

Learn to be at Peace with Yourself

By Ajahn Brahm

Too many people are trying to improve themselves, and underlying this attitude is a non-acceptance towards ourselves, and relentless perfectionism that tends towards makes ourselves miserable. Whilst it may be counter-intuitive to people in the West, the path to self improvement begins with accepting ourselves just as we are. Through learning to be at peace with ourselves, we heal the inner conflicts and begin to grow.

(Transcription by Joao Brinco)

Ok, most people have managed to get
a space inside, great, excellent

So for those of you who've been coming
to this center for a long time

you may notice that when I give a talk
It is a... based on buddhist principles,

it is a buddhist center, But I usually
talk about just how we can

improve our lives just by changing
our attitudes

Because there's much in our
life we have not got the power,

the ability to change, but
one thing we can do

a lot about is the way
we look at life, the way

We react to our life.

And by seeing things in
a different way,

so that it lessens our anxiety,
our irritation, our pain

And live as happy and more
peaceful human beings

And the last couple of talks
I was just focussing

on just how we can change
our attitudes towards perfection

And not be... try so hard to be something
you're not

and to improve yourselves

To many people trying to improve
themselves

and they're getting all frustrated,
actually they're getting worse

The more they try to improve
the worse they get

And then we suddenly learn that,
who says we're not good enough?

Where did that come from?

And so we learn how to be at peace
with ourselves

Learn how to be at peace
with ourselves!

Not to make ourselves perfect first
and then to be at peace with yourself

Be at peace with yourself as you are now
and then the improvement happens

Then the problems get solved.

It's counterintuitive to
many people in the west

But it is what has worked
for centuries in the east

Learn to relax, and be at peace with
yourself, accept yourself as you are

And the you find that
the problem gets solved

So it's all about changing the attitudes
which we have towards our life

And somehow or other, Ahh...
somehow the western world,

and I say this as a western born person,
has been just so into progress

and development, and not really
recognizing just what we already have

There's a basic saying of buddhism
which, you know, if you're gonna learn

any Buddhism, you don't need to
learn lots and lots and lots of theories

you don't need to read all the books,
thank goodness, cause there's heaps

of them.

All you really need to do is understand
what those books really mean.

and that saying is: "when you want
something more, you can't enjoy

what you already have".

You can't even appreciate what,
you already have,

because you're not looking at
what you already have

you're way over there, wanting
something more,

to develop the next addition to your house,
how many more rooms do you need

in a house?

my house has only got one room

I live in a cave, beautiful, so simple
it doesn't take long to clean it up

I don't even need to clean it up,
someone cleans it up for me

out of compassion for the cleaner
i only have a small room

Imagine, imagine when you go home tonight,
and you've only got one room

and that's all you have in you're house
oh what bliss.

you don't have much to clean up
you can't have many possessions

cause you can't fit them in.

You don't have to spend all you're life
saving up and paying off the debts

to build these huge mansions
in which you live.

Look at how we live these days, you live
mansions which even kings 100 years ago

would not be able to live in,
hey're so huge and big.

Why do we do that?
Because it's what everybody else does.

And sometimes we need some people to
say: "What on earth are you doing?"

Can't you actually look at thing in a
different way?"

Small is much more beautiful.

And also, just, I never expected to
actually go on this, but

Those of you who are privileged,
where fortunate, to be poor

when you grew up. You had to share
rooms with your brothers, sisters,

Sometimes people say they had to share
the same bed with four or five siblings,

yeah you may not have got much sleep
at night, but you sure had a lot of fun

together. And you learn how to love
one another.

It's one of the things which, because
I was poor, I spent my whole life

In the same room with my brother.
Only one bedroom, we had to share,

didn't have private bedrooms.

And those of you who've seen my brother:
we love each other! We get on,

even, he was a banker, I was a monk,
you couldn't get two, sorta... more

diverse careers than that, but, you know
we respect each other, love each other,

you know, to this day. And I often say:
"why was that?". Because we had to

to get on together.

And now you give separate rooms

To all you're kids, huge mansions,
which means that we don't learn how to

get on together, we don't learn how to
love. We don't learn those attitudes

of life. So I always think small is
incredibly beautiful!

It's great for the economy, great for
sort of... not wasting all the resources

you know, of our planet, bad for the
building industry, bad for the government

bad for the GDP, but really
great for human happiness.

Small, close together, learning how
to get on, because you have to.

So changing attitudes like that is part
of my life, it's being a bit rebellious

but why not? And one of the biggest
attitudes, which I wanted to change

you know, in my career as a monk,
is just the way that we look at material

stuff being really important; Things are
not important: people, relationships are.

Doesn't matter how much stuff you have,
look: Experiences which I've had as a monk

Because as a monk is a... I really
recommend this lifestyle.

