Vesak at Dhammaloka.
Dear Ajahn Brahmali

I listened to your talk live yesterday (Vesak Day), on making Buddha your spiritual friend (the PM session). I enjoyed your talk very much and made a Graphic Recording of its content. I would like to share it with the BSWA community.

With metta, June Yeo. Lay Disciple from Singapore
Release --- The Naturalness of 'Letting-Go'

By Dennis Sheppard

Buddhist practitioners (like me) often lament the difficulty of letting go. How do we let go? Any serious meditator who practises to ‘experience’ what the Buddha was pointing to will usually find themselves exploring this conundrum. Our practice is deep enough to understand the stillness of consciousness, nested beneath the movement of mind that creates our world and our being. We know without doubt that it is all mind created. Indeed, we may have experienced the extraordinary nature of our body and the world finishing in our mind, in what the Buddha labelled ‘Mundane’ knowledge. Further, some of us may have experienced consciousness finishing, which will lead to the cessation of mind should it be in place at death. This is an experience labelled ‘Supra Mundane’ by the Buddha. I infer that when the Buddha used the word Mundane, he did so to show that our work is still not done, we still habitually grasp onto our being and the world. It is true that the Buddha did say that anyone experiencing cessation would become a ‘stream winner’, enlightenment within a maximum seven rebirths in the idiomatic language of the time. He also explained that this process can be quicker as a “Once-Returner, Non-Returner, or Arahant” in this life. We know that we need to let go completely to fully realise, we know that the path is not about attainment, but we still grasp. So finely balanced is the wisdom and delusion found at the heart of the present moment, that fear prevents us from walking through the door of enlightenment. This is so because there is still a residual belief in the consciousness of death and this will naturally bring about a rebirth. We are still to fully appreciate and make real the truth and beauty of the universal nature of mind. We still see the external as the other.

The karmic process that brought us into existence plays out for most of us until we are old and worn out. Death then comes as a release from the physical aging to allow the mind to condition a new body and a new circumstance depending on our karma. It is usually the subconscious and unconscious nature of our consciousness that is at play here. We start to understand the way consciousness is iterating beyond any definition of fast, as it begins and ends in the present moment. The countless cycles and build-up of this conditioning of consciousness does create a strong belief in what the physical brain filters from the mind. Indeed, most of us believe the brain is the mind. We do not realise that the mind is beyond the activity and the consciousness being sequestered by the brain. Beyond this, it seems to be a very rare circumstance for someone to be aware of what it is to know beyond consciousness. Certainly, people the Buddha called Arahant have developed to be this knowing. In the realm of consciousness however, many people, especially children up to ages 5 to 7 years are aware of the life they have come from. Many people remember their past lives either spontaneously or because of a happening, traumatic or otherwise and indeed my work as a hypnotherapist has assisted many people to remember. For those of us who find past lives problematic, the work of Professor Stevenson (1918-2007) Chair of Psychiatry, University of Virginia, will be an enlightening read. It remains true however that the brain’s filtered understanding means ignorance remains so strong.

Having said all of this, the Human condition in fact displays very natural, comparable resonances of what it is to let go in the realm of consciousness. Investigating this way prepares us to be ready to know the Supra Mundane experience of consciousness ending. To do this we must know consciousness and how it works intimately. So, as an example, we can see the resonance of ‘letting-go’ when we can look at what it is to ‘drop off to sleep’. This is a change in the state of our consciousness. It is something that most have little awareness of because our consciousness is not usually awake when this happens, we are most likely to be subconscious or unconscious as it happens. Practising waking into a dream lucidly is a way to know, and perhaps even semi consciously direct a dream once asleep. It seems to confirm we have innate will, but in fact it continues the delusion. Anyway, the phase transition from awake to sleep is a process we do not usually witness. We are awake and then we are asleep. I experience it like a quantum mechanical process where the mind goes into a dreamy state of uncertainty and instability, with random images and thoughts, somewhat akin to a ‘false vacuum’ in Physics. And then sleep! So, tiredness overwhelms, then subconscious imagery and then a direct unconscious release into sleep. During sleep there is further subconscious and unconscious processes at work to rest, rejuvenate and recalibrate our body and the mental processes to recreate and sustain us over the course of our life. So, I am pointing to this ‘Release’ into
sleep as a ‘phase transition’ we can come to terms with and be aware of. This can help enable the practice of being aware when letting go into the Supra Mundane and cessation. It demonstrates the limited nature of our will and in the end shows the empty pre and ongoing conditioning we all live with. It is not enough to have just the Right View; we need also to develop the Right Intention. (the two wisdom elements of the Noble Eight-Fold path).

Specifically to know the right intention that allows letting go. These two factors, along with the support of the rest of the eight-fold path, enable us to move beyond physical conditioning and further, beyond the mental conditioning that creates the mind beyond the body and the world. This allows the cessation experience to be viable at death when it has been experienced and understood. When this knowing is in place, the mind will unify naturally at death.

