

## *In Accordance with the Dhamma*

*April 5, 2022*

One of Ajaan Suwat's favorite Dhamma topics was the practice of the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma. He picked this up from Ajaan Mun. He said it was one of Ajaan Mun's favorite topics. We tend to think of the Forest tradition as being very Thai. But when Ajaan Mun was going out into the forest along with Ajaan Sao, he was very controversial. Ajaan Chah talks about how families would be split over whether they supported Ajaan Mun or village monks, because the way Ajaan Mun practiced, the way Ajaan Sao practiced, had very little in common with the way ordinary village monks would practice. Eating one meal a day out of the bowl. Living in the forest. Meditating a lot. Not being doctors to the local populous. And Ajaan Mun was criticized. His response always was, "If you want to be a noble one, you have practice in line the way the noble ones practiced." He was talking about the customs of the noble ones, but also saying that you have to take your thoughts and your words and your deeds and bring them in line with the Dhamma if you really want to see the Dhamma.

As you go through the day, do you think about that? When a thought comes into the mind, do you ask yourself, "Is this in line with the Dhamma or is it something else?" Or do you just go with it? You've got to realize that you've got to make yourself Dhamma if you really want to get the most out of the practice. This means that you've got to scrutinize every thought that comes into the mind: Where's this going to lead? If you get casual about some of your thoughts, then that attitude of casualness begins to spread, takes up more of your thoughts, and starts eating into your meditation time. You've got to regard all day as meditation time.

Ajaan Fuang made this comment one time. He said, we're looking for a Dhamma that's *akaliko*, as we chant day in, day out: a Dhamma that's not subject to time. Yet our practice has times. This is the time to meditate. This is the time to eat. This is the time to sweep around the monastery. This is the time to work in the kitchen. As if they weren't related. You've got to have the attitude that all the time is practice time. While you're in the kitchen, while you're sweeping around, keep watch over your mind. Because that's how the Dhamma is found: through commitment and reflection. Just keep at it, keep at it, keep at it, and then notice the results of what you're doing. Learn how to know when to put the mind on a long leash and when to put it on a short leash. The long leash is for times when the mind is thinking things that are actually useful, things that are harmless. When it starts thinking of things in ways that are not going to be good for your practice, when it starts falling into the hindrances, then you have to put it on a short leash.

Of the hindrances, sensual desire and ill will are the two big ones. It's because of sensual desire that we were born here, so it's going to underlie a lot of our thoughts. You have to be especially careful about that.

I remember one night when Ajaan Suwat was teaching body contemplation. He just went through the whole skeleton, starting through the bones in the toes, and then up to the bones in the feet, and then the bones in the ankles, and the bones in the shins—like that old song. But he did it very slowly—section, by section, by section. And then he started talking about the things that were inside, say, the rib cage, encased by the rib cage and the parts of the body that the bones were keeping erect. It was very graphic. It's good to be graphic in your contemplation of the body. Ask yourself, "What in there is worthy of lust? What in there is worthy of pride?" Learn how to have that thought ready at hand, so that when thoughts of lust or pride around the body come up, you've got something to deal with them.

As for ill will, we usually don't like to think of ourselves as having ill will for anybody, but the mind does have a tendency to say, "So-and-so deserves to be punished, so-and-so deserves to get their karmic rewards—fast." Even though you may think of that as righteous anger or as justice, still you're wishing harm on people.

Think of Angulimala. He killed hundreds of people, and justice would have been served if he'd been executed. But the Buddha had something better than justice for him: release. He could see that Angulimala had the potential, so he taught him, ordained him. The king recognized him as a monk and so didn't inflict any punishment on him. People were upset. I'm sure there were people who had lost their relatives to him. So when he'd go on his alms round, people would throw things at him. But as the Buddha said, the pain of that was minor compared to what Angulimala would have suffered if he hadn't gained awakening.

So wishing karmic retribution on people is not the Buddha's way of doing things. That's the way the world is, but his way was against the way of the world. No matter how much you may "deserve to suffer," quote-unquote, he's got a way out for you. As he said, if all our karmic consequences had to be served before we gained awakening, nobody would ever gain awakening.

So the noble eightfold path is an escape clause. When you think of people doing harm in the world, the best attitude would be: "May they find the Dhamma. May they appreciate it. May they see the error of their ways and change their ways." Some people change their ways from their own recognition of what they've done wrong. That's the best way. That's the change of heart that really lasts. The change of heart that comes when you're being punished may last for a while, but sometimes some people resist even that.

So develop these antidotes to your big hindrances and have them ready all the time. After all, the hindrances aren't hindrances only when you're sitting in meditation or when you're doing walking meditation. They're hindrances whenever they come up. Our problem is that we see them as our friends. They're our entertainment during our time off from the practice.

But if you go for that kind of entertainment, it pretty much erases the good you've done during your meditation and eats into your practice time.

So, the Dhamma is timeless, and to practice the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma you have to make your practice timeless. We're not here to gobble down pleasures. After all, the practice of the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma is for the sake of disenchantment, which is the opposite of eating. You want to get so that the mind has had enough of things, doesn't want to eat anymore. That kind of disenchantment is what leads to dispassion. The mind grows up. It's tired of playing around with fabrications. As when you mature, as you go from childhood to your adolescence, you look back at your childhood games and say, "Those are stupid." That's dispassion. That's the kind of attitude we want to practice for.

So see the practice as an all-day affair. That's when it's Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma: timeless and to be understood by those who are wise. In other words, you want to develop the wisdom of dispassion. That's when you really know what the Dhamma is about.