If you really want to go to interesting
places where you people can't go

I can go to these places, cause I'm
a monk. You can go to see, uhh, royalty

go to see, uhh, what was it... presidents.
I've met a couple of presidents

A couple of royalty, and, you know,
you guys can't... how can you get to

be there, in those places? You can as
a monk, because... it's weird,

somehow or other they think because you're
religious, you must be really special.

Especially if you're in politics, they
need all the blessing they can get (laugh)

Seriously. So that's why they sort of...
and, you know one of the things which

I've noticed talking to prime ministers
and presidents, quite a few of them now

that one of the things which they ask
you, is they say: "Help!", the problems

of the world are just so tough,
and they've run out of solutions

literally, they don't know what to do,
and they say: "We're open for any suggestions

any new ways of dealing with these things,
because it's just hopeless, whether it's

economy, terrorism, global warming:
"Help!", and so they're very open

to people like myself, spiritual people,
trying to give them some new way of

looking at things, which can cut through
the sorta... the great, uhh, burdens

and problems and obstacles of getting
things done.

So, seeing that, you get into some very
interesting areas of existence, which

gives me an opportunity to maybe
do some stuff. I say, as a monk, because

you do live outside the box, you know,
you do think outside the box.

I was very happy, after the last federal
election, someone actually... I've been

saying this for so many years and somebody
actually sent me a copy

of The Melbourne Age, with something
I've been saying for a long time, it

actually appeared in the lead article,
about just, our democracy.

Democracy doesn't work, we all know that,
so how can we improve it?

Why do we always have to take the same
old system, and do it again and again

knowing it doesn't work. So what I was suggesting, and I was just using

a little bit of reason, ok, this comes from the corporate world, but the

corporate world isn't all bad: If you hold shares in a company, at they're

AGM (annual meeting), you have votes proportionate to the number of shares

you hold in that company. If you hold 10% of the shares, you get 10% of the vote

which sounds fair. You're investment, you're commitment to that Organisation

will determine how many votes you get, that seems very fair. What about our

democracy, our governments. Why is it, that everyone has one vote each?

Even though there are some people who are so old, they're gonna die soon

they don't have much of a share, in life. But young people, eighteen year olds

they're whole life ahead of them. Maybe, life expectancy, say eighty maybe

sixty years of life; should they have the same vote as an old person

who is on the way out soon? Cannot we... apportion... very simple

mathematical solution: can't we apportion the number of votes, to you're

life expectancy, the amount of shares you have in life. Which means young people

would have a much much larger say, than the old guys, who don't really give that

much of a damn about global warming, cause they're not gonna be here to face

the consequences; They don't give much...
well they do care, I'm not saying they

don't care, but they don't care as much
about going to war, cause they don't have

to fight, It's the young people [who] have
to fight, and take the bullets and die.

Wouldn't it be amazing if we could
just, somehow, change the balance

so those who have more... more commitment
to this world, more investment, more

life expectancy, have more say about how
this world... and the world they're gonna

live in is gonna be run. That, I think,
just that simple thing would change a lot.

So I like seeing things in a different
way, because this is part of my life

to see things in a different way, and
that was the gist of an article which

somebody wrote in The Melbourne Age,
I don't know if they got it from me,

but, it just comes up there, people
think: "nahh that's a stupid idea",

but eventually these ideas get some
traction, and people realize: "Yeah!"

One of my other great ideas: our education
system, kids over here

in western Australia have already done
they're year twelves, how much stress

that is. And everybody knows! Just getting
high grades in year twelve, which is the

pre-university exam, doesn't guarantee
you're gonna be successful in life.

That's just... you're good at exams!
Look at me, I passed all my exams,

I went to Cambridge, and look at me now,
I'm broke, I've got no money (laughs),

I've got a tiny house, I've got no
assets, no superannuation (laughs),

What a waste of time those exams where,
and honestly, they where!

I'll say that, ok? And people argue
with me, but I went to Cambridge

University, hang out with Nobel Laureates,
people top of their field, and then

I decided to become a monk! Why to become
a monk? I told people, actually, I think

I new year's, I think: Because I had a
relationship, she dumped me, and

I became a monk to forget (laughs).
That's not true... I wish it was true,

because that would be really romantic,
that would be really cool!

But then somebody said: "It could be true
Ajahn Brahm, because you've forgotten"

(Laughs)
It's logically consistent.

But no... But you became a monk and
then you're with these, these, old monks

in northeast Thailand that had only gone
to school for four years, and after a few

weeks, you had to admit, you had to
confess to the fact that that they where

much smarter than you where. Much more
intelligent. And I think: What Have I been

doing, working so hard, and these people
are far more intelligent than I am?

And there's something wrong with our
education system. We learn how to think,

but we don't know how to be still, and
how to listen, and how to know.

It's one of the reasons why we're in such
a big problem in our life, because we

listen to all these thoughts, we solve
problems through thoughts, and we don't

really solve the problems, we just make
more problems! Thoughts are just out

of control. You know that. When you
really have a big problem,

a lot of anxiety, a lot of difficulty
in life, what do you do?

