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Following the wish of

Ajahn Chah that his Dhamma teachings

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Once there was a layman who came to Ajahn Chah and asked him who Ajahn Chah was. Ajahn Chah, seeing that the spiritual development of the individual was not very advanced, pointed to himself and said, "This, this is Ajahn Chah."

On another occasion, Ajahn Chah was asked the same question by someone else. This time, however, seeing that the questioner's capacity to understand the Dhamma was higher, Ajahn Chah answered by saying, 'Ajahn Chah? There is NO Ajahn Chah.'

The quotations in this collection have been taken from Bodhinyana, A Taste of Freedom, A Still Forest Pool, Samadhibhavana, Seeing the Way, Living Dhamma, Food for the Heart, and Venerable Father, A Life with Ajahn Chah. Some quotations come from a personal collection hitherto unpublished.

INTRODUCTION

When people would say to Ajahn Chah that they found it impossible to practice in society, he would ask them, "If I poked you in the chest with a burning stick, would you say that indeed you were suffering, but since you live in society you can't get away from it?" Ajahn Chah's response makes a point not unlike the Buddha's parable of the poisoned arrow. The Buddha tells of a man who had been shot by an arrow and would not let anyone pull it out until his questions about the arrow, the bow and the archer were all answered. The only problem was that the wounded man would probably die before he could get the replies to all of his questions.

What the wounded man had to realize was that he was in pain and dying, and he should do something about that right away.

Ajahn Chah emphasized this point over and over again in his teachings: You're suffering; do something about it now! He wouldn't spend much time talking about peace, wisdom, or nibbanic states, but rather the practice of constantly being aware of what was happening within the body and mind in the present moment, learning how to simply watch and let go. Meditation, he'd say, was not getting things, but getting rid of things. Even when asked about the peace that one could attain through practice, he would instead rather speak of the confusion that one should first get rid of, for, as he put it, peace is the end of confusion.

This collection reflects not only on suffering and meditation practice, but also gives us some insight into impermanence, virtue, non-self and so on. We hope that the reader will take this little book as a companion and "good friend" for moments of quiet reflection, and perhaps get a glimpse of the "no-Ajahn Chah" who used to say, 'I'm always talking about things to develop and

things to give up, but, really, there's 'nothing' to develop and 'nothing' to give up."

No Ajahn Chah

Birth & Death

1. A good practice is to ask yourself very sincerely, "Why was I born?" Ask yourself this question in the morning, in the afternoon, and at night...every day.

2. Our birth and death are just one thing. You can't have one without the other. It's a little funny to see how at a death people are so tearful and sad, and at a birth how happy and delighted. It's delusion. I think if you really want to cry, then it would be better to do so when

someone's born. Cry at the root, for if there were no birth, there would be no death. Can you understand this?

3. You'd think that people could appreciate what it would be like to live in a person's belly. How uncomfortable that would be! Just look at how merely staying in a hut for only one day is already hard to take. You shut all the doors and windows and you're suffocating already. How would it be to lie in a person's belly for nine months? Yet you want to be born again! You know it wouldn't be comfortable in there, and yet you want to stick your head right in there, to put your neck in the noose once again,

4. .Why are we born? We are born so that we will not have to be born again.

5. When one does not understand death, life can be very confusing.

6. The Buddha told his disciple Ananda to see impermanence, to see death with every breath. We must know death; we must die in order to live. What does this mean? To die is to come to the end of all our doubts, all our questions, and just be here with the present reality. You can never die tomorrow; you must die now. Can you do it? If you can do it, you will know the peace of no more questions.

7. Death is as close as our breath

8. If you've trained properly, you wouldn't feel frightened when you fall sick, nor upset when someone dies. When you go into the hospital for treatment, determine in your mind that if you get better, that's fine, and that if you die, that's fine, too. I guarantee you

that if the doctors told me I had cancer and was going to die in a few months, I'd remind the doctors, "Watch out, because death is coming to get you, too. It's just a question of who goes first and who goes later." Doctors are not going to cure death or prevent death. Only the Buddha was such a doctor. So why not go ahead and use the Buddha's medicine?

9. If you're afraid of illnesses, if you are afraid of death, then you should contemplate where they came from. Where do they come from? They arise from birth. So don't be sad when someone dies it's just nature, and his suffering in this life is over. If you want to be sad, be sad when people are born: "Oh, no, they've come again. They're going to suffer and die again!"

10. The "One Who Knows" clearly knows that all conditioned phenomena are unsubstantial. So this "One Who Knows" does not become happy or sad, for it does not follow changing conditions. To become glad, is to

be born; to become defected, is to die. Having died, we are born again; having been born, we die again. This birth and death from one moment to the next is the endless spinning wheel of samsara.

BODY

11. If the body could talk, it would be telling us all day long, "You're not my owner, you know." Actually it's telling it to us all the time, but it's Dhamma language, so we're unable to understand it.

12. Conditions don't belong to us. They follow their own natural course. We can't do anything about the way the body is. We can beautify it a little, make it look attractive and clean for a while, like the young girls who paint their lips and let their nails grow long, but when old age arrives, everyone is in the same boat. That is the way the body is. We can't make it any other way. But,

what we ' can improve and beautify is the mind.

13. If our body really belonged to us, it would obey our commands. If we say, "Don't get old," or "I forbid you to get sick," does it obey us? Na! It takes no notice. We only rent this "house," not own it. If we think it does belong to us, we will suffer when we have to leave it. But in reality, there is no such thing as a permanent self, nothing unchanging or solid that we can hold on to.

BREATH

14. There are people who are born and die and never once are aware of their breath going in and out of their body. That's how far away they live from themselves.

15. Time is our present breath.

16. You say that you are too busy to meditate. Do you have time to breathe? Meditation is your breath. Why do you have time to breathe but not to meditate?

Breathing is something vital to people's lives. If you see that Dhamma practice is vital to your life, then you will feel that breathing and practicing the Dhamma are equally important.

