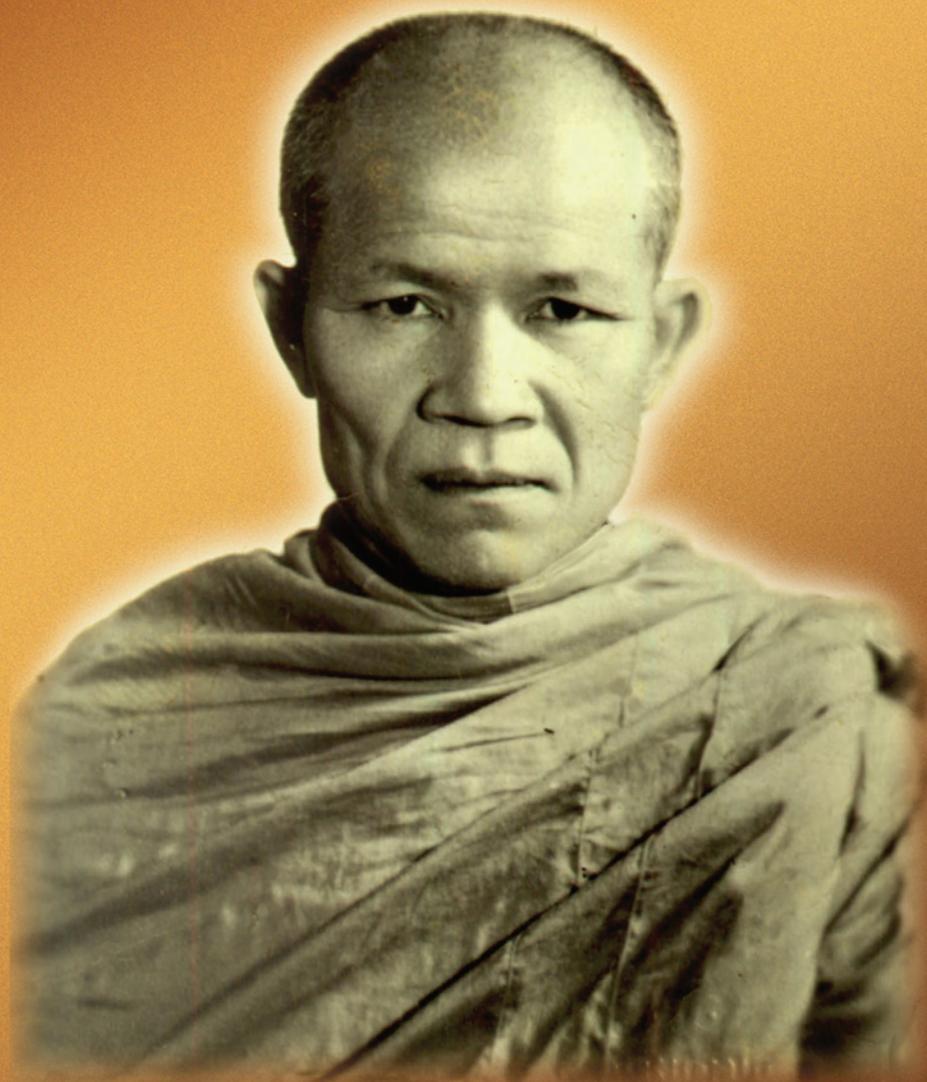


A short Biography of



**the Venerable Ajahn
Mahā Bua Ñāṇasampanno**

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of the Venerable Ajahn
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Forest Dhamma Books of Wat Pa Baan Taad

*this booklet is a gift of dhamma
and printed for free distribution only!*

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and edited by
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Family Background

Luangta was born into a farmer's family with the last name "Lohitdee" in the village of Baan Taad, city district of Udon Thani, Udon Thani Province on Tuesday 12th August 1913. This date falls on the 11th night of the waxing moon 9th month, the year of the Ox. His father's name is "Mr Thongdee", his mother's name is "Mrs Phaeng". His parents gave him the auspicious name "Bua" (which means lotusflower).

Childhood

When his mother was pregnant, she mentioned to the family and relatives that "naturally when a baby in the womb grows, it will move around and the mother will be able to feel this. However, the nature of this child differs from others for it stays still, very quiet as if there is no life. His mother often thought and worried why is the baby not moving, why is it so unusually quiet, can it be that the baby is already dead?". However when the baby did move, it also moved around more than other babies, it really thrashed around inside her, and his mother felt very intense pain in her stomach. When the birth drew near, his mother felt the birth pangs for 3 days but there was no sign of birth. While in such a great pain for so long, she thought she was going to die, but then suddenly the baby inside her again became so quiet that again she thought that the baby had already died again. Then the baby started wiggling again..."

His grandfather predicted the character of the baby in the womb like this, "If it is a boy, whatever he desires, he will be very firm about it, with great determination and seriousness about everything he does. He will not be ambivalent or half-hearted". When the baby was finally born, the placenta was thrown over his shoulder. When grandfather saw that, he said "alms-bowl strap" and predicted three things:



Father and Mother of Luangta Mahā Bua



Luangta Mahā Bua shortly after Ordination

1. Alms-bowl strap: “If he becomes a philosopher, he will shake the earth.
2. Robust strap: “If he becomes a hunter, his shooting skills will shake the forests”.
3. Chain strap: “If he becomes a thief, there will be no prison that is able to lock him up.

Education

Luangta was an intelligent child, diligent, patient and very responsible. This is reflected in his excellent school grades. He was ranked second in Primary 1, and when he was in Primary 2 and 3 he was ranked first in both. When he finished Primary 3 which was the highest compulsory education level at that time, he did not continue education at any level.

Character

Luangta’s character was honest and determined. Whatever he did, he did with great determination and sincerity. When he worked, he did not want people to see or know. Even though he had been ordained as a monk, when he was practicing, he did not want anybody to see him. So when he was doing walking meditation he hid in the forest. At night, he would wait for everybody to go back to the monk’s dwellings, before he started doing his walking meditation. His outstanding trait was his immense determination and patience. This could be inferred from his working style, as he would continue working until his work was completely done. If it was not too dark, or it was lunch time, he would not quit his work until his siblings complained to his parents saying, “If you do not go and work as well, our older brother will not stop working, and he does not let us stop working, as if we his siblings should have to work until we die”.



