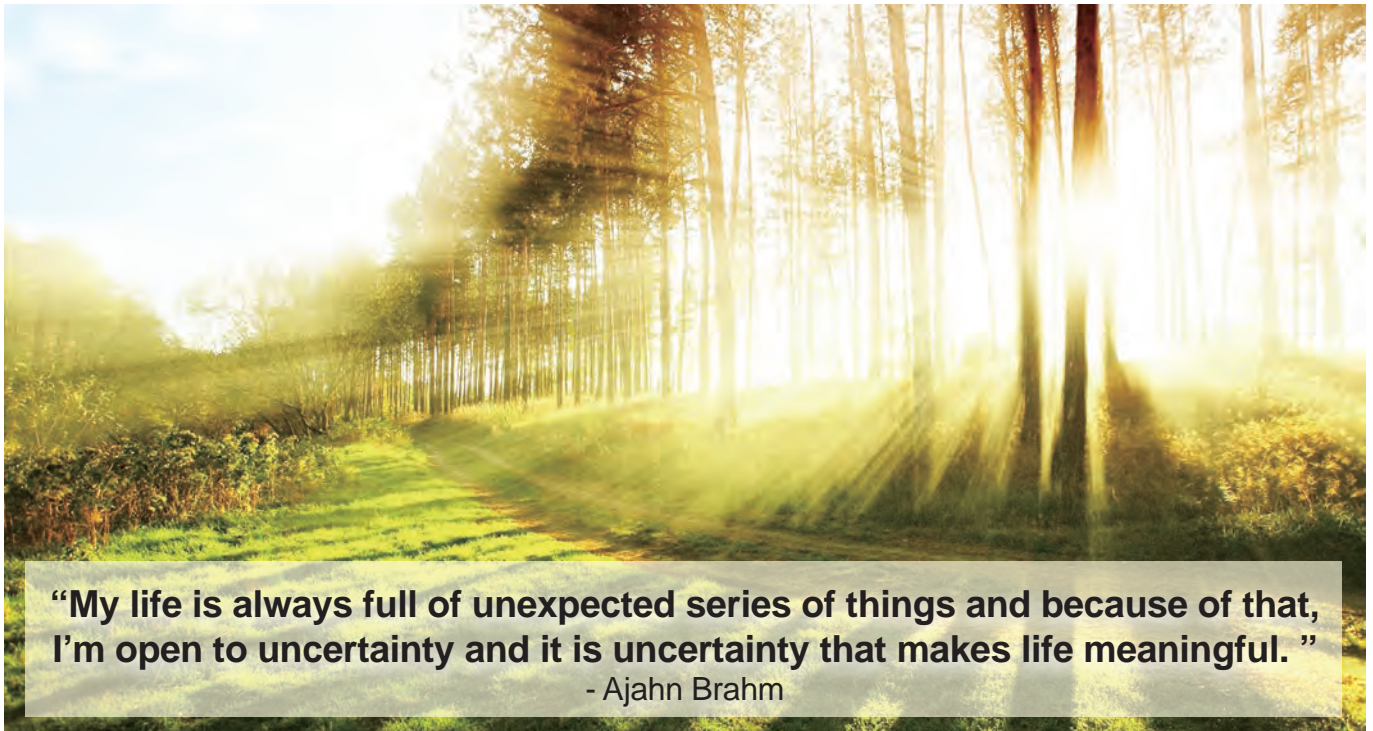


FINDING INNER PEACE IN THE MIDST OF CHAOS

DHARMA TALK BY VENERABLE AJAHN BRAHM (Part 2)



“My life is always full of unexpected series of things and because of that, I’m open to uncertainty and it is uncertainty that makes life meaningful. ”

- Ajahn Brahm

> Continued from Issue 331, Part 1

In this chaotic world and present circumstances, many people perhaps (and inevitably) feel stressed and are at a loss; not knowing how to have control, peace and happiness. Following the previous article, we continue to learn how to find peace from Venerable Ajahn Brahm on top of previously mentioned ways of focusing on having goodness, learning to be better, cultivating love and compassion, and giving hope to others and having hope in oneself, others and situations.

Learn to live with uncertainty in life

You can make plans and organise your life, but does it ever work that way? My life is (has been) always a series of unexpected events. I never know what I am going to do next. And you too, you would never know where you are going to end up next. So because of that, I’m always open to uncertainty. Uncertainty makes life meaningful!

It is just like having a copy of the latest *Harry Potter* book; Would you turn to the last pages of the book and find out what is going to happen at the ending? That’s a crazy thing to do because it will take all the joy out of reading if you know what’s going to happen next and/or at the end.

It just like going to a fortune teller to find out if you are going to be successful or not, or when and whom you are going to marry – it takes out all the joy in life. It is much better and more exciting to be living with the uncertainty of life.

Many people love certainty – they want to make sure they have a job next year, the year after... but that certainty kills life. It is like (living life) as a robot.

It is like a programme, it is so predictable; it certainly feels safe for you, but this is not life. Where is the opportunity, the kindness, the innovation and the ability to change how we see things in different ways?

Accept chaos as part of life

Life is a series of unpredictable events, and every event is challenging us – challenging our wisdom, challenging our kindness and challenging our ability to see things better and do things better – to grow!

