

The background is a light green gradient with faint, large-scale fern fronds. Several smaller images are overlaid: a close-up of a green fern frond with brown spots, a close-up of a textured, golden-brown surface (possibly a seed pod or shell), a close-up of a green plant with small yellow buds, and a close-up of a green branch with leaves and small red buds. A single, light pink flower with five petals is positioned in the lower-left quadrant.

Dhamma Nature

Ajahn Chah

Respected as one of the most accomplished spiritual masters of his age, **Ajahn Chah** has inspired and guided innumerable people in the arts of Buddhist meditation and skillful living. He committed himself to a life of simplicity and renunciation, conveying the Buddha's teachings through wisdom, humor, and a great sense of compassion. Ajahn Chah's influence and teachings were of seminal importance to many prominent Western Buddhists.

Born into a family of subsistence farmers in northeast Thailand in 1918, Ajahn Chah chose to enter the monastic life at the age of nine; at twenty he took higher ordination. Some years later, spurred on by the death of his father, he left the security of his local monastery and undertook the life of a wandering, ascetic monk devoted to meditation. Staying in forests, caves, and cremation grounds Ajahn Chah trained under several of the local meditation monks of the Forest Tradition, including Ajahn Mun, one of the most famous and respected Thai meditation masters of the last century.

Ajahn Chah's simple yet profound style of teaching had a special appeal to Westerners, and many came to study and practice with him. In 1975 Ajahn Chah established a special training monastery for the growing numbers of Westerners interested in undertaking monastic training. Since then Ajahn Chah's large following has continued the work of spreading the Buddha's teachings around the world. Ajahn Chah passed away in 1992, but his students continue to teach in over two hundred monasteries on four continents.



Ajahn Amaro, THE COLLECTED TEACHINGS OF AJAHN CHAH

Dhamma Nature

Sometimes, when a fruit tree is in bloom, a breeze stirs and scatters blossoms to the ground. Some buds remain and grow into a small green fruit. A wind blows and some of them, too, fall! Still others may become fruit or nearly ripe, or some even fully ripe, before they fall.

And so it is with people. Like flowers and fruit in the wind they, too, fall in different stages of life. Some people die while still in the womb, others within only a few days after birth. Some people live for a few years then die, never

having reached maturity. Men and women die in their youth. Still others reach a ripe old age before they die.

When reflecting upon people, consider the nature of fruit in the wind: both are very uncertain. Our minds are also similar. A mental impression arises, draws and pulls at the mind, then the mind falls — Just like fruit in the wind — all very uncertain.

With even a little intuitive wisdom, we will then be able to see clearly through the ways of the world. We will come to understand that everything in the world is a teacher. Trees and vines, for example, can all reveal the true nature of reality.

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With wisdom there is no need to question anyone, no need to study. We can learn from Nature enough to be enlightened, because everything follows the way of Truth. It does not diverge from Truth.

Associated with wisdom are self-composure and restraint which, in turn, can lead to further insight into the ways of Nature. In this way, we will come to know the ultimate truth of everything being “Impermanence, Unsatisfactoriness, Non-self.”

Take trees, for example; all trees upon the earth are equal, are One, when seen through the reality of



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“Impermanence, Unsatisfactoriness, Non-self.” First, they come into being, then grow and mature, constantly changing, until they die finally die as every tree must.

In the same way, people and animals are born, grow and change during their life-times until they eventually die. The multitudinous changes which occur during this transition from birth to death show the Way of Dhamma. That is to say, all things are impermanent, having decay and dissolution as their natural condition.

If we have awareness and understanding, if we study with wisdom and mindfulness, we will see Dhamma as

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reality. Thus, we will see people as constantly being born, changing and finally passing away.

Everyone is subject to the cycle of birth and death, and because of this, everyone in the universe is as One being. Thus, seeing one person clearly and distinctly is the same as seeing every person in the world.

In the same way, everything is Dhamma. Not only the things we see with our physical eye, but also the things we see in our minds. A thought arises, then changes and passes away — simply a mental impression that arises and passes away. This is the real nature of the mind. **M**

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