THE BUDDHIST SOCIETY OF W.A.

NEWSLETTER

The Mind Lets Go of Itself

Ajahn Chah

What follows is an extract of a conversation between Ven. Ajahn Chah and a group of western monk disciples. It was recorded at Gor Nork Temple in northeast Thailand on the 14th August 1979.

Question: What do we have to do to get to the real mind (citta)?

Ajahn Chah: Firstly we follow this wandering mind. Follow this mind until we see it as uncertain and changing. The mind must clearly perceive itself, seeing that it has nothing that can be grasped. Then it will let go completely. The mind lets go of this very mind. By completely understanding this mind it abandons the mind. It exhausts the minds ability to concoct thought, it becomes unconfused by any of this.

The Buddha was reluctant to describe this state (of Enlightenment) for whatever words are ascribed to it they are mere conventional labels. Words are used to describe it so people can understand. Naturally it remains just as it is.

"Don't be just empty talk...!"

(Ajahn Chah taps the ground and continues:) Like the ground compared to that which runs around on top. It's like that. That which is the ground doesn't arise or cease, it remains as it is. That which arises and runs around on top, includes the mind (citta), perception, (sanñña) as well as thinking (sankhāra).

In whatever way the state (of Enlightenment) is explained-body, feeling, perception, thought and consciousness do not exist. They totally cease. They only exist by placing a conventional designation
on them. Body, feeling, perception, thought and consciousness arise, then cease. Nothing! All ceased!

Have you ever read the discourse where the Venerable Sariputta enquires from his disciple, Ven Yamaka who is about to, go off wandering through the countryside?

Ven. Sariputta, asks his disciple, "Ven. Yamaka, suppose on your wanderings someone asks you the question 'Ven. Yamaka, where does a Buddha go after death?' How would you answer them?"

"I would reply that body, feeling perception, thought and consciousness, having arisen, cease. Cease completely. Just that.

"Ven Sariputta exclaimed "That's right! You’ve passed the test!"

This was a question to examine a disciple before he was able to go off travelling alone. Here I ask if you also understand. Comprehend just this point and everything comes to an end. Body, feeling perception, thought and consciousness, having arisen, cease without remainder. Knowing this go away and investigate it, making it extremely clear. It's not just to see arising and passing away superficially, it's not like that. You must see until the path and fruit (of Enlightenment) manifest in the mind. Then, though we experience that arising and passing away are phenomena-no happiness or suffering follows because of it. There is not the continuous clinging and grasping as before. The mind must truly become like this. It must be seen in your own heart this way. Don't be just empty talk! Then wherever we are we own nothing. Whatever arises ceases, arises then ceases, that's all, there is no more dependence on a speculative mind running after this.

Q: This is the original mind or primordial mind, isn't it?

Ajahn Chah: Hey!

Q: The original mind.

Ajahn Chah: The what?

Q: Is there anything outside these five aggregates (i.e. of body, feeling, perception, thought and consciousness)? Is there anything at all that can be called the original mind.
Ajahn Chah: They can call it ‘original’. But it’s all gone. Just there, it’s all gone.

Q: You couldn’t call this the original mind, could you?

Ajahn Chah: Label it that if you like. You could call it that. If we don’t give words to things then we will have to stop talking. We won’t have any words to communicate about this. There would be nothing to talk about. (Ajahn Chah picks up a cup and moves it away, pointing to its original position saying:) That was its origin. That space was its primal original position. There now, is nothing of this cup there. This spot contains nothing. That which can be spoken of is all a part of conventional reality, that’s all. The primordial, the original, that’s just a way of speech, without such conventional descriptions there can be no understandable communication. We would just sit speechless and stare at each other, not understanding anything. But we can begin to understand something by giving it a defining word.

Q: To get to this stage, how much samadhi (right concentration) do you need?

