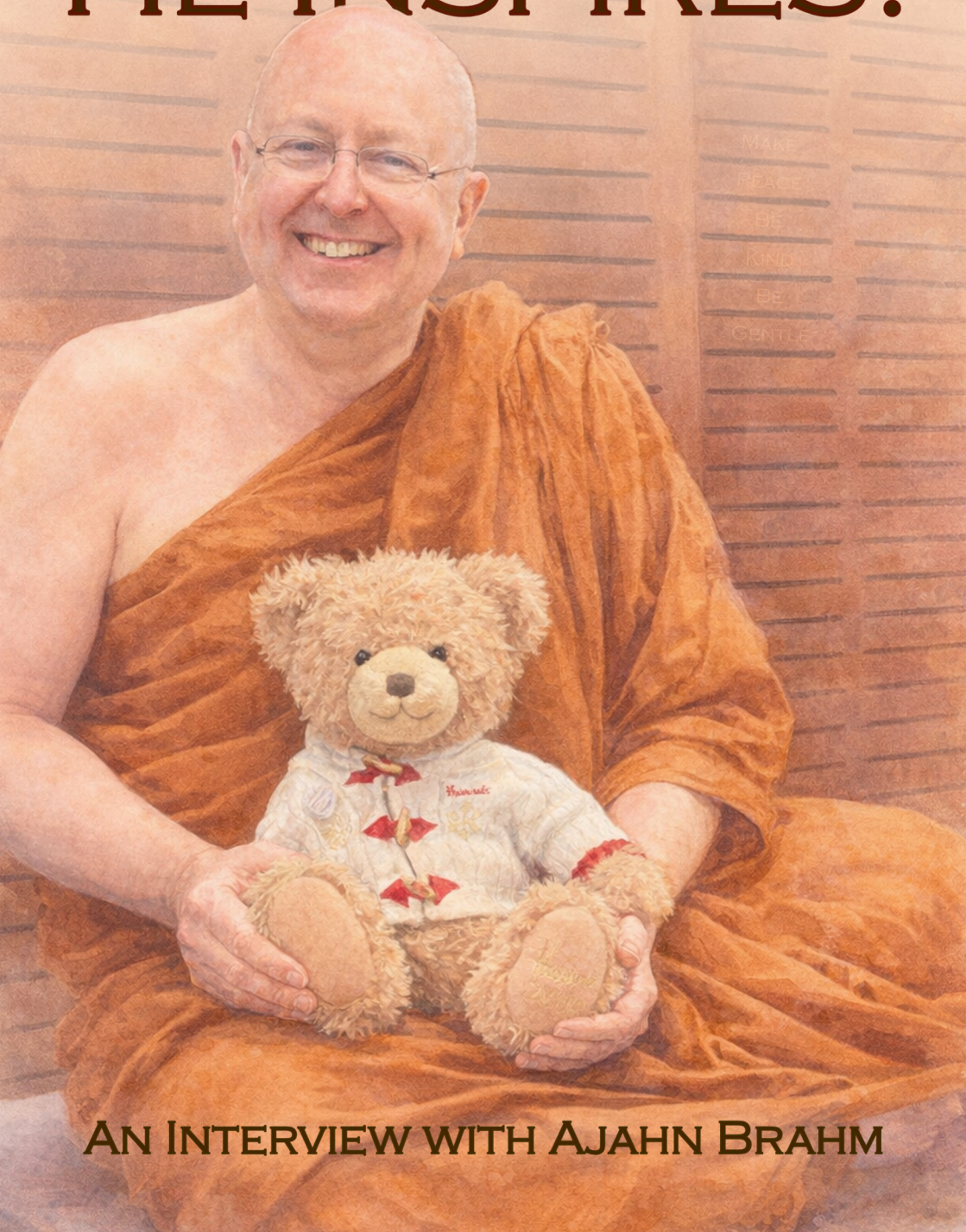


# HE INSPIRES!



AN INTERVIEW WITH AJAHN BRAHM



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AJAHN BRAHM

&

BHIKKHU BRAHMALI



WISDOM & WONDERS

He Inspires! — An Interview with Ajahn Brahm

Ajahn Brahm & Bhikkhu Brahmali

For Free Distribution

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Find more information on Ajahn Brahm at [bswa.org](http://bswa.org)