Luangta Mahā Bua's ordination photo

Reason for Ordination

Among all his children, his father wasn't interested in any of them except Luangta. Luangta was the only one he really could depend on. His father praised Luangta, saying that whatever Luangta did he could trust and depend on him. That even he himself could not achieve the level of skills of Luangta.

When Luangta was old enough to ordain as a monk, his father raised the subject of becoming a monk while having dinner. "I have many sons, but none even thinks about ordination for the well being of their Father. I really want to see one of you in the yellow robes before I pass away, because then I can pass away peacefully and without any worries. But when his father asked Luangta to ordain, he stayed quiet and did not reply, as if he did not have any ears, or a mouth with which to speak. His father said that if he passed away, there would be no one able to lift him out of hell. That if he could not depend on Luangta, there was no hope, for of all his sons, he could only depend on Luangta.

"After his father said this, he instantly broke out in tears. When his mother saw her husband crying she also started to cry. When Luangta saw this, he felt terrible and could not stand it. He instantly left the dinner table and fled into his room. This was the reason for him to become ordained.

Entering the Monkhood

Luangta ordained as a monk at the Monastery of Yothanimit in the village of Nong Khon Kwang, sub district Nongbua, city district of Udon Thani, in the Province of Udon Thani. He ordained on tuesday the 12th of may 1934, which falls on the 9th night of the waxing Moon, in the 7th month of the 'year of the dog'. His preceptor was the Venerable Chaokhun Phratham Dhammachedi (Jum Phanthulo), the Abbot of the monastery Bodhisomphorn, city district of Udon Thani, in the Province of Udon Thani. He received

as his ordination name the name “Ñāṇasampanno” which means “accomplished with insight”

As his personal character was determined and sincere, he thought to himself, “that after being ordained, I will be ordained fully and stay within the Dhamma Principle and the Discipline so that no one will be able to criticize me. I will be earnest and serious until the day I leave the monkhood which is probably in about two years time. I will fulfil my duty as a monk as best as I can and if that includes study, then I will also do my best to accomplish this”.

***Despite Studying Buddhism,
he did not neglect to practice meditation.***

Luangta asked his venerable Teacher, about the practice of meditation. “Dear teacher, I would like to practice, can you tell me how I can do this?” His venerable Teacher replied, “Hmm, well just practice using the *parikamma*¹ of *buddho*, by mentally repeating the word “*buddho*”; I do the same sort of practice”. So Luangta practiced relentlessly. In the beginning, his mind would not calm down much. However, after practicing often with determination, his mind gradually started to calm down until one day he saw the wonder of the *Citta*.

“Whatever Dhamma I studied, I studied it continuously, ever since the book “*Nawagowaat*”, which was part of my basic education background, caught my attention. After I had read the Buddha’s biography, I felt depressed, because I pitied our Lord Buddha when he faced hardship. He seems to torture himself in his search for Enlightenment until my tears were running continuously. When I had finished reading, I was so inspired by the Lord Buddha’s perseverance. He was a Prince who abandoned a kingdom to become a wandering holy man, a so-called beggar. At that time, there didn’t exist any religion in the sense that; *if you are giving in charity you will receive this kind of merit, or that maintaining the precepts will*

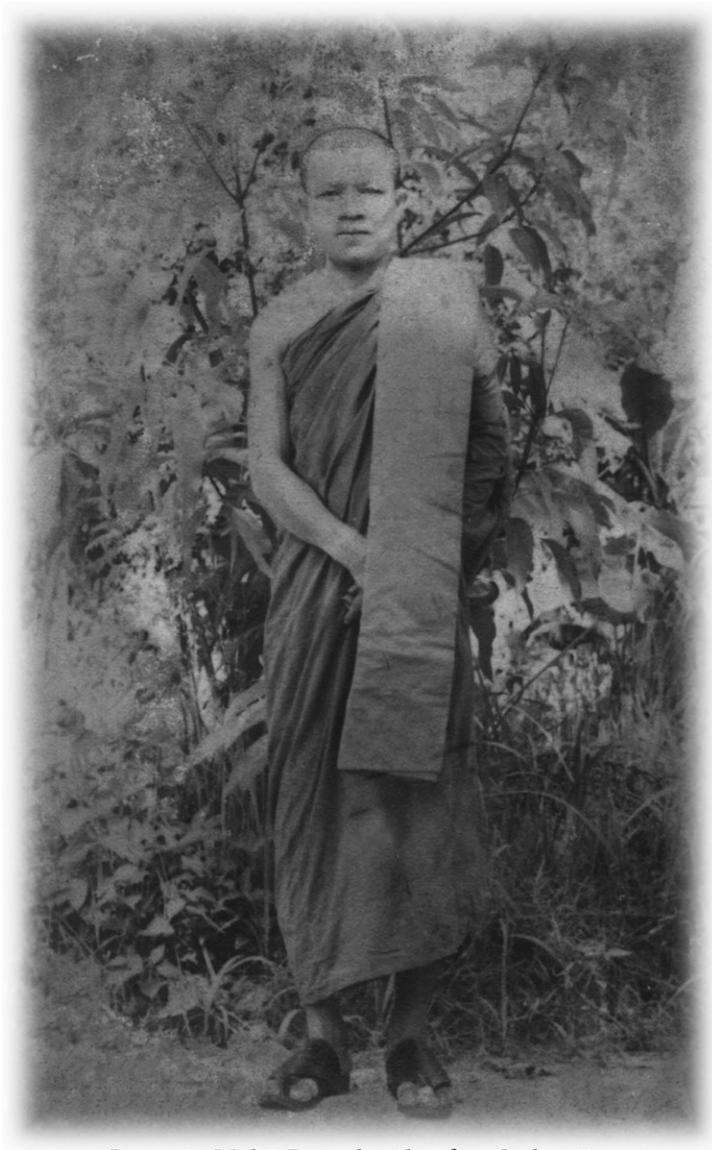
¹ Parikamma is the meditation object, the object the mind focuses on.

yield that kind of merit. This did not exist at that time. The Prince, now impoverished, had to beg to sustain his life. For six years he trained his mind and body through his own abilities in every sort of way until he became enlightened to become the Lord Buddha”.