In the end, understanding and being with this ‘sleep release’ is as natural as being with the ‘letting go release’ of our body at death, however it goes without saying that the ‘letting go release’ at death requires the mind to be totally awake for cessation. It is this fact that introduces doubt and confusion into the letting go process. To illustrate this, I have witnessed myself mindfully holding a cup firmly, with the intention of holding it up if I drop to sleep, only to find I waken myself when the cup falls from my hand. The sleep release had relaxed my body and fingers beyond my control into a sub or unconscious state. Perhaps I could condition myself to be like a bird that can hold onto a branch when asleep, by habitually conditioning its feet and claws to grip tighter, if it starts to slump in sleep. Its brain and body have some control in sleep as indeed we have some control in our sleep to keep us safe and alive, but at the bird’s death, it is said to ‘drop off the perch’. To further illustrate this point I remember many years ago, I had the opportunity to arrange for some BSWA members along with some of our monks to visit the morgue at the beginning of each annual rains retreat. We were invited to observe autopsies and did so mindfully and respectfully. Observation of these corpses showed how the release of the life we knew, allowed the individual and compounded constituents that once made up the physical nature of the person, to collapse back into their own field of consciousness. These components, once animated with a life and ego, go their own way. The fluids succumb to gravity’s laws and where the person could have once held in its waste, it now flowed freely in some cases.

Seeing and understanding the way mind ‘lets go’ (releases) a body at death has great merit. It demonstrates how the physical process finishes ready for recycling. The birds drop off the perch and our bodies go back to nature. These illustrations show how limited our understanding can become when we equate the mind as being the brain, without understanding the consciousness driving everything in the Universe. It is here that we can break through and understand completely the nature of the mind. Mind is the Universe driven by consciousness and it is personal for each of us, just as it is for components or collections of components of energy, mental or physical. We start to understand the insidious nature of consciousness. We see that will is an illusion. This insight opens the pathway to knowledge of the deathless.

So, recapping, mindful practice to stay with the still consciousness of mind is a practice that can be realised. The Buddha’s Eightfold path of practice will eventually lead you right into the heart of the present moment where the still consciousness identifying the boundary of the mind will stand forth. As refined as this experience is, the Buddha has labelled it Mundane. It is still in the realm of Samsara and is subject to birth, death, and rebirth, however the practitioner will now know beyond any doubt that their being, along with the world they are born into is mind made. All the physical has unified and subsumed into the still consciousness that contains it all. The subtle pleasure and beauty of the stillness will now allow Mindfulness to engage with it as a still datum against the apparent nature of life as it plays out in the world. The practitioner can now concentrate on deepening the practice by penetrating this pure consciousness with Mindfulness. This will eventually allow you to see that even this still consciousness finishes deeper again, right on the balance point of the present Moment. The still datum is gone. The boundaries of mind have gone. Consciousness is finished. Cessation! This realisation, along with an understanding of the on/off nature of phase transitions that govern the change in all energy states, will give great confidence to know how things work. This is so for both the sleep and death release, or indeed for any energetic transitions whether they are collapsing compounded conditioning to unify into the moment or, building conditioning as creations the other way into time and space. Phase transitions work naturally either way to keep our world and the emptiness of the present moment forever in balanced perfection. However, building consciousness and conditioning will always have the first noble
truth of dukkha in place. Remember that the Buddha said, “I teach only two things, Dukkha and the ending of Dukkha”. With practice we can unify beyond dukkha and be awake to our non-self-nature and emptiness at our death even though others may judge our brain to be dead. Time and space have ended. We can see that when our personal being and world resolves and unifies beyond the realm of consciousness at our death, the two-way process and duality of our being has ended, becoming one with the empty nature of it all. Karma is finished, the universe is finished. There is only truth and beauty radiating beyond time and space and beyond any quantum mechanical logic, at peace in the present moment. This is not atheism and it is not theism; it is the Middle Way. We can realise this ‘knowing’ in a ‘unified natural state’, consciousness gone, relaxed infinity and Supra Mundane knowledge that allows our personal Universe to finish in Pari Nibbana.

Heedfulness is the Deathless path,
Heedlessness is the path to death.
Those who are heedful do not die,
Heedless are like the dead.

The Buddha.
Dhammapada Verse 21
by Iffeisha Gordon-Toppin and Nim Dissa

Over 2600 years ago the Buddha set up the Sangha comprised of four pillars: monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen. The goal was to have us work together to support each other in growing on the Path to Nibbana. That tradition of the four-fold Sangha died along with the Buddha’s ordained nuns and the refusal of the Buddhist monastic community to bestow upon nuns the same rights as monks.

Ten years ago, Ajahn Brahm did the unthinkable – he stood up for gender equality and followed his heart in conducting the first Theravada bhikkhuni (nun) ordination in Australia, and the first in the Thai Forest Tradition anywhere in the world. This ceremony was performed at Bodhinyana Monastery in Western Australia on October 22nd, 2009 by Ajahn Brahm and some of the monks at Bodhinyana.

The historic event drew an austere reaction and outrage among conservative Buddhists. However, Ajahn Brahm’s response in an interview with ABC was that there were four Australian women who met the criteria and wanted to become Bhikkhunis and so he did the ordination for them, saying it was a sacrifice he was willing to make and had made.