Watch a video about the monastery where Ajahn Brahm resides at

[youtu.be/GOL5RTd-WDk](https://youtu.be/GOL5RTd-WDk)

*The gift of the dhamma excels all gifts;  
the taste of the dhamma excels all tastes;  
delight in the dhamma excels all delights.  
The eradication of craving overcomes all suffering.*

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## *He Inspires!*

*He inspires through the way he shares the Dhamma to arouse faith,  
and through the way he guides the faithful to deeper Dhamma.*

*He inspires with humility and humour,  
through meditation and stillness, with unassuming courage.*

*He inspires by valuing equality and equanimity, and in many other  
ways, including the way he handles an interview.*

ON THE 5TH DECEMBER 2024, a wonderful anniversary took place. Exactly 50 years prior, Ajahn Brahm became a bhikkhu—a fully ordained Buddhist monk.

The Buddhist Society of Western Australia organised a series of events to celebrate Ajahn Brahm's 50th year as a bhikkhu. One such event was an interview on the 1st December at Dhammaloka Buddhist Centre. It was a delightful opportunity for those present to witness the interaction between Ajahn Brahm and his close monastic disciple, Ajahn Brahmali.

Ajahn Brahmali has lived with Ajahn Brahm, at Bodhinyana Monastery, for 30 years. It's unlikely he would have learned anything new about his teacher. Yet, for those who were present or who are reading this now, or who access the interview on YouTube, it offers another opportunity to understand and learn from a beloved and generous teacher. For those present that day, the experience was moving and joyful, as both interviewee and interviewer are loved and respected teachers, deeply valued exemplars to the wider Buddhist community.

At the beginning of the interview, Ajahn Brahmali said:

*This is a dream opportunity! Now is my chance to get my own back on Ajahn Brahm! I told him, 'This is my chance to torture you a little bit!' Ajahn Brahm simply replied, 'You will not be able to torture me.'*

As always, Ajahn Brahm was right. With a heart overflowing with mettā for all beings, he smiles—or even laughs—through everything. What this interview has revealed to us is that it is impossible not to feel inspired by our beloved teacher.



# EARLY LIFE



# CHILDHOOD INCLINATIONS

Ajahn Brahmali:

You've told the story of receiving a book voucher for winning a science award at Latymer Upper School. You said you went to Foyles of London and went straight to the religion section. Why did you go to the religion section?

Ajahn Brahm:

Foyles is a very big bookshop near Tottenham Court Road, and I did what my teacher told me to do: go to the maths section. But then I realised I could get those rather boring maths books from the library, so instead, I went to the opposite side of the road, to the annex of Foyles Bookshop. In the attic on the top storey of the annex, there were all kinds of forbidden books. There were books on different religions, books on psychology and philosophy. Anything that was a bit strange was up there. Weird and forbidden things attracted me.

Ajahn Brahmali:

Why did that attract you?

Ajahn Brahm:

I'm rebellious.

Ajahn Brahmali:

One can be rebellious in many ways. What made you go to the religion section?

Ajahn Brahm:

It was not just religion; it was the section on Eastern religions. One of the things I realised early in life was the importance of spirituality or religion. I wanted to find out what kind of religion I should follow.

I picked up a copy of the *Quran*, a copy of the *Bhagavad Gita*, a copy of *The Third Eye* by Lobsang Rampa, and, last but not least, a book on Buddhism by Christmas Humphreys. That book didn't inspire me, nor did it convert me. But what was important was that it made me realise who I was. I then knew that my views, the way I looked at the world, already had a name, and that name was 'Buddhism'.

Ajahn Brahmali:

So, you realised that spirituality was important. Why did you realise that?