DHAMMA

17. What is Dhamma? Nothing isn't.

18. How does the Dhamma reach the proper way of life? It shows us how to live, 11 has many ways of showing it - on rocks or trees or just in front of you. It is e teaching but not in words. So still the mind, the heart, and learn to watch. You'}! End the whole Dhamma revealing itself here and now. At what other time place are you going to look?

19. First you understand the Dhamma with your thoughts. If you begin to understand it, you will practice it. And if you practice it, you will begin to see it. And when you see it, you are the Dhamma and you have the joy of the Buddha.

20. The Dhamma has to be found by looking into your own heart and seeing that which is true and that which is not, that which is balanced and that which is not balanced.

21. There is only one real magic, the magic of Dhamma. Any other magic is like the illusion of a card trick. It distracts us from the real game: our relation to human life, to birth, to death and to freedom.

22. Whatever you do, make it Dhamma. If you don't feel good, look inside. If you know it's wrong and still do it,

that's defilement.

23. It's hard to find those who listen to Dhamma, who remember Dhamma and practice it, who reach Dhamma and see it.

24. Regardless of time and place, the whole practice of Dhamma comes to completion at the place where there is nothing. It's the place of surrender, of emptiness, of laying down the burden. This is the finish.

25. The Dhamma is not far away. It's right with us. The Dhamma isn't about angels in the sky or anything like that. It's simply about us; about what we are doing right now. Observe yourself. Sometimes there is happiness, sometimes pain...this is Dhamma. Do you see it? To know this Dhamma, you have to read your experiences.

26. When you listen to the Dhamma you must open up your heart and compose yourself in the center. Don't try to accumulate what you hear or make a painstaking

effort to retain what you hear through memory. Just let the Dhamma flow into your heart as it reveals itself, and keep yourself continuously open to its flow in the present moment. What is ready to be retained will be so, and it will happen of its own accord, not through any determined effort on your part.

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28. Similarly when you expound the Dhamma, you must not force yourself. It should happen on its own and should flow spontaneously from the present moment and circumstances. People have different levels of

receptive ability, and when you're there at that same level, it just happens, the Dhamma flows. The Buddha had the ability to know people's temperaments and receptive abilities. He used this very same method of spontaneous teaching. It's not that he possessed any special superhuman power to teach, but rather that he was sensitive to the spiritual needs of the people who came to him, and so he taught them accordingly.

HEART & MIND

29. Only one book is worth reading: the heart.

30. The Buddha taught us that whatever makes the mind distressed in our practice hits home. Defilements are distress. It's not that the mind is distressed! We don't know what our mind and defilements are.

Whatever we aren't satisfied with, we just don't want anything to do with it. Our way of life is not difficult. What's difficult is not being satisfied, not agreeing with

it. Our defilements are the difficulty.

31. The world is in a very feverish state. The mind changes from like to dislike with the feverishness of the world. If we can learn to make the mind still, it will be the greatest help to the world.

32. If your mind is happy, then you are happy anywhere you go. When wisdom awakens within you, you will see Truth wherever you look. Truth is all there is. It's like when you've learned how to read - you can then read anywhere you go.

33. If you're allergic to one place, you'll be allergic to every place. But it's not the place outside you that's causing you trouble. It's the "place" inside you.

34. Look at your own mind. The one who carries things thinks he's got things, but the one who looks on only sees the heaviness. Throw away things, lose them, and

find lightness.

35. The mind is intrinsically tranquil Out of this tranquility, anxiety and confusion are born. If one sees and knows this confusion, then the mind is tranquil once more.

36. Buddhism is a religion of the heart. Only this. One who practices to develop the heart IS one who practices Buddhism.

37. When the light is dim, it isn't easy to see the old spider webs in the corners of a room. But when the light is bright, you can see them clearly and then be able to take them down. When your mind is bright, you'll be able to see your defilements clearly, too, and clean them away.

38. Strengthening the mind is not done by making it move around as is done to strengthen the body, but by bringing the mind to a halt, bringing it to rest.

39. Because people don't see themselves, they can commit all sorts of bad deeds. They don't look at their own minds. When people are going to do something bad, they have to look around first to see if anyone is looking: "Will my mother see me?" "Will my husband see me?" "Will the children see me?" "Will my wife see me?" If there's no one watching, then they go right ahead and do it. This is insulting themselves. They say no one is watching, so they quickly finish their bad deed before anyone will see. And what about themselves? Aren't they a "some-body" watching?

40. Use your heart to listen to the Teachings, not your ears.

41. There are those who do battle with their defilements and conquer them. This is called fighting inwardly. Those who fight outwardly take hold of bombs and guns to throw and to shoot. They conquer and are conquered. Conquering others IS the way of the world. In the practice of Dhamma we don't have to fight others, but instead conquer our own minds, patiently resisting all our moods.

42. Where does rain come from? It comes from all the dirty water that evaporates from the earth, like urine and the water you throw out after washing your feet. Isn't it wonderful how the sky can take that dirty water and change it into pure, clean water? Your mind can do the same with your defilements if you let it.

43. The Buddha said to judge only yourself, and not to judge others, no matter how good or evil they may be. The Buddha merely points out the way, saying, "The truth is like this." Now, is our mind like that or not?

IMPERMANENCE

44. Conditions exist through change. You can't prevent it. Just think, could you exhale without inhaling? Would it feel good? Or could you just inhale? We want things to be permanent, but that can't be. It's impossible.

45. If you know that all things are impermanent, all your thinking will gradually unwind, and you won't need to think too much. Whenever anything arises, all you need to say is "Oh, another one!" Just that!

46. Any speech which ignores uncertainty is not the speech of a sage.

47. If you really see uncertainty clearly, you will see that which is certain. The certainty is that things must inevitably be uncertain and that they cannot be otherwise. Do you understand? Knowing just this much, you can know the Buddha, you can rightly do reverence to him.