You think like crazy!
And it makes you more mad.

You never find a solution that way,
solutions come through stillness.

So this is actually what we learn,
as monks, we learn how to be still

and let the mind see things, hear things.
Thinking is like talking back at life.

Have ever you, like, lived with somebody,
and you talk to them, and they're not

Listening?
They're listening to they're thoughts,

they're not listening to you. And that's
like you're living with life: life is

always teaching you, giving you advice,
but you never listen, because you're

too busy talking to yourself inside,
in you're thinking world.

When you're still, it's amazing just
what you understand, and what you see.

Somebody was asking me earlier: See all
of these monks in the time, you know,

when I was, where I grew up, and even
beforehand, in the old books which I used

to read, all these monks used to live in
the forrest, in nature. And they said

they're greatest teacher was nature,
because they would always be listening

to nature, much more than books, much
more than experts, like me, you know, in

front of a microfone; They would go out
there and learn it for themselves,

you know, in the raw nature. Look, one
example of that: cause in a few days time,

I don't know what it is that, recently
there's a spate of like a... deaths.

There's a funeral here this afternoon,
a funeral here on Wednesday, there's

another funeral I have to go to on
Tuesday. I don't know why people are

dying, perhaps because they waited until
after christmas and new year to get it

over and done with, and then they're gonna
die, you know, they scheduled it for

out of compassion for everybody else
(Laughs). I always say that to people

you know, that, look I mean Don't be so
selfish; Why do people die when THEY

want to die? You should think of your
friends and your relationships, make

it also convenient for them. I always say
that during the rains retreat, because

we go on retreat for three months
every year, the monks and the nuns

so we can have some peace and quiet,
we can meditate. So I ask everybody before

our rainy season retreat begins, of three months, because it's my rest, relaxation

please... Don't die (laughs), during the rains retreat. Die beforehand,

or afterwards, whenever you want, but that three months, please,

be respectful, don't just be selfish and die when you want to die (laughs).

Of course that's just messing around, you can't do that. But anyway, so, there

was a young person... That causes so much suffering for people, when young people

die. there's something about that, they haven't lived a full life yet,

why, why does that happen? And, have you ever got a good answer to that?

The answer which, I got for that, I got from a monk, an old monk

who's living in the jungle, who was one of these people who was still enough

to listen to the teachings from the nature, from around us

Brilliant teachings. And I tell this every time I have to do a funeral service

for someone who is young. I tell this, and many people get it, they understand

"Ahh, I understand now". And it was, this monk was in a very simple hut,

in the north of Thailand, and when I talk about simple, I really mean simple,

just made out of bamboo and thatch for the roof, and thatch for the walls

as well: really simple to put up, very natural, very easy. And you know,

he'd go on alms round every morning
to the local village, live a very very

frugal, peaceful life, but very very
happy. But living in the jungle,

there are such things as storms,
and if a storm comes when you're

in the middle of the forrest, and you
haven't got much protection,

it is very dangerous. Trees come down,
or even big branches!

And imagine, just visualize a bamboo
and thatch hut, if a decent size branch

hits that roof, it just goes straight
through. Not like metal roofs,

or these, uhh, roofs which are
engineered so that almost like

an Elefant could fall on this roof
and it wouldn't go through.

Otherwise we woudn't get planing
permission and building permission,

not that an elefant would actually
fall on this roof, but you never know

(Laughs)

So, so over engineered, for safety.

But anyway, so, it was such a flimsy
dwelling, that one branch could go through

and it would... if you didn't actually
get crushed you'd get injured,

break a leg, break an arm, and remember
this is simple living, you don't have

mobile phones, you don't... you know
even if you did have one, there

would be no telecommunications
tower there,

there's no one you can call,
no one can help you

if you break a leg, that's probably
worse than dying instantly

you just die slowly.
So it was very dangerous!

So he was up all night, hearing
the... THUUUDD! BANG!

(Hits Table) WHA... oops, WHACK
actually that hurt (Laughs)

That didn't work as
I expected it to.

I always say that when you give
a public talk, do some special effects

(Laughs)
Cause you know what happens

when people talk, talk, talk,
you know, they fall asleep

they get bored.
It is something like, special

like raise your voice, or go
BANG! or WOFF!

then actually, you know,
people actually enjoy it

in weird ways. Anyway, so
BANG!, WHACK!

All these trees where THUDDING
next to him.

And so, you know, it was very
difficult to meditate

And he was up all night,
but, you know, he survived

If he didn't survive he wouldn't
be able to tell me the tale.

He survived the night.
And in the morning

He walked outside, to see the
damage; And yeah, several big trees

Just missed his hut, he was lucky
to be alive!

But it wasn't the trees which
grabbed his attention,

what he saw was the leaves
on the forest floor.

Most of the leaves which had been
torn off the trees and laid dead

on the forest floor, where the old,
brown leaves.