Ajahn Brahm:

My interest was in science, in physics—how the world works. But those are just physical laws, and that's not enough. There's something more important.

Dennis, our past president sitting over there, may remember an invitation to meet with Sir Roger Penrose. Dennis was also into science, and Roger Penrose was one of the big stars of science. He was way up there. Stephen

Hawking wasn't that well known at the time, but Roger Penrose was. We thought spending the evening with him would be fascinating, but he turned out to be a wallflower;<sup>1</sup> you couldn't really talk to him.

That's one of the reasons I realised that being a monk was a better choice of lifestyle. You understand deeper truths than Roger Penrose. You also learn how to convey those truths to others.

Ajahn Brahmali:

Was there anyone in your early life who guided you towards spiritual ideals, or did it come from yourself?

Ajahn Brahm:

It came from myself.

Ajahn Brahmali:

So, if it came from yourself, did it come from a past life?

Ajahn Brahm:

It had to.

Ajahn Brahmali:

What do you think happened in your past lives?

Ajahn Brahm:

What do I think? You can't think about past lives!

---

<sup>1</sup> 'Wallflower' is a term used to describe someone who tends to avoid attention and prefers to stay on the sidelines in social situations.

Ajahn Brahmali:

If you were to make a guess, what do you think you were in your past lives?

Ajahn Brahm:

You can't make guesses as monks.

Ajahn Brahmali:

An educated guess?

Ajahn Brahm:

I never studied reincarnation at university, so it cannot be an educated guess.

Ajahn Brahmali:

Do you think you were a monk in a past life?

Ajahn Brahm:

What do I think? I said we don't think like that as monks.

Ajahn Brahmali:

Could you have been a nun in a past life?

Ajahn Brahm:

I could have been anything.

Ajahn Brahmali:

Okay, next question. You mentioned that you picked up the book by Lobsang Rampa just because it was crazy. So, you were interested in weird stuff?

Ajahn Brahm:

Yes.

# LEARNING COURAGE

## Ajahn Brahmali:

Was there anything else in your background that could have influenced your monastic life? For example, you talk about coming from a working-class family. You lived in Acton, London. Was it a nice community?

## Ajahn Brahm:

It was a very poor community.

By the way, one of the people who went to my primary school and also to my secondary school was the actor, Alan Rickman (Professor Snape in the Harry Potter movies). He came from a very poor family and won a scholarship to Latymer Upper School, just as I did. He was about four years older than me, but I must have seen him.

## Ajahn Brahmali:

Did any of the people from that time—friends, acquaintances, the people you grew up with—affect you in terms of the decisions you made in life?

## Ajahn Brahm:

Never be afraid.

Many of you would have heard me tell this story. One day, in the last year of primary school, my father had the afternoon off work. He came to see me at lunchtime with two tickets to a World Cup soccer qualifier at Wembley Stadium that very afternoon.

I had school that afternoon, but I said, “Well, I can always ask my teacher.”

My teacher was a really tough disciplinarian. But I asked him anyway. What could be wrong with asking?

I went up to the teacher and said, “Is it okay if I go to Wembley Stadium this afternoon for a World Cup qualifier match, England versus Poland?” I still remember the look on my teacher’s face. He couldn’t believe that I had the nerve to ask such a thing!

Then, surprisingly, he said, “I don’t see why not. Off you go, then.” He let me go! I think he was acknowledging the fact that I had the nerve, the courage, to ask.

Of course, when I went to school the next day, all my friends were so jealous, wondering, “How did you do that?” While they were studying maths or science, I was watching the football match with my teacher’s permission.

I learned the value of courage. You can only ask, and people will respect you for that.





# MONASTIC LIFE



# PROGRESS

Ajahn Brahmali:

Now I'm moving on to monastic life. In your 50 years as a monk, what has been the most fruitful and beneficial period?

Ajahn Brahm:

Now that's a good one! The whole lot.

Ajahn Brahmali:

The whole lot? In different ways or in the same way?

Ajahn Brahm:

In different ways.

