

Walking with Awareness

A Guide
to Walking Meditation

Written by
Luang Por Liem
Thitadhammo

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The secret of walking meditation is to walk in a manner that will imprint nothing but peaceful happiness with each step.





Walking – Something we Should Know how to do

Walking *jong-grom* is a way to practise meditation while walking up and down. Cultivating this will bring happiness and serenity to our practice.

When walking meditation, we should move unhurriedly, with a peaceful and relaxed attitude, and a smile on our face. Walking, we have all the time in the world, and nothing else whatsoever that we have to do.

With every step, we let our worries and concerns fall away. We should take every single step in this way, for the sake of abiding in serene happiness.

This is not beyond our capability. Every one of us can do it, for we all truly wish to dwell in serene happiness.

Walking with Ease

In our daily lives, the steps we take are laden with our anxieties and concerns - weighed down with fear. You could say our lives are built up on months and years of worry. That is why we cannot take our steps with ease.

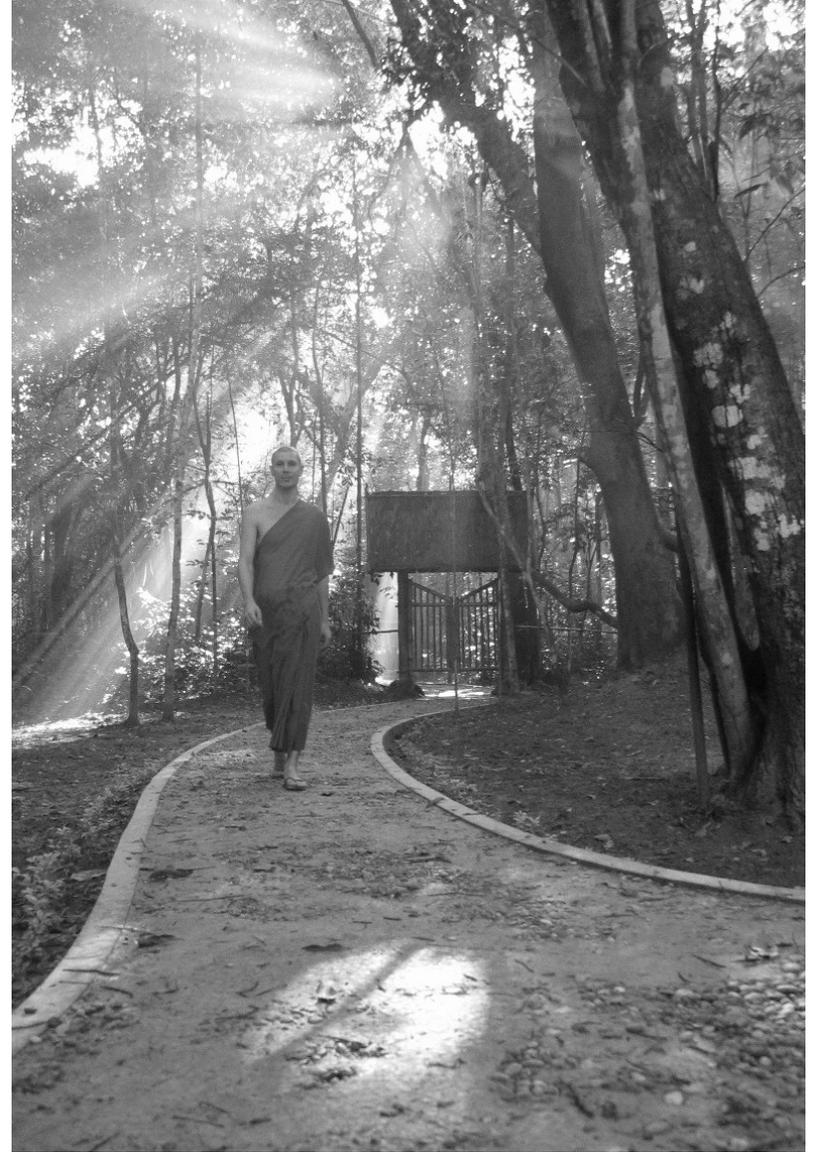
This world is full of beauty, with many lovely and captivating paths to choose from. There are paths scented with the fragrance of blossoms, and arrayed with tasteful selections of colour.



But we pass by unaware, not pausing to admire our surroundings, with the faltering steps of one ill-at-ease.

Walking jong-grom involves re-training the way we walk - so that we learn to move with ease.