48. If your mind tries to tell you it has already attained the level of sotapanna, go and bow to a sotapanna. He'll

tell you himself it's all uncertain. If you meet a sakadagami, go and pay respects to him. When he sees you, he'll simply say, "Not a sure thing!" If there's an anagami, go and bow to him. He'll tell you only one thing, "Uncertain!" If you meet even an arahant, go and bow to him. He'll tell you even more firmly, "It's all even more uncertain!" You'll hear the words of the Noble Ones: "Everything is uncertain. Don't cling to anything!"

49. Sometimes I'd go to see old religious sites with ancient temples. In some places they would be cracked. Maybe one of my friends would remark, "Such a shame, isn't it? It's cracked." I'd answer, "If they weren't cracked there'd be no such thing as the Buddha. There'd be no Dhamma. It's cracked like this because it's perfectly in line with the Buddha's teaching."

50. Conditions all go their own natural way. Whether we laugh or cry over them, they just go their own way. And there is no knowledge of science which can prevent this natural course of things. You may get a

dentist to look at your teeth, but even if he can fix them, they still finally go their natural way. Eventually even the dentist has the same trouble. Everything falls apart in the end.

51. What can we take for certain? Nothing! There's nothing but feelings. Suffering arises, stays, then passes away. Then happiness replaces suffering - only this. Outside of this, there is nothing. But we are lost people running and grabbing at feelings continuously. Feelings are not real, only changes.

KAMMA

52. When those who do not understand the Dhamma act improperly, they look all around w make sure no one is watching. But our kamma is always watching. We never really get away with anything.

53. Good actions bring good results. bad actions bring bad results. Don't expect the gods to do things for you, or the angels and guardian deities to protect you, or the

auspicious days to help you. These things aren't true. Don't believe in them. If you believe in them, you will suffer. You will always be waiting for the right day, the right month, the right year, the angels, or the guardian deities. You'll only suffer that way. Look into your own actions and speech, into your own kamma. Doing good, you inherit goodness, doing bad you inherit badness.

54. Through right practice, you allow your old kamma to wear itself out. Knowing how things arise and pass away, you can just be aware and let them run their course. It is like having two trees: if you fertilize and water one and do not take care of the other, there is no question which one will grow and which one will die.

55. Some of you have come from thousands of miles away, from Europe and America and other far-off places, to listen to the Dhamma here at Nong Pah Pong Monastery. To think that you've come from so far and gone through so much trouble to get here. Then we have these people who live just outside the wall of the monastery but who have yet to enter through its gate. It

makes you appreciate good kamma more, doesn't it?

56. When you do something bad, there is nowhere you can go to hide. Even if others don't see you, you must see yourself. Even if you go into a deep hole, you'll still find yourself there. There's no way you can commit bad actions and get away with it. In the same way, why shouldn't you see your own purity? You see it all - the peace, the agitation, the liberation, the bondage. You see all these for yourself.

MEDITATION PRACTICE

57. If you want to wait around to meet the future Buddha, then just don't practice. You'll probably be around long enough to see him when he comes.

58. I've heard people say, "Oh, this year was a bad year for me," "How come?" "I was sick all year I couldn't practice at all." Oh! If they don't practice when death is near, when will they ever practice? If they're feeling

well, do you think they practice? No. They only get lost in happiness. If they're suffering, they still don't practice. They get lost in that, too. I don't know when people think they're going to practice

59. I've already laid down the schedule and rules of the monastery. Don't transgress the existing standards. Anyone who does is not one who has come with a real intention to practice. What can such a person ever hope to see? Even if he slept near me every day, he wouldn't see me. Even if he slept near the Buddha, he wouldn't see the Buddha, if he didn't practice.

60. Don't think that only sitting with the eyes closed is practice. If you do think this way, then quickly change your thinking. Steady practice is keeping mindful in every posture, whether sitting, walking, standing or lying down. When coming out of sitting, don't think that you're coming out of meditation, but that you are only changing postures. If you reflect in this way, you will have peace. Wherever you are, you will have this attitude of practice with you constantly. You will have a

steady awareness within yourself

61. "As long as I have still not attained Supreme Enlightenment, I will not rise from this place, even if my blood dries up." Reading this in the books, you may think of trying it yourself. You'll do it like the Buddha. But you haven't considered that your car is only a small one. The Buddha's car was a really big one. He could do it all at once. With only your tiny, little car, how can you possibly take it all at once? It's a different story altogether.

62. I went all over looking for places to meditate. I didn't realize it was already there, in my heart. All the meditation is right there inside you. Birth, old age, sickness, and death are right there within you. I travelled all over until I was ready to drop dead from exhaustion. Only then, when I stopped, did I find what I was looking for... inside me.

63. We don't meditate to see heaven, but to end suffering.

64. Don't be attached to visions or lights in meditation, don't rise or fall with them. What's so great about brightness? My flashlight has it. It can't help us rid ourselves of our suffering

65. You're blind and deaf without meditation. Dhamma isn't easily seen. You must meditate to see what you've never seen. Were you born a teacher? No. You must study first. A lemon is sour only when you have tasted it.

66. When sitting in meditation, say "That's not my business!" with every thought that comes by.

67. When we are lazy we should practice and not only when we feel energetic or in the mood. This is

practicing according to the Buddha's teaching.

According to our own, we practice only when we're feeling good how are we going to get anywhere like that? When are we going to cut the stream of defilements when we practice only according to our whims like that?

68. Whatever we do, we should see ourselves. Reading books doesn't ever give rise to anything. The days pass by, but we don't see ourselves. Knowing about practice is practicing in order to know.

69. Of course there are dozens of meditation techniques, but it all comes down to this - just let it all be. Step over here where it is cool, out of the battle. Why not give it a try?

70. Merely thinking about practice is like pouncing on the shadow and missing the substance.

71. When I had been practicing for only a few years, I still could not trust myself. But after I had experienced much, I learned to trust my own heart. When you have this deep understanding, whatever happens, you can let it happen, and everything will just rise and pass away. You will reach a point where the heart tells itself what to do.