Ajahn Brahmali:

Can you explain a bit about those different ways?

Ajahn Brahm:

When you first start as a monk, you are always trying to attain things and get things. But when you've got that out of the way, you realise the most important thing in monastic life is to be able to share all that you've experienced. You have found this wonderful mineshaft of wisdom and kindness, stillness and peace. And it's important to share that with as many people as you possibly can. That becomes the meaning of your life.

Imagine you get some really nice meditation, some insights, some deep states of freedom. What would you want to do? You can't keep it to yourself. There is no self to keep it to. It gives me the greatest joy when somebody comes

along—usually after a meditation retreat—to tell me what they’ve experienced, and you realise it’s valid. They’ve understood that it’s true that you can have wonderful experiences as a meditator, as a Buddhist. That’s the greatest gift you could ever give me: the fact that you’ve also been following the path of the Buddha, that you’ve also experienced the great freedoms, peace, and the bliss that the Buddha described.

## INSIGHT

Ajahn Brahmali:

Has monastic life given you any special insights into yourself?

Ajahn Brahm, laughing:

No. There is no self to have insights into.

Ajahn Brahmali:

But that’s an insight, isn’t it?

Ajahn Brahm:

Is it?

Ajahn Brahmali (laughing):

I’m asking you, Ajahn.

Ajahn Brahm:

These wonderful insights that you see in traditional Buddhism...

That's one of the strange things that goes against my idea of being a rebel, of doing things differently. How the Buddha practiced and how he taught and described reality is so clear and realistic. Some people may think the Teachings are burdened by the cultural baggage of the past, but they're not. The core teachings of the Buddha are still valid today. They're as powerful today as they were thousands of years ago.

The Buddha said the four pillars—bhikkhunīs, bhikkhus and lay people—are important for the growth of Buddhism in our world. That's why we have bhikkhunīs. Of course, I have worked hard fighting to establish not just bhikkhu monasteries but also bhikkhunī monasteries, lay retreat centres, and lay dhamma centres here and in many other places. That has become the meaning of my life.

## MEDITATION

Ajahn Brahmali:

What has been the most unexpected part of monastic life?

Ajahn Brahm:

Unexpected? Just to realise that when you expect things, you never get them [laughter]. And when you stop expecting, everything gets so peaceful, blissful and beautiful. It is not a path of expectation; it's a path of "inspectation".

Ajahn Brahmali:

Did you discover that as you went from lay life to monastic life or was it earlier?

Ajahn Brahm:

I think many of you know that I was still a layperson when I first discovered the power of meditation.

I was having a lovely time with my last girlfriend. One day I said that I was planning to go on a nine-day retreat in Cambridge. On that retreat I had a wonderful meditation, and basically that was the end of the relationship.

I didn't know it at the time, but looking back, I realise that when you have the peace and freedom of the Dhamma, you really do not get caught up in romantic relationships. That was before I became a monk, so I didn't have anybody to discuss it with or to help me understand it. But later, when you meet someone like Ajahn Chah, you realise: "Yes, this is the way it is."

## HANDLING FAME

Ajahn Brahmali:

Ajahn, you are an extraordinarily famous monk. The standard sequence you see these days is the Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh, and then, Ajahn Brahm. Has that ever affected the decisions that you have made?

Ajahn Brahm:

I have to be honest with you—sometimes I can't understand it. I get more photos taken of me now when I'm old and fat than when I was young and handsome. There are advantages and disadvantages. I remember going on an aircraft—I think it was Garuda—over to Singapore to give some talks. I was sitting at the back in economy class.

An Indonesian flight attendant stopped and looked at me and asked, "Are you Ajahn Brahm?"

"I think so," I replied.

Putting her hand over her heart, she gushed, "Oh, I am your most devoted disciple. I've read all your books and listened to all your talks. Thank you, thank you, thank you so much!"

I knew I was going to get special service on that flight. This is one of the advantages.

But then in the middle of the flight, once they had served the meal, she came up to me again.

"Would you mind coming up to the galley?"