Ajahn Chah: Eh? To obtain this, there already has to be a continual controlling and encompassing awareness of the mind. Without samadhi, right concentration, will you be able to do anything? Without samadhi and right concentration there’s absolutely no way this can be achieved regardless of what you may think.

The degree of samadhi needs to be enough so that phenomena can be seen. Enough that wisdom can arise. How can you quantify how much that is? Or ask how peaceful does the mind have to become. Try developing enough to the extent of overcoming all your doubts! Then it will be all finished with. The mind will arrive at the truth.

"...how much samadhi do you need?"
SANGHA NEWS

Something is wrong! As I write this, it is so peaceful there and nothing has gone wrong yet to spoil our retreat. It can’t be right that nothing goes wrong. Something always goes wrong, right? Alright, I might be wrong right now but my wrong will be righted when it all goes wrong. Am I right?

I’m not usually a pessimist but, you see, this is our 13th Rains Retreat at Bodhinyana Monastery, we have 13 monks resident and I am writing this on 13th October when there are just 13 days to the end of our retreat! Such coincidences give me much consternation (what I once thought one took laxatives for) and I fear that the uneasy peace here is, as the saying goes, just the qualm before the storm!

Talking of storms, we have had a very, very wet winter at our monastery. So much rain has fallen that it has been like living at the bottom of a well - so, I suppose I can honestly say that all is ‘well’ here at the monastery! The rain even fell during our ceremony to mark the beginning of the Rains Retreat in late July. However, it only slightly dampened the enthusiasm of the hundreds who came and literally soaked up the atmosphere here! It was truly a wonderful day since our devotees were full of wonder, such as “......‘wonder when it will stop raining?” “......‘wonder if I can dash to the car without getting soaked?” and many other similar “wonders”. The greatest wonder, though, was that so many people thoroughly enjoyed themselves with a day at our monastery in spite of the ‘disrespectful’ weather.

It was also wonderful to have the wandering monk, Ven Gunaratana, stay at our monastery for the first few days of our retreat. His inspiring presence meant that this year’s Rains Retreat got off to a very slow start. In a meditation monastery such as ours, that is just perfect! Usually it takes us a few weeks to build up to such a profound degree of mindful slowness! So “Thank you, Venerable Sir” for hurrying along the slowness. It has been pretty silent ever since. Silence is shy, as they say, because whenever one starts talking about it, it has already departed!
Because of the very wet winter this year, our monastery looks delightfully green and very beautiful. The lakes are overflowing and the wildflowers are in abundance. This is an irritating state of affairs when one is a hay-fever sufferer like me! Perhaps I should write a hay fever sufferer’s guide to meditation and call it "How I came within a nose of enlightenment but blew it"! The problem is genetic since noses run in my family. I endure the presence of itchy eyes and an exploding nose with the thought that the hay fever season will soon be over. Then we get the fly season here. I was told, though, at the beginning of our retreat, that the inventive Americans had managed to successfully establish, over Iraq I think, what they called a "no-fly zone". I will contact the American Consulate in Perth after the retreat and see if they would kindly establish a "no-fly zone" over our monastery as well!

It is not only little two-winged insects which fly at this time. Some of our monks will also be flying, taking the Dhamma to distant parts. Ajahn Khasouk, the Lao-Thai monk from our parent monastery, Wat
Nong Pah Pong, who spent the Rains Retreat with us, will return to Canberra in November. Ajahn Khamsouk helped me greatly during the retreat period, especially through giving Dhamma talks in Thai to our regular visitors. I do hope that he returns again soon because my Thai is getting so rusty that I often need a translator from Brahmi-Thai to intelligible Thai!