72. In meditation practice, it is actually worse to be caught in calmness than to be stuck in agitation, because at least you will want to escape from agitation, whereas you are content to remain in calmness and not go any further. When blissful clear states arise from insight meditation practice, do not cling to them.

73. Meditation is just about the mind and its feelings. It not something you have to run after or struggle for. Breathing continues while working. Nature takes care of

the natural processes. All we have to do is try to be aware, going inwards to see clearly. Meditation is like this.

74. Not practicing rightly is being heedless. Being heedless is like being dead. Ask yourself if you will have time to practice when you die? Constantly ask yourself, "When will I die?" If we contemplate in this way, our mind will be alert every second, heedfulness will always be present, and mindfulness will automatically follow. Wisdom will arise, seeing all things as they really are very clearly. Mindfulness guards the mind so that it knows when sensations arise at all times, day and night. To have mindfulness is to be com-posed. To be composed is to be heedful. If one is heedful, then one is practicing rightly.

75. The basics in our practice should be first, to be honest and upright; second, to be wary of wrongdoing; and third, to be humble within one's heart, to be aloof

and content with little. If we are content with little in regards to speech and in all other things, we will see ourselves, we won't be distracted. The mind will have a foundation of virtue, concentration, and wisdom.

76. At first you hurry to go forward, hurry to come back, and hurry to stop. You continue to practice like this until you reach the point where it seems that going forward is not it, coming back is not it, and stopping is not it either! ICI finished. There's no stopping, no going forward and no coming back. It is finished. Right there you will find that Isere is really nothing at all.

77. Remember you don't meditate to "get" anything, but to get "rid" of things. We do it, not with desire, but with letting go. If you "want" anything, you won't find it.

78. The heart of the path is quite easy. There's no need to explain anything at length. Let go of love and hate

and let things be. That's all that I do in my own practice.

79. Asking the wrong questions shows that you are still caught in doubting. Talking about practice is all right, if it helps contemplation. But it's up to you your-self to see the Truth.

80. We practice to learn letting go, not to increase our holding on. Enlightenment appears when you stop wanting anything.

81. If you have time to be mindful, you have time to meditate.

82. Someone recently asked me, "As we meditate and various things arise in the mind, should we investigate them or just note them coming and going?" If you see someone passing by whom you do not know, you may wonder, "Who that? Where is he going? What is he up

to?" But if we know the person, it is enough just to notice him pass by.

83. Desire in practice can be a friend or an enemy. As a friend, it makes it move to practice, to understand, to end suffering. But to be always desiring something that has not yet arisen, to want things to be other than they are, just causes more suffering, and this is when desire can be a foe. In the end, we must learn to let go of all our desires, even the desire for enlightenment. Only then can we be free.

84. Someone once asked Ajahn Chah about the way he taught meditation: "Do you use the method of daily interviewing to examine the mind-state of a person?" Ajahn Chah responded by saying, "Here I teach disciples to examine their own mind-states, to interview themselves. Maybe a monk is angry today, or maybe he has some desire in his mind. I don't know it but he should. He doesn't have to come and ask me about it,

does he?’

85. Our life is an assembly of the elements. We use conventions to describe things, but we get attached to the conventions and take them to be something real. For example, people and things are given names. We could go back to the beginning before names were given, and call men "women" and women "men" - what would be the difference? But now we cling to names and concepts, so we have the war of the sexes and other wars as well. Meditation is for seeing through all of Mts. We can then reach the unconditioned and be at peace, not at war.

86. Some people enter the monkhood out of faith, but later trample on the teachings of the Buddha. They know better, but refuse to practice rightly. Indeed, those who do really practice are few these days.

87. Theory and practice - the first knows the name of a medicinal plant, and the second goes out to find it and uses it.

88. Noise - you like the sound of birds but not that of cars. You're afraid of people and noises, and you like to live alone in the forest. Let go of the noise and take care of the baby. The "baby" is your practice.

89. A newly ordained novice asked Ajahn Chah what his advice was for those new to meditation practice, "The same as for those who've already been at it for a long time," he replied. And what was that? "Just keep at it," he said.

90. People say that the Buddha's teaching is right, but it is impossible to practice in society. They say things, like "I'm young, so I don't have the opportunity to practice, but when I'm old I'll practice." Would you say you're

young so you don't have time to eat, but when you get older you'll eat? If I poked you with a stick that was on fire, would you say you're suffering, it's true, but since you live in this society you can't get away from it?

NON- SELF

91. A devout elderly lady from a nearby province came on a pilgrimage to Wat Pah Pong. She told Ajahn Chah she could stay only a short time, as she had to return to take care of her grandchildren, and since she was an old lady, she asked if he could please give her a brief Dhamma talk. Ajahn Chah replied with great force, "Hey, listen! There's no one here, just this! No owner, no one to be old, to be young, to be good or bad, weak or strong. Just this, that's all - just various elements of nature going their own way, all empty. No one born and no one to die! Those who speak of birth and death are speaking the language of ignorant children. In the

language of thy heart, of Dhamma, there are no such things as birth and death."

92. The real foundation of the teaching is to see the self as being empty. But people came to study the Dhamma to increase their self-view, so they don't want to experience suffering or difficulty. They want everything to be cosy. They may want to transcend suffering, but if there is still a self how can they ever do so?

93. It is so easy once you understand. It is so simple and direct. When pleasant things arise, understand that they are empty. When unpleasant things arise, see that they are not yours. They pass away. Don't relate to them as being you, or see yourself as the owner of them. You think that papaya tree is yours, then why don't you feel hurt when it is cut down? If you can understand this, then the mind comes into balance. When the mind comes into balance, then this is the correct path, the correct teaching of the Buddha, and

the teaching that leads to liberation.

94. People don't study that which is beyond good and evil. This is what they should study. "I'm going to be like this; I'm going to be like that," they say. But they never say, "I'm not going to be anything because there really isn't any I." This they don't study.