I agreed and went to the front. The whole flight crew was there—for a photo session. Despite the call lights going off as the passengers were ringing and ringing (their beers needed topping up), the flight attendants wanted to finish the photo session with me first. As I walked back, all the Australians going on holiday to Bali realised that I was the reason they didn't get their extra beer. I got some really interesting comments and looks. I kind of enjoyed that! [laughter]

Ajahn Brahmali:

Ajahn, by 2009 you already had a lot of accolades and fame. I was wondering if this would stop you from going ahead with the first bhikkhunī ordination, which took place that year and which could have led to a decline in your fame. It also might have led to problems in Thailand—perhaps they would demote you. There were all kinds of possible negative consequences. It was very inspiring that those things were never part of your calculation. It was purely about what was right.

Ajahn Brahm:

Correct. I've mentioned these anecdotes many times. The time I really started getting well known, famous you might say, was when I went to Singapore. They had arranged a series of talks at Suntec City Convention Centre. One evening no one else was talking, just me, and there were about 3,000 people seated in the hall, waiting. It was a weekday. They would have taken leave from work and had probably missed dinner that evening.

I thought if I gave a very bad talk, then of course that would put people off the Dhamma. I love the Dhamma, and the last thing I ever want to do is diminish people's respect for meditation or Dhamma. The second thing I thought was that if I gave a good talk, then I'd be in danger. I had seen many other people getting proud and arrogant because of what we call 'gains, honour, and fame'.

I thought, "My goodness, how can I deal with this?"

And then I got this wonderful insight. Every time I give a talk or lead meditation teachings here at the BSWA or anywhere in the world, it's never been 'I' who gave a talk.

All the words that come out of my mouth are the conditioning, what I usually call 'brainwashing' from all the teachers I've known over the years. From Ajahn Chah as well as other inspiring teachers I went to see—all the monastics, female as well as male, and all the people I've listened to over the years. Basically, they're responsible for my talks. I never connect 'Ajahn Brahm' with anything I say.

There's one thing I wanted to stress at some point today. Please remember that you should never take refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Ajahn Brahm. You only take refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. And the Sangha means monastics, male and female. That's what you take refuge in. I know that some people say they are followers of Thich Nhat Hanh or the Dalai Lama. You don't take refuge in Thich Nhat Hanh. You don't take refuge in the Dalai Lama. You don't take refuge in Ajahn Chah. You take refuge in the Sangha, as well as in the Buddha and the Dhamma. Please remember that.

## ANY REGRETS?

Ajahn Brahmali:

Is there anything you would have liked to have done differently in your monastic life?

Ajahn Brahm:

No.

Ajahn Brahmali:

That's wonderful. Now to some questions that are more specific to monastic life.

## RECEIVING FOOD AND BEING OKAY WITH HUNGER

Ajahn Brahmali:

Have you ever experienced hunger, and if you have, how did you deal with it?

Ajahn Brahm:

I have experienced hunger, not eating for a few days. It's easy to deal with—you don't die from hunger. It's lovely to fast. It's like purging your body and then you can just meditate.

One time I went on a fast, the villagers from Bung Wai Village<sup>2</sup> came to see me and said, “Ajahn Brahm, why are you not eating our food?”

I said to them in the Isaan language<sup>3</sup>, “I’m not eating anyone’s food; I’m fasting.” For the villagers, a monk is a receptacle for them to make good kamma. At first, they didn’t agree with what I was doing. It took me a long while to realise that I was never a burden to them in the sense that they had to feed me. I was a burden when I didn’t eat their food!

This morning here at Dhammaloka, a lady brought a huge cake, the kind that she knew I liked. I didn’t eat any, but I told her that I would keep some for lunchtime instead. It’s not that I wanted or needed it; it was that she needed to give it to me. Many of you who are here will understand. If someone makes something specially for you and you don’t eat it, they get disappointed.

Ajahn Brahmali:

Too much food is more of a problem than hunger? Is that right?

Ajahn Brahm:

Yes.

