

A Single Mind

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February 5, 1980

Ajaan Fuang rarely allowed his talks to be taped, and he was even more adamant about not allowing anyone to tape his conversations. Somehow, though, the following conversation was taped with his permission. In it, he's giving advice to some of his students—young women in their late twenties and early thirties—who were being pressured by their parents to settle down, get married, and start having children. There were other occasions on which, when asked, he gave advice on how to lead a happily married life to any of his students who were planning on marriage, but it's easy to see from this discussion where his heart really lay.

Student: When I see someone carrying a child and I give it some thought, all I can see is that it's a lot of suffering.

Ajaan Fuang: That's right. Give it a lot of thought. Once there's birth, there has to be suffering. We've all suffered in this way. First there's your own suffering, then you take on the sufferings of others. Look at a baby. What is it? Where does it come from? The Buddha says that it's suffering; it comes from the power of craving and defilement. First you have to carry it around in your womb, then when it's born you have to carry it around on your hip, and then when it starts to walk you have to lead it by the hand. When you see this sort of thing your heart just ...

Student: Withers.

Ajaan Fuang: Yes. It withers. This is what gives you a sense of *samvega*. This is the sort of thing you want in your practice. It's your teacher. They call it your teacher. Ask yourself: "Is this what you want out of life? Is this what you want, this sort of thing?" Not really. "Then if you don't want this sort of thing, don't get involved." How many times have you been through this already? This isn't the first time, you know. You've been doing this holding-carrying-weighing-yourself-down routine for a long, long time—hundreds of thousands of eons. If you keep getting involved, there's no way you'll get free.

Birth, aging, illness, and death: these things are normal. Birth is the normal way of things, aging's the normal way of things, illness and death are the normal way of things. Get so that you can see clearly that this is the way things normally are. That's when a sense of disenchantment can arise. You'll be able to loosen the grip that these things have on you. You'll be able to pull them out, root and all.

We've suffered as the slaves of defilement and craving for how long now? Can you remember? Ask yourself. Can you remember all you've been through? And how much longer are you going to let it keep on happening—this holding and carrying and weighing yourself down? How many eons have you been doing this? Tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of eons. Can you count them all? Of course you can't. And how much longer will you have to keep on suffering in this way? If you're still stubborn, still unwilling to listen to the Buddha's teachings, this is the kind of reward you'll have to expect out of life. Do you want it? Do you like it? If you don't want it, then you'll have to develop the goodness of your mind so that you can see your way out of this, so that you can see your defilements, so that you can see the suffering and harm they cause.

Look at suffering. Look at the rewards of suffering. When people feel that we don't have much suffering, they find more suffering for us. Even just the five aggregates provide us with more than enough suffering—the suffering we have just on our own. So when they talk about the happiness of taking on another person, exactly what happiness is there? Nothing but more suffering.

“Treasures” that bring you suffering. Our parents want us to get married, to have a spouse and a family. They've had plenty of suffering raising us, and yet it's not enough. How many children has your mother carried around in her womb? And now she's looking for *more* suffering for her children.

Student: Than Phaw, is it true what they say, that a woman gains a lot of merit in having a child, in that she gives someone else the chance to be born?

Ajaan Fuang: If that were true, then dogs would get gobs of merit, giving birth to whole litters at a time. No, that's just propaganda from those who want to see more and more beings getting born in this world.

Student: When people want to get married, it's because they have a lot of bad karma with each other. Isn't that right?

Ajaan Fuang: Of course that's right. Just look at what they're doing. There's no need to explain. It's nothing but imposing on each other, causing each other affliction and pain. There's no real happiness there; nothing but suffering. Getting married is no way to escape suffering. Actually, all you do is pile more suffering on yourself. The Buddha taught that the five aggregates are a heavy burden, but if you get married, all of a sudden you have ten to worry about, and then fifteen, and then twenty. And that's not the end of the matter. As soon as a child is born, it comes down with this, then comes down with that. It's not the case that from the moment it pops out it doesn't need to take medicine, that we

can just leave it alone and it'll grow day and night. Oh, all the things you have to do for it until it's grown! It starts out so small and can only lie there. Then think of what it needs until it can sit up, and then what it needs until it can stand, and then what it needs until it can walk. When was it ever an easy thing, raising a child? And that's not all. As soon as you want to lie down for a little rest, it cries. You lie down for a little bit and it cries. There's nothing wonderful about it at all.