But amongst those old brown leaves
there where several yellow leaves,

even a few green leaves. And some
of those green leaves where so

freshly green, they could have
only been alive for a few hours,

and now they laid dead
on the forest floor.

Before he completed his insight,
his understanding,

he checked to see what leaves remained
alive on the twigs and branches

of those trees; And of course!
Most of the leaves remaining alive

on the forrest trees, where the
green leaves!

But, even though a few green leaves
had been torn off and laid dead

on the ground, there where still a few
curly old brown leaves, still clinging on,

Even though the young green leaves
where torn off and laid dead.

You understand what we mean,
even though young children die,

there are still some of these old people
who keep coming to our center

every Friday for years and years and years
still clinging on (Laughs).

You know the old Grandma and Grandpa,
why aren't they dead yet? (Laughs)

They're all still clinging on when these
young people die.

And he realised that there
was nothing wrong.

That's what they where saying there:
"there's something wrong,

It can't be right, why are old people
still alive and young people die?

It can't be right". Then he saw it was
right: It was the nature of life and death

it's the nature of a storm which goes
through a forrest, to mostly take

the old leaves, but it always leaves
a few old leaves.

And it always takes a few
young green leaves as well.

Nothing is wrong,
welcome to life.

That's the law of life in
which we live.

Diseases, accidents, whatever happens,
mostly takes the old people first,

but a few young people, and a few
very young people,

and a few children as well.
That's our life.

But the nice thing about that
little story also

not only is it true, but it's
a reflection from nature

which we understand when
we are still, we can actually see that

we can actually get the connections,
as in nature, as in our life

we're not apart from nature,
we're part of nature.

And from that we can also have a lot
of other really great understandings

and the main thing I wanted to talk
about tonight, which I got on to, maybe,

just kinda almost halfway through
the talk already

Is actually just: well, young people die,
three deaths recently,

And just what happens afterwards,
when a person dies.

And, ever since I was really small
I had no problem in accepting

the idea of reincarnation.
One of the reasons why

It's got even firmer as a truth
it's by understanding the nature

of the mind, we learn what this
mind actually is.

We have become such a
materialistic society

in so many ways, that even things
like love and kindness, even joy

we think it's just something which
is a by-product of a brain.

Just to be able to get some happiness
and joy by taking some physical stuff

like a drug. And people just, sometimes
don't believe, when they come to see monks

especially, or nuns; We are
pretty happy people

and sometimes they come and say:
"Well, what drugs are you taking, monks?"

(Laughs). That happened to me so
many times!

One time, I was visiting a prison in UK
You know, we spend a lot of time in prison

as monks, I often tell people: Visiting
prisons, I always would keep a log

of how many hours and minutes I spent
doing community work in prison

to be used as credit, in case I ever
got sentenced for something (Laughs)

look, I've already done about... the
equivalent of about two or three months

you should take that off (Laughs).

But anyway, I was inside this jail,
cause it was a ceremony,

somebody had sweet talked the British
government into putting a Buddha statue

In the middle of an open prison,
a big one!

And you know, it's very easy
for people to sponsor a Buddha statue

especially inside a prison,
wow, it's amazing!

And so we did a installation ceremony.

And for those who ever come and see
some of the Buddhist rituals,

one of the favourite ones is actually we
go around three times

flowers, candles and incense, we go around
It's like an act of worship, reverence

you know, it's interesting, where
this comes from we don't know

but they also do that in Meca, when
they go around the, whatever it's called

...the Kaaba, always
go three times around, wearing white

this is incredible similarities between
our different traditions

where they came from
I don't know, but it's... that's Buddhist

Anyhow... There we where, going round
three times, and I was inspired

I was happy, Amazing, something good
being done in a prison!

Not just locking people up and
reenforcing how guilty they should feel

but no, just something which
is inspiring

and I was just so happy
with a big smile on my face

much more than I usually have
cause, you know, more inspiration

and at the corner of my eye I saw
these two prisoners

they just got nothing to do,
nothing was on the TV that night

so they just hung out to see
what the hell was going on

with these crazy people with brown
robes and a Buddha statue

so just, you know, having
a quick look

and then I heard them, one
looking to me... looking at

the other prisoner and
pointing to me

he said: "That monk, he's on
the gear" (Laughs)

If you don't know what gear means
you know, it's like, some sort of drug

cause that's the only thing they
could explain the happiness from

just some medication;
it's not medication!

you know, it's meditation,
not medication (Laughs)

you don't need that stuff to be
happy and have a really good time.

And I tell people, I don't know why
people laugh at this, because it's true

I'm a good time monk: I have a good time.
People say good time girl, a good time boy

and that has other meanings, I'm
a good time monk, cause you're

having a good time, you're happy.

And, so you don't need the medication,
something else which goes on there

and this is actually where you start
to realize: why do people wanna be happy

with things? Material stuff. We're
far too focussed on the material stuff

and instead, those ancient
religions, especially Buddhism

we've been focussing on the mind
for year and years and years

that's the important part.