Ten years later, the Buddhist Society of Western Australia celebrated the 10th Anniversary of the First Theravada Bhikkhuni Ordination in Australia on October 27th 2019 along with the Kathina ceremony at Dhammasara Nuns’ monastery. The historic ordination at and establishment of which set the precedence for restoring the order of the four pillars of the community that the Buddha had set up over 2600 years ago.

Close to this milestone Ajahn Brahm was named Member of the Order of Australia for work on gender equality. He was recognized on the Queen’s Birthday 2019 Honours List, appointing him as a Member of the Order of Australia for his “significant service to Buddhism, and to gender equality.”

When Dhammasara Nuns Monastery was established in 1998, the Buddhist Society of WA had already established a highly respected forest monastery for monks, Bodhinyana Monastery, at Serpentine. The aim of Dhammasara was and continues to be, to give women the same opportunity to train in the Buddha’s teachings and Monastic discipline as monks, in supportive conditions. The nuns at Dhammasara are fully ordained Bhikkhunis (equal in every respect to Bhikkhu / Monks) in the Theravada tradition.

Dhammasara is dedicated to providing opportunity to committed lay women to experience the monastic lifestyle firsthand, and if they wish to undertake the training to become fully ordained nuns, in realizing ‘The Goal & Heartwood (Dhammasara)’ of this Holy Life, according to the BSWA’s website.

The Revolution Continues:

BSWA is now committed to expanding the monastic community in Australia with the aspiration of spreading the Dhamma and Meditation far and wide. This includes the establishment and support of:

- Bodhinyana Great Southern (our home hermitage at Elleker): A new project called ‘Bodhinyana Great Southern’ a private residence as a place of practice in the forest tradition of Ajahn Brahm in the vicinity of Albany on the south coast of Western Australia.

- Busselton Augusta-Margaret River Buddhist Initiative: The Busselton Augusta-Margaret River Buddhist Initiative (BAMBI) seeks to unite Buddhists or people interested in Buddhist practice and teachings in the City of Busselton and Shire of Augusta-Margaret River (the capes region between Cape Naturaliste and Cape Leeuwin).

- Stocker Road Project: The Stocker Rd property is located in Roleystone, in the Perth hills. It comprises about 26 acres of forest adjacent to Wungong Regional Park, the Canning River and Dhammayanaram Monastery.

Ajahn Brahm supported by BSWA and the four pillars of the Sangha is a true trailblazer. We are eternally grateful for Ajahn Brahm’s and BSWA’s willingness to do what is right and noble to promote equity for all beings even when it’s not the popular choice.

See more about the story of Buddha’s Forgotten Nuns, including an interview with Ajahn Brahm, Bhante Sujato and some of the nuns from Dhammasara on youtube.

A Decade Later
Buddha’s Forgotten Nuns and a Revolution in Western Australia
Turning the Threat of Covid-19 into Opportunities

By Upasako

The Tripitaka, the Pali Canon that contains the precious gem of the Buddha Dhamma may not have been written down on palm leaves in Sri Lanka, about 2000 years ago, if not for one of the greatest threats posed to humanity in Sri Lanka, at that time! The threat was the biggest famine ever to hit Sri Lanka and the war with the invading South Indian war lords. The writing down of the Tripitaka undoubtedly is one of the greatest gifts to humanity, if not the greatest of all, ever! So, who knows, what extraordinary good things would come out of the present threat posed by Covid-19 virus?

The Tripitaka that contains the Dhamma, as discoursed by the Lord Buddha, which was first codified/composed around 550 BCE was written down for the first time in the 1st century BCE. The Dipavamsa (a chronicle of Sri Lankan history), states that during the reign of King Valagamba of Anuradhapura (29–17 BCE) the monks who had previously remembered the Tripitaka and its commentary orally, wrote them down on palm leaves, because of the threat posed by famine and war. (Courtesy of Wikipedia website)

The Buddha Dhamma in its written form is one of the greatest gifts to humanity given by those great members of the Maha Sangha in Sri Lanka, most likely including, a large number of Arahant Sangha, about 2000 years ago. Up to that time, the teachings of the Lord Buddha had been preserved by the members of the Maha Sangha by way of memorising and remembering the Dhamma and reciting them repeatedly over and over again! What was the reason for them to take on that very onerous decision to write down the Tripitaka on palm leaves, at that time?

The main reason was that the members of the Maha Sangha who remembered the Dhamma that had been passed down to them by their teachers in a long lineage, had been passing away, (dying), at a very rapid rate due to the illnesses arising from lack of food which was a result of the famine.

It was an enormously onerous task because of the rudimentary ways of writing available at that time, enormity of the problem of logistics that required to house and feed a large number of Maha Sangha at one place, the lack of food due to the famine, the insecurity posed by the war etc.

According to Deepavamsa and Mahavamsa, two of the oldest chronicles of the Sri Lankan history, (as found in Wikipedia), the main reasons were the greatest of famines ever to hit Sri Lanka and also, the King Valagamba’s, (valiant and finally successful), struggle to protect the country from the Indian invaders. So, the Maha Sangha took the threat seriously, turned the threat into an opportunity and gave the gift of the Dhamma in its written form!

