christine Lee Chin Har of Subang Jaya Buddhist Association for proof-reading the manuscript and making many useful suggestions for improvement. The assistance of Mr. Tey Seng Heng, my former colleague at Applied Agricultural Research Sdn. Bhd. in the computer work is gratefully acknowledged. Finally, I wish to thank the various individuals and societies for their support in the publication of this book so that it can be used as a Buddhism Course that will lead to better understanding of Buddhist history and doctrine.

May the merits of this *Dhammadana* be shared with relatives, friends and all beings. *Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!*

Bro. Chan Khoon San, June 2006

About the Author

Bro. Chan Khoon San was born on 8 August 1941 in Penang where he received his early education. After completing sixth form in 1960, he joined the Malayan Teachers College at Brinsford Lodge, UK where he underwent two years teacher training. On completion of the course, he taught briefly from 1964 to 1967. In 1968, he entered the University of Malaya and graduated with a B.Sc. (Hons) degree in Chemistry in 1971. From 1971 till his retirement in 1996, he worked as a Research Chemist in a large plantation company. He is married with two grown-up daughters.

After retiring in 1996, Bro. Chan went to Myanmar to pursue the intensive practice of *Satipatthana Vipassana* meditation under the guidance of **Chanmyay Sayadaw Bhadanta Janakabhivamsa** at Chanmyay Yeiktha Meditation Centre in Yangon. In 1998, he went for his second retreat at the countryside centre in Hmawbi, where he practised under the guidance of **Venerable Sayadaw U Indaka**. Since then, he has gone for regular annual retreats at Hmawbi practising under **Venerable U Nyanaramsi** and other instructors, during the cold season from December to February. For the rest of the year, he teaches Buddhism at various Buddhist societies in the Klang Valley. Since 1997, he has organized several Buddhist pilgrimages to India and has also written a book entitled '**Buddhist Pilgrimage**' describing the holy shrines of Buddhism in India today.

Contents

	Page
About the Publisher, ISBN and Cover Design	2
Dedication	3
Preface, Acknowledgements & Sharing of Merits	4
About the Author	6
I. LIFE OF THE BUDDHA	14
1. The Birth	15
2. The Prediction	16
3. The Ploughing Festival	18
4. Prince Siddhatta's Youth	18
5. The Four Signs and the Great Renunciation	20
6. The Search and Struggle for Enlightenment	22
7. The Enlightenment and the Seven Weeks After	23
8. The Buddha Propounds the <i>Dhamma</i> (Teaching)	25
9. Conversion of Sariputta and Moggallana	27
10. The Buddha Visits His Birthplace	28
11. The Buddha's Ministry	29
12. The <i>Parinibbana</i> and Final Admonition to the Monks	30
13. References	32
14. Explanatory Notes	32
II. FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS	36
1. What are the Four Noble Truths?	37
2. Why are they called Noble Truths?	37
3. Noble Truth of Suffering	38
4. Suffering because of the 5 Aggregates of Clinging	43
5. Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering	45
6. <i>Kama-Tanha</i> or Sensual Craving	46
7. <i>Bhava-Tanha</i> or Craving for Eternal Existence	47
8. <i>Vibhava-Tanha</i> or Craving for Non-Existence	48
9. Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering	49
10. References	51
11. Explanatory Notes	51

III. NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH	52
1. Noble Truth of the Path leading to Cessation of Suffering	53
2. Right View (<i>Samma-ditthi</i>)	53
3. Right Thought (<i>Samma-sankappa</i>)	55
4. Right Speech (<i>Samma-vaca</i>)	55
5. Right Action (<i>Samma-kammanta</i>)	56
6. Right Livelihood (<i>Samma-ajiva</i>)	56
7. Right Effort (<i>Samma-vayama</i>)	57
8. Right Mindfulness (<i>Samma-sati</i>)	58
9. Right Concentration (<i>Samma-samadhi</i>)	60
10. References	60
11. Explanatory Notes	61
IV. DEPENDENT ORIGATION	
(PATICCA SAMUPPADA)	63
1. What is the Law of Dependent Origination?	64
2. How does the Law of Dependent Origination work?	64
3. Question of the First Cause	65
4. Dependent Origination is different from direct causation	65
5. Dependent Origination to explain the Origin of Suffering	66
6. Reverse Order of Dependent Origination to explain the Cessation of Suffering	72
7. References	72
8. Explanatory Notes	73
V. LAW OF KAMMA	74
1. The Five Universal Laws	75
2. The Importance of Understanding the Law of <i>Kamma</i>	75
3. What is <i>Kamma</i> ?	77
4. How does the Law of <i>Kamma</i> Operate?	77
5. What is the Cause of <i>Kamma</i> ?	78
6. Who is the Doer of <i>Kamma</i> ? Who Reaps the <i>Vipaka</i> ?	79
7. Where is all the <i>Kamma</i> ?	80
8. Classification of <i>Kamma</i>	80
9. Is One Bound to Reap All that One Has Sown in Just Proportion?	82
10. Lessons Learnt from <i>Kamma</i>	84
11. References	85
12. Explanatory Notes	85