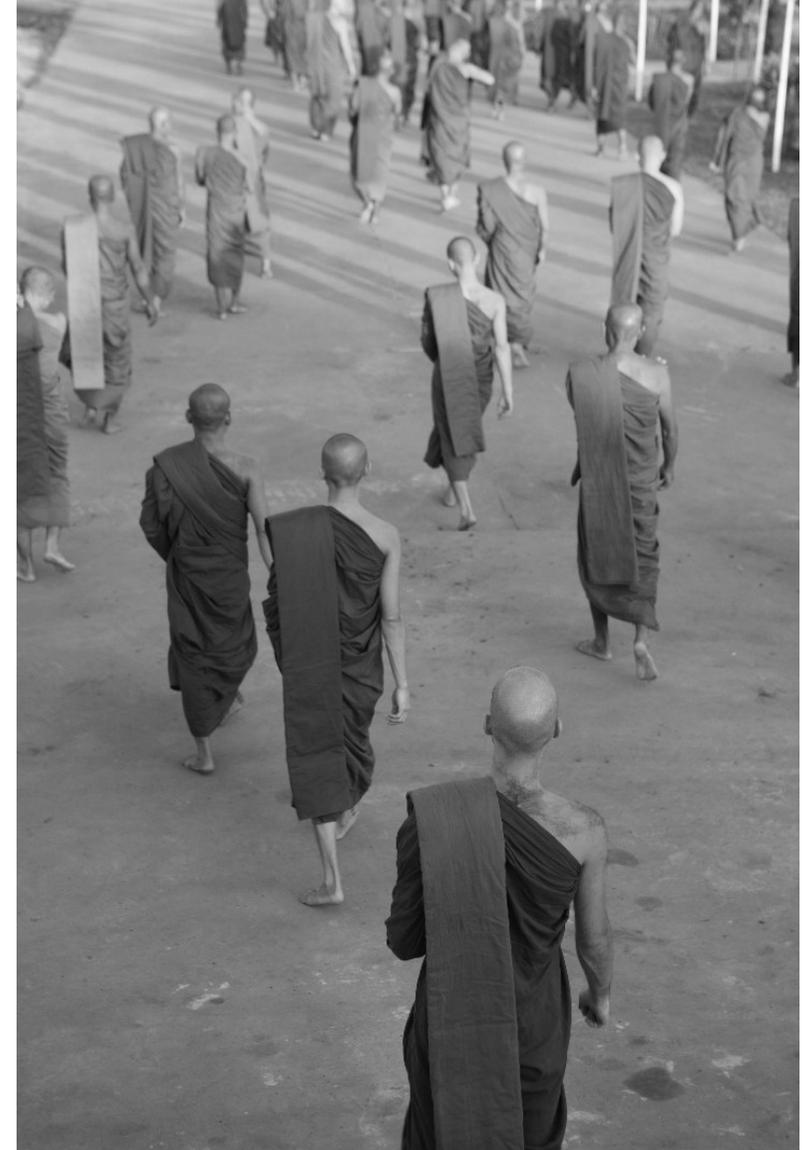
When I was new to this training of Dhamma-Vinaya, I initially walked without confidence, without steadiness. In the beginning we are all like this. But then, after not so many weeks, we are able to walk assuredly and steadily; clear, bright and calm - quite naturally.



Our lives are often haphazard and chaotic. We are continually rushed and under pressure due to this matter or that. We feel that we have to dash about constantly. But just where is it that we are rushing to? This is a question we tend not to ask ourselves.

Walking jong-grom is like taking a stroll. We don't need to set any definite goal, or time-limit. We walk meditation just to walk meditation. The point is just to walk, without any goal to be reached. Walking meditation is not a method - it is an aim. Each step that we take is our life.

Each step is serene happiness. That is the reason we don't walk in a hurry. That is the reason we step with measured dignity. There's nowhere we must get to, no goal to pull us forward. In this way, we walk mindfully, with contentment on our face.



We walk meditation to cast away our worries, once and for all.

Suppose that we had the eyes of the Buddha, we could see the footsteps of others impressed in the ground - engraved records of their worries and sadness. We would take note of these marks as we passed by, as a scientist observes micro-organisms through a microscope.

The secret of walking jong-grom is to walk in a manner that will imprint nothing but peaceful happiness with each step. To walk like this, we must learn how to throw off all of our sadness and worries, without exception.