So, why not turn the threat of Covid-19 into an opportunity? The opportunities could come from material developments such as the new ways of doing medical research, new ways of education, new ways of handling sicknesses, some novel ways of seeing the doctor and also, new ways of buying our groceries. Who knows what else, because humans are preoccupied with finding ways to gratify our sensual pleasures that bind us to this Samsara!

More importantly though, the spiritual development could take a much greater leap forward! People would start to think about the Dhamma the Lord Buddha taught, in a more serious manner. To begin with, one needs to take precautions to stop spreading the virus and act responsibly, not only for one’s own benefit but, for the benefit of others!

The caring attitudes and the generous deeds that we see today, may start to galvanise society with the potential for the reduction of poverty in the world. This is the moment to loosen our purse strings! The poor people in 3rd world countries, especially the day-wage-earners will have nowhere to turn for help.

The governments in those countries are doing their best but, they are hamstrung due to the meagre resources that they have. So, this is the time for people living in affluent countries to turn this into an opportunity and start practising the true Dhamma and help those in need. That is practising the generosity that the Lord Buddha termed Cāga in Pali, one of the four ways of letting go!

There are so many ways of helping the poor people in those countries such as Sri Lanka, India, Burma, Uganda, too many to name! I know personally, of very credible local organisations that are on the ground, helping the poorest of poor in rural Sri Lanka, right at this very moment. If there is a will to help, there is a way, always!

The increased effort in spiritual development would neither need large laboratories nor any other expensive infrastructure. The efforts will have to come from within each person. So, the Dhamma could be practised well, in seclusion, either at home or at any other individual moment.  If there is a will to help, there is a way, always!

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The increased effort in spiritual development would neither need large laboratories nor any other expensive infrastructure. The efforts will have to come from within each person. So, the Dhamma could be practised well, in seclusion, either at home or at any other individual moment.  If there is a will to help, there is a way, always!
personal spaces without attending public places such as Dhammaloka Centre etc! The nominal Buddhists may start practising the Dhamma in the true way, making the right effort to end the true suffering!

As Ven Ajahn Brahmali discoursed us yesterday, (on 21 March 2020), at Dhammaloka Centre in Perth, (which we listened on-line, from our home), the Lord Buddha’s teaching is that it is the Conscious Beings that keeps doing the Kamma, (intentional or volitional acts).

Ajahn also discoursed that Beings do these deeds because of the Greed or Wanting that arises as a result of Contacts through six sense bases, (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind), which bind/fetter beings to the unending cycle of repeated rebirths, the Samsara. The final point of Ajahn’s talk, as I understood was, “Be Detached”! When detached, the consciousness will have no ground to get a hold of and the cycle of repeated rebirths is broken! The circuit-breaker is in place! No more suffering!

The Lord Buddha discoursed to the then Ven Maha Moggallana, (later to become the Great Arahant Maha Moggallana Maha Thero, the foremost of Lord Buddha’s Monastic disciples in Psychic Powers) in the Pacalāyamāna Sutta – Nodding Off (AN 7:61), ‘Nothing is worth clinging on to.’

So, whenever we perform even the highest most meritorious deeds, we need to be detached! This is the Sutta in which the Lord Buddha teaches the then Ven Maha Moggallana, seven possible ways to give up drowsiness whilst in meditation. Hence the name ‘Nodding Off’! Here is the link to a very simple English translation of that Sutta by Bhante Sujato: https://suttacentral.net/an7.61/en/sujato

So, it is up to each one of us to take it individually and turn this threat into some opportunity in our lives! Ven Ajahn Brahm’s frequent advice is, “when you have nothing to do, do nothing”!

“Nothing is worth clinging on to”- The Lord Buddha!

### This is what happened.....

**By Sutta Junkie.**

“Hey, I’ll be there earlier today. Should I reserve a seat for you? Where do you prefer?” H texted me.

“On the left of the hall, against the wall. I love to lean against the wall.” I replied.

“Oh, what about dining area? Window view?” H asked.

“Yes please!” I replied.

**Day 0**

R, H and I were chatting before the session started. “I have always been overeating as I couldn’t resist the food. This time, I’ll make sure I exercise more control.” R said. H and I nodded in unison.

I was like, yes, I’ll have to try very hard...

**Day 1**

R, H and I looked at our plate of food and we all laughed. We exchanged eye contact which seemed to have said, “Yep, so much about controlling our food intake. The food is simply irresistible!”

**Day 2**

H bit into her food and looked at me, looking puzzled. I took a bite of the same food and tried to taste a little bit more, rolling my tongue. And we both smiled as we realised what food it was.

**Day 3**

I was eating happily as usual and suddenly, tasted how spicy the papaya salad was. I tried to warn R about it using my eyes as I don’t think she can handle the spice. R returned my eye contact seemingly to tell me that she loves spice and can handle it. I watched as R dug into the papaya salad and her whole face turned red. I smiled with facial expression that said “I warned you!”

During this time, H was busy eating her lunch, tomyum soup, curry and oops, I saw she had the papaya salad on her plate too. I nudged H and pointed to the papaya salad. She understood what I was trying to tell her. While I was drinking my hot cup of tea to get over the spice and H had a glass of cold milk, we couldn’t help but noticed that H was sweating and her mouth was on fire.....

