

Speech on January 18th, 2026 to WBSC members

By WBSC Theravada Consultant

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I'm very honored to be an advisor to the World Buddhist Scout. It used to be the Buddhist Brotherhood, but we had to change it. I'm 81 now, so it's a very long time ago that I was a scout. I was a cub from the age of 8 to 11. But I didn't stay very long, because I had to start at grammar school, and it was all a bit too much for me. I do remember my days as a cub with great affection. It's, of course, a very useful thing to be a Boy Scout or a Girl Scout. I thought to myself today. And I'm very pleased, of course, that now we have Buddhist scouts.

When I was a scout, I don't think there were any Buddhist scouts. But there was always a spiritual element to being a Scout. And, originally, of course, it was Christianity. But now it's been extended to other religions. And the world, in many respects, has become much smaller. So we, as Buddhists, and within the Buddhist god mood. We must do our best to promote the core teachings of Buddhism.

The scout badge has a point to it. And that point is supposed to point north. And it's supposed to signify the fact that Scouts are leaders. Scouts go before other people. We want our Buddhist scouts to be leaders in Buddhism. And to practice the core principles of Buddhism.

And I would suggest that we encourage them. Every day, too. Remind themselves of the three refuges. Also, the basic precepts of Buddhism, which are to abstain from killing, to abstain from false speech, that is, to abstain from lying. To abstain from taking that which is not given, to abstain from sexual misconduct, and, very important nowadays, to abstain from alcohol and drugs.

So I think we must encourage our Scouts to recite those precepts, those five precepts, and to remember them well, and to do their best to live by them. And to give leadership. To have this sense of giving leadership to young people generally. I think this is very important, and one that we should do our best to nurture.

And to encourage the Scouts to know very well, and to do their best to help others. Baden-Powell made this point. Baden Powell, who founded the Scout Movement, said that Scouts should be helpful. Our scouts will be the most helpful if they lead good lives, good Buddhist lives. We must try to remind them of this. To do their good deeds, and to help other people live well, and to live moral and upright lives.

I hope I can encourage you, to bring to your scout movements, your scout troops. Buddhism is the most marvelous teaching. And we are very fortunate to have encountered the Buddha Dharma. The Buddha himself said that it's not easy to be born a human being, and even more difficult to be born one who hears the Dharma. We are fortunate in that respect. And, we must do our best to pass on to the young people these important teachings of the Buddha. Because the way of Buddhism is a way to a better and happier life.

And we must not lose sight of that. Life is very difficult. As the Buddha pointed out. It's a life of suffering. It's a life in which we will know all kinds of disappointments and unhappiness. And we will have to surmount many difficulties as we live life. So we need to arm ourselves well. And if we arm ourselves with the Buddha's teachings, we will be able to deal with whatever comes our way, and we must do our best to help our young people understand.

And for them to be leaders within their communities. Leaders amongst their peers, friends, and family. So, this is what I feel I want to say to you, really. To do your best as scout leaders to practice the Buddha's teachings. To do your best to make them a part of your life every day, not just when you go to the temple, but at all times. To keep those precepts, and to develop your understanding of yourself, and life, and its ups and downs.

And realize that there is a way of changing things and changing yourself. Making life so much better. Ultimately, of course, being able to deal with your suffering. Completely, and to free your minds of all greed, hatred, and delusion. That's the purpose of our practice, and that's the promise of Buddhism.

And that's its great gift to the world. I feel we must do our best to make it known. If people kept the five precepts, just imagine it. There would be no police forces, no armies, no violence. We would have a beautiful society and a wonderful world. And a world at peace.

So, please, as scout leaders. Do your very best to uphold these principles and encourage young people to know what the Buddha taught. And to live by it. And make it a better life for everyone. For the sake of all beings. Everywhere.

Here today, we have a small celebration, not exactly a celebration, a small occasion. Because the great master whom I practiced under in Thailand passed away on January 16th, 1992. His name was Achaan Chaa. He's very famous nowadays. So, today, as is the anniversary of his death, which was a couple of days ago, but today is a Sunday, so people can gather, and we can show our respects to him. And express our gratitude for all that he's done for us.

Thank you, it's so nice to have you with us. I hope I can join your meetings again sometime. I don't travel anywhere these days. But I am very interested. In what you're doing, and keen to support it.