Readings Ajaan Mun

November 11, 2021

Tonight’s the seventy-second anniversary of Ajaan Mun’s passing. In Thailand, where they measure the years in twelve-year cycles, that’s six cycles. So it’s an important date. So I’ll read a few fragments from Ajaan Mahaprabhu’s biography of Ajaan Mun. The first is from a senior monk from Bangkok who was not all that impressed with the forest tradition. He came to visit Ajaan Mun. He asked a question. “It’s known that you like to stay in the wild, not having anything to do with monks or laypeople. What do you do when a problem arises? To whom do you go for help? Here I live in a metropolis, Bangkok, full of sages and scholars who can help me overcome any difficulties I have. But even here there are times when I’m at a loss, when I come across a problem no one can help me with. But you, out there alone in the forest, what do you do when a problem arises? To whom do you go for help?” Ajaan Mun said, “I hear and study the Dhamma night and day in all my activities except for when I’m asleep. The moment I wake each morning, the Dhamma comes in and makes contact with my heart. As for problems, there’s not a moment my heart is free from them. There is a constant debate. As soon as one problem is solved, a new problem arises in its place. With the solution of each problem, a defilement is uprooted. With the arising of a new problem, a new battle with defilement begins. All sorts of problems, far-reaching and close at hand, major and minor, deep and superficial, crude and subtle, arise and meet in the heart. The heart is the battlefield in which I deal with all enemies and shed off all defilements with the solution of my problems. When a problem stares me in the face, I have no time to think,”Who should I go to for help?” I have time only to take my stance and fight the problem, the screen hiding a defilement, until it’s shattered and the defilement is uprooted. So I don’t bother with worrying about who’s going to be able to help me faster than the mindfulness and discernment I’m constantly getting and keeping in shape. The saying, “attahi attano nato,” “the Self is its own mainstay,” becomes clearer to me each time a problem arises and is immediately solved by means of the strategies of my own mindfulness and discernment. I don’t go searching through the scriptures. Instead, the Dhamma, natural mindfulness and discernment, springs up, does battle, and deals with a situation on its own until it can work its way free from other problems. Even in a case where this doesn’t happen automatically, it’s simply a matter of an especially profound and complicated problem. I try extra time and delicacy. Ultimately, I’ve found that there’s no problem beyond the powers of the mindfulness and discernment I’ve used to such advantage so far. Each problem will eventually reach the point where it has to dissolve. This is why I’m not especially interested in searching for people who might help me with my problems and why I’m very interested in living alone. I’m perfectly happy to be off by myself in physical and mental solitude. Questions of life and death are made simple this way. There’s no one else to be concerned about. When I stop breathing, that will simply be the end of the matter. And then some excerpts from Ajahn Mahan’s final sermon. When the time comes when it’s too late, you won’t be able to do anything to them. Don’t say I didn’t warn you. You have to take birth and die, and to experience major and minor sufferings, other than the defilements that the beings of the world see as so trivial that they totally overlook them. They’re the main culprits. To die with a sense of enough in every way is to die in a way that’s free from worry and released from suffering. No matter where you go, there’s nothing lacking. People “enough” in every way don’t have to expect or hope for anything at all. They can simply stay with that enoughness. But if you die with defilements, the state of not having enough, then no matter which world you go to, that sense of not enough will stick to your heart, forcing you to suffer in proportion to the defilements that are still there in the heart. Whoever is persistent, whoever is courageous, whoever is resilient in the fight with defilements, those things that run counter to the Dhamma at all times, will meet with a cool shade of peace in this world, at this moment, in this very heart. All I ask is that your discernment, the weapon that cuts away all the things weighing down your heart, be razor sharp. There’s no other tool in all three levels of the cosmos, much of the cutting edge, for stripping away defilement of every sort, like mindfulness and discernment. Every Buddha, every Arahant, has stripped away every sort of defilement by using mindfulness and discernment. They didn’t use any other weapon aside from this, which is why they didn’t praise anything else more highly than mindfulness and discernment. This is not to say that other skillful mental qualities aren’t good, but simply that their role is to strengthen mindfulness and discernment, the same way that a supply corps functions in a battle. What’s really important is that the warrior has his weapon. The warrior here being the firm and unwavering determination not to retreat back into birth and death as a laughingstock for the defilements. Your foremost weapons, every level of mindfulness and discernment, have to be right at your side. Don’t let them go far from your heart. When the time comes to die, may you die as a victor. Don’t die as a loser, or you’ll regret it for a long time to come. Keep up the fight until the cycles of samsara turn into a ghost town for lack of anyone to come back and be reborn. Make the effort to give it a try. You don’t really think that the cycles of samsara will turn into a ghost town because the beings of the world won’t be deluded into taking birth again, do you? So why does the fear of underpopulating the cycles of samsara, of not coming back to be reborn, get in the way of your making even the least little effort? And why are you always running around laying claim to new states of becoming and birth with each moment of thought in the mind, even though you haven’t yet died? To be lax in your efforts at the practice is to be diligent in taking birth and dying. That’s what it means to lay claim to states of becoming and birth, so that they’re never in the way of your effort. I’ve always been glad to listen to you and to help you resolve them to the best of my ability. After I’m gone, you’re going to have a hard time finding someone else to help you resolve these things you know. The Dhamma of the practice isn’t like the Dhamma of the scriptures. They’re very different. A person with no experience in terms of concentration, discernment, the paths, fruitions, and nibbana is in no way able to teach others correctly for the sake of the paths and fruitions leading to nibbana. The word sankara in the Buddha’s last words covers all dhammas, but he was aiming at internal sankaras more than anything else, so that we would see the importance of the sankaras that act as the cause of suffering, that disturb the mind and make it fall for them, so that it can’t be still over its own self. When we investigate sankaras, the mind’s fabrication is both crude and subtle. When we’re thoroughly aware of them in their entirety, then they disband. When sankaras disband, the heart is free from disturbance. Even though some thoughts may still form, it’s simply in line with the ordinary nature of the khandas, called khandas pure and simple. Nothing sneaks in along with them, in line with defilement, craving, or ignorance. If you were to make a comparison with sleeping, it’s like a sound sleep with no dreams to disturb it. To talk in terms of the mind, it’s a stilled mind, vipassama citta, a quiet mind with no defilements laden within it. The minds of all Buddhas and Arahant disciples are minds of this sort, which is why they don’t fall for anything or look for anything more. From the moment this sort of mind appears, what’s called nibbana with fuel still remaining appears. The ending of defilement occurs at the same moment. The attainment of Arahantship occurs at the same moment. It’s an amazing event. Nothing at all three levels in the cosmos can compare.

<https://www.dhammatalks.org/Archive/y2021/211111_Readings-Ajaan_Mun.mp3>