So these days people don't
understand what the mind

actually is. And still, great scientists
have been trying to prove that the mind

is some byproduct of the brain
and they have failed miserably.

for years and years and years.
It's about time that they face the truth

that they're barking at the wrong tree
as they say

that the mind is something totally
different

fortunately there's a few scientists,
big ones

who're actually seeing something
totally different

one of them, you all saw recently,
or some of you saw

who came to our global
conference on Buddhism

Professor Bernard Carr.
I mention him cause

he's a really close friend
we went to Cambridge together

and he, Buddhist society, we chased
ghosts together in the psychic

research society, chasing ghosts and,
buddhists and astronomy as well

and also theoretical Physics

And he, you know, he lessened his
interest in Buddhism

and went more into theoretical Physics

I lessened my interest in theoretical
Physics and became more a Buddhist.

But he made a wonderful analogy,
at our conference

where he said We're really close
friends, it's great we've come together

again. Ajahn Brahm went off to be
a well known Buddhist,

under one of the great teachers:
Ajahn Chah; And Bernard, you know

he gave up his Buddhism, he became
a close disciple of Stephen Hawking's

He told me only recently, I went for lunch
with him when I was in Cambridge last

October- November, I did realise just
how close he as to Stephen Hawking's

so, In that movie, which they did of
Stephen Hawking's: brief... no,

"The Theory of Everything" I think
they called it

In that movie, one of the characters
in there was based on him

based on Bernard. So much so
that Bernard got invited to the premiere

in London. He actually walked on the red
carpet, which he thought was really cool

So you know, very close... so he became
a disciple of Stephen Hawking's, I became

a disciple of Ajahn Chah. And now we
sort of come together again and, he still

he wants to spend the rest of his time,
you know because he is emeritus now,

he's retired as professor of theoretical
Physics at Queen Mary College

in London. He is the top Physicist
to try and reintroduce into science

the primacy of the mind.

So, what the heck do I mean,
what is the mind

and this is a little exercise, when
you're giving a talk don't just

talk at people, get them to contribute

I am now going to ask you something,
and I want you to put up you're left

hand or you're right hand, you
can't keep both hands down

unless you're armless. If you got two
hands, put one of the up

and be honest... Not yet! Come on, now
be patient! (Laughs)

If you are happy, you know, more happy
than sad, having a reasonably good time

put up you're right hand. If you're more
miserable, put up you're left hand, ok?

Put up you're hand, doesn't matter which
one it is, keep it up.

Those people who got the right hand
up, you're happy, now please point

to the happiness for me, locate it
for me, where is it, where is it?

point to it.

You're all pointing to different places,
how come? you're head, is you're

head happy?

Now, you can put it down, this
is an exercise

because it's so hard to locate happiness

you're not imagining it, in fact,
happiness is a real thing, it's tangible

you know it, you experience it many
times.

Different forms, but it's real.
Where is it?

next time you're angry, where
is anger? where is it?

Is it in you're head, is it in your
tummy? where is it?

The point is, that we can't locate
these things, because these are things

which exist in the mind.

Just like you locate, or define
a garden, what is a garden?

a garden is where you find trees
and flowers, and lawns.

A garden is defined by what exists
in it. So if you want to know what the

mind is, the mind is where Love,
Kindness, Happiness, Anger, Anxiety,

Fear, Hope, Peace, where all of those
flowers and weeds live.

That's what defines the mind.

So it gives you an understanding of
what that mind actually is.

It takes it away from being some
philosophical, superstitious,

what actually is it?

Where you find those things, those
qualities that is where the mind is.

And you will soon figure out it does not
live in physical space

It doesn't live in you're brain,
or in you're body here.

Now, to prove that again:
one of Bernard's and my common

friends is actually at house where
we had lunch together

A few weeks ago
it's guy called Jeff

one of my other friends from Cambridge
had a lot of time together

Uhhh, I know that when my friend
Bernard came here

I think, Cecilia who was here, just
a few hours ago, she asked him in public

"Ok, you where a close friend of Ajahn
Brahm, tell us all the dirt...

what did he really get up to as a
student, what was the naughtiest

thing he did, come on, let us know"

now, Bernard doesn't know much,
but my friend Jeff does know a lot

So that's why I've never invited him
over here (Laughs)

I was just a student, like everybody else! Did really stupid things.

But fortunately I didn't get caught
(Laughs)

But anyway...

He's daughter, Pascal, she came, she's married now, and got a kid

she came and saw me just in October as well, and, when she was at grade one

primary school, that was when the teacher asked her a question

this is a brilliant story. In philosophy, this is actually where you start

with a story, a logical sequence which you end up in a place

you never expected to end up, and it changes the way you look at life

and this came from a five year old kid who later on went to do post graduate

research in Oxford, in Biochemistry. So, she was obviously just a really gifted

kid, but at five years of age, her teacher, grade one, at school

asked a question: "What is the biggest

thing in the world?" That was the question. And, one kid put her hand up

this is... he wrote to me about this and this is actually what happened

(Puts hand up) "My daddy", five year old kid, you know?