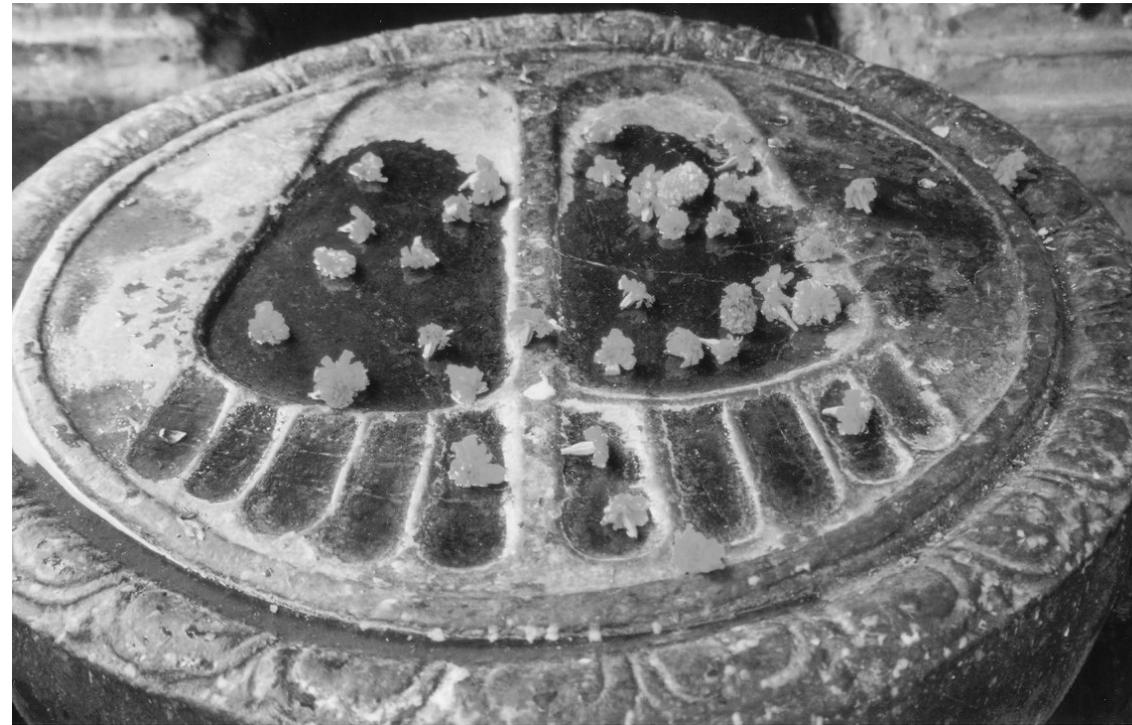
Walking in a Place Free From Dust

We must walk in the way of one with no worries. This means to walk in a place of purity. In such a place, there is striking beauty, peace, and immense happiness.

Should you find yourself in such a place, in what manner would you walk? Can you really be sure that you would not leave impressions of the worry and sadness of the world, there in your footprints, in that pure place? If we bring sadness and worries, and print them into the ground, we will leave the earth tainted and blemished with traces of our gloom. If we are to live in this world serenely and happily, it is essential that we walk with peace and ease right from this moment on.

If we are able to step on the surface of this earth with happiness and serenity, then there is no need at all to travel to the land of the Buddha. Both that which is mundane and that which is pure are born right here in this heart of ours. In any moment that we are free, peaceful and happy, the mundane is pure, and purity is mundane. There is nowhere at all that we need to go, and no need to depend upon the footsteps of the historical Buddha.

The moment we realise that the mundane and the pure truly are born from the heart, we are filled with happiness. We are happy because we know that there is both dust and freedom from that dust. Should we open our eyes and stride, mindful, serene and happy, we will walk in that place of purity. This will be our inspiration to walk jong-grom every day.



The Way we Walk Through Life

When walking meditation, please walk in a natural way. No need to keep the hands together at the chest, or maintain a rigorous posture. Choose a quiet and peaceful walking path in the forest, in a public park, on the bank of a river, or in a monastery or meditation centre.

You can practise at any time. Should anyone see you, they'll know you are walking jong-grom, and they won't disturb you. Anytime you encounter someone during your meditation, simply make a brief sign of respect, joining your hands and raising them to the chest, then carry on walking.





I used to walk jong-grom in the early morning and the evening, when I lived in the forest. The forest animals, my neighbouring friends, would come and call out when they saw me walking. They weren't familiar with the movements of one walking at ease, peaceful and quiet. But, if I were to walk rapidly, they would simply think, 'That's something normal', and pay no further attention.

Most of us these days go through life, whether we are walking, standing, sitting, or looking at all the different things in the world and its various living beings, as if we are sleepwalking. We have no idea what we are doing, or in which direction we are headed. Our awakening will depend on whether we are able to walk with mindfulness. The future of all living beings on earth truly depends on the way that we take each step we take.

