

Dharmette: Q&A 2026-02-25

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So one of the aspects of me being a teacher and giving talks like this or showing up is I have to see what's in me whenever I get to. What's in there? What wants to be done? And today, what's in there is to answer your questions. So if any of you have anything you'd like to ask, I'd be happy to respond in some way. Yes. You have to use the mic because otherwise I won't hear.

Max recently spoke about home leaving and home leaving. I'm missing a word. Yeah. Home leaving. Home leaving? Oh, home leaving. That's a Zen background. And how monks historically would leave their home and how in the West we are more lay practitioners, etc. I was sort of wondering, what's the, what's the... Are there cultural, technological, historical reasons why we don't, in the West, why we don't leave the home?

For example, maybe when the Buddha first taught it was an oral tradition and it might have taken a cluster of monks to chant all these things and pass down this knowledge and now we have writing and don't need that. I'm trying to make more sense of home-leaving and people would leave home and really leave home and we don't do that. And I just kind of wanted a broader context on that. Very nice question. You had this idea of if you wanted to learn in the old days, there were no books. But even in 20th century in Thailand, let's see, it's a little bit not for me.

So you have to kind of... So, a little lower for me. Yeah, so let's see. Can you still hear me, everyone? A little bit. Maybe I was a little too soft. Let's see. Now, how's that now? Can you hear? Okay.

So, I suppose, if my great grandfather in the Dharma, or my grandfather, in the Dharma, one of them was Ajahn Chah. And in the 1940s, maybe, he heard about a teacher far north in Thailand, I think, in the forest. And I think he had to walk for weeks to find him. And maybe

at first he didn't find him where he was supposed to be. And he went traveling. And so he went looking for him.

And finally he met him. And he spent three days with him learning what he had to teach. And that was all he needed in order to... finish his practice and that he saw him as his teacher. So you had to go travel to get it. I guess maybe we don't have to do that so much now.

But we do have a lot of home leaving in this culture. I mean, now it's in the ancient world, people kind of lived at home their whole life. They lived in the house they were born in. And most people in our culture leave home when they're 18 or so. And so it's a, you know, you leave home and no one complained. Usually people don't complain.

You know, you're abandoning the family, you're abandoning society, you're leaving home. No, we expect it. We expect them to come home. We hope they come home sometimes. So the... And then in Zen, they talked about a home leaving while still at home.

And so they always in Buddhism... You should take any language that implies that it's some kind of external change, how you live your life. You should really turn the mirror back to really see what that implies internally. And so this word home-living while still at home is similar to in San Quentin, a state prison. There's a saying, becoming free while you're still in prison. And the people who do the practice there, they're finding a different kind of freedom.

And so home leaving while still at home means what we're doing is we're letting go of the attachments to home. We're letting go of the domestic kind of attachments. But we might still love our people that we're living with and care for it all. But it's the attachments that are let go. That's what home leaving, at the essence of what home leaving is, is to really let go of the attachments. So... Is that a good enough response?

Okay. Someone else? Yeah, it's so easy now to get Dharma. You push a button from, you know, what goes in through there, and people are getting, you know, easy access to all this in a way that in the ancient world, it was not easy access. Any other questions? Yes, Vijay?

Wait for the mic. Thank you, Gil. Thank you. I just have a question going back to a class that I listened to from you. It's probably more of a clarification. So in that class, you had defined *nibbāna* as the first awakening, probably.

But my understanding until that point was that it's the final awakening. So I don't know. Is it like... Is it up to, is it just up to a definition and does it vary widely how they call the word *nibbāna* or *nirvāṇa* in the community? When you, two things come together here. You have one of the highest ideals of a tradition, the word *nibbāna*, *nirvāṇa*. And then you have

2,500 years of... of the teachings developing and changing and evolving, maybe for cultural reasons, local reasons, personal reasons, who knows?

All the ways that things change. And so to really offer you the right answer is not to answer your questions on the terms they were told, because it's so general. You'd have to say, you know, in early Buddhism, in modern Buddhism, in middle Buddhism, how are these things understood? So the word *nibbāna* is understood in different ways. And so depending on how it's understood or the reference for it, you get different answers to this, what you're talking about. Thank you.