Err.....R, H and I are on a spiritual journey.

While it is not apparent from the conversations above, that it is a spiritual journey, IT IS A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY we are on!

This spiritual journey consisted of food of course, bush walk, dish washing duties, watching ants, walking like a zombie, sitting and lots of sitting and listening to Ajahn Brahmali’s teaching of suttas.
When I first started attending the sutta retreat, I printed out the sutta page by page and all excited. I took so many notes as Ajahn is always so detailed in his explanation and I didn’t want to miss any of those. So I scribble as much as I can into the pages and always ran out of space to write.

This time round, I decided that I will print the suttas on one side of the page only so I could use the other page for taking notes. And...it didn’t help. Still ran out of space to capture the notes. It’s all Ajahn’s fault! Seriously, the excerpt of the sutta only consisted of four lines and Ajahn took an hour to explain, word by word and me, again ran out of space.... hm.... I need to devise a different note taking strategy next year.

Two years ago, C texted me that her friend in Hong Kong attended the Sutta Retreat conducted by Ajahn Brahmali in Hong Kong. Her friend was so impressed with the class and was full of praise for Ajahn Brahmali. I reminded C that her friend can continue to attend the class when Ajahn is in Hong Kong but not fly to Perth to attend the Sutta retreat so she doesn’t fight with us over a retreat spot.... haha...Already we are seeing how popular Ajahn Brahmali is getting as there are more overseas retreatants attending the sutta retreat.

Oh dear, we have already lost Ajahn Brahm to the world as he is travelling so much. We have shared Ajahn Brahmali these days as well and the only time we have of him in Perth is this Sutta Retreat so please, don’t fight with us....ha...

“What, no talking at all?”
“I don’t think I can do it.”
“Can I at least text you to check if you are surviving on the retreat?”

Ha...endless concerns of well-meaning colleagues when they hear I am attending a 9-day silent retreat in Jhana Grove.

So yes, I am a sutta junkie. I see many familiar faces when I go on this retreat so it is clear, they are sutta junkies like me.

And what does Ajahn Brahmali actually teach during the retreat......???

Please don’t come...don’t bother to find out.... Satisfaction is not guaranteed and that’s why we kept coming back to attend the retreat!!!!

And yes the food... they are prepared with love by volunteers. The volunteers have to use their own money to buy the ingredients, wake up early in the morning to start cooking and for some, even had to prepare the ingredients the night before. They then had to drive a long distance to get to Jhana Grove and still full of smiles when they serve the monks and nuns on retreat the food that they had cooked. And for the retreatants, it’s a surprise each day at meal time as we don’t know what we are getting.

And because we are on silent retreat and not supposed to speak, we communicate with our eyes our food experience.

And yes, Ajahn Brahmali taught us about the five hindrances, starting with sensual desire.... about how we should try to reduce our sensual desires and by improving on our virtues, our meditation will get deeper... and that we should watch our breath, notice if it is a short or long in breath, a short or long out breath....

And the whole time I wondered as well.... what will be for lunch today!!!!

That’s why this Sutta junkie will be back again next year.... :)

Hello dear readers

of the Enlightened Times, the
BSWA and all Ajahn Brahm
devotees!

Formally known as Bhante Subhuti, I became a novice monk when I was about 22 years old and stayed with Ajahn Brahms for five years all up as an Anagarika for over two years then as a novice. I happily received Ajahn’s mindfulness and kindess teachings, which he calls kindfulness. But most importantly following the example of the Buddha himself. With plenty of help from Ajahn’s noble friendship I was able to find some peace. During this time, I practised Zazen, formal Zen meditation and studied Zen and the early scriptures of the Pali canon. Zen always brought me the greatest joy as it is very clear and practical. I have disrobed for the moment, having a moment in lay life to see my situation clearly.

The year I entered the monastery I was diagnosed with schizophrenia. I now laugh and feel at ease, as I have come so far as to feel protected from this scary condition through meditation and medication. I feel balanced, fit and healthy. I am convinced that others can also heal their minds as practitioners have done since the first fully awakened Buddha came into this world. The Buddha was a human like you and me, even more fully human than we first think.

“Abiding nowhere the heart comes forth“ is an old Zen saying. For me, there is no other person who has exemplified it as much as Ajahn Brahms. His teachings are up to date, traditional and always bring a fresh and wonderful twist. I like his old story of the most beautiful tree. It was twisted, damaged yet absolutely beautiful! Ajahn you are my hero, even after meeting you!

What can we say about today’s world? Corruption, judgement, misunderstanding, an ecological crisis. Greed and violence that brings along with it poverty and disharmony. These things are only the manifestations of one’s internal negative emotions, which bring heat and turmoil to the mind. “The mind is the forerunner of all things” said the Buddha.

Through kindness, understanding and patience we can transform ourselves and our world. All these amazing qualities can be taught and exemplified by our spiritual friends. Other positive qualities include beauty, belonging, wisdom, compassion, and charity. Developing a respect for gender equality, different races, religions, personal beliefs, the environment, and basic human rights is also wonderful.