Ajahn Nyanadhammo has been invited to visit the Buddhist holy places in India and will be away for a fortnight in November. Ajahn Khemananddo will visit his family in the U.K. returning to Perth after the summer, and Ajahn Nyanavisuddhi will be heading out to the far east, being Melbourne and Sydney. As for me, after a quick three day invitation to Jakarta to deliver some talks on Buddhism, I will visit the Buddhist holy places in Perth (Dhammaloka and Bodhinyana) with my monastic family and going no further east than East Vic Park (a suburb of Perth)! In the approach to my old age, I prefer more and more the sedentary life ....... but then again, sitting on an aeroplane qualifies as sedentary, doesn’t it?

As for flying visitors, in late October we expect a visit from the English speaking Thai Buddhist nun, Sister Supin, and then from November 25th to December 7th we will host a brief visit from two western Buddhist nuns, Sisters Upekkha and Vayama. Around the time of the New Year, we hope that the well respected Sri Lankan monk, Ven Dhammavihari will visit us once more. That is if nothing goes wrong meanwhile....... 

The end of the world maybe nigh, or otherwise, that is uncertain. But the end of our retreat is certainly night and that spells D-O-O-M for our peaceful schedule. It will be back to our city centre, Dhammaloka, for me most weekends and then more building projects at the monastery in the meantime. This year we hope to start building two more kutis (monk’s huts), if there are sufficient funds, for our ever growing Sangha. I also hope to complete the monastery wall extension past the lower gate. When finished, the wall will be long enough to count as our first monastrosity! In mid-summer, probably, we will proceed with drilling the bore (this project was postponed before the retreat) aiming to find a plentiful supply of good
underground water. However, in my present pessimistic mood, I have a sinking feeling about the bore!

On the subject of bores, I do not wish to become one, so I will finish this article shortly. As for my premonition of disaster, I have now found out what is wrong: thinking “Something is wrong” - that’s what was wrong! So all is right at the monastery after all. Maybe......

Looking on the bright of life(!)
Ajahn Brahm

"There's a passage where the Buddha asks, 'Days and nights pass by, pass by. What are you doing right now?' So what answer do you have for him?"
THE LIFE OF A JUNIOR MONK

Life as a junior monk has its ups and downs. But this is not really a big problem as long as there is progress on the path. If one looks back on the months and years and sees that change in accordance with the Dhamma has taken place then there is a cause for joy and further striving.

It has been said that it doesn’t matter where you are and who you are with as long as you just practice. But surely this is to oversimplify. Indeed, in many instances, the Buddha made it clear that right companionship and right living are crucial supports for the practice of his path. In one ‘sutta’ the Buddha said to Ananda; “Good friendship is not half the holy life Ananda, it is all of it.” (SN, I, III, 2, 8). And as regards the right way of living the Buddha again and again praised seclusion and aloofness from society.

Thus there seems to be a close relationship between progress on the eightfold path and external circumstances. But what about Bodhinyana Monastery? Is it a good place to practice according to the Buddha’s criteria? Even though my experience with other monasteries is limited, some observations are quite apparent.

Seclusion is difficult to find these days, even in most monasteries. In traditional countries such as Thailand, economic progress and development is happening so fast that hardly any place is left untouched. In most western countries this is also the case. Thus the peaceful, quiet and secluded atmosphere of Bodhinyana Monastery is to be highly cherished.

Furthermore the daily routine at Bodhinyana (especially during the rains retreat) allows lots of time for solitary meditation. This also should not be taken for granted, as many monasteries are busy with many kinds of work and business. Yet the Buddha said “...a monk does not shine by delighting in company...by delighting in society...” (MN 122) and “there are these roots of trees, these empty huts. Meditate monks, or else you will regret it later.” (eg MN 152)
Of course such a routine based on solitary practice, demands maturity of the individual monastic. But if one has sufficient motivating force within oneself then the seclusion and quiet atmosphere of this monastery is hard to match.

