

**PHRAMONGKOLTHEPMUNI**



Phramongkolthepmuni

# **PHRAMONGKOLTHEPMUNI**

## **Discoverer of the Dhammakaya Meditation Method**

Famously known as Luang Por Wat Paknam, one of the most Venerated Buddhist monks in the history of Thailand, Phramongkolthepmuni was born as Sodh Mikaewnoi on October 10, 1884 to the family of Ngeun and Sutjai Mikaewnoi, a rice merchant in Songpinong District, Suphanburi, a province 60 miles west of Bangkok, Thailand. Sodh was the second born of five brothers and sisters with an older sister Dha, and three younger brothers, Sai, Phook and Samruam in order of birth.

Sodh was an intelligent child with a strong will power. In whatever he set out to do he would always persevere until it was done and done well. Sodh showed the signs of compassion even when he was very young. While helping his parents plough the rice fields each morning, as it neared midday, he would gaze up to check the position of the sun to note what time it was. His sister thought he was lazy, waiting for the time to take a break, but in fact he was watching for the appropriate time to relieve his ox. If he saw that the oxen had been overworked and had become tired, he would lead them off for a bath then let them loose to graze.

Sodh helped his parents with their work until he was nine when he began his formal education with his uncle, a monk at Songpinong Temple. In those days, before the establishment of state schools, monks were the only teachers and Buddhist temples functioned as schools for people in the community. When his uncle left the monkhood he went on to continue his study at Bangpla Temple, Nakornpathom Province, where he studied Thai and Cambodian languages.

Sodh was fourteen when his father passed away. As the eldest son, the burden of running the family business and supporting his mother and siblings fell on his young shoulders. He took over his father's rice trading business and worked hard to grow the business. Soon his business prospered and the family became well established.

A turning point in his life came when, on one trading trip to Bangkok, he sold all the rice in his boat and headed home with the empty barge and a large sum of money. The main river routes that he traveled were extremely treacherous so he took a detour through a remote waterway known as Klong<sup>7</sup> Bang-Eetan. This was a narrow stretch of canal dreaded by boatmen because it was infested with pirates and bandits. Only a few lucky boats would manage to pass Bang-Eetan without being robbed or killed. Usually they would travel in a convoy for security. That day, Sodh's was the only boat in sight. Upon reaching this narrow stretch, the fear of death struck him. Sodh knew the strategy of the pirates: they would aim to attack the captain or the helmsman first to gain control of the boat. The person at the front of the boat would be in a safer

---

<sup>7</sup>**Klong:** Thai word for canal

position, as he could fight or escape. Sodh's survival instinct told him that he should switch his position from the helm to the front of the boat to avoid danger. So he ordered his crewman at the front to take his place at the helm.

Then a guilty conscience struck him. He thought: "All the crew gets from me for looking after this wretched barge is eleven or twelve Baht a month (equivalence of 50-60 cents in those days). As for me, I am the owner of the boat and I have all the money. If I hand down death to my less-than-fortunate workers I would be taking advantage of a fellow man. This is the wrong thing to do. The money is mine; the boat is mine; if someone should die it should be me. Let the workers escape so they can live to take care of their families."

He was ashamed for having made the selfish move. He called the crewmen back to the oars and sat himself at the tiller with the rifle in his lap. Although he finally managed to pass through the crisis in safety, the whole episode left him with a deep sorrow for his fellow men. He came to realize: "Making a living is such a hard thing indeed—to go through such an ordeal just to avail oneself of a day's wage. Material wealth is so ingrained in man's values that he loses touch with the reality and true purpose of life. In the end everyone must die. My father has died. My relatives have died. And when they died they could take nothing with them. What is the point of having all these possessions when you can't enjoy them after your death? One day, I, too, must die. Haven't I learned from my deceased father and relatives?"

---

He pondered about what he should do with his life, and came to the conclusion that there was nothing more worthwhile for him to do than pursuing a life of purity by becoming a monk. He made the resolution: "Please don't let me die before I have a chance to ordain. Once I take ordination it will be for life."