“One who traces the footsteps of his heart
Will escape from Mara’s snare.”

Walking for Awakening

Walking jong-grom can open our eyes and ears to the wonders of the universe, and change the world into a place of peace and joy. It can help us to end suffering, sorrow, sadness and worries, and bring us the happiness of peace. In the same way, it can enable us to see the suffering in life. If we can’t see that which arises before and all around us, how can we expect to see our own nature?

Seeing our own nature is not likely to come about through closing our eyes. On the contrary, we must open our eyes, and awaken to the true nature of the way things really are in the world.



Opening our eyes will enable us to see nature within ourselves, and our own inner Buddha-nature: awakening. The hardships of poverty, and the allure of wealth: even the power that these things can hold over us can not separate us from our own essential nature.

Walking paths shaded with leafy trees, and others with lovely coverings of fallen leaves, these are the jong-grom paths that lie ahead of us. We should take full joy in these meditation paths. They won't lead us astray. While walking, we will observe and take note, awakening to the true suffering of the world.

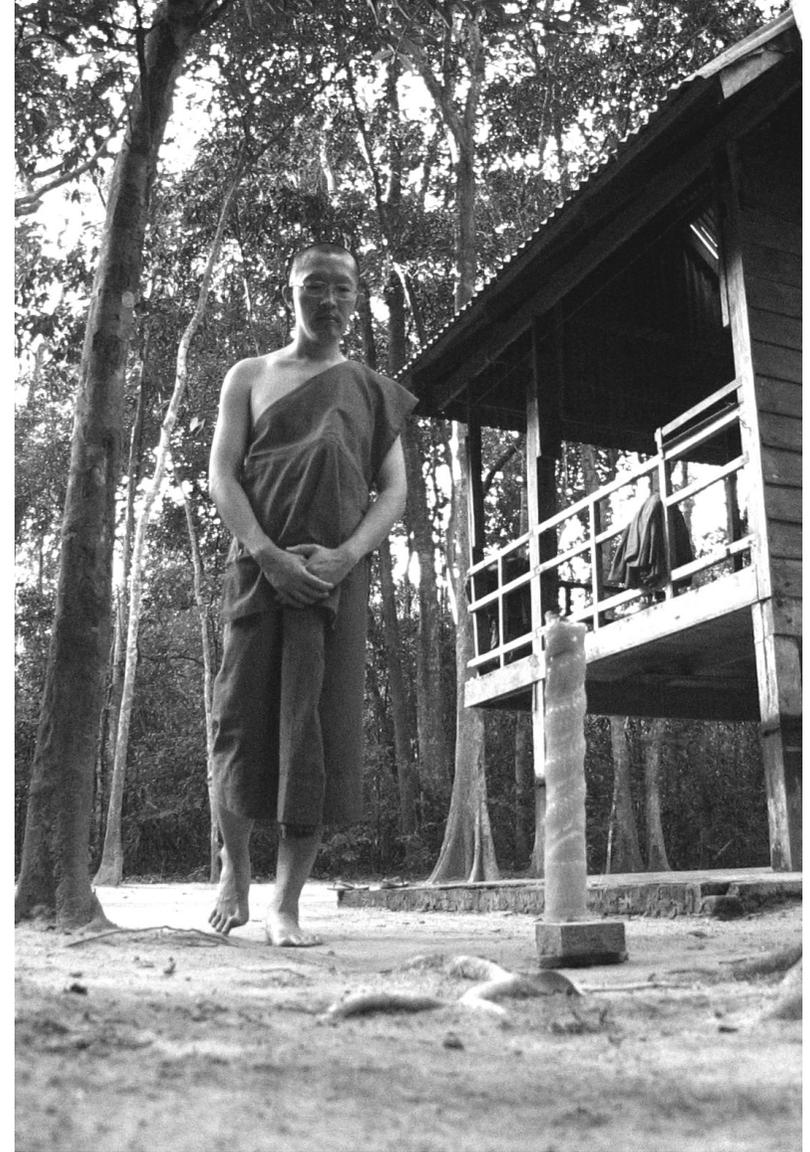
Every walkway in this world can be a walking meditation path for us. As we awaken, we will not hesitate to walk upon these paths at all.



Doesn't our anguish in life merely arise from doubts, hesitation and worry? Awakening to the suffering of our fellow beings, we feel nothing for one another but kindness and compassion, just like a Bodhisattva.