Patience is said to be the highest spiritual practice, since it brings other qualities like renunciation, kindness, and wisdom along with it. These qualities all here on our path as practitioners. It is through all the good work that we do in our meditation. Always try, try, try for infinite kalpas to awaken to the truth and end human suffering. This I believe is bringing world peace one breath at a time.

With our minds we can achieve peace. We do this not so much through will power but by being in harmony with the way things are in nature. Take for example Anapanasati, breathing in, we know we are breathing in, breathing out, we know we are breathing out, knowing if the breath is deep or shallow then knowing the whole breath and simply by recognising and making peace with our body, breaths and mind we come into harmony with the way things are in nature. Letting things take their course, being kind being gentle.

May all beings have happiness and its causes
May all beings be free from suffering and its causes
May all be one with the bliss they have attained
May all be free from bias, anger, and attachment.

With regards

Nathan Jeffery

Perception is completely controlled by our views that so often we can’t see the truth but what we want to see.

By Ajahn Brahm and the Ehipassiko Foundation. From the Book ‘Happy Every Day’.
Meet a Teacher: Ajahn Sujato
The Buddhist scholar was once a dissatisfied rock musician.

By Sabina Rabold
Summer 2020

For someone who eats his only meal of the day before noon, Venerable Sujato looks surprisingly solid. He’s tall, with cropped salt-and-pepper hair and glasses that give him the look of the Buddhist scholar that he is. We’re meeting on a sunny spring day in Harris Park, a suburb of Sydney, Australia, where he shares a flat with a fellow monk, Bhante Akaliko.

We chat easily. Bhante Sujato’s hands move throughout our conversation, and I find myself wondering whether they still carry the memory of the musician he was in the late 1980s.

Back then, Anthony Best spent most nights on stage with the Perth indie rock band Martha’s Vineyard, blond locks flying, belting out tunes while playing his beloved 1972 Fender Telecaster. But though his fame was growing, his happiness was not. A song he wrote at the time called “None of This” reflects his incredulity at the insatiable hunger for more that was the norm wherever he looked.

The transition from rock musician (and unenthusiastic student of economics) to Buddhist monk began with a holiday. While traveling in Thailand, Best made a spur-of-the-moment decision and signed up for a meditation retreat in downtown Chiang Mai. He found the daily routine of sitting in meditation for many hours painful and gruelling. Then, about a week into the retreat, he had an experience that would change his life forever: “I was sitting in the crowded courtyard of the monastery, dogs barking, chickens squawking, noisy traffic all around. It was the hot season and it had been really stuffy all day—the sun was going down, the day was cooling and I was having a cup of Chinese tea. Just sitting there, in the shade, I thought: This is what peace of mind feels like, and I realised that I’d never felt this before.” Best fell in love with meditation, and as he learned more about the ancient teachings of the Buddha, he found a life that he felt was for him.

In 1994, Best was ordained as a Theravada monk in the Thai forest tradition of Ajahn Chah; he spent the next two decades practising in Thailand, Malaysia, and Australia, including a three-year retreat at Bodhinyana monastery with his teacher, Ajahn Brahm. Bhante Sujato eventually returned to Australia and established the Santi Forest Monastery, a hermitage for Theravada Buddhist nuns (bhikkhunis). In 2009, Ajahn Brahm and Ajahn Sujato performed the first full-ordination ceremony for bhikkhunis since the order died out in this tradition more than a thousand years ago.

Bhante Sujato’s special interest is the earliest teachings of the Buddha, those shared by all Buddhist traditions, and his scholarly writings include Sects and Sectarianism and A History of Mindfulness. His most recent project is the translation of the four Nikayas of the Pali canon, an ambitious undertaking that took him two years of intensive work. His translations are available for free at Sutta Central, a digital library of early Buddhist texts that he cofounded in 2005.

When our conversation begins to feel like a dharma talk, I ask for a definition of meditation. Bhante Sujato isn’t keen to answer, preferring to guide his students toward understanding their own mind. When prompted, he offers these words: “At the heart of everything is awareness itself. “One of the big moments of insight that came to me in meditation was catching a glimpse of the delicacy of this awareness, its softness, and its power as well. And literally everything makes an impression on it.” A deep silence follows this revelation. Bhante Sujato had just described a tangible experience of something mysterious and beautiful yet ordinary.

Just now Venerable Akaliko comes in. It’s only an hour to midday, and the two monks need to make ready to go on their alms round to neighbouring shops and supermarkets. It’s their one meal of the day and should not be missed.

- Sabina Rabold is a counsellor, psychotherapist, and meditation teacher based in Sydney, Australia.

In this time of Covid Pandemic, we are being asked to follow some important rules designed to stop the spread of the virus and minimise its effect on humanity. It is truly heartening to see most law abiding, good people are following such rules to the letter of the law, whereas a small minority is openly flouting them. Following rules and regulations applicable within the society that we live in is the ethical way of life. That is the Buddhist Way!

In the Sila Sutta, (Discourse on Ethics – AN 5:213), the Lord Buddha discussed five benefits of Ethical living. Here is an extract from that Sutta: ‘There are these five benefits for an ethical person because of their accomplishment in ethics. 1. Firstly, an ethical person gains substantial wealth on account of diligence. 2. Furthermore, an ethical person gets a good reputation. 3. Furthermore, an ethical person enters any kind of assembly bold and self-assured, whether it’s an assembly of aristocrats, brahmins, householders, or ascetics.