Look at how the forests grow; they don’t get planned. If you want to see a forest planned, you go to a golf course or to a botanical garden where everything is straight and neat. Look up at the stars at night in the sky, and you’ll see that they are never evenly spaced out. It is chaotic and it’s nature’s way. Life is like the weather and nature; it is totally chaotic and out of control, but it works because every now and then, life adds a little something beautiful to the natural chaos of life. So how do we deal with this? We embrace it, and allow life to unfold and instead of having to fix things up.

Look at the reality of things

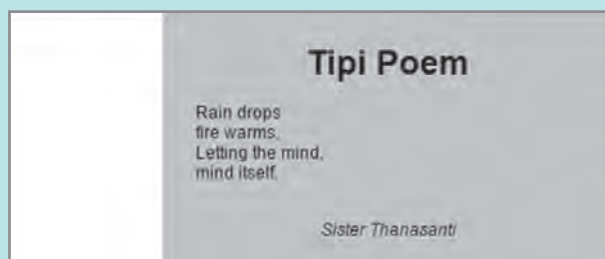
Take your house for an example. How many of you have a house so clean that it’s ever ready for a Presidential visit? You always have the dishes cleaned and put away, not a single dirty dish in the sink... That’s not a lived-in house.

Why do we always want a tidy house? We all know that life isn’t tidy. It’s messy; relationships are messy and they are never really tidy. Embrace that and you will be happy!

Learn that things are not perfect

If everything is perfect and in control, you are going to suffer a lot. When my teacher (Venerable Ajahn Chah) passed away, there was a huge state funeral that Their Majesties, King and Queen of Thailand also went to pay respects. At the end of the funeral and when it was time for cremation, we lit the pyre, it exploded* and was set ablaze. This was my teacher, Ajahn Chah and the whole thing was a mess. And the man responsible was Ajahn Liam (then acting Abbot of Wat Pah Pong), and what did he do? He said, “Okay...” and then later returned to his hut and went to bed and fell sleep.

He just messed up the cremation of his (our) teacher and he didn't worry at all! He tried his best and was not bothered at all. And we were so impressed with that as this was indeed our teacher's teaching which he taught very often, “In this world, there are things you can't control things at all, unexpected things happen. And if you can control it, alright. If you can't control it, it is fine; let go and go to sleep.”



****The explosion of the pyre was written shortly after the funeral of Luang Por Chah in 1993, and published in the Forest Sangha Newsletter***

But the actions of humans, however superlative, are never final. Chance and circumstance have a way of surpassing us. And so it was – the effect of all the offerings of sandalwood on the coffin, and maybe too much charcoal, caused the fire to burn too fiercely – scorching the wiring that was to open the vents in the chimney; the heat was therefore all contained in the crematory which split open... flames leaked out and caught onto the wax decorations, smoke billowed out and filled the chamber, the boards crushed down... people stood back, some began to bring water, fire trucks appeared...

From outside the *chedi* as it glowed in the spotlights against the dark sky, the spectacle had the quality of a vision – the Four Elements dramatically manifesting within the place of purity as some final image of the life of a Master.

But everyone remained cool and peaceful; the fire was extinguished, people began mopping up, some found places out of the cold night to meditate, some began to walk home. The mind was allowed to contract to more mundane considerations.

Excerpt from “The State Funeral of Luang Por Chah”
(*Forest Sangha Newsletter*, 1993)

Don't live for the mundane things

This is an important teaching. If there's something you need to do, it is to look at how much time you spend doing the mundane things. Just in your house, look at how much time you have spent doing your dishes.

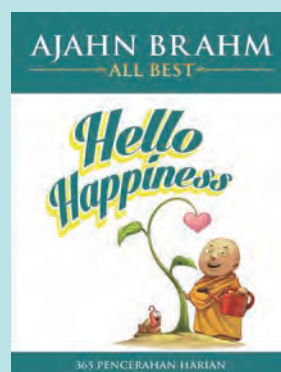
When you go home and head into the kitchen, don't just go and wash all the dirty dishes all the time. Count the number of clean and dirty plates. If you have more clean plates, then, quit the washing at least for the moment. You might not live the night; you might die tonight and why are you washing up for nothing? Why are you so hang up on cleaning, being so compulsive in making the place clean and tidy?

Allow for imperfection in life

In relation to handling mundane matters, never do today what you can put off till tomorrow because you might die tonight! This is to allow things to be chaotic – to allow your house to be a little untidy, a little chaotic – to allow imperfection. This is for you to learn how to enjoy life much more – you can be at peace with allowing your house to be an imperfect house – you can be at peace with your imperfect life.

If you allow imperfection, you can enjoy life much more. You can have much more happiness. Then also, you can allow your wife or your husband to be imperfect – he or she will always be the beautiful spouse – the beautiful wife or the charming man you married. And you know why he (she) married you? That's because you are imperfect too. You (the two of you) match!

Understand and accept the basic imperfections in life. You will naturally be happier and more at peace with yourself and also everyone (everything) around you.



One of Ajahn Brahm's best sellers, *Hello Happiness* is definitely a book that is relatable to anyone. With his unique blend of enlightening wisdom, heart-warming quotes and hilarious wit, this book is definitely a great compilation of Buddhist philosophy and teachings with modern literary appeal. Available via various purchase links on www.goodreads.com.