Breathing with Mindfulness

Breathing with mindfulness is different to ordinary breathing. To breathe with mindfulness means that as we breathe, we know that we're breathing. When we breathe in long, we know - we are breathing in long. When we breathe in short, we know - we are breathing in short. When we breathe in a subtle breath, we know - we are breathing in a subtle breath. How can we focus on breathing and walking at the same time?



One way is to combine the breathing and the walking together using a counting technique. We can count the number of steps we take. Or, to put it another way, we can measure the length of our breath according to the number of steps: how many steps do we take as we are breathing in? And how many steps do we take as we are breathing out?

Do this for some time - for a number of weeks. Give it a try - test it out. Slow down your steps, but not too much, and breathe normally. Don't try to lengthen your breathing. Try this out for a period, then begin to take note: as you breathe in, how many steps are there?

Using this method, our attention is on our breathing and our walking at the same time, and we develop a close connection to the peacefulness and clarity of

our walking and our breathing. This increases our attentiveness, peacefulness, serenity and happiness. It calms and refines the objects of our attention.

This is awakening.

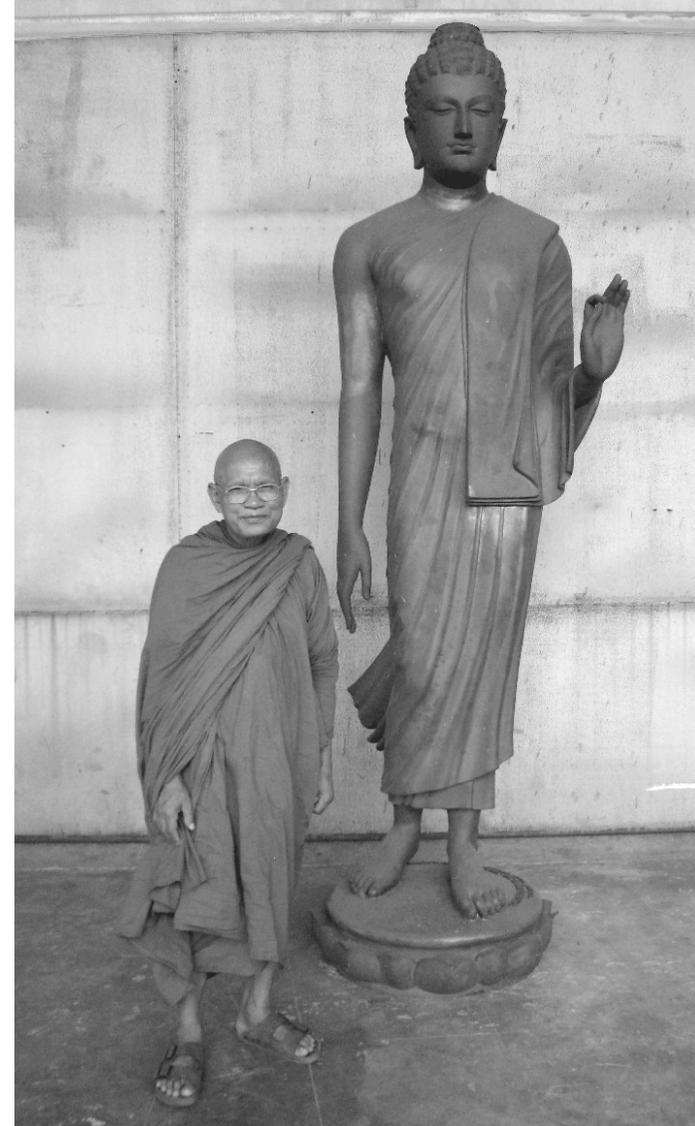
This is knowledge.

And this is wisdom.

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About Luang Por Liem Thitadhammo

Luang Por Liem Thitadhammo, a Buddhist monk in the Thai Forest Tradition, was born in 1941. After higher ordination at twenty years of age, he first practised in several village monasteries until he joined Wat Nong Pah Pong, Ajahn Chah's famous forest monastery in Ubon Province, in 1969. Before Ajahn Chah passed away, he entrusted Luang Por Liem the abbotship of Wat Nong Pah Pong, which he holds up to the present day, keeping the heritage of Ajahn Chah's Dhamma and characteristic ways of monastic training available for monks, nuns and lay disciples, including the foreign monks of Wat Pah Nanachat, the international branch monastery of Wat Nong Pah Pong. For the monks at Wat Pah Nanachat he is not only a dearly respected teacher and guide in the monastic life, but also conducts the ordinations ceremony as the preceptor. With several visits overseas Luang Por Liem recently started to extend his engagement for Buddhist practice to various countries outside Thailand.



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