While Luangta was reading the Lord Buddha’s biography, and the story of his Enlightenment, he felt so amazed and wonderful that he broke out in tears again. At the same time, when Luangta also read the biographies of the many Buddhist Arahants at the time of the Lord Buddha, who were from different family background, e.g. from royalty, rich families, merchants, ordinary people, poor people, and so on, and he thought to himself ... “after any of these monks from any kind of family background had listened to the Buddha’s Teachings, they went into the forests to practice seriously. Then one by one they succeeded in becoming an Arahant; at that forest, this mountain, that cave, or that place. All of these were really quiet places. Faith arose in me, and my mind started to ponder about these things, and slowly outside worldly matters faded from my thoughts...”

“...at first, I thought that I would like to go to heaven, to the *Brahmā* worlds. But the more I read the biographies of the *Sāvaka* (The Buddha’s enlightened disciples), the more I did not want to go to these places anymore, instead I wanted to attain *nibbāna*. In the end, I desired only to attain *nibbāna*. I only wanted to become a Buddhist Arahant. That was my only intention. Now my mind fixed only on this one option. My original intention to become a monk for only two years, and then to leave the monk-hood, disappeared slowly but continuously. Instead, I became more and more pleased with being a monk. I got deeper and deeper into the Dhamma and this also changed my mind...”

As a result, he later left the village of Baan Taad to study in different places. He vowed to himself that, “When I have graduated from the Buddha’s Teaching level 3, as soon as I have finished the third grade of Pāli Studies; I will practice only, without any excuse or



Luangta Mahā Bua shortly after Ordination

condition, because I want to be free from *dukkha*, I want to become an Arahant.”

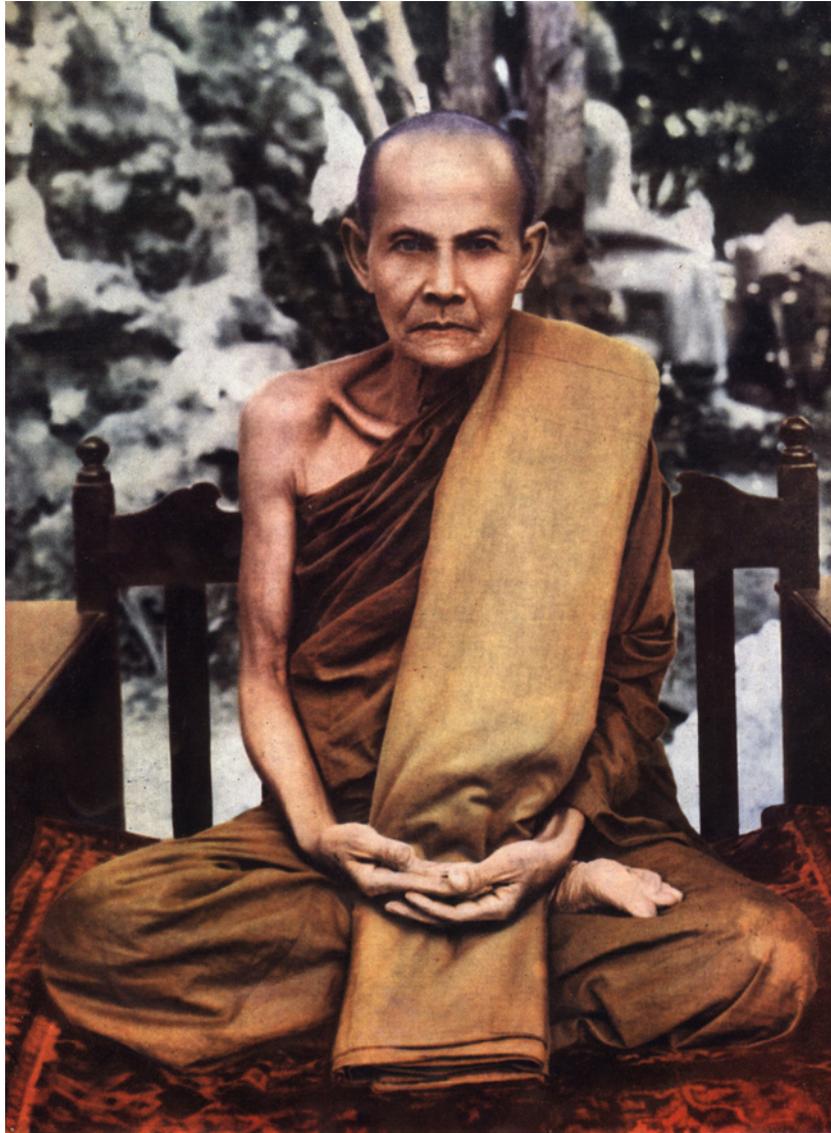
Nevertheless, he had doubt. “Is the attainment of *nibbāna* still possible in this day and time, just like in the time of the Lord Buddha?” He kept this doubt buried deep in his heart, for he could not express this to anyone else. This is the reason why he wanted to meet Than Ajahn Mun Bhūridatto. He had heard of his fame for a long time and felt in his heart that Than Ajahn Mun Bhuridatto would be able to resolve his doubt.

In 1941, Luangta graduated from the School of Dhamma in the monastery of Chedi Luang with both certificates of Mahā Parian III (3rd grade of Pāli Language Studies; there are 9 grades) and Nak Dhamma Ek (highest grade in Dhamma Studies) in his 7th year as a monk. He said that:

“While studying the Buddha-Dhamma for 7 years, I could not practice wholeheartedly. I could only be peaceful for short periods of time. Only three times in these years was I able to go deep into meditation, diving right deep down into that fully miraculous moment when I got completely absorbed, when all sense objects just disappeared. At this time, the body completely disappeared and the only thing left was “knowingness²”.

After his graduation, Luangta thought about the oath he took earlier, so he traveled to Bangkok to bid goodbye to the senior monk, his teacher. Because his teacher has been invited to a rural province, he then went to pay his respects to the Supreme Patriarch (Somdet) Phra Mahā Viravong (Tisso Uan), who at that time was the Abbot of the monastery of Baromnivat, and asked for permission to leave. The Supreme Patriarch Mahā Viravong then gladly gave Luangta the permission to leave.

2 This state of meditation is also known as *appana samadhi*, deep state of *samadhi*, or one-pointedness.



The Venerable Lungphu Mun Bhuridatto

Practicing seriously and putting his life at stake for Dhamma

Luangta traveled to Nakhon Ratchasima Province, and carried only the book of Patimokkha; the monastic discipline (the 227 Rules for the monk) in his shoulder bag. He stayed for the rains retreat at a monastery in the Chakkarat District. He practiced diligently day and night, from his arrival and throughout the rains retreat. This was now the eighth year of his monkhood.

