Reading Ajaan Suwat

April 5, 2021

Ajahn Suwat Peace means letting go of metal objects so that nothing comes in to disturb the mind. All that’s left is a nature devoid of fabrication. Even the nibbana we want to reach is nothing other than a peace not fabricated by conditions. As for the peace we develop through various techniques by which the mind gathers into concentration or gathers into stillness. That’s the peace of the mind gathering in. It stops fabricating. It stops holding on to the aggregates. We should view this sort of peace in which we let go of the aggregates as a strategy. When the mind isn’t at peace, that’s because it doesn’t let go. It holds on to things as itself or belonging to itself. As a result, it suffers. It feels stress. The mind takes its stance in form, in feelings, in perceptions, in consciousness. It seizes hold of these things. But these things are inconstant. When they change, they lead to disappointment. The mind then thrashes around and piles up. It piles on more stress and suffering. So we have to view peace as a strategy, the peace we try to give rise to, seeing it as a high level of happiness. As for any lack of peace, we should view that as suffering. The mind lacks peace because defilements disturb it. This happens because the mind isn’t skillful. And the mind isn’t skillful because of delusion. So we focus on peace and on the stress of disturbance as our strategies. Peace we regard as the goal for which we’re practicing. Stress we use as an object of contemplation, as a means for destroying delusion, intoxication, heedlessness, or hankering for things. The strategy by which we can bring the mind to peace requires that we see the stress and drawbacks inherent in the aggregates. As long as we keep hankering after the aggregates, as long as we’re deluded by sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, and ideas found in the aggregates, the peace we want can’t last. We seize hold of forms that are inconstant. We live in forms that are inconstant. We take a stance in feeling. We seize hold of feeling. Why do we seize hold of it? Because we fabricate it into being from having seized hold of feeling in the past. The cause from the past becomes the effect in the present. To let go of the feeling in the present, we have to examine things until we see the inconstancy, the stress in form, feeling, perception, fabrication, and consciousness. Then the mind won’t be deluded. This is our path. In this way, stress is the means for developing knowledge and vision. If there weren’t any stress or suffering, what would we take as our focus? Actually, stress and suffering are already there, so why don’t we see them for what they really are? Because we haven’t heard the Dhamma. Or we have heard it, but we’ve listened in an aimless way, with no truth in our listening, our awareness, our actions. So we have to be certain, earnest, and true in our heart. After all, suffering is an earnest truth. If we just play at contemplation, simply letting things happen on their own, that’s not meditation. It gives us no proof, doesn’t develop the mind. If you’re going to focus on anything, focus on it so that you comprehend it, so that you see its truth, so that you can grow disenchanted with stress and suffering and can abandon the origination of stress and suffering in line with this truth. Don’t just go through the motions. When I went to stay with the Jhanmun, the first thing he spoke about was this, being truthful, earnest. He said, “You’ve ordained in earnestness. You didn’t ordain in play. You ordained with conviction and did it properly with the Sangha and your precepts. After admitting you to the community of monks, everything was done in line with the Buddha’s instructions. So you have your guarantee that you’re a genuine monk on the conventional level. But your status as a monk isn’t yet complete. You need to be earnest in your practice to complete the three parts of the triple training, heightened virtue, heightened mind, heightened discernment, to gain true knowledge of what the Buddha taught. You have to practice all the way to the end so that you can gain true knowledge through proper discernment of the noble truths. Stress, for instance, is a noble truth. It’s right there in front of you. Why don’t you become disenchanted with it? Because you don’t see it or don’t see the cause from which it comes. Or when you see the cause, you don’t see its connection to stress. Why is that? Because delusion gets in the way. You see pretty sights, hear lovely sounds, smell nice aromas, taste good flavors, and then you fall for them. You get carried away and grasp after them, thinking that you’ve acquired something. As for the things you don’t yet have, you want to acquire them. Once you acquire them, you fall for them and get all attached and entangled. This is the origination of suffering. When these things are inconstant, they stop being peaceful. They become a trauma because they’re inconstant all the time. Have you ever acquired anything that’s constant and lasting? Has anyone ever acquired anything that’s constant and lasting? When you acquire money, a home, a car, a boat, whatever, a child or grandchild, are these things constant, stable? Do they make the mind constant and stable? We have to contemplate suffering and stress down to the details and see all the way through. Don’t just go through the motions. Focus on sights and sounds in general—everything inside or outside where the mind takes up residence. They’re all just like our body. They’re all based on form. Hair of the head is a form, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin, every part, the bones. If you took the bones out, how could the rest of the body stay? Even if you don’t take them out, they’re going to go on their own. Every part is going to fall away. They won’t stay together like this forever. Whatever you acquire, good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant, you have to investigate it. Ask yourself, all these things you hold on to, that you love and delight in, that you have to keep caring for, from fear of hunger, heat, cold, difficulties, pains and illnesses, all these things that you’ve been caring for all along, what have you gained from them? All you’ve got to show is that you can’t meditate and bring the mind to peace, radiance or purity, all because you’re so possessive of these things. What I’m saying here is the truth that’s true for everyone. Each of these words applies to each one of us. This is the truth. That’s what the Buddha said when he was