

NAMO TASSA BHAGAVATO ARAHATO SAMASAMBUDDHASSA

The Mind Lets Go of Itself

Ajahn Chah

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

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

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

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

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

(Ajahn Chah taps the ground and continues:) Like the ground compared to that which runs around on top. It's like that. That which is the ground doesn't arise or cease, it remains as it

is. That which arises and runs around on top, includes the mind (citta), perception, (sañña) as well as thinking (sankhāra).

In whatever way the state (of Enlightenment) is explained-body, feeling, perception, thought and consciousness do not exist. They totally cease. They only exist by placing a conventional designation



on them. Body, feeling, perception, thought and consciousness arise, then cease. Nothing! All ceased!

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ajahn Chah: Hey!

Q: The original mind.

Ajahn Chah: The what?

Q: Is there anything outside these five aggregates (i.e. of body, feeling, perception, thought and consciousness)? Is there anything at all that can be called the original mind.



Ajahn Chah: They can call it 'original'. But it's all gone. Just there, it's all gone.

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

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

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

*"...how much samadhi
do you need?"*

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

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