“This time I will practice earnestly and to full measure so as to obtain good result, no matter if I will remain alive or die. I don’t hope for any other thing except to be free from *dukkha*. In this very life I will make sure to transcend *dukkha*! I only ask that somebody will help me to understand that *magga*, *phala*, and *nibbāna* really exist and are attainable. Then I will give my whole life to that person and will devote my body and mind to the essence of Dhamma. I will not ask for anything else than to put everything into my practice, no matter if I am going to die. If I die I want to die practicing the Dhamma, I don’t want to die while retreating from my practice, or die with a deteriorated mind or a broken spirit”.

Luangta traveled from Nakhon Ratchasima Province and headed towards Udon Thani Province. He intended to stay the rains retreat with Than Ajahn Mun at Wat Pa Nonniwet. However, Luangta could not catch up with him, for Than Ajahn Mun had been invited to go to Sakon Nakhorn Province. So Luangta went to stay at the monastery of Thungsawang in Nongkhai Province. There was a monk from the monastery of Baan Khoknamon that told him; “Than Ajahn Mun is very fierce, he is not only fierce when admonishing us, but if necessary he will kick us out as well.”

After Luangta heard this, he felt a conviction in his heart about the determination of Than Ajahn Mun and thought to himself: “This monk will become my Teaching Master. I must go and see for myself about how much he admonishes. It is impossible that such a famous

Teaching Master, who is well-known all over Thailand for such a long time, scolds us and kicks us out without any reason...”

Meeting with Than Ajahn Mun

Luangta stayed at the monastery of Thungsawang for 3 months. In May 1942, his 9th year of being a monk, he traveled out of Nongkhai to Sakon Nakhorn and headed towards Than Ajahn Mun, who was staying at the Baan Khok, municipality Tongkhob, city district of Sakon Nakorn, Sakon Nakorn Province.

Luangta asked for directions to the monastery from the villagers, and walked along the path until he arrived there at dusk. When he saw a pavilion, he became suspicious: “If this is a *sālā* (meeting hall), then this is too small; but if it is a monk’s dwelling, then this is too big.” Than Ajahn Mun was doing walking meditation at the



The *Sālā* at Wat Pa Baan Nong Pheu

side of the *sālā*. Luangta walked up to meet Than Ajahn Mun on the meditation path. Than Ajahn Mun then asked “Who’s that?” Luangta replied: “Phom khrap” (It’s me.). Than Ajahn Mun scowled and replied immediately with wit; “Even a bald headed person has phom (hair), not to say a person with hair is not bald (phom in Thai means either hair or I)”. When Luangta heard that, he knew he had made a mistake and therefore replied immediately, “My name is Mahā Bua”. Than Ajahn Mun replied: “Yes, just introduce yourself properly like that, so that people understand. When you only mentioned “phom” (I), everyone has phom (hair) on their head.”

Now Luangta had the opportunity to explain to Than Ajahn Mun about his background, where he was coming from, and where he had stayed. He then asked for permission to stay with him, and submit himself to become Than Ajahn Mun’s disciple. Once finished he still felt troubled within his heart, and said, “I really don’t want to hear that this place is full and cannot accept any more. I am not able to accept this, I’m afraid my heart will break”. After a moment, Than Ajahn Mun said that, “You’re lucky, for Than Net just left here yesterday, and you just came today, otherwise you would not have been able to stay as there would be no *kuti*³ available.” Than Ajahn Mun said this in a normal voice. Even though out of his kindness, he had accepted Luangta to stay; Luangta could not help but feel startled, and scared that he might not have been accepted to stay.

No more suspicions about magga, phala, and nibbāna

Than Ajahn Mun, as if he could read Luangta’s thought, directly answered Luangta’s question on the first night by saying; “You have come here to look for *magga*, *phala*, and *nibbāna*. Where is *magga*, *phala*, and *nibbāna*? Earth is earth, water is water, air is air, fire is fire, weather is weather, and the elements they are made of exist in

³ Monks dwelling, or a hut for monks to live.

themselves. These things are not *magga*, *phala*, and *nibbāna*; and they are not the *kilesas*.”

“The real *kilesas*, and the real *magga*, *phala*, and *nibbāna* exist in your heart. You should fix your *citta* with *sati* at the heart and then you will see the movement of Dhamma and the *kilesas* in your heart. At the same time, you will also see *magga*, *phala*, and *nibbāna* respectively”.

From the bottom of his true heart, Than Ajahn Mun explained to him about *magga*, *phala*, and *nibbāna*. Luangta then felt confident and really trusted that *magga*, *phala*, and *nibbāna* are still attainable. His former suspicion on this matter, which gnawed at his heart, now totally disappeared.



Luangta's Kuti at Wat Pa Baan Nong Pheu

Discontent because of deterioration of his citta

Luangta's *samādhi* began to deteriorate because he fixed his klod⁴.

...”It was a condition where the *citta* could not focus properly into *samādhi*, like I had been able to do before. Sometimes I could concentrate enough to make the *citta* calm, sometimes not. My practice deteriorated in a way that I thought I was going to really die, for the *dukkha* was heavy. The reason I experienced heavy *dukkha* was, that I had tasted the great value of deep *samādhi* before. But now, because my meditation had deteriorated I felt as if nothing was left, and as if my heart was on fire day and night, standing or walking, sitting or sleeping. This was very extreme *dukkha*, because I really wanted to restore that kind of deep *samādhi* again. This was really extreme *dukkha*...”

However, Luangta had the resoluteness and determination to fight the *kilesas*. He always said that, “If the *kilesas* do not die, I will die. We cannot stay in the same place, the *kilesas* and I! This is unacceptable.” When his *citta* deteriorated, he had received advice from Than Ajahn Mun who said, “Let go of the thought about deterioration, just think *buddho* continuously and non-stop. After using your *parikamma buddho*, repeatedly and without lapse, the concentration will rush back on its own. Even if it comes back now, don't let go of the *buddho*, for if the *kilesas* have no sense food to eat, the concentration will come back to us.”

The 9th year of his monkhood is the first year that Luangta stayed during the rains retreat with Than Ajahn Mun at Ban Khok, Sakon Nakhorn Province. He promised himself that: “I must use the meditation word “*buddho*” to control my *citta* all the time, regardless whether I practice *samādhi* or not, or wherever I am. Even though I am sweeping the monastery grounds or do other daily activities, I will

4 A klod is a large umbrella to give shelter from the sun, to protect against rain. In the evening it serves as a tent by hanging the mosquito net over the umbrella. It gives enough space to sit comfortable.

not let my *sati* slip away from ‘*buddho*’” Because of Luangta’s determination, his *citta* attained *samādhi* again and did not deteriorate!