VI. DEATH AND REBIRTH	87
1. Difference between Rebirth and Reincarnation	88
2. How does Rebirth Take Place?	88
3. The Re-linking or Rebirth Consciousness	89
4. Modes of Death	90
5. Objects presented to the Mind before Death	91
6. Five Visions of a Dying Person	92
7. The Dying Consciousness	92
8. Modes of Birth	93
9. Four Planes of Existence	94
10. References	95
VII. FIVE DESTINATIONS (<i>PANCAGATI</i>)	96
1. Hell (<i>Niraya</i>)	97
2. Animal Realm (<i>Tiracchana</i>)	100
3. Ghost Realm (<i>Peta</i>)	100
4. Human Realm (<i>Manussa</i>)	102
5. World of Gods (<i>Devas and Brahmas</i>)	104
6. Lifespan of Hell Beings and <i>Petas</i>	107
7. Lifespan of Celestial <i>Devas</i>	107
8. Lifespan of <i>Brahmas</i>	108
9. References	109
10. Explanatory Notes	110
VIII. WORLD CYCLES WHEN BUDDHAS APPEAR	111
1. Buddhist Timescale	112
2. Great Aeon or World Cycle (<i>Maha-kappa</i>)	112
3. Incalculable Aeon or Epoch (<i>Asankheyya-kappa</i>)	113
4. Included Aeon or Era (<i>Antara-kappa</i>)	115
5. Human Lifespan (<i>Ayu-kappa</i>)	116
6. World Cycles When Buddhas Appear (<i>Buddha Kappa</i>)	116
7. Twenty-Four Buddhas Preceding Lord Gotama Buddha	117
8. Eight Qualifications of a Future Buddha (<i>Bodhisatta</i>)	118
9. Length of Time to Cultivate the Perfections (<i>Paramis</i>)	119
10. Reasons for the Differences in Time to Fulfill <i>Paramis</i>	121
11. Rare is the Appearance of a Buddha	122
12. Eight Unfortunate Existences in <i>Samsara</i> (Cycle of Births)	124
13. The Fulfillment of the Perfections by <i>Pacceka</i> Buddhas, Chief Disciples and Great Disciples	125

14. The Pre-eminent Disciples of the Buddha	128
15. References	129
16. Explanatory Notes	130

IX. TAKING OF REFUGE	132
1. Meaning of Refuge	133
2. Origin of Taking of Refuge	134
3. Act of Taking Refuge	134
4. Why We Need to Take Refuge	135
5. The Three Refuges	138
6. Factors that Enhance the Taking of Refuge	140
7. Corruptions and Breach of Refuge	141
8. Benefits of Taking Refuge	142
9. References	143

X. FIVE PRECEPTS (<i>PANCASILA</i>)	144
1. Five Vices and Five Virtues	145
2. Self Responsibility in Moral Training	146
3. Precepts are Indispensable in Moral Training	147
4. <i>Dhamma</i> Way to Compare Oneself with Another	148
5. First Precept: Abstention from Killing Living Beings	149
6. Second Precept: Abstention from Taking What is Not Given	152
7. Third Precept: Abstention from Sexual Misconduct	154
8. Fourth Precept: Abstention from False Speech	156
9. Fifth Precept: Abstention from Partaking of Intoxicants	157
10. Benefits of 'Moderate Drinking': Fact or Fallacy?	158
11. Factors that Enhance the Keeping of Precepts	160
12. Consequences of Breaking and Keeping the Five Precepts	162
13. References	163

XI. TEN BASES OF MERITORIOUS ACTION	
(<i>DASA PUNNA-KIRIYA VATTHU</i>)	164
1. Unwholesome and Wholesome Roots (<i>Akusala Kusala Hetu</i>)	165
2. Meritorious Action (<i>Punna-kiriya</i>)	165
3. Ten Bases of Meritorious Action (<i>Dasa Punna-kiriya Vatthu</i>)	166
4. Types of Wholesome <i>Kamma</i>	167
5. Classification of Individuals (<i>Puggala-bheda</i>)	169
6. References	170