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2 A village near Wat Pah Nanachat, in the north-east of Thailand.

3 A dialect in the north-east of Thailand.

## PAINFUL EXPERIENCES

Ajahn Brahmali:

What is the most painful experience in your monastic life?

Ajahn Brahm:

I became very ill a few times. One of those times was when I had scrub typhus. I was only 24 or 25 years of age, and I had very little energy. It was a painful experience.

I had injections every morning and afternoon in the backside, with very dull needles. This was a time when needles were recycled. They boiled them to sterilise them after use. First, they were used in Bangkok, and after using them there, they were sent up to the Northeast. Then, they sent the now very dull needles down to the monk's ward because we were supposed to be tough. The nurses who injected us were built like wrestlers. They had to be so as to be able to stab blunt needles into our backside twice a day! Eventually this became the most painful part of the experience. I had no energy, so I couldn't run away.

In the end, Ajahn Chah visited. He said, "Brahm, you'll either get better or you'll die," and he left. Great wisdom but no bedside manners!

Painful experiences can give you some wonderful things to remember.

# DOUBTS

Ajahn Brahmali:

Did you ever have any doubts about monastic life or Buddhism?

Ajahn Brahm:

That's a great question, and I can answer that without any fear at all, and the answer is "no".

There were two occasions when I really tested myself. The first one was when one of my best friends, the monk who sat next to me, decided he wanted to disrobe, which he did. Afterwards I remember going back to my hut and asking myself if I wanted to leave. The answer was "no".

I was still young, and I had a good degree from Cambridge University. I would be able to survive really well in the world. I contemplated all the possible reasons for leaving, but none of them were convincing. This is why any monk who comes to me, thinking about disrobing, doesn't get any encouraging response.

When Ajahn Jagaro disrobed, some of the people here asked me, "When are you going to disrobe, Ajahn Brahm?" They lost a bit of faith in monks. They had known Ajahn Jagaro, and he had been a monk for a long time.

As the person next in line, I was the replacement for Ajahn Jagaro. For two or three days after he left, I asked myself if there was any chance at all of my ever disrobing. If I had seen any crack there at all, if I had seen that there was any chance that, somehow or other, I would disrobe, I would

never have accepted the role as abbot of Bodhinyana Monastery.

It is terrible as a leader to disappoint those who follow you. I looked and looked, and tested it out, but I couldn't find any possibility of that ever happening. I had no doubt at all. As a result, I agreed to be the abbot. I'm still here, thirty years later.

## RELATIONSHIPS

Ajahn Brahmali:

Moving on to your relationships, I want to ask you what you appreciate the most in other people?

Ajahn Brahm:

Honesty.

Ajahn Brahmali:

Anything else?

Ajahn Brahm:

Honesty more than anything else. When they're honest, they're true to themselves and thus can be true to me. In other words, what they say is what they mean. They don't pretend in order to impress me.

# INTERACTIONS WITH TEACHERS

## Ajahn Brahmali:

The next question is about your relationship with teachers. Who is most important to you, the Buddha or Ajahn Chah?

## Ajahn Brahm:

Ajahn Chah. He was someone I lived with, someone I could see, whilst the Buddha is someone above everything.

I am not diminishing the importance of the Buddha. You may have read about the Buddha, may have ideas about the Buddha, but seeing someone actually practicing and living that holy life was most important.

## Ajahn Brahmali:

You knew Ajahn Chah personally. That's why your main relationship was with him. How would you describe your relationship with the Buddha?

## Ajahn Brahm:

It is at a different level. At first, most of what he said and how he practiced was beyond me. Being a theoretical physicist, I was taught to accept things that are provable, things that I can experience for myself. As the years have passed, my appreciation and admiration for the Buddha have grown stronger and stronger; what he taught is real.

## Ajahn Brahmali:

When you read the suttas, do you get a sense that the Buddha is your teacher? Do you get that feeling?

Ajahn Brahm:

Yes, for sure.

Ajahn Brahmali:

When Ajahn Chah died, did you feel any sense of loss or anything like that?