Practicing diligently and meditating through the night

The 10th year of his monkhood Luangta spent at the village of Namon, Sakon Nakhorn Province. This is the second year that Luangta stayed with Than Ajahn Mun. With respect to his mind and body, he practiced more diligently than before, and with all his might. He did not sleep at all during daytime, except for the days he sat meditating through the night (6 pm until 6 am). Then he would take a rest during the day. Otherwise when he practiced normally he would not rest at all during the day. On the nights that he meditated through the night, he would not change his sitting position nor move his legs. The painful torture that he experienced because of this, he explained as follows:

“...as if my whole buttock was swollen up, my bones felt like they were broken into pieces, also every joint and even my wrist felt like it was broken apart. Feelings of *dukkha* and very painful feelings, when they occurred, were everywhere, in each bit and piece within the body.”

His diligence in meditation through the night for nine or ten nights like this caused his buttock to swell up resulting in the skin being bruised, and finally bursting and staining his robe. But because of this sitting through the night, and sitting through painful feelings, he did experience the wonder of the *citta*. Therefore because he was able to investigate thoroughly painful feelings until he saw the truth of the body, feeling and the *citta* become evident in his heart, he was able to experience the wonder of Dhamma. Luangta said about this Dhamma: Each body feeling and the *citta* have a separate identity⁵.

⁵ Annotation: The insight that the *citta* and the body are of different identities is a necessary insight to reach the stage of Sotāpanna (stream enterer) Though

When he talked about this time of sitting through the night, he said, no matter what, I will not leave my sitting place until I reach the stage of *appanā samādhi*. He mentioned as well, sometimes fighting the *kilesas* lasted for eleven hours, before he could drop into *appanā samādhi*, sometimes, if he could concentrate well, it took only a few hours before he dropped into *appanā samādhi*. And the longer it took him to reach *appanā samādhi*, the more sore his body was the next morning.

Addiction to Samādhi for Five Years

During this period, his meditation was very solid and stable. He could sit in *samādhi* for as many hours as he liked, and he experienced a high intensity of happiness. He did not want to leave *samādhi* and be disturbed with anything whatsoever. He was satisfied to be able to firmly concentrate to reach one-pointedness, in other words just ‘knowingness’. Finally, he thought that this outstanding knowingness was nothing other than *nibbāna*. He got addicted to this kind of happiness arising from *samādhi* for five full years. Finally Than Ajahn Mun had to use a trick to lure him out, by saying “Would you like to lie down and die like this? Do you know that the happiness in *samādhi* is like meat that gets stuck between your teeth? Do you know the *samādhi* of the Lord Buddha? *Samādhi* must know it is *samādhi* and investigation must know it is investigation. You just take *samādhi* and think this is *nibbāna*. You are really crazy about *samādhi*. *Samādhi*, that looks like you are lying there dead, do you think that is right *samādhi*?”

5.. Luangta never mentioned it, it is obvious, that he was able to attain to the stage of Sotāpanna within that period. It is also clear, that within this period he also transcended *dukkha vedanda* (painful feelings) through his thorough investigation of *vedanā*. His experience of this investigation of feelings, made him later write his first book entitled: “wisdom develops *samādhi*”.

Enjoying Investigation

Because of the fierce and severe Dhamma scolding of Than Ajahn Mun that hit Luangta, he came out of *samādhi*. Once out, he learned to practice investigation very quickly. His mind turned around day and night and he did not sleep. And he even criticized his *samādhi*, “you just sleep like being dead and don’t get anything from it!” Actually, *samādhi* when it is done properly is the way to rest the *citta* during investigation. It is like a whetstone that sharpens the knife of wisdom. Because Luangta did not rest his mind when he started investigation, Than Ajahn Mun reprimanded him again; and said “Now you are crazy with thoughts and you fall for them! You do too much thinking, falling from one extreme into the other. Then of course your thoughts will turn into worldly things. If you would use your thoughts of investigation appropriately, then this would be the way to kill the *kilesas*!”

Investigation to overcome Sexual Desire

Luangta used the contemplation of *asubha* (loathsomeness of the body). He trained himself to observe. In his investigation of *asubha*, he looked at people as a bag of bones wrapped by skin, or only as bloody meat and skin. Because of this, he did not experience sexual desire. Sexual (sensual) desire slowly disappeared without him knowing the time and place of its disappearance. There was something wrong here he thought, so he switched during walking meditation from the *asubha* meditation (loathsomeness) to *subha* meditation (beauty). He brought up images of beautiful bodies and forced them to stay close to him. He took this kind of practice and practiced it for four full days. After the fourth day of this practice around 9.00 - 10.00 pm, there was a kind of crush arising in his *citta*. It was as if he was still lusting after these beautiful bodies. That showed him, that sensual desire was not yet over. From then on he placed the *asubha* in front of his eyes. He set it up, so that the image would stay there. Then the *citta* stared at it, by using *sati* to concentrate on it. He watched to see if this piece of *asubha* would move or would

change; where it was coming from and where it would go. Once he put his attention on the *asubha* that was in front of his eyes he saw that it was swallowed and sucked up by the *citta* into itself, making him finally understand. He understood that it was the *citta* itself that created this *asubha*. It was the *citta* itself that labeled it as *subha* or *asubha*, and then fell for it. It became evident that the *citta* is the one that decides what it is, and then falls for its own deception, perceiving it as *subha* (beautiful) or *asubha* (loathsome)! Once he had this insight, the *citta* instantly let go of the external *asubha*. Now it was gone for good! And that is the way it should happen!

Great Sati and Great Paññā

Luangta then went to see Than Ajahn Mun and related this experience to him. Than Ajahn Mun said loudly and pronounced; “Yes, that is right. Now you are experienced. You have come to the right path and criteria. That is the correct way.” It took Luangta only 8 months to finish the investigation of the body to reach this stage of Anāgāmi. Luangta now had to eliminate what he called the inner *asubha* to reach the stage of, what he called a full fledged Anagami. The inner *asubha* is the sixth fetter, the attachment to, as he calls it, *rupa jahana* or the attachment to form. He again used the pictures of *asubha* and *subha* and trained himself to destroy and create them until he reached proficient skill with it. Then he took both images, hold them without destroying them in front of his inner eyes and passed in the middle of both of them through. This then was the final end of *subha* and *asubha*⁶.