For a five year old kid, daddy is huge. And some other kid said

"No, no no miss: an Elephant" they'd just been to the zoo, Elephant is much bigger than anybody's daddy.

"No, no miss: A mountain is much bigger than an elephant" and actually you're

getting somewhere, this is the whole point of the exercise, getting the kids

to actually think and imagine and to know more

and then Pascal put her hand up and said: "no miss, my eye is the biggest

thing in the world". And at that even the teacher didn't understand

what the heck she meant. "What do you mean you're eye?"

And then this five year old genius said: "Well, miss, my eye can see

her daddy, my eye can see an elephant and a mountain and so much more

if all of that can fit into my eye, my eye must be the biggest thing in the world"

that is genius. It's genius because it sees things in a different perspective

than other people think. And it's, you can't fault it. It's just seeing things

from a different angle, and now you know what's the biggest thing: you're eye

cause everything you see can fit into it. It's huge!

But, I wrote back immediately and said: 9 out of 10, but not 10 out of 10

because, you're mind can see everything you're eye can see, and many other stuff

you can't see with you're eye,
imaginary things, flying pigs

(Imperceptible) Elephants, you can
imagine all of that sorta stuff

you'll never see that.

And you're mind can also hear stuff
real and imaginary sounds

it can smell, it can note tastes,
it can feel feelings in the body

even like phantom limbs, sometimes.
Real and imaginary sensations

It's also got it's own area, you know,
the love, the kindness, the fear

In fact, I argued, Everything you can
ever experience and know in life

can fit into you're mind.
So, you're mind is the biggest thing

Not in the world, because
you can know the world

and that can fit into you're mind.
You're mind is even bigger than the world

Now that is a logical argument, which
I've never had any Philosopher manage

to tear apart, and deny. It's just looking
at life in a different perspective

and coming up with an incredible answer
about how huge and powerful

you're human mind is.
Which is why people continue to report

to me weird and strange things...
Mindgames and stuff...

You know I told this story
a long time ago

and people said "that's true"
but they didn't actually believe it

but I, I heard it from the source,
and the source swore to me

I asked him again and again "Yes it
Hapened!"

The guy who was an Anagarika
for one year at Serpentine Monastery

Went over to Germany to
complete his degree

first day at a University campus
he walked past the ATM machine

This is a great story, and you may
actually get some benefit from this,

if you understand it and
practice it properly

So, he walked past the ATM machine
and he said the ATM machine

emitted a sound, he called it a
gurgling type sound

very difficult to define, but it made
a sound just as he passed by

and he took that as a welcome
from the ATM machine to the campus

And so from that time on that was
his ATM, that's where he did all his

transactions, and because he had been
by a monk like me

A little bit weird and crazy but, he
would always give Loving-Kindness

to the ATM machine. "May you be happy
and well, may you never run out of cash

may you're clients never hit you and
swear at you when they find they've got

no balance, may, you now, robbers never
tear you out of a wall with

a four wheel drive or blow up trying
to get the cash

may you live at peace and happy"
that sorta stuff

He'd talk to the ATM, regarded
it as a personal being with consciousness

and was always kind to it!

And he swore to me, this
actually happened, having his lunch

one afternoon, on a bench,
maybe about five or ten meters

away from the ATM. No one had gone
close to that ATM machine

for about 20 minutes, he was there
he saw it, no one had gone close to it!

and he was sitting there, having
his lunch, and he heard the gurgling sound

again, the machine gurgled at him
and he looked around, and he saw

a twenty euro note come out
of the machine (Laughs)

no one had put in any credit card,
punched in any numbers for twenty minutes

it got twenty euros. And he went
to the machine

with disbelief, but it was there
and he pulled it out: "does this belong

to anybody?" no one claimed it
but of course they wouldn't claim it

because it was the ATM's gift to
It's friend (Laughs)

Do you believe that? That
absolutely happened.

People say it couldn't happen
therefore it didn't

but that's not the case, any
scientist know it did happen

it was there, it was real, just we
haven't figured out how that happens yet

it's the way the mind works!
And somebody was telling me that recently

I got this story, one very, uhh,
strong supporter was telling me

That his old iPhone was not working,
you know, sometimes you're mobile

phones you used them so much and they
get a bit passed it, but you know,

he was just, you know he was trying to
live a simple life so instead

of replacing it, get a new one, he kept
the old one.

And when it wasn't working he
banged it, he hit it

and of course it still didn't work
and then he realised: "I'm a Buddhist

that's not the way you should do things"
so he apologized to his iPhone

"I'm sorry iPhone, I should not
have hit you, I really apologize,

I will never do that again, I wish
you all peace and happiness"

and he said it started working
immediately. (Laughs)

It did! I've tried that before, not
with iPhones, I don't have an iPhone

but i've tried that so many times
even, where is... I saw her earlier,

Ronnie, is she here? Veronica? She's
out the back somewhere.