However, meditation and seclusion don’t get one very far if one doesn’t have good guidance based on correct understanding of the Dhamma. "Monks I know of no single thing of such power to cause the arising of good states...as friendship with the good." (AN,1,8,1) said the Buddha, so this is certainly crucial. And at Bodhiyana Monastery, behind the jokes, smiles and relaxed façade of the senior monks, one finds indeed some of the most wise, serious and sincere practitioners of the Dhamma that can be found anywhere. (As far as my limited ability to judge goes.) This is of great help for coming to an intellectual grasp of the true Dhamma. (i.e. Right View), and also a great source of inspiration for the beginner on the path. Undoubtedly, at Bodhiyana are found those "Kalyana Mitra", that the Buddha said are so important for living the holy life.

Finally there is the high yet simple standard of the monastic facilities. This is of course due to the generous support of the lay community. And this support is continuously evident as there is never any lack in the requisites necessary for living a proper monastic life.

All this seems to put Bodhiyana Monastery quite close to the ideal as the Buddha himself formulated it. Indeed it is not uncommon that visiting senior monks, from all over the world, confirm that this monastery is better suited than most for the practice of the Dhamma.

So, even though monastic life has its ups, and downs, if one wants to succeed in the practice of the Dhamma, Bodhiyana Monastery is most certainly the right place to be. Hopefully the monastery has a long life ahead of it, allowing a large number of Dhamma practitioners to benefit from such rarely found facilities.

May you all realise the highest happiness as soon as possible.

JUNIOR MONK
MEDITATION RETREATS

There are a number of retreats being offered during 1997. They represent a wonderful opportunity to take time out to concentrate on your meditation practice. Registration forms will be available from Dhammaloka Buddhist Centre four weeks prior to the start of each retreat.

March 14 - 16  Weekend Retreat at St Joseph’s Retreat House, SafetyBay
June 20 - 22   Weekend Retreat at St Josephs’ Retreat House, Safety Bay
November 21 - 23 Weekend Retreat at St Joseph’s Retreat House, Safety Bay
December 12 - 21 Nine day Retreat at the Redemptorist Retreat House, North Perth
SOCIETY NEWS

If you have been watching your mailbox waiting for the Newsletter to arrive and wondering why it is late it is because we have now decided to publish it only three times a year instead of four as we have in the past. The intervening months we will produce a Bulletin at Dhammaloka Buddhist Centre to bring people up to date and to let them know what activities etc are being planned for the future. The cost of producing and mailing the Newsletter, together with the work involved in its production has become difficult to sustain and the Committee is confident we can meet the needs of our members under the new system. As from next year Newsletters will be sent out in March, July and November. Contributions gratefully received!

The Rains Retreat period is traditionally a quieter period for the Society as the monks remain at the monastery for most of that period. A program of visiting teachers, guest lay presentations, videos and tapes filled the Friday night sessions and we are grateful to all those who contributed. Our thanks also to those lay people who ably conducted the Saturday afternoon meditation classes during that period. It is pleasing to see that we have a number of people who are willing and able to contribute in this way.

We have been very fortunate to have had two very inspiring nuns visiting us for a couple of weeks - Sister Vayama and Sister Upakkha. Sister Vayama is an Australian nun who ordained 11 years ago and has spent most of her monastic life in Sri Lanka. Sister Upakkha is of French origin, has been 10 years in robes and is usually resident at Amaravati. The Nuns’ visit has again given us all the opportunity to discuss the idea of establishing a place for Nuns to practice and to gather ideas and suggestions from female monastics. Sister Vayama gave a wonderful Friday night Dhamma talk at Dhammaloka which was greatly appreciated by everyone. As the sisters leave Perth we wish them well and hope that one day they will return to Western Australia.
Happy workers preparing for the Multi-cultural Fair

Contributions by many were needed when the Society conducted a Multi-cultural Food Fair in November which raised a wonderful $12,453.30 for the Society! Nollamara was transformed as we took over the Park opposite the Centre for the cultural show. African, Sri Lankan, Portuguese, Thai and Chinese dancers were amongst the entertainers, together with singers, bands (including a high school concert band), martial arts and many other acts which entertained the large crowd who were already feeling very happy and contented after the wonderful food fair. The successful day was the result of hard work by many people over very many months and we thank all who were involved for a wonderful day which resulted in much needed funds.