Now he was left with the investigation of the *nāma khandhas*. That means *vedanā*, *saññā*, *sankhāra*, and *viññāṇa*. But he had nearly finished the investigation of *vedanā* (feeling) while sitting through *dukkha vedanā*, so the next big battle field was *saññā* and *sankhāra*, finding and eliminating delusion (*moha*). Luangta said

⁶ This will be explained in more detail in some of the talks in the book: in commemoration of the Venerable Than Ajahn Maha Bua Nanampanno.

that at this stage, *sati* and *paññā* became automatic, they were digging out and eliminating the *kilesas* in a constant manner. So he called it *sati* and *paññā* on autopilot, or *mahā sati* and *mahā paññā*, like it was called at the times of the Lord Buddha. Luangta said that the investigation of *saññā* and *sankhāra* was really difficult, for they worked so fast, and hand in hand, so that it was difficult to catch. It seemed to be just one and the same, once it formed; the *citta* fell for its own conception. It constantly fell for its own creation, not knowing it created it through the fast intermingling of *saññā* and *sankhāra*. It took him nearly two and a half years to break through this thick forest of delusion, the investigation constantly following up and breaking off the *kilesas*. He was so absorbed in his work, that he would not rest his *citta* in *samādhi* anymore, he thought it was a waste of time. He saw *nibbāna* as being within the reach of his hands. Once he could look back, he said that actually in this situation he was caught up in the fetter of restlessness. But at that



Luangta's walking path at the monastery of Doi Dhammachedi

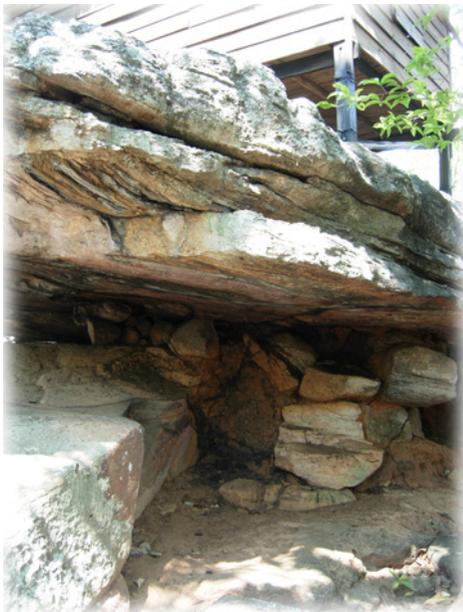
time he could not see it, all he could see was that *nibbāna* was in reach. Once he had finished investigating all of the *khandhas*, he thought that he understood everything already. It seemed that there was nothing more to know about this. The only thing left now was this knowingness. He sometimes felt, maybe I am enlightened already, but there was something strange about this knowingness, for it seemed to suck him in and make him drink it. At that time whatever had arisen in his *citta*, instantly fell away. At that time his *citta* was very bright and outstanding. However this was also the time his venerated Teacher Than Ajahn Mun passed away. At this time, for he has not yet finished, he felt sorry that Than Ajahn Mun had passed away, he who had been such a great help to him, he who helped him to pass difficult tasks with ease.

Destroying Avijjā and the Cycle of Rebirth

This was his 16th year as a monk. It was the 9th year of his practice, and he was at the monastery of Doi Dhammachedi. On Monday 15th May 1950 which was the 14th night of the waning moon, 6th month, at exactly 11.00 pm, Luangta successfully destroyed the *kilesas* in his heart. Luangta compassionately said about his mind at that point;

When *sati* and *paññā* focused in on this kind of *citta*, a strange knowledge arose in his heart, "If there is a point of the knower anywhere, then this is the nucleus of existence." It seemed to him, like an inner voice had told him. But for months he could not figure out its meaning. He was so startled by this expression and wished that he could have asked Than Ajahn Mun. For then he would have had it explained to him and he would have passed this last obstacle that same day. But Than Ajahn Mun had passed away and Luangta had to figure it out for himself. That's why it took him three months of serious investigation of the *citta*. Then this knowledge arose in his heart: "Whether it is sorrow, brightness, happiness, suffering, all of these are only worldly things and are not self (*anattā*)". At this point *sati* and *paññā* knew that while the *citta* is held by the power

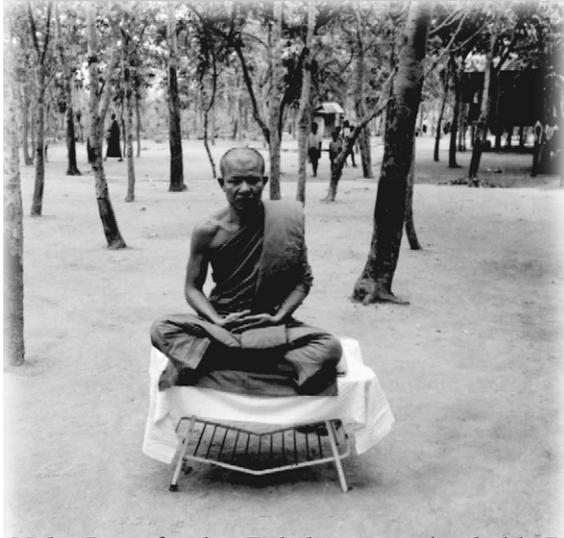
of *avijjā*; that all these phenomena are of conventional reality, and that one should let go of this immediately. One should not cling to it. Once that knowledge had arisen and advised *sati* and *paññā*, who were examining this point; it just took a moment of realization, and then it was as if the *citta* and *sati paññā* came to a complete halt in equanimity. Everything stood dead still, nothing moved. The *citta* had no focus of attention and was immobile, wisdom was not working and awareness was just aware, not focused on anything. The *citta*, wisdom and awareness, were completely in a state of equanimity. At this point the whole universe, with *avijjā* as its sole authority, exploded, broke apart and fled the throne of the heart. He expressed it like this: The *kilesas* with all its children, grand children, and great grand children left. Not even one of its relatives stayed. They all had to leave forever and since that day, none of them ever came back again. And what remained then was the completely pure *citta*.