95. Once you understand non-self, then the burden of life is gone. You'll be at peace with the world. When we see beyond self, we no longer cling to happiness and we can truly be happy. Learn to let go without struggle, simply let go, to be just as you are - no holding on, no attachment, free.

96. All bodies are composed of the four elements of earth, water, wind and fire. When they come together and form a body we say it's a male, a female, giving it names, and so on, so that we can identify each other

more easily. But actually there isn't anyone there - only earth, water, wind and fire. Don't get excited over it or infatuated by it. If you really look into it, you will not find anyone there.

PEACE

97. Q: What's peacefulness like?

A: What's confusion? Well, peacefulness is the end of confusion.

98. Peace is within oneself to be found in the same place as agitation and suffering. It is not found in a forest or on a hilltop, nor is it given by, a teacher.

Where you experience suffering, you can also find freedom from suffering. Trying to run away from suffering is actually to run toward it.

99. If you let go a little, you will have a little peace. If you let go a lot, you will have a lot of peace. If you let

go completely, you will have complete peace.

100. Actually, in truth, there isn't anything to human beings. Whatever we 'nay be, it's only in the realm of (appearances. However, if we go beyond appearances and see the truth, we will see that there isn't anything there but the universal characteristics - birth in the beginning, change in the middle, and cessation in the end. This is all there is. If we see that all things are like this, then no problems arise. If we understand this, we will have contentment and peace.

101. Know what is good and bad, whether travelling or living in one place. You can't find peace on a mountain or in a cave. You can even go to where the Buddha attained enlightenment without getting closer to the truth.

102. Looking outside the self is to compare and to discriminate. You will not find happiness that way. Nor will you find peace if you spend your time looking for a perfect person or the perfect teacher. The Buddha taught us to look at the Dhamma, the truth, and not to look at other people.

103. Anyone can build a house of wood and bricks, but the Buddha taught us that sort of home is not our real home. It's a home of the world and it follows the ways of the world. Our real home is inner peace.

104. The forest is peaceful, why aren't you? You hold onto things causing your confusion. Let nature teach you. Hear the bird's song and then let go. If you know nature, you'll know Mamma. If you know Dhamma, you'll know nature.

105. Looking for peace is like looking for a turtle with a mustache. You won't be able to find it. But when your heart is ready, peace will come looking for you.

106. Virtue, concentration, and wisdom together make up the Path. But this Path is not yet the true teaching, not what the teacher actually wanted, but merely the Path that will take you there. For example, say you traveled the road from Bangkok to Win Pah Pong; the road was necessary for your journey, but ' you were seeking Wat Pah Pong, the monastery, not the road. In the same way, we can say that virtue, concentration, and wisdom are outside the truth of the Buddha but are the road that leads to this truth. When you have developed these three factors, the result is the most wonderful peace.

SUFFERING

107. There are two kinds of suffering: the suffering which leads to more suffering, and the suffering which leads to the end of suffering. The first is the pain of grasping after fleeting pleasures and aversion for the unpleasant, the continued struggle of most people day after day. The second is the suffering which comes when you allow yourself to feel fully the constant change of experience - pleasure, pain, joy, and anger - without fear or withdrawal. The suffering of our experience leads to inner fearlessness and peace.

108. We want to take the easy way, but if there's no suffering, there's no wisdom. To be ripe for wisdom, you must really break down and cry in your practice at least three times.

109. We don't become monks or nuns to eat well, sleep and be very comfortable, but to know, suffering:
- how to accept it...

- how to get rid of it...

- how not to cause it...

So don't do that which causes suffering, like indulging in greed, or it will never leave you.

110. In truth, happiness is suffering in disguise but in such a subtle form that you don't see it. If you cling to happiness, it's the same as clinging to suffering, but you don't realize it. When you hold onto happiness, it's impossible to throw away the inherent suffering.

They're inseparable like that. Thus the Buddha taught us to know suffering, see it as the inherent harm in happiness, to see them as equal. So be careful! When happiness arises, don't be overjoyed, and don't get carried away. When suffering comes, don't despair, don't lose yourself in it. See that they have the same equal value.

111. When suffering arises, understand that there is no one to accept it. If you think suffering is yours, happiness is yours, you will not be able to find peace.

112. People who suffer will accordingly gain wisdom. If we don't suffer, we don't contemplate. If we don't contemplate, no wisdom is born. Without wisdom, we don't know. Not knowing, we can't get free of suffering - that's just the way it is. Therefore we must train and endure in our practice. When we then reflect on the world, we won't be afraid like before. It isn't that the Buddha was enlightened outside of the world but within the world itself.

113. Sensual indulgence and self-mortification are two paths the Buddha discouraged. This is just happiness and suffering. We imagine we have freed ourselves from suffering, but we haven't. We just cling to happiness. If we cling to happiness, we will suffer again.

That's the way it is, but people think contrarily.

114. People have suffering in one place, so they go somewhere else. When suffering arises there, they run off again. They think they're running away from suffering, but they're not. Suffering goes with them. They carry suffering around without knowing it. If we don't know suffering, then we can't know the cause of suffering. If we don't know the cause of suffering, then we can't know the cessation of suffering. There's no way we can escape it.

115. Students today have much more know-ledge than students of previous times. They have got all the things they need, everything is more convenient. But they also have a lot more suffering and confusion than before. Why is this?

116. Do not be a bodhisatta; do not be an arahant; do not be anything at all. If you are a bodhisatta, you will suffer; if you are an arahant, you will suffer; if you are anything at all, you will suffer.

117. Love and hate are both suffering, because of desire. Wanting is suffering; wanting not to have is suffering. Even if you get what you want, it's still suffering because once you've got it, you then live in the fear of losing it. How are you going to live happily with fear?

118. When you're angry, does it feel good or bad? If it feels so bad, then why don't you throw it away? Why bother to keep it? How can you say that you are wise and intelligent if you hold onto such things? Some days the mind can even cause the whole family to quarrel or cause you to cry all night. And, yet, we still continue to get angry and suffer. If you see the suffering of anger, then just throw it away. If you don't throw away, it'll go

on causing suffering indefinitely, with no chance of respite. The world of unsatisfactory existence is like this. If we know the way it is, we can solve the problem.