Ajahn Brahm:

No.

Ajahn Brahmali:

Why not?

Ajahn Brahm:

By then I already understood a lot about what the Dhamma is. If you understand what the Dhamma means, you don't feel sad even when your teacher disappears. You don't feel sad when your own father disappears. I won't feel sad when Ajahn Brahmali disappears!

Ajahn Brahmali, laughing:

Okay, that's fair enough. I think that's probably the least of your worries.

Ajahn Brahm:

It is just the nature of the world.

# INTERACTIONS WITH DISCIPLES

Ajahn Brahmali:

How do you train your monks and nuns?

Ajahn Brahm:

*The Chinese Art of War* is a weird thing to quote when you're talking about training human beings to be peaceful. But this story shows that to train people you have to be a motivator.

A general had the most well-disciplined troops in the imperial army. When the emperor asked him what his secret was, he replied that he would only tell his troops to do what they wanted to do. That's why they always followed his orders.

That's what I do with the monks and the nuns I train. I tell them to do what they want to do. How do I do that? By brainwashing, inspiring, and motivating. You give them good reasons for getting up early in the morning, for letting go, for meditating a lot, for keeping precepts, and so on. Why should they do all these things? Because it's fun, it's joyful. Because it makes you happy and peaceful, and your problems in life will get less and less. So, please, whatever you do in your life, whatever role you have in your life, make sure you know how to inspire and motivate others. Then, they will always do the right thing. This is how I train people.

Ajahn Brahmali:

Even though in theory they should always do the right thing, sometimes there are difficult disciples. Ajahn, how do you deal with difficult disciples?

Ajahn Brahm:

With kindness, believing they will change.

Some of my disciples may have been told by professionals that they have problems or traumas from the past. They may have been diagnosed with schizophrenia or ADHD or whatever else. I always know that the mind is much more powerful than the brain. I try to inspire them to see if they can break those boundaries and do better than they've ever expected. Some of my disciples have done that, some haven't. I always give everyone a chance.

Ajahn Brahmali:

Is there ever a situation where you might tell someone off or correct them?

Ajahn Brahm:

Sometimes I do, but then I can't really do it wholeheartedly. Have I ever told you off?

Ajahn Brahmali:

Very rarely. I can't even remember, to be honest... What are the qualities of a good disciple, Ajahn?

Ajahn Brahm:

Patience. In other words, have confidence that eventually it all works out. Things that you think of as a huge problem

will eventually disappear and vanish. During the times when you feel: ‘Oh, I can’t handle this,’ just stay there, and the problem gets less and less.

Ajahn Brahmali:

What are the attributes of a good candidate for ordination?

Ajahn Brahm, laughing:

That they’re breathing.

Ajahn Brahmali:

Okay, what kind of breath? Is it a peaceful breath or a rough breath?

Ajahn Brahm, smiling:

When it’s a long breath, they know it’s long; when it’s short, they know it’s short.

Ajahn Brahmali:

That is a fairly low bar, isn’t it, Ajahn? That the only requirement is that they have to breathe. Any other qualities?

Ajahn Brahm:

Well, it’s strange. I have been a teacher for all these years, ordaining monks and nuns, and to this day, I can never guarantee which of those monks or which of those nuns are going to be the stars of the future.

I sometimes thought, “Oh, he’s going to be a really good monk. She’s going to be a great teacher in the future,” but then it didn’t happen. Sometimes the opposite has become true. I thought, “There’s not much hope for them, but why not?” Then, they turned out to be wonderful. [laughter]

Ajahn Brahmali:

What is the best way for a student to repay a teacher?

Ajahn Brahm:

By inspiring others. “Pay it forward.” That is what Ajahn Chah told me. Whenever we thanked him, he would tell us to practice well and spread the Dhamma. The only way you can pay off your debts to me, or to any of the monastics here, is to help somebody else, to share the Dhamma.