summarizing the basic principle of suffering and stress. So we should use suffering and stress as our tool in destroying the origination of suffering so that we won’t be deluded by craving. We don’t make use of suffering and stress. There’s no other way we can destroy it. We’ll keep falling for it, delighting in it. But if we see how things are inconstant and stressful, we won’t fall for craving any longer. We’ll see how we’ve been taking birth and dying, dying and taking birth endlessly, all because we see this thing is delicious, that is delicious, this is sweet-smelling, that is sweet-smelling, this is soft, that is soft. All of this is the origination of stress. We’re deluded about these things. We get infatuated with them. We don’t get infatuated with suffering. As long as we’re infatuated with these things, there’s inconstancy, instability, separation, leading to sorrow and despair, always searching for more. Where does this all come from? We have to look for both the cause and the effect to see how they’re connected, if we want to know. That’s when we’ll be discerning, when we gain knowledge and vision, seeing the long course. The Buddha taught the Dhamma so as to broaden our mindfulness and discernment, so that it can encompass more than just what’s right in our face. For instance, he has us contemplate that we’re subject to aging, subject to illness, subject to death. Even though we’re not yet old, he has us contemplate aging so as to prepare ourselves for the fact that this is the way things will have to go. We’re not yet ill. We’re not yet dead. But we have to contemplate these things every day. This is what it means to be heedful, prepared. Once we see this truth, we won’t want to give rise to anything unskillful in the mind. We won’t be greedy, angry, or deluded. For what do we gain from being greedy? Nothing but stress. What do we gain from being angry? Nothing but stress. What do we gain from being deluded? Nothing but stress. When we see this, we’ll be able to live without greed, anger, or delusion, caring for the body just enough to keep it going, just enough to develop the discernment that will enable us to see the truth. This will put an end to the burden of falling for the cycle of death and rebirth without end. Once we cast off this burden, we won’t have to concern ourselves with these things any longer. We hear that nibbana is happiness, so we want to go there. We hear that meditating brings happiness, so we want to meditate. But we do it without any skillful strategies. We need skillful strategies in our listening, skillful strategies in focusing our awareness, and skillful strategies in our practice. Everything requires strategies, intelligence, mindfulness, and discernment within the mind. The intelligence in the mind is something really powerful, you know. It’s nothing to sneeze at. But for most of us, we don’t apply that power inside. We apply it outside to material things. Whatever we put our minds to, we can accomplish. We can build all kinds of things, but we devote our power just to things outside, to solving external problems. As a result, we stay deluded about ourselves. We don’t really look at ourselves. The Buddha was the first to really turn around and look at himself. He didn’t build external power; he didn’t claim to be special. He simply turned around to look at the mind, asking himself,”If the mind is really special, why does it have to depend on other things? Why does it have to keep building up other things? Those things are inconstant, so when they change what’s left, it’s all a waste of energy.” All you have to do is turn around and straighten out the mind so that it doesn’t fall for its fabricating. You don’t have to go building anything, fabricating anything. When you see through the process of fabricating, you put an end to it. That’s called the unfabricated nibbana. Nibbana is the unfabricated. No conditions can fabricate it or dress it up at all. It comes from turning around to know the heart, without fabricating or seizing hold of anything outside. This is the truth. If we don’t reach this state of truth, we’ll just keep on circling around. You have to know what disbands and ceases in nibbana. You have to know what you’re still deluded about that keeps getting in the way. So be intent on your meditation. Peace of mind is a strategy that we use to test the truth within ourselves. We see that when the mind lets go of the aggregates, it’s happy. If you believe this, you can give it a try. When you sit in concentration, try letting go. Tell yourself you’re not going to carry these aggregates around, you’re not going to get riled up about them. Whatever pains there may be, you don’t have to pay them any mind. Pay attention to bhutto, whatever your meditation topic may be, till there’s nothing left but the property of knowing. And then keep watching, watching, watching, letting go of anything that comes along until the mind settles down and is peaceful. A sense of ease and pleasure will appear as your evidence. You’ve been able to let go of the aggregates of form, feeling, perception, and fabrication. As long as you’re not involved with them, the mind is peaceful and at ease. But as soon as you get involved with them, the mind is immediately in a turmoil. This is your strategy for seeing stress, for knowing stress. When the mind isn’t peaceful, that’s stress. As soon as we see this, we’ll grow disenchanted. Whatever comes to disturb the mind, there’s stress in the process of fabrication, which is conditioned by ignorance. So we should focus on studying the mind, developing the mind. Once you’ve brought the mind to peace, you should use this peace as a strategy to contemplate stress. See the connection between stress and lack of peace in the mind, along with the relationship to form, to the aggregates, to the origination of stress. See how the origination of stress is related to the eye seeing forms, the ear hearing sounds, the nose smelling aromas, the tongue tasting flavors. When craving arises, this is where it’s going to arise, right here at these things. But the only way to see this is through meditation. If you don’t meditate, you won’t know. The way to know is through the strategy of finding a peaceful place and making the mind peaceful. Then release from suffering and stress. Now that you understand this, focus on making the mind peaceful as a strategy for eliminating the stress and disturbance. Be circumspect in using your discernment. Keep on meditating until the end of the hour.

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