XII. TEN BASES OF MERITORIOUS ACTION

PART ONE: THE *DANA* GROUP

	171
1. Giving (<i>Dana</i>)	172
2. Factors that Strengthen the Beneficial Results of <i>Dana</i>	172
3. Volition of the Donor	173
4. Purity of the Recipient	175
5. Offering to the Order (<i>Sanghika Dana</i>)	177
6. Types of Gifts	178
7. Giving of Money for New Work (<i>Nava Kamma</i>)	180
8. Gifts to Avoid	181
9. Advantages of <i>Dana</i>	181
10. Sharing or Transference of Merits (<i>Patti-dana</i>)	183
11. Transference of Merits to Departed Relatives	185
12. For Whom Are the Food Offerings in Pattidana Intended	185
13. Can <i>Petas</i> partake of food and drink offered to them?	188
14. What Type of Beings Can Receive the Merits?	189
15. Chinese custom of burning paper money and paper models of clothes, houses, etc., as offerings to the Departed	193
16. Rejoicing in Others' Merits (<i>Pattanumodana</i>)	194
17. References	194

XIII. TEN BASES OF MERITORIOUS ACTION

PART TWO: THE *SILA* GROUP

	195
1. Definition of Morality (<i>Sila</i>)	196
2. Characteristic, Function, Manifestation and Proximate Cause of Morality	198
3. Morality for the Lay Disciple	199
4. Five Precepts and Precepts of the Noble Eightfold Path	199
5. Eight Precepts	200
6. Ten Precepts	202
7. Grades and Types of Morality	202
8. Benefits of Morality	203
9. Reverence (<i>Apacayana</i>)	204
10. Humble or Dutiful Service (<i>Veyyavacca</i>)	207
11. References	208

XIV. TEN BASES OF MERITORIOUS ACTION	
PART THREE: THE <i>BHAVANA</i> GROUP	209
1. The Miracle of the Power of the Doctrine (<i>Dhamma</i>)	210
2. Teaching the Doctrine (<i>Dhamma-desana</i>)	210
3. Teaching of the Doctrine by Lay Disciples and Benefits	212
4. Listening to the Doctrine (<i>Dhamma-savana</i>)	213
5. Proper Way of Listening to a Sermon and the Benefits	215
6. Straightening One's Views (<i>Ditthijukamma</i>)	216
7. Types of Wrong Views	216
8. Advantages of Straightening One's Views	218
9. References	218
XV. BUDDHIST <i>VIPASSANA</i> MEDITATION	220
1. Types of Mental Development or Meditation (<i>Bhavana</i>)	221
2. Objects of Meditation in <i>Samatha</i> Meditation	222
3. Purpose of <i>Vipassana</i> or Insight Meditation	223
4. Role of Mindfulness in <i>Vipassana</i> Meditation	223
5. Four Foundations of Mindfulness (<i>Satipatthana</i>)	225
6. Practical <i>Vipassana</i> Meditation	226
7. Benefits of <i>Vipassana</i> Meditation	229
8. References	231
9. Explanatory Notes	231
XVI RECOLLECTION OF THE BUDDHA, <i>DHAMMA</i> AND <i>SANGHA</i>	232
1. Recollection of the Buddha (<i>Buddhanussati</i>)	233
2. Recollection of the <i>Dhamma</i> (<i>Dhammanussati</i>)	247
3. Recollection of the <i>Sangha</i> (<i>Sanghanussati</i>)	254
4. References	260
XVII THREE BASKETS (TIPITAKA) IN BUDDHISM	261
1. What is the <i>Tipitaka</i> ?	262
2. Language of the Buddha	265
3. What is Pali?	268
4. The First Council	271
5. The Second Council	277
6. The Great Schism	280
7. Origin of the Eighteen <i>Nikayas</i> (Schools of Buddhism)	285
8. The Third Council	287

9. Committing the <i>Tipitaka</i> to Memory	290
10. Fourth Council: Committing the <i>Tipitaka</i> to Writing	292
11. Fifth and Sixth Councils in Myanmar	295
12. Conclusion	297
13. Appendix: Contents of the <i>Tipitaka</i> or Three Baskets	298
14. Explanatory Notes	300
15. References	309

**ADDENDUM TO CHAPTER XVI: Supramundane Dhamma is
Akaliko (Immediately Effective)** 311

1. Question: Is it Possible for One to Attain <i>Magga</i> (Path) and Not Experience <i>Phala</i> (Fruition) Immediately?	311
2. The Seven Kinds of Noble Persons	311
3. Fruition Arises Immediately After Attainment of Path	313