There have been other ‘comings and going’ at Dhammaloka with Jesper Hansen who lived at Dhammaloka and assisted with the caretaking duties, leaving us to return to Melbourne. Jesper has many friends in Perth and has contributed greatly to the building and maintenance of the Monastery as well as Dhammaloka. He takes with us our best wishes and deep gratitude.
Our thanks also to Linda Stevenson who has recently resigned as library coordinator. Linda has done a fine job in this role which she performed with great efficiency and good humour. Ron Storey has kindly taken over the role of Librarian and we are thankful for his continuing support.

The Society is wishing to compile a history of the Buddhist Society of Western Australia and would welcome help from any volunteers who would undertake to interview people about the early days of the Society and to write up their findings. If you would like more details or would like to help please telephone Don Weerakody, our President, on 326 2987 during business hours.

As 1996 comes to an end we thank everyone who has helped support the aims of the Society during the year. A great number of people are needed in many ways to keep both Bodhinyana and Dhammaloka going and to enable many people to hear the Dhamma and our thanks go out to you all. It is now time to consider nominations for the new Committee for next year. There is a great opportunity to serve in a skilful manner by becoming a Committee member and if you are interested please contact Don to discuss further. There may also be other people who you would like to see represent the members by being on the Committee and we suggest that you discuss it with them and encourage them to become involved. Further details on the Annual General Meeting and nomination process appears elsewhere in this newsletter.

We wish you all a very happy and fruitful 1997.

*With metta*

*The Committee*
AN APOLOGY

In our "Monthly-Bulletin", September-October, the amount raised in our September fund-raiser, LUCKY SOMTUM 37, was mistakenly stated as $3037.37. The amount received by the Buddhist Society of W.A was actually $7037.37.

The hardworking organiser of this successful event, Mrs Lucky Staines requested that $5,000 be used towards purchasing a new monastery bus for transporting our monks to their many engagements, and the remainder be put towards monastery running costs.

The Buddhist Society and in particular the editors of the ‘Monthly-Bulletin’ apologise for any misunderstandings caused by our error. Further, we would take this opportunity to express our deep thanks to the Staines family and all the many helpers who contributed so much of their time, resources and energy to make this event one of the most successful fund raisers ever.

“Selfless giving is the path to the heavenly abodes”
### Regular Activities

**Dhammaloka Buddhist Centre, Nollamara**

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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>7.00 - 7.20pm</td>
<td>Chanting</td>
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<td>7.30 - 8.00pm</td>
<td>Guided sitting meditation</td>
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<td>8.00 - 9.00pm</td>
<td>A talk on Buddhism by one of the senior monks</td>
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<td>Saturday</td>
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<td>Food offering to the Sangha</td>
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<td>3.00 - 4.15pm</td>
<td>Instruction, meditation and discussion. Separate classes for new and</td>
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<td>experienced meditators. A four week <em>Introduction to meditation</em> course</td>
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<td>Sunday</td>
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<td>Sitting meditation</td>
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<td>9.15 - 9.45am</td>
<td>Walking meditation and interviews</td>
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<td>9.45 - 10.30am</td>
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<td>10.30am</td>
<td>Food offering to the Sangha</td>
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<td>12.00 - 1.30pm</td>
<td>Dhamma school for children is on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month</td>
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<td>3.00 - 4.30pm</td>
<td>Advanced Dhamma class (2nd &amp; 4th)</td>
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<td>Wednesday</td>
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<td>Unguided meditation</td>
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### South of the River

**Tuesday**  

7.00 - 9.00pm  

Meditation Instruction  

Meditation and Dhamma talk at Armadale-Kelmscott Hospital

### Addresses

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