119. A woman wanted to know how to deal with anger. I asked her when anger arose whose anger it was. She said it was hers. Well, if it really was her anger, then she should be able to tell it to go away, shouldn't she? But it really isn't hers to command. Holding onto anger as a personal possession will cause suffering. If anger really belonged to us, it would have to obey us. If it doesn't obey us, that means it's only a deception. Don't fall for it. Whether the mind is happy or sad, don't fall for it. It's all a deception.

120. If you see certainly in that which is uncertain, you are bound to suffer.

121. The Buddha is always here teaching. See for yourself. There is happiness and there is unhappiness. There is pleasure and there is pain. And they're always here. When you understand the nature of pleasure and pain, there you see the Buddha, there you see the Dhamma. The Buddha is not apart from them.

TEACHER

122. You are your own teacher. Looking for teachers can't solve your own doubts. Investigate yourself to find the truth - inside, not outside. Knowing yourself is most important.

123. One of my teachers ate very fast. He made noises as he ate. Yet he told us to eat slowly and mindfully. I used to watch him and get very upset. I suffered, but he didn't! I watched the outside. Later I learned: some people drive very fast but carefully; others drive slowly and have many accidents. Don't cling to rules, to outer form. If you watch others at most ten percent of the

time and watch yourself ninety percent of the time, your practice is okey.

124. Disciples are hard to teach. Some know but don't bother to practice. Some don't know and don't try to find out. I don't know what to do with them, Why is it humans have minds like this? Being ignorant is not good, but even if I tell them, they still don't listen. People are so full of doubts in their practice. They're always doubting. They want to go to nibbana but they don't want to walk the path. It's baffling. When I tell them to meditate, they're afraid, and if not afraid, then just plain sleepy. Mostly they like to do the things I don't teach. This is the pain of being a teacher.

125. If we could see the truth of the Buddha's teaching so easily, we wouldn't need so many teachers. When we understand the teachings, we just do what is required of us. But what makes people so difficult to teach is that they don't accept the teachings and argue with the

teachers and the teachings. In front of the teacher they behave a little better, but behind his back they become thieves! People are really difficult to teach.

126. I don't teach my disciples to live and practice heedlessly. But that's what they do when I'm not around. When the policeman is around, the thieves behave themselves. When he asks if there are any thieves around, of course they all say there aren't, that they've never seen any. But as soon as the policeman's gone, they're at it again. It was like that even in the Buddha's time. So just watch. Yourself and don't be concerned with what other do.

127. True teachers speak only of the difficult practice of giving up or getting rid of the self. Whatever may happen, do not abandon the teacher. Let him guide you, because it is easy to forget the Path.

128. Your doubts about your teacher can help you. Take from your teacher what is good, and be aware of your own practice. Wisdom is for yourself to watch and develop.

129. Don't just go and believe in the teacher because he says a fruit is sweet and delicious. Taste it for yourself and then all the doubting will be over

130. Teachers are those who point out the direction of the Path. After listening to the teacher, whether or not we walk the Path by practicing ourselves, and thereby reap the fruits of practice, is strictly up to each One of us.

131. Sometimes teaching is hard work. A teacher is like a garbage can that people throw their frustrations and problems into. The more people you teach, the bigger the garbage disposal problems. But teaching is a

wonderful way to practice Dhamtana. Those who teach grow in patience and in understanding.

132. A teacher cannot really clear up our difficulties. He is just a source to investigate the Path. He can't make it clear. Actually what he says is not worth listening to. The Buddha never praised believing in others. We must believe ourselves. This is difficult, yes, but that's really how it is. We look outside but never really see. We have to decide to really practice. Doubts don't disappear by asking others, but through our own unending practice.

UNDERSTANDING & WISDOM

133. No one and nothing can free you but your own understanding.

134. A madman and an arahant both smile, but the arahant knows why while the madman doesn't.

135. A clever person watches others, but he watches with wisdom, not with ignorance. If one watches with wisdom, one can learn much. But if one watches with ignorance, one can only find faults.

136. The real problem with people nowadays is that they know but still don't do. It another matter if they don't do because they don't know, but if they already know and still don't do, what's the problem?

137. Outward scriptural study is not important. Of course, the Dhamma books are correct, but they are not right. They cannot give you right understanding. To see the word "anger" in print is not the same as experiencing anger. Only experiencing for yourself can give you true faith.

138. If you see things with real insight, then there is no stickiness in your relationship to them. They come - pleasant and unpleasant - you see them and there is no attachment. They come and they pass. Even if the worst kinds of defilement come up, such as greed or anger, there's enough wisdom to see their impermanent nature and allow them to just fade away. If you react to them, however by liking or disliking, that isn't wisdom. You're only creating more suffering for yourself.

139. When we know the truth, we become people who don't have to think much, we become people with wisdom. If we don't know, we have more thinking than wisdom or no wisdom at all. A lot of thinking without wisdom is extreme suffering.

140. These days people don't search for the Truth. People study simply in order to find the knowledge

necessary to make a living, raise their families and look after themselves, that's all. To them being smart is more important than being wise.

VIRTUE

141. Be careful about observing our precepts. Virtue is a sense of shame, What we have doubts about, we should not do or say. This is virtue. Purity is being beyond all doubts.

143. There are two levels of practice. The first level forms the foundation, which is the development of virtue, the precepts, in order to bring happiness and harmony among people. The second level is the practice of Dhamma with the sole goal of liberating the heart. This liberation is the source of wisdom and compassion and is the true reason for the Buddha's teaching. Understanding these two levels is the bank of true

practice.

143. Virtue and morality are the mother and father of the Dhamma growing within us. They provide it with the proper nourishment and guidance.