But to try to offer you something more useful than just, you know, that it's semantics, is that the idea is that underlying idea is that at some point, as we practice... We have, we see something, we have an insight that's so clear that we're never going to be quite the same again. And it's one way of understanding that, seeing, is we see our personal potential to live without any clinging, any attachment. We see that potential in a way that now we know that that's really possible. And so exactly what that experience of non-clinging is, is what is variable in different traditions. Even in modern Theravāda, Burmese have a little different idea than the Thais.

And so, you know, it's just a, you know, it's a, you have to, but the idea is to have this, the underlying idea to have this insight that you know your potential so well that now you're ready to just kind of trust that, go with it, you recognize something in yourself, and that recognition then becomes the underlying current that you're swimming in or floating in or being carried by. And that'll take you to that experience, filling out that experience of non-clinging. You see the potential, and you grow into it and fill it and fill it and fill it until you're completely full... of non-clinging. What does that look like? Thank you. There's no clinging there, so how can you be full of it?

You talked earlier, can you hear me, about leaving ourselves alone. How do we leave ourselves alone in daily life? How do you leave yourself alone? In daily life. In daily life. Leave yourself at home.

Don't take yourself with you, which means don't take with you your... your self-consciousness, your judgments, your need to prove yourself, your need for success, need to be someone for other people, need to be affirmed, there's so many things we bring along with us, our resentments, our annoyances, our victimhood, our, you know, so many things we bring along that's better left at home. Yeah. I just came back from my last retreat. Could you turn it up? I just came... Can you hear me okay? Yeah, but let me turn it up for me. I'm still... Is this better?

Yeah. Okay. I just had my first retreat, and I came back on Sunday, and it felt very overwhelming today. to come back into reality. I feel like there was a part of me that didn't want to... Yeah, yes, okay. You could... I need to turn it up more higher volume for me.

There was a part of me that didn't want to leave the retreat and come back to reality. Yes. And I'm... I feel like I'm... After two days, I'm sort of back, more present, back to sort of my regular life. Yeah.

And a part of me is trying to cling on to what I got from the retreat. But it's been very easy to fall back on old patterns. And I'm just wondering if you had any advice. Yeah. So the retreat was meaningful for you? Yes, I would say it wasn't what I expected.

I felt like fundamentally something has changed for me. And there was a particular time during the retreat you felt most... Kind of like that transformational change that was most clear for you? I don't know if there was a single moment, but I think as the retreat progressed, every single day became more and more clear and vivid. I think the first two days I was very drowsy and sort of sleepwalking through it. I was like very aware.

And, you know, emotions came up maybe third or fourth day. And... I think on the last day or two, everything just became very vivid. And I just felt very subtle. Very vivid. Vivid, okay.

So if you can remember back what it was like when you were most clear. And then if you can remember how you were like then in your body, in your heart, your mind, just kind of when you were most satisfied or settled into that. And if... You asked that version of yourself, what advice it has to give you for how to deal with the complexity of outside of retreat. What advice would you give yourself from that clarity? I think just trying to be still and... Try to be still.

It's very hard for me to, I feel like, get back to that state when I'm out. Let's assume you're not going to go back to the state. That's not the point. So what wisdom does that state offer you about how to be not in that state? What advice does it give you? I think there was just a lack of worry or...

Sorry? There was a lack of worry. I don't know. Things didn't feel... Things felt very simple. It didn't. Very simple. Yeah.

Oh, so the advice would be, given you lost the clarity, you're back in the fullness of life, the complexity of it, somehow be simple in the middle of it. I think that would help when I'm... I think that's fantastic that you would come with that as an answer out of the retreat. So two things, a few things here. is that I tried not to provide you the answer to your question because we're supposed to be able to find our answers within ourselves. And you had a won-

derful retreat, and the wonderfulness of it maybe give you a different perspective that you've lost touch with now.

There was wisdom there, and you're back into the busy, overwhelmed mind, so you're caught up already. So if you can go back and remember, maybe there... From that point of view, you can have now a new way of understanding how to be in the difficulty of life. It's not helpful to try to get back to what you had. That might happen the next retreat, maybe. But don't expect it.

But you can learn from that how to be with your difficult daily life in a new way, in a wiser way, in a way. and exactly what being simple and middle of it might mean, that's for you to find. But I think that's a very significant and helpful response to get. Thank you. Great. Thank you. So we're going to do...