Sodh entered the monkhood in July 1906 at Songpinong Temple when he was 22. He was given the monastic name of Candasaro Bhikkhu<sup>8</sup>. He began practicing meditation the next day and continued to do so until the last day of his life. For many years he journeyed through many forests and mountains throughout the country of Thailand searching for the best meditation teachers to apprentice with. After eleven years of practice with some of the best Thailand had to offer he still felt that he had not yet attained the ultimate knowledge realized by the Buddha. So he decided to set out on his own. He studied Visuddhimagga, the Path of Purity, a scriptural text on meditation practice, and practiced on his own.

One morning, while taking residence at Bangkoowieng Temple, Nontaburi Province, he went to the chapel to meditate. He determined to stay unmoved until the midday drum sounded (time for the last meal of the day at 11:00 a.m.). He began meditation around 8 a.m. After a couple of hours, right before the sound of the midday drum, his mind began to settle to a completely standstill state. Whereupon, a bright sphere the size of an egg yolk appeared at the center of his body. He experienced a feeling of bliss, something he had never experienced before. He knew in his heart that this was

---

<sup>8</sup>**Bhikkhu:** Buddhist monk

the beginning of the path to spiritual attainment. He was overjoyed. Even the midday meal tasted extraordinary delicious that day. He looked forward to continuing a long meditation session that afternoon.

Sitting in front of the main Buddha statue, he made the following resolution: *“Upon this sitting, if I cannot attain even a small part of the Truth realized by the Lord Buddha, then I shall remain here unmoved until I perish. If I die, I will become a worthy example for people after me.”*

He sat in a half lotus position and began to meditate. The bright sphere that he saw earlier that morning emerged again and appeared even more radiant. It began to expand and remained with him from 7 p.m. to 1 a.m. the next morning. A tiny bright spot appeared at the center of the sphere and gradually became bigger. Afterwards, several transcendental bodies appeared one after another, each successive sphere bigger and brighter than the previous one. Until, finally, a supremely bright and pure image of the Buddha appeared. This was the Dhammakaya—Body of Enlightenment, an image brighter and clearer than any Buddha images in the world.

Sodh Chandasaro knew this was the right path—the path to enlightenment. He continued to further the depth of his knowledge and meditation practice until it reached the supramundane level. His meditation skills and mental powers became so powerful that he became Thailand’s most revered meditation master. He devoted his time

---

and attention in practicing and teaching his meditation method to the general public. The Dhammakaya Knowledge that he rediscovered<sup>9</sup> was so profound that he aimed to use it to help all beings reach an end of all defilements and free from the cycle of rebirth.

In 1918, Sodh Chandasaro was appointed abbot of Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen. His reputation as a meditation master and the miracles associated with Buddha amulets created by him made him a sought after spiritual teacher. He organized a 24-hour meditation workshop to train gifted meditators. Many of his students reached the highest level of meditative attainment known as attaining the Dhammakaya. He was also the first Thai preceptor to ordain a westerner as a Buddhist monk. He later rose to higher monastic rank with a new monastic name of Phramongkolthepmuni.

Phramongkolthepmuni passed away in 1959 at age seventy-five. He became one of the most revered Buddhist monks in Thailand's history. After his death, his top disciple, a nun by the name of Chand Khonnokyoong, continued to further the legacy of the Dhammakaya Knowledge on his behalf. Along with her two outstanding students, Chaiyaboon Suddhipol and Padej Pongsawat, who later became the Abbot and Vice Abbot of the Dhammakaya Temple, she went on to found the Dhammakaya Temple which later became the largest Buddhist temple in the world.

The Dhammakaya Knowledge rediscovered by Phramongkolthepmuni has helped transformed the lives of millions. The Dhammakaya Tradition, the meditation method

---

<sup>9</sup> It was said that the Dhammakaya Knowledge had disappeared from this world for five hundred years after the death of the Buddha

that he founded is practiced by millions of people throughout the world today. For most Buddhists in Thailand, Phramongkolthepmuni is best known by his miracles, prophecies and super-natural healing powers. Hundreds of thousands of Thai Buddhists pray to him daily asking for help and guidance in their lives.

The legacy of Luang Pu Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen lives on.

---

