



Luang Por Liem, current abbot of Wat Pah Pong



The Chedi (stupa) at Ajahn Chah's monastery in Thailand

Dhamma Talk. On this, the first day, it is Luang Por Liem, like a welcoming host, who gives the introductory talk. He stresses that initially we have come out of faith in the Buddha and Luang Por Chah, but that in order to carry out their teachings we need to develop true *sati* – true mindfulness:

‘We are all just part of nature: the body must change and return to its origins. When we think in this way the mind will tend to seclusion, rather than clinging to views and conceit. Dwelling secluded in body and mind, we are able to see the true nature of reality. And so we won’t fall under the sway of things that can obsess the mind and wrong views which stain the mind. The body is just a natural resource we can make use of – not a being, not a person, animal or individual. If we understand this the mind will feel cool and happy, not anxious and confused. If we strive in this way we will attain the goal we are seeking.

‘We have a good opportunity, so try to do it: renounce and abandon the things that cause you worry. The Buddha taught us to abandon all worldly dhammas. We can’t even depend on our friends and relatives. Ultimately we have to build our own inner refuge.’

He outlines the daily routine, emphasizing the need to be harmonious and helpful as we will be spending a week living together in such large numbers. Meditation, too, is taught in brief:



‘Breathe in and out. See that it’s just nature doing it’s job. Breath coming in and going out. When we understand that our awareness of this is an aspect of our mind, we see that even this is a *sankhatadhamma* (a conditioned phenomenon). There is no self in there. The mind experiences the breath. The mind has no physical matter, yet that is where *dukkha* (suffering) arises. All mental states are impermanent, so develop the quality of patient endurance with regard to all mental states, good and bad. Usually we get lost in our moods, and this keeps us away from the correct path of practice....

‘Whatever posture you are in you are grounded on the earth. Keep this deep awareness (Thai: *poo roo*) in mind all the time. This way you won’t think of the body as a self. It will lead to a pure happiness arising in the mind. Instead of delighting in those things which deceive us – things people run to like insects drawn to a flame – cultivate faith in the Buddha’s awakening....

‘Develop yourself internally with your mind and externally with your actions. You all know the duties regarding the lodgings and toilets. They are communal property, not owned by anyone, including the abbot. People who are mindful keep a place clean and well maintained.’

Knowing it’s almost nine o’clock, he concludes: ‘Now it’s time to provide our bodies with the sustenance we need to carry us through the next day and night, so I will end there. I wish to express my gladness that you have all come, and encourage you to make a firm determination to practise with integrity this week.’

For the rest of the day, monks and laypeople arrive at Wat Pah Pong in a constant stream. Luang Por Liem receives incoming Sangha members under his kuti all day, and by evening he still has not had a chance to find his own spot in the forest to put up his mosquito net and lay down a bed of straw like everyone else. He is just slipping away when a monk approaches him quickly to say that Ajahn Sumedho has arrived to pay respects.

He returns to his seat, first putting on his robe, and the large group of Western bhikkhus, including Ajahn