144. Virtue is the basis for a harmonious world in which people can live truly as humans and not as animals. Developing virtue is at the heart of our practice. Keep the precepts, Cultivate compassion and respect for all life. Be mindful in your actions and speech. Use virtue to make your life simple and pure. With virtue as a basis for everything you do, your mind will become kind, clear, and quiet. Meditation will grow easily in this environment.

145. Look after your virtue as a gardener takes care of his plants. Do not be attached to big or small, important or unimportant. Some people want shortcuts. They say,

"Forget concentration, we'll go straight to insight; forget virtue, we'll start with concentration" We have so many excuses for our attachments.

146. Right effort and virtue are not a question of what you do outwardly but of constant inner awareness and restraint. Thus, charity, if given with good intention, can bring happiness to oneself and to others. But virtue must be the root of this charity for it to be pure.

147. The Buddha taught us to refrain from what is bad, to do good, and to purify the heart. Our practice, then, is to get rid of what is worthless and keep what is valuable. Do you still have anything bad or unskillful in your heart? Of course! So why not clean house? But true practice is not only getting rid of what is bad and cultivating the good. This is only part of it. In the end we must go beyond both good and bad. Finally there is a freedom that includes all and a desirelessness from

which love and wisdom naturally flow.

148. We must start right here where we are, directly and simply. When the first two steps, virtue and right view, have been completed, then the third step of uprooting defilement will naturally occur without deliberation. When light is produced, we no longer worry about getting rid of darkness, nor do we wonder where the darkness has gone, We just know that there is light.

149. Following the precepts has three levels. The first is to undertake them as training rules given to us by our teachers. The second arises when we undertake and abide in them by ourselves. But for those at the highest level, the Noble Ones, it is not necessary to think of precepts, of right and wrong. This true virtue comes from wisdom that knows the Four Noble Truths in the heart and acts from this understanding.

150. Some monks disrobe to go to the front where bullets fly past them every day. They prefer it like that. They really want to go. Danger surrounds them on all sides and yet they're prepared to go. Why don't they see the danger? They're prepared to die by the gun but nobody wants to die developing virtue. This is really amazing, isn't it?

MISCELLANEOUS

151. One of Ajahn Chah's disciples had a knee problem that could only be corrected by surgery. Although the doctors had assured him his knee would be well in a couple of weeks, months went by and it still hadn't healed properly. When he saw Ajahn Chah again, he complained saying, "They said it wouldn't take this long. It shouldn't be this way." Ajahn Chah laughed and said, "If it shouldn't be this way, it wouldn't be this way."

152. If someone gives you a nice fat, yellow banana that's sweet and fragrant but poisonous, will you eat it? No. Why is it, then, when the Buddha tells us that sensuous pleasure is 'poisonous," we go ahead and "eat" it anyway?

153. See your defilements, know them like you know a cobra's poison. You won't grab the cobra because you know it can kill you. See the harm in things harmful and the use in things useful.

154. We are always dissatisfied. In a sweet fruit, we miss the sour; in a sour fruit, we miss the sweet.

155. If you have something bad smelling in your pocket, wherever you go it will smell bad. Don't blame it on the place.

156. Buddhism in the East today is like a big tree which may look majestic, but can only give small and tasteless fruit. Buddhism in the west is like a sapling, not yet able to bear fruit, but having the potential to give large, sweet ones.

157. People nowadays think too much. There are too many things for them to get interested in, but none of them lead to any true fulfillment.

158. Just because you go and call alcohol "perfume" doesn't make it become per-fume, you know. But, you people, when you want to drink alcohol, you say it's perfume, then go ahead and drink it. You must be crazy!

159. People are always looking outwards, at people and things. They look at this hall, for example, and say, "Oh, it's so big!" Actually it's not big at all. Whether or not it

seems big, depends on your perception of it. In fact this hall is just the size it is, neither big nor small. People, however, run after their feelings all the time. They are so busy looking around and having opinions about what they see that they have no time to look at themselves.

160. Some people get bored, fed up, tired of the practice and lazy. They can't seem to keep the Dhamma in mind. Yet, if you go and scold them, they'll never forget that. Some may remember it for the rest of their lives and never forgive you for it. But when it comes to the Buddha's teaching, telling us to be moderate, to be restrained, to practice conscientiously, why do they keep forgetting these things? Why don't people take these things to heart?

161. Seeing that we are better than others is not right. Seeing that we are equal to others is not right. Seeing that we are inferior to others is not right. If we think we

are better than others, pride arises. If we think we are equal to others, we fail to show respect and humility at the proper times. If we think we are inferior to others, we get depressed thinking we are inferior, born under a bad sign and so on. Just let all of that go!

162. We must learn to let go of conditions and not try to oppose or resist them. And yet we plead with them to comply with our wishes. We look for all sorts of means to organize them or make a deal with them. If the body gets sick and is in pain, we don't want it to be so, so we look for various sutras to chant. We don't want the body to be in pain. We want to control it. These sutras become some form of mystical ceremony, getting us even more entangled in clinging. This is because we chant them in order to ward off illness, to prolong life and so on. Actually the Buddha gave us these teachings in order to help us know the truth of the body, so that we can let go and give up our longings, but we end up

chanting them to increase our delusion.

163. Know your own body, heart, and mind. Be content with little. Don't be attached to the teachings. Don't go and hold onto emotions.

164. Some people are afraid of generosity. They feel that they will be exploited or oppressed. In cultivating generosity, we are only oppressing our greed and attach merit. This allows our true nature to express itself and become lighter and freer.

165. If you reach out and grab a fire in your neighbor's house, the fire will be hot. If you grab a fire in your own house, that, too, will be hot. So don't grab at any-thing that can burn you, no matter what or where it is.

166. People outside may call us mad to live in the forest like this, sitting like statues. But how do they

live? They laugh, they cry, they are so caught up that at times they kill themselves or one another out of greed and hatred. Who are the mad ones?