When I was just a young monk, I was the attendant of a teacher teaching a retreat. A lady came to talk with the teacher. With very real sincerity, she thanked that teacher for saving her life. When I heard that, I thought, “If even one person says that to me, my monastic life will have been worthwhile.”

Many people have already said that to me.

Imagine the job satisfaction of being a good monastic. And when they do say that, please accept it because they mean it. Don’t think, “Oh no, not me.” When you accept it, it will encourage you to work even harder. If you give kindness, instructions, and leadership, then how many people can you save in this life? That is always the best thank-you anyone can give me.

# LEGACY



# LESSONS FROM LIFE

Ajahn Brahmali:

We are coming to the end of the interview, Ajahn. What lessons should we learn from your life?

Ajahn Brahm:

Live your own life. Please don't imitate me. Don't try to do things the way I do them. Don't try to teach the way I teach. Remember, I rebelled? Be a unique human being in this world.

Never reject the pain you've had in your life; incorporate it into your life. Please excuse my language, but that "shit" is the fertiliser from which you grow your understanding. The difficulties are a beautiful motivator, a source of wisdom from which you can live a wonderful life.

It doesn't matter how much you develop on the path. Remember there are many lives. What you don't achieve or don't let go of in this life, you can carry on working on in another. So, be patient.

Ajahn Brahmali:

Be rebellious, be patient, what else?

Ajahn Brahm:

And tell bad jokes. [laughter]

Ajahn Brahmali:

Telling bad jokes—is that a sign of non-self?

Ajahn Brahm:

I don't know. I don't think they're bad jokes. I think they're of high value.

Ajahn Brahmali:

Why do you tell bad jokes?

Ajahn Brahm:

I don't tell bad jokes. I tell really refined jokes, but people aren't advanced enough to understand and appreciate them!

Ajahn Brahmali:

Someone suggested yesterday that the reason you do it is to make everyone feel at ease. Is that part of it?

Ajahn Brahm:

Yes, it is true. I just look at the faces in the crowd. I've known you for so many years, most of you.

I haven't told this old joke for a while. You all remember the carrot joke? Of course. I'm going to tell it again. [laughter]

Two carrots were walking down the street. One got hit by a car. The other one got on his mobile phone and called the ambulance. The ambulance came within a few minutes. The badly injured carrot was put into the back of the ambulance and taken to the hospital. His fellow carrot went with him. The triage nurses took one look at the injured carrot and sent him straight into surgery. The other carrot, his friend, was waiting in the waiting room. It's always a very

tense place to be. People don't know whether their loved ones are going to survive or die.

After two hours the doctor came into the waiting room. He noticed the friend of the injured carrot straight away. I don't know how he could know that!

"You are the friend of the injured carrot?"

"Yes, that's me."

"I've got some good news and some bad news. The good news is that your friend, the injured carrot, is going to survive. He's going to live."

I've told this joke so many times, and I still cannot tell it without laughing beforehand.

The doctor continued, "The bad news is that because of his injuries, he's going to be a vegetable for the rest of his life!"

*Ajahn Brahm, continues through the audience laughter:*

How many times have you heard that? Still, you're laughing!

## ADVICE FOR THE FUTURE

*Ajahn Brahmali:*

I actually like that joke. It's one of the better ones. We are coming to the very end, and I have a few more questions, Ajahn. What is your advice to the BSWA for after you pass away? [a collective sigh]

Ajahn Brahm:

You should always stay in the present moment. Remember, your future is being made right now. So, just do the best you possibly can right now, and then wait till the future. Who knows what might happen?

Ajahn Brahmali:

Where should we build the Ajahn Brahm Museum?

Ajahn Brahm:

In your hearts.

Ajahn Brahmali:

Sadhu! That's a good answer. Time is running out. Here is the very last question, Ajahn. What can we all do, monastics and lay people, to support you into the future?

Ajahn Brahm:

Nothing. You always do too much. Now is the time for you to do less, to be more peaceful, to be freer. Instead of always doing things to try to solve problems, how about doing less to solve problems?

*Sadhu, Sadhu, Sadhu!!!*