Most probably the place, it is close to the walking path, in the monastery of Doi Dhammachedi, where Luangta Mahā Bua reached Enlightenment



Luangta Mahā Bua one week after his Enlightenment



Luangta Mahā Bua after his Enlightenment (probably Baan Taad)



The kuti of Lungphu Mun in Wat Pa Nongpheu

After training himself, he trained others...

Luangta Maha Bua reached enlightenment at the age of 36. After he had practiced with great determination and to the utmost of his ability he reached the highest Buddhist goal, Arahantship. Now he could also think and care about his friends in Dhamma. Before that, since the time of the passing away of his Venerable teacher Lungphu Mun, he always tried to avoid them, for he wanted to focus solely on reaching his goal. So as he himself said, he always secretly escaped his fellow monks, doing his best to avoid them all together. He had to, like he said, be absolutely isolated to be able to reach the final stage of practice. For this reason, whenever his Dhamma friends knew his whereabouts and tried to call on him, he would secretly escape. His Dhamma friends were the monks he lived together with under the guidance of Venerable Acharn Mun. After the passing away of the Venerable Acharn Mun, these monks had no one to depend on any more, they were at a loss, and so they tried to follow Luangta. This was because shortly before Venerable Acharn Mun died, the monks asked him, “Dear Venerable teacher, when you have passed away, who shall we depend on?”, then Acharn Mun answered, “well hold on to Than Maha”. (Acharn Mun always called Luangta Maha Bua “Than Maha”) Therefore these monks would always try to follow Luangta.

But now, having finished his work, attaining to the highest goal, Luangta Maha Bua felt compassion for his fellow monks, so he spent his first vassa (rains retreat) in Wat Pa Nongpheu, Nanai. This was the place where he had once stayed with Lungphu Mun. But after his passing away, most of the monks had left the monastery and the only monk who remained was an elderly bhikkhu. This was in the year 1950.

After that he spent the next four years, 1951 to 1954, in Ban Huey Sai, Kam-Cha-I, province of Nakhon Phanom (Now part of Mukdahan province). Here he trained all the monks, novices and maechees very strictly in the monks discipline. He trained them in the 13 ascetic practices and in the practice of meditation to build



Ban Huey Sai- here the chedi of Maechi Gaeow



Land donated to Luangta to build the Forest Monastery of Baan Taad



Maechi Gaeow



Luangta Mahā Bua in front of his kuti in Wat Pa Baan Taad in 1966

up a solid base in their hearts. He also trained Maechi Gaeow, who lived there at that time.

After that he went into the forest of Chantaburi, where he spent his vassa in 1955. But when he heard about his mother being sick, he then traveled back to Udon Thani, to take care of her. After staying at Baan Taad, the villagers and his relatives invited him to stay on in the forest south of the village. Later on, they beseeched him to stay and give up his life as a wandering monk. They were also willing to offer him a piece of forested land 163 rai (26 acre) in area. Then Acharn Maha Bua pondered it, thinking his mother was already old, and that he could stay and take care of her. So he accepted the villagers' offer and they happily donated him the land (bild). Then in November 1955 he started building the monastery. He called it Wat Pa Baan Taad (the Forest monastery of Baan Taad). He remained the abbot of Wat Pa Baan Taad until his death.

From then on he started to train monks strictly in Dhamma and Vinaya at his monastery. First he would only accept a few monks, twelve at most. Around 1965, the first western monk arrived at Wat Pa Baan Taad. His name was Acharn Pannavaddho. In the beginning Luangta Maha Bua was apprehensive about having a western monk staying at his monastery, for he did not know the characteristics of westerners. Also at that time Acharn Pannavaddho was ordained in the Mahanikaya sect, whereas all the other forest monks were part of the Dhammayut tradition. But out of metta he allowed him to stay. Later on in 1966, because it was awkward to stay as a Mahanikaya monk in a Dhammayut monastery, Acharn Pannavaddho reordained under the Dhammyut tradition in Wat Boworn, Bangkok, together with Acharn Cherry, who had recently arrived in Thailand. So, since 1966 Luangta Maha Bua had two western disciples, the first western monks in the whole of Thailand. But Luangta Maha Bua never gave formal permission for them to stay. He told at the funeral of Acharn Panna in 2004, "when he first arrived and asked me for formal permission to stay, I didn't answer, then he asked a second and a third time and I still didn't answer or



Right to left:
Luangta Mahā Bua
and Ajahn Pannavaddho



Left to right: Luangta, Ajahn
Cherry and Ajahn Dick



Luangta Mahā Bua scolding...

give formal permission. Then, Acharn Pannavaddho, for he was clever, asked me, please Than Acharn, give me permission to stay temporarily. Well I gave him permission to stay temporarily and now he stayed until his death, for more than 40 years temporarily at this monastery.” Luangta Maha Bua smiled about it, for he always praised Acharn Panna for his cleverness.

But then slowly over the years the number of monks in the monastery increased. In 1976 there were about 18 monks training under him, four or five of them were westerners. Beginning in 1980 until 1996 the well known Teaching Masters or Kruba Acharns were passing away one by one, and their disciples were looking for new teachers, so out of metta he accepted some of these monks. So each year the number of monks that were living and training under him in the monastery increased. In 1985 he got tired of the misbehavior of many of the western monks, so he did not accept any more western monks to live and train under him for 10 years. In 1993, at the age of 80, he formally said, that he would not teach and train monks any more, for he no longer had the energy to do so. He still continued to train the monks generally and some of them selectively, but not with the level of vigor and effort as he had before.

He was feared all over Thailand for his strictness. For instance he would go on a round through the monastery, checking by at the kuti