They where trying to open they're car,
I came back from a ceremony

and I was just walking down the road
here, on a Saturday afternoon

and our Kalyana-mitta group,
they where about to go out

kitesurfing or doing something weird.
And anyway, the Boot of their car

was locked, tight. And they
could not open it!

and they where trying for twenty
minutes... OH! (Points) She's over there,

there you are. How long where you trying
to open up that car before I came along?

(Lady replies, unintelligible)
Only five or ten minutes, yeah

How many people tried?
(Lady replies, unintelligible)

Only two of us, but you couldn't do it?
Yeah there we go

So I came along, and they said:
"Ajahn Brahm, please could you

use your powers to open the car?"
(Laughs)

So I'm always a very kind monk, and
very helpful, and so I said:

Ok, but one condition, I wanted
to make a deal

The deal was that Ronnie, at the
back there, will become a nun. (Laughs)

And she said yes, never ever imagining
I could do it.

But of course, that's what you do.
You give it loving-kindness:

Nice car, that was what I did,
nice car, and I put the key in

and I turned it and it opened straight
away. And poor old Ronnie

has to become a nun now.
Be careful, playing around with monks

just, uhhh, it's very dangerous.
But fortunately, fortunately

one of the other youth group members
is a lawyer (Laughs).

She saw the loophole straight away
which is why Ronnie doesn't have

to become a nun yet.
She said: "You never mentioned the time,

maybe in fifty years or a next life
sometime, but, she promised

yes she will become a nun but you
didn't say when"

that was the loophole. (Laughs)

But it's amazing what you can do with
the mind. And this is something

which we see for such a long time,
the mind is huge!

And I spent most of my life as a monk
investigating and getting to know it

what it's really like, how powerful
it is. And, it is enormously powerful

and as a scientist you wish you
could take that evidence out there

and show it to people, so we realize
that, you know, this mind is icredibally

powerful, and this is actually what
we should be doing in our modern world

Strengthening the mind, not our brain!

Not learning how to think, but learning
how to be still, and accessing much more

of the power which we've lost, you know
with our mind.

And it's incredible what it can do.
So, because of that, it's always

been the case in Buddhism: focussing
on the mind, learning what your mind

is like. The exercise which we do
is meditation, that's how you really

strengthen the mind, get to know it.

Simile to end up with now, cause
I'm going overtime again:

Sometimes, the only way you can convey
these truths is through similes,

Very hard to find similes but this is
one of the similes which I used

the simile of the Emperor: So once
there was an Emperor, but everytime

the emperor came out in public,
the emperor was always covered,

head to toe, with five pieces of clothing.
With boots that went right up to

the thighs, with these trousers which
covered way over the top of the boots

to the ankles and, you know, really high
up his... It wasn't HIS, don't know who

it was; The chest. And a big jacket,
which overlapped the top of the trousers,

when right up to the neck, and right
down to the arms. HUGE gloves, which

overlapped the sleeves of the tunic,
and a helmet, like Darth Vader

or something, which overlapped
the top of the tunic.

So you could not see any part
of the skin or the eyes or the face

of this emperor. You didn't know
who the emperor was.

What is it? A girl or a boy?
Old or young? Asian, caucasian,

african or whatever. You couldn't
see the body at all, all you could see

was the coverings, the five coverings:
the helmet, the jacket, the gloves,

the trousers and the boots.
So no one really understood

this powerful emperor, who it was.

And the only way you can find out
is to take off those five pieces

of clothing to find out what's
underneath.

And in that simile, this is the five
senses: Seeing, hearing, smelling

tasting and touching.
You're mind, the Emperor

and it is the Emperor, controls
so much of what you do in life

you're happiness, you're sadness,
you're ability to love or be loved

You're physical health, you're peace.
It's all this Emperor inside.

We don't know what it is, you know,
who we are.

So, we take off those five pieces
of clothing: seeing hearing smelling

tasting and touch, that's what happens
in meditation, close you're eyes

and sight vanishes, really still, you
can't hear anything, can't smell,

as long as no one... Farts. (Laughs)
Disappears.

You know, that is why in Buddhist
temples they would light lots of incense

(Laughs), Just in case, to mask the smell.
There's always reasons for this.

And you're not tasting anything,
and because you're sitting perfectly still

and just watching you're breath, soon
you're body vanishes

Can't feel the feet, can't feel
you're hands, no aches and pains

and when you're body disappears
then you're breath disappears,

and you go, the last of those five
senses has vanished,

and the only thing left is you're mind,
the sixth sense, that's what happens

in meditation, it's what you do.
So you carry on like this, and soon

everything of those five senses vanishes:
You're girliness, you're Sri Lankan'nes,

You're Englishness, that's all outside
in the body, being old, being young

that's body stuff, when all that vanishes
you find out who this Emperor is inside

for you're self! Not theory, not believing
in somebody else: you're own

direct experience. And that is what
meditation does.