4. Furthermore, an ethical person dies not feeling lost. 5. Furthermore, when an ethical person’s body breaks up, after death, they’re reborn in a good place, a heavenly realm.’ (Courtesy of SuttaCentral)

Ethical behaviour is not just the deeds by body and speech. It covers mental actions, our thoughts, as well. In the Sanidâna Sutta, (With a Cause – SN 14:12), Lord Buddha advises HIS disciples that thoughts arise with a cause not without. Here is an extract from that Sutta: ‘Mendicants, sensual, malicious, and cruel thoughts arise for a reason, not without reason. And how do sensual, malicious, and cruel thoughts arise for a reason, not without reason? The element of sensuality gives rise to sensual perceptions. Sensual perceptions give rise to sensual thoughts. Sensual thoughts give rise to sensual desires. Sensual desires give rise to sensual passions. Sensual passions give rise to searches for sensual pleasures……’ (Courtesy of SuttaCentral)

How could we modify the way we think on various issues? When we see the root cause of any thought, we could take action to modify, change and remove such causes. One way to do that is to tell oneself, repeatedly, of the danger of such bad thoughts and the benefits of the opposite, the good thoughts. This is called repeated broadcasting!

Ven Ajahn Brahm calls it ‘brain washing’, planting the good causes in our mind by repeatedly listening to/reading the True Saddhamma. We have to follow his advice! The businesses sell their products, even the unwanted products, by repeatedly advertising them on TV. They use multi-coloured pictures and the presence of attractive looking celebrities! The advertiser is able to brain wash the viewer that the life without the particular product is meaningless! So, the innocent, gullible person goes and buys a product that may be completely and utterly useless!

We could adopt the same principle for our own benefit. If one keeps getting malicious thoughts, making oneself unhappy and also, making the people around unhappy then, tell oneself, repeatedly, that ‘these thoughts are making me unhappy, making the people around me unhappy and they lead to the lasting harm of both me and others’.

So, it is aptly clear that the ethical way of life would bring us benefits in this life as well as in the next! We have to behave ethically not only for our benefit but for the benefit of others, our family members, our friends, neighbours and the world at large! The purpose of life is not just for the benefit of oneself but for the benefit of others, for the benefit of the whole wide world! Here is an extract from the Chavâlâta Sutta (Firebrand- AN 4:95), in which the Lord Buddha discoursed on the four types of persons found in this world: ‘Mendicants, these four people are found in the world. What four?’

1. One who practises to benefit neither themselves nor others;
2. one who practises to benefit others, but not themselves;
3. one who practises to benefit themselves, but not others; and
4. one who practises to benefit both themselves and others.

………… But the person who practises to benefit both themselves and others is the foremost, best, chief, highest, and finest of the four.” (Courtesy of SuttaCentral)

So, we have to heed the word of the Lord Buddha, behave ethically and practise for the benefit of both ourselves and others!
That way, we could minimise and finally completely remove such unhelpful, unhappy, sensual, malicious and cruel thoughts! Then, we could create conditions conducive to the arising of thoughts on letting-go, thoughts on loving kindness and thoughts on compassion to arise. These conducive conditions include the cultivation of our knowledge of benefits of having good thoughts, speaking good words and doing good deeds! Such good thoughts would undoubtedly lead to good behaviour which would definitely be for the benefit of oneself and others!

See the Lord Buddha’s teachings in the two Sutta titled Dvedhāvittakka Sutta (Two Kinds of Thought—MN19) and Vitakkasanthāna Sutta, (How to Stop Thinking—MN20). Here is the link to Ven Bhante Sujato’s English translations of those two Suttas on SuttaCentral: https://suttacentral.net/mn-sihanadavagga

The Lord Buddha has shown the path! It is up to us to travel! The best way open to us, Buddhists, is to develop the Right View. That way, we would be able to see things as they truly are. We would see the suffering as suffering, not as happiness. How could we change our wrong views?

The Lord Buddha advised HIS disciples to associate with true, good friends.

In the Upaddha Sutta, (Half the Spiritual Life – SN 45:2), the Lord Buddha discoursed to the then Ven Ananda Maha Thero, (later, Great Arahant), that the entire Buddhist Dispensation is all about having good friends, friends who would lead you on the right path, in the right way! That is the beginning of the ethical path. There are number of ways that we could practise the ethical way of living.

Lord Buddha advised HIS disciples to follow the practice of what HE termed Hiri and Ottappa. These two important terms have been translated as Moral Shame and Moral Fear by Ven Bhikkhu Bodhi and as a Sense of Conscience and Prudence by Ven Bhante Sujato. You could find these teachings in a number of Sutta such as Sallekha Sutta (Self-Effacement MN 8), Hirīottappa Sutta (Conscience and Prudence – AN 7:65), Udakūpamā Sutta (A simile with water AN 7:15).

So, we Buddhists have to have moral shame and be utterly fearful of doing the wrong thing. The Lord Buddha’s guarantee is that the practice of conscience and prudence would lead us to happiness! When we have moral shame and fear of doing the wrong thing, we will not break the rules, invariably we will do the right thing.