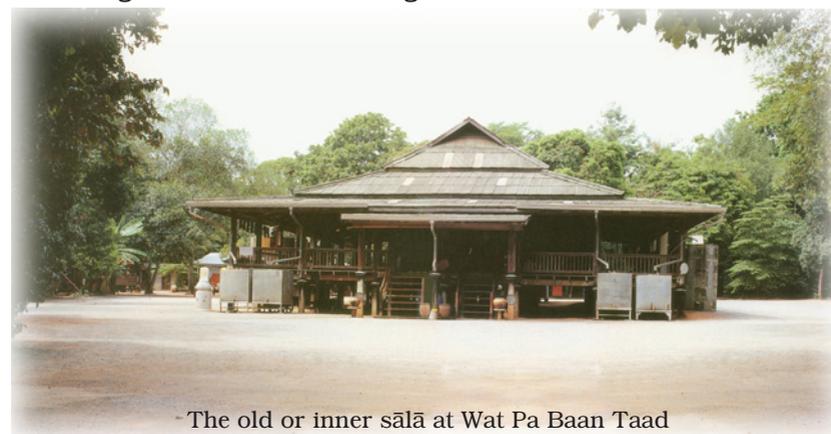
of each monk, to see what he was doing. He did the rounds in the morning, in the afternoon and evening. If he encountered a monk, either not at his kuti, or not doing sitting or walking meditation, on the third occasion, he would kick him out of the monastery. If monks were publicly quarreling or arguing, he would also kick them out. If one monk went to see him to complain about another monk, then if what the other monk was doing was wrong, he would kick both of them out of the monastery. If the complaint was untrue or trifling, he would only kick out the monk who made the complaint. If a monk asked for permission to go out to visit his parents, or go to the funeral of one of his parents, he would say: “Of course you can go, but pack up all your things and don’t come back.” If a monk came to ask him for permission to see a doctor or go to the hospital, then if the situation was not life threatening, he would give the same answer. Also, if he had the feeling that one of the monks wasn’t progressing in his meditation anymore, if he got too lazy to practice, he would come up to this monk and ask: “How long have you been here?” No matter if the answer was just four weeks, (nearly everybody was allowed to stay three weeks), or ten years, he would say: “That’s a long time already, you can leave now, so that you don’t become a burden on the monastery.”

Even then, after the age of eighty, he would still go twice a day on an inspection round, but now he would only go to check on a select group of monks that he had decided to train. Then in 1995 he changed his mind and accepted western monks again. At that time there were about 37 monks living and training under him, four of them came from the west. Then, at the time when Thailand fell into an economic crisis, the number of monks increased year by year. First he said, no more than 40, then a few years later, no more than 50, until in the end in his last year the number of monks living under him reached 60.



Luangta Mahā Bua giving a Dhammatalk at Lumpini park in Bangkok for the project “Thais help the Thai Nation”

When the country was in an economic crisis in 1997, Luangta stepped forward and founded the “Thais Help the Thai Nation” project. Through this, he helped his countrymen not only monetarily, but also by giving them many Dhamma talks, about how to live following the Buddha’s teaching.



The old or inner sāla at Wat Pa Baan Taad

Laypeople had asked him so many times to build a new sāla or remodel his kuti and he was always very strict and never allowed it. Then in the year 2000, when the number of visitors increased manifold, due to interest in the project, he finally gave his permission to construct a big sala just in front of the old monastery gates.



The new or big sālā at the entrance of Wat Pa Baan Taad

Every morning in the sālā, after Luangta had finished his meal, people would gather around him as he would sometimes give short Dhamma talks, and tell jokes and stories.



Luangta's remodeled kuti with ICU in Wat Pa Baan Taad



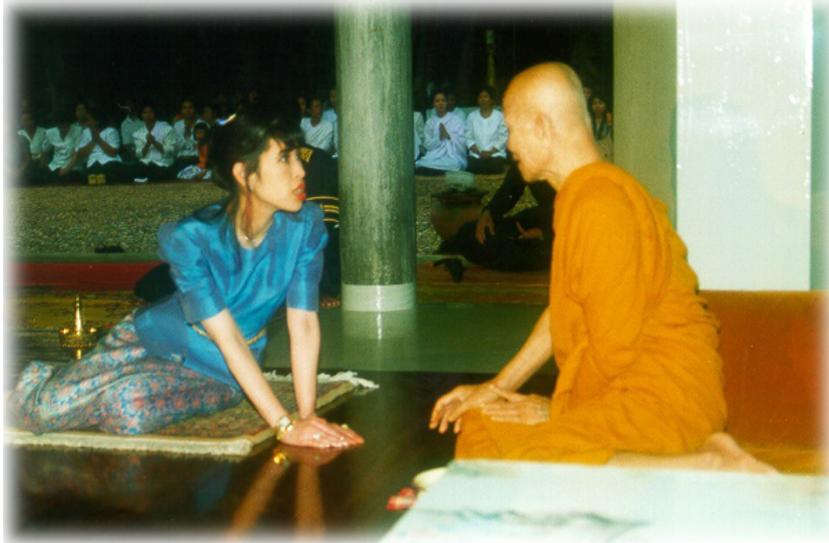
Luangta's old kuti in Wat Pa Baan Taad

Luangta lived by what he taught, and didn't put on any airs. His kuti was a simple wooden hut, raised-up off the ground, and it was only renovated when he had problems walking. His original kuti was raised higher up off the ground, and a new floor was built at ground level under the original kuti. It was nothing fancy for such a great noble person. His outer robes were always tightly rolled neatly under

his arm whenever he sat to eat his morning meal, at Dhamma talks and at functions. He was always proper even in old age.

Luangta was 98 years old when he died. Before he passed away Luangta was nursed at his kuti, and in his last few days, no one was allowed to visit him apart from those who were nursing him each day. But when Luangta wasn't too tired, he would go around in his golf cart, even though he was on drips and oxygen, so every





Luangta with HRH the Princess Chulaporn



HRH the Princess Chulaporn and the monks paying their last respect to Than Ajahn Maha Bua Nanasampanno

day many of his lay followers would wait in the *sālā* hoping to see his face. They would gather and form a line to see him, making donations of money, cloth for monk's robes, and other requisites.

Then on January 30th, 2011, at 3am, word that Luangta was in critical condition and near death, rapidly circulated around the monastery. Along with many monks and laypeople, HRH the Princess Chulaporn was also present during his last hours. A few years ago, Than Acharn Mahā Bua had accepted the Princess Chulaporn as his daughter in Dhamma.

The *sālā* was quiet as a somber crowd gathered awaiting more news of Luangta's medical condition, but Luangta's *kuti* was heavily guarded as HRH the Princess Chulaporn was there. Most of his senior monks, who had already come from all parts of Thailand, were also at his *kuti*. The time was 3:53 am when Luangta passed away. Tubes and machines were removed from his body, and the curtains were drawn open, so that the laypeople could have a look at what was going on. A short chanting session was held, then one of the senior monks opened the window and made the formal announcement that Luangta had just passed away.

Evam (The End)

Specific Information

Date of birth: Tuesday 12th August 1913.

Date of passing away: Sunday 30th January 2011, 3:53 am.

Aged: 97 years, 5 months, 17 days, 77th year of monkhood

Date of attaining Arahantship: May 15th 1950, 23:00 pm.