167. More than merely teaching people, Ajahn Chah trained them by creating a general environment and specific situations where they could learn about themselves. He would say things like, "Of what I teach you, you understand maybe 15%," or "He's been a monk for five years, so he understands 5%." A junior monk said in response to the latter, "So I must have 1% since I've been here one year." "No," was Ajahn Chah's reply. "The first four years you have no percent, then the fifth year, you have 5%."

168. One of Ajahn Chah's disciple was once asked if he was ever going to disrobe, if he was going to die in the yellow robes. The disciple said that it was hard to think about, and that although he had no plans to disrobe, he couldn't really decide that he never would. When he

looked into it, he said, his thoughts seemed meaningless. Ajahn Chah then replied by saying, "That they are meaningless is the real Dhamma."

169. When someone asked Ajahn Chah why there was so much crime in Thailand, a Buddhist country, or why Indochina was such a mess, he said, "Those aren't Buddhists who are doing those unwholesome things. That isn't Buddhism doing those things. Those are people doing those things. Buddha never taught anything like that."

170. Once a visitor asked Ajahn Chah if he was an arahant. He said, "I am like a tree in a forest. Birds come to the tree, they sit on its branches and eat its fruit. To the birds the fruit may be sweet or sour or whatever. But the tree doesn't know anything about it. The birds say sweet or they say sour, but from the tree's point of view, this is just the chattering of birds."

171. Someone commented, "I can observe desire and aversion in my mind, but it's hard to observe delusion." "You're riding on a horse and asking where the horse is?" was Ajahn Chah's reply.

172. If it isn't good, let it die. If it doesn't die, make it good.

173. You say you love your girlfriend one hundred per cent. Well, turn her inside out and see how many per cent of her you still love. Or if you miss your lover so much when she's not with you, then why not ask her to send to you a vial of her feces in it. In that way, whenever you think of her with longing, you can open the vial and smell it. Disgusting? What is it, then, that you love? What is it that makes your heart pound like a rice pounder every time a girl with a really attractive figure comes walking along or you smell her perfume in

the air? What is it? What are these forces? They pull and suck you in, but you don't put up a real fight, do you? There's a price to pay for it in the end, know!

174. One day Ajahn Chah came upon a large, heavy branch that was lying in his path and which he wanted to move out of the way. He motioned to a disciple to get hold of one end while he lifted the other. Then when they held it ready to throw, he looked up and asked, "Is it heavy?" And after they had flung it into the forest, he asked again, "Now, is it heavy?" It was like this that Ajahn Chah taught his disciples to see the Dhamma in everything they said or did. In this case, he demonstrated the benefit of "letting go."

175. A disciple of Ajahn Chah was unplugging a tape recorder when he accidentally touched the metal prongs of the plug while it was still connected. He got a shock and dropped it immediately. Ajahn Chah noticed, and not being one to let an opportunity to teach the

Dhamma slip by, was quick to say, "Oh! How come you could let go of that so easily? Who told you to?"

176. It was Christmas and the foreign monks had decided to celebrate it. They invited some laypeople as well as Ajahn Chah to join them. The laypeople were generally upset and skeptical. Why, they asked, were Buddhists celebrating Christmas? Ajahn Chah then gave a talk on religion in which he said, As far as I understand, Christianity teaches people to do good and avoid evil, just as Buddhism does, so what is the problem? However, if people are upset by the idea of celebrating Christmas, that can be easily remedied. We won't call it Christmas. Let's call it 'Christ-Buddhamas.' Anything that inspires us to see what is true and do what is good is proper practice. You may call it any name you like."

177. During the time refugees were pouring into Thailand from Laos and Cambodia, the charitable

organizations who came out to help were many. This made some ordained Westerners think it was not right that Buddhist monks and nuns should just sit in the forest while other religious organizations were so actively participating in alleviating the plight of the refugees. So they approached Ajahn Chah to express their concern, and this is what he said, "Helping in refugee camps is good. It is indeed our natural human duty to each other. But going through our own madness so that we can lead others through, that's the only cure. Anyone can go out and distribute clothes and pitch tents, but how many can come into the forest and sit to know their minds? As long as we don't know how to 'clothe' and 'feed' people minds, there will always be a refugee problem somewhere in the world."

178. Ajahn Chah listened to one of his disciples recite the Heart Sutra. When he had finished, Ajahn Chah said, "No emptiness either...no bodhisatta." He then asked, "Where did the sutra come from?" "It's reputed to have

been spoken by the Buddha," the follower replied. "No Buddha," retorted Ajahn Chah. Then he said, "This is talking about deep wisdom, beyond all conventions. How could we teach without them? We have to have names for things, isn't that so?"

179. To become a Noble One, we have to continuously undergo changes until only the body remains. The mind changes completely but the body still exists. There is hot, cold, pain, and sickness as usual. But the mind has changed and now sees birth, old age, sickness and death in the light of truth.

180. Someone once asked Ajahn Chah to talk about enlightenment; could he describe his own enlightenment? With everyone eagerly waiting to hear his answer, he said, "Enlightenment isn't hard to understand. Just take a banana and put it into your mouth, then you will know what it tastes like. You have to practice to experience realization, and you have to

persevere. If it were so easy to become enlightened, everyone would be doing it. I started going to the temple when I was eight years old, and I have been a monk for over forty years. But you want to meditate for a night or two and go straight to nibbana. You don't just sit down and - zip! -there you are, you know. You can't get someone to blow on your head and make you enlightened either."

181. You don't have to be fully enlightened before you are able to teach people. Just be honest with them and tell them what you know from your heart. Tell people what's possible. Don't pretend to be able to lift big rocks if you can only lift small ones. Yet it doesn't hurt to tell people that if you exercise and if you work, it is indeed possible to lift large rocks.

182. I don't know who to talk to about it. We talk about things to be developed and things to give up, but there's really nothing to develop, nothing to give up.

AN INVITATION

All that I have said up to now has merely been words. When people come to see me, I have to say something. But it is best not to speak about these matters too much. Better to begin practice without delay. I am like a good friend inviting you to go somewhere. Do not hesitate, just get going. You won't regret it.