Another way to subdue our sensual thoughts and practise the ethical path is to minimise our association with the world and be independent. In the Anupada Sutta (one by One - MN 111), the Lord Buddha described the attainments of the Great Arahant Sariputta Maha Thero. Here is a short paragraph from that Sutta:

“And He meditated without attraction or repulsion for those phenomena; independent, untied, liberated, detached, his mind free of limits.” (Courtesy of SuttaCentral)

So, the best way to live is to be independent, untied, liberated, detached! That is the way to practise the Noble Eightfold Path!

By following the Social Distancing, we are not only obeying the government rules and regulations, but we are also properly following the Buddhist Teachings! It will make us happy and safe and also, make others around us happy and safe, too! Wouldn’t that be good?! When we live ethically, following the rules and regulations, we not only gain the benefit of such action in this world but also in the next world!

What next world? It is the next place of our rebirth unless of course, we end the suffering in this very life and attain to Nibbana, here and now!

The Lord Buddha has taught us that rebirth is a process! It is a process that happens due to causes and effects! The Lord Buddha discoursed in the Maha Tanhāsankhaya Sutta, (The Longer Discourse on the Ending of Craving MN 38) to the misguided bhikkhu Sāti, that there is no one transmigrating from life to life, there is no fixed Consciousness or a permanent essence that gets reborn after one’s death. Here is a sentence form that Sutta:

“Silly man, who on earth have you ever known me to teach in that way? Haven’t I said in many ways that consciousness is dependently originated, since consciousness does not arise without a cause?” (Courtesy of SuttaCentral)

So, it is neither you nor someone else! It is a process of Cause and Effect!

Just the same way when a lamp is lighted from the flame of another lamp, the new flame is not the old flame though, it has derived its qualities; the light, the warmth and the colour, from the previous lamp!

Similarly, when we plant a mango seed, the new mango that was produced by the new tree has qualities of the old mango, but it is not the same fruit! If the seed came from a sweet mango, it is likely that the next tree too, would bear sweet mangoes. If the seed was from a sour mango then, the next tree will very likely bear sour mangoes. In the same way, when we do good things in this life, we are likely to have a good and a happy re-birth in the next life! We win both ways! This life and in the next!

The teachings of the Lord Buddha on this important aspect of Buddhist Doctrine is called Dependent Origination.
We are so Lucky

By Upasako

We are so lucky to have well-gained a Human Birth! Wow! How lucky are we?!!

We are so lucky to have been born at a time when the True Teachings of a Samma Sambuddha is still prevailing in the world!

We are so lucky to have been re-born in a Buddhist country where the good Dhamma is still being practised by the good Ariya Sangha, Upasaka & Upasikā!

We are so lucky that our Grandparents, Parents & the early teachers instilled the initial Dhamma Foundation in us!

We are so lucky to live in a place like Perth where the Good Ariya Sangha is practising, in our vicinity, the Good Dhamma in the Good Way!

We are so lucky that we are able to visit such Good Sangha & associate them at Monasteries & Hermitages right here in WA!

We are so lucky to be able to practise the good Dhamma at places like Jhana Grove under the guidance of Good Ariya Sangha like Ven Ajahn Brahm & His senior monastic disciples like Ven Ajahn Brahmali!!!!

We are so lucky that we live at a time when the wise, diligent, virtuous & stainless Good Ariya Sangha like Most Ven Ajahn Ganha, Most Ven Bhante Gunaratana & Most Ven Ajahn Brahm Maha Theros are all living on this earth!

We are so lucky that we are able to offer the Dana Requisites to such good Ariya Sangha, in this very life & learn the True Teachings from them!

We are so lucky that we could visit Bodhinyana, Dhammasara & Patacara Hermitage, offer the requisites & pay our respects to good, practising Sangha, whenever we want!

We are so lucky that we could visit fully ordained senior female Bhikkhuni Sangha of the calibre of Ven Ajahn Vayama & Ven Ajahn Hasaparnna right here in WA!

We are so lucky, we have Sutta Central, with the unadulterated, true teachings of the Lord Buddha, at our fingertips! Thank you Ven Bhante Sujato!

We are so lucky that we could read, hear, listen to & practise the True Saddhamma whenever we want!

We are so lucky to have a spouse & children who are ethical, upright, frugal, renunciant, easily satisfiable & above all, supporting our spiritual path to liberation!

We are so lucky that we have the desire, (the Kusala Chanda),...
the material means & the ways to keep helping those in need!
We are so lucky that we have virtuous, keen & good Dhamma friends like you who support BSWA, Dhammaloka, associate monasteries & help disseminate the True Saddhamma to the whole world!
We are so lucky that we have virtuous, ardent, happy & good Dhamma friends like you who take the time to read Enlightened Times!!!

So, Feel Lucky!
Be Happy!! Be Still!!!
With Metta & Compassion,
Upasako


Ajahn Brahm's 69th Birthday

Ajahn Brahm's 1974 Ordination Certificate
Vesak 2020 Live Stream at Dhammaloka.

Ajahn Brahm meets the Easter Bunny.