You find out what is this mind,
and it will blow... actually how can

knowing the mind blow you're mind?
(Laughs) But you know what blowing

the mind means. It will literally just
really amaze you, just how powerful

is this mind. That's what the monks
and nuns do! So much time, and then

the body vanishes and disappears,
you see these beautiful lights

in the mind, incredible bliss
and power.

Therefore you understanding this mind
is much more powerful than this body.

Little driver, gets into this body for
a lifetime, and afterwards goes and gets

another body. Or just goes to incredible
other places where that mind can live

for long periods of time. And how this
mind creates time, creates stuff.

If you want to know who the creator is,
it's not some God in the sky, You are

the creator, this mind.
Once you know that, woof!

You know just how you can get
twenty euros out of an ATM. (Laughs)

Very useful skills in today's economy.
Thank you for listening (Laughs).

(Audience): "Sadhu, Sadhu, Sadhu!"

Ok, very good. Ok, let's get some of the questions, especially from, yeah,

Overseas. Here we go. (Reads iPad):
"Since a while my meditations end in the

mindfulness stage, I lean back, relax and suddenly notice how agitated

I actually am. It gets worse during meditation so I have to stop. What to do?"

Follow the instructions which I give!
So if you start by, especially paying

attention to the peace o'meter, then you find when the peace o'meter gets

more and more still, then you're actually looking at what's really important

so you de-agitate yourself. So sometimes it's because the mindfulness is not put

in the right place. You're not really seeing what the problem is.

And if you put the mind on the peace o'meter as I mentioned here,

It will probably be solved.
Next question (Reads):

"Letting go. Are these two words overused these days? People seem

to be careless users for anything they cannot get or do not want

to put effort into."

Exactly! You go to work, and instead

of people saying you're fired, or we sack you, they say: "We have to let

you go" (Laughs). They don't have to let you go! You're sacking me!

But, it is overused, and sometimes people can be: "Well if we just let go

we get nowhere in life!" Exactly! There is the time for letting go, and the time

for doing stuff. So, if you need to go to the toilet, do not let go

in this room (Laughs). You put effort to get to the toilet first, and then you

let go. Do not let go when you're riding on the back of a motorbike going home,

Cling and be attached! So letting go is a skill which we use when it's

appropriate. When there's nothing to do, then we let it be, when there's

something to do then we put effort in.

But the point is, we know how to put effort into our lives, we've been doing

that ever since we went to school! But we haven't learned how to be still

and let things be, which is one of the reasons we're a crazy society.

So let go: great! Learn how to do that. A skill which you can use whenever

it's necessary. When there's nothing to do, do nothing, let go.

How many times is it... there's nothing to do, but we still have to do something.

Cause we don't know how to let go.

Lastly, from Germany: "What is transcendent... transcendent mind?"

Is it what remains of us after death?"
Transcendent mind, I don't know.

Uhhhhh, I know that one of our monks
many years ago, he, you know, he had

a bad teeth, and you know, we live in
Serpentine, it's a long way to go to

the dentist. And you know what it's
like these days, you have to make

an appointment, and when you go
to the appointment then you have

to wait and then... It's just such a pain
in the... actually probably the pain

in the neck is worse than the pain
in the mouth when you go to the

dentist sometimes. So this monk
decided "ah yeah, it's a waste of time

going to the dentist". So he decided to
put his own tooth out. I saw him!

He just, he went to the workshop,
got a pair of pliers and just

yanked his tooth out. And I just
happened to be going to the workshop

at Bodinyana Monastery and I saw
this bloody tooth, you know, in a pair

of pliers. "What have you been doing?"
"Oh you know, took my tooth out,

It's much cheaper and much quicker
than going to the dentist."

And I thought "How did you do that?"

And he said "It's very easy, because..."
It's a wonderful little teaching

He said: "When I decided to put my
tooth out, that didn't hurt. You know,

thinking about, planning doesn't hurt.
And when I went to the workshop

that didn't hurt, when I picked up the
pliers that didn't hurt, when I put

the pair of pliers on the tooth that
never hurt, when I wiggled that hurt!

But you know, just for, maybe, twenty
seconds, thirty seconds and it was out

and it didn't hurt much afterwards.
It's only twenty seconds of pain,

that's all." But if that was you, (Points
at audience), even before you'd even

picked up the pliers it would hurt
like hell (Laugh).

You see what pain is? Anticipation.
He trained himself not to anticipate,

being in the present moment, so it's
only ten seconds of pain.

So that is what we call how to...
Trancen...DENTAL meditation (Laughs).

And that's enough for tonight,
thank you so much. (Clapping).

OK, let's pay respects to Buddha, Dhamma
and Sangha, I apologize for that,

but those of you who know me,
know what to expect.

(Chanting Homage to the Triple Gem
in pali)

(Speaking, unintelligible)