When people pressure you to get married and have children, it's like someone who walks along and steps in a pile of excrement and then tries to figure out how to get other people to step in it, too, to make up for his own mistake. Yes, it's karma that makes people want to get married. Karma is what obscures their vision. They can't see that what they want is a form of suffering. To them it's something wonderful—because that's the best they know. The best they have. They don't know anything better than that.

When your parents want you to get married, it's because that's all they know. Get them to meditate, and then they'll realize: "Oh! What we've been through is suffering!" To see this sort of thing, though, you have to meditate. If you don't meditate, you won't see. If you don't meditate, you'll have to see things the way they do. Even when you *do* meditate, you still see things the way they do. It's not easy to pull yourself out of that way of thinking. It's not easy at all. If the power of this defilement won't surrender.... Only when your views are straight and you really let go: only then will you be done with the matter.

Even the devas in heaven: they're still satisfied with their sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile sensations. They're still satisfied with what they've got. They're infatuated with the way they look and sound and smell, infatuated with their companions. They're tied down to sensuality, hand and foot, which is why it disturbs them when we meditate. They're afraid we'll get away. They're determined not to let it happen. When we meditate and our minds grow still, they come and attack, stirring us up so that we start turning back in our tracks, so that we don't see the right path to release from suffering. This is called karma that keeps us in the round of saṃsāra, the karma we do that makes us fall in line with everyone else, so that we don't see the path to release from suffering. All we can see is the path to staying stuck, staying stuck in suffering.

Student: In that case, then, when you think you've found your mate, you've really found someone who holds some of your old karma debts.

Ajaan Fuang: What else did you think? It's like horseshoe crabs. Have you ever seen them? They live in the sea. Even they have their mates. Everywhere they go, they go in pairs. The male doesn't know how to feed itself, so it rides on the back of the female.

Student: So how can we escape this? We *can* avoid this, can't we, Than Phaw, if we really want to?

Ajaan Fuang: If you don't want this sort of thing, then don't let any horseshoe crabs catch hold of you. After all, it's just an animal instinct. Animals have to mate in order to spread their species, their influence. But if we don't want to have a part in that, we just don't get involved. Your mate can demand repayment on your old karma debts only if you get involved.

Student: Can you really escape?

Ajaan Fuang: Why shouldn't you be able to escape? Just don't get involved, don't get attached. Try to keep your mind strong and don't waver. Develop your perfections so that they're greater and greater, and these other desires will just wither away. They're really shallow, you know, and nothing but suffering. They come about because we're attracted to our own bodies, but when you get an image of yourself in meditation, just take it apart. Take it apart, and then what's left? Anything? Nothing at all. It's all in the form. When you take the form apart, there's nothing left. And what substance is there in the form? Look at it. Take it apart. There's nothing but earth, water, wind, and fire. Is there anything to be attracted to then?

Student: No, nothing.

Ajaan Fuang: And when you're sound asleep. Does the body know anything of desire?

Student: No, not at all.

Ajaan Fuang: The *mind* is the instigator. The body on its own doesn't have anything to do. It simply acts under the orders of its boss: the mind. The body doesn't know a thing. It depends on the boss' orders. So when the boss says, "Enough! No more!" then that's the end of the matter. The mind doesn't struggle or thirst. What struggles and thirsts is the aggregate of fabrication (*saṅkhāra*). If you latch on to fabrication, that's the essence of suffering—big-time suffering. If you look at the body, you'll see that there really are no issues there. The issues all come from fabrication. If the mind can break through and understand this attachment to the body, then where else will desire come from?

The body isn't really ours. Wherever you see anything that's "yours," uproot it, take it apart, and let it go. Take it apart: the earth, the water, the wind, the fire. That's all there's been to it, all along, since who knows when. That's all there is to it now. The problem is that we've been deluded about it and so we've latched onto it. We've been deluded just like everyone else. Deep down, doesn't the mind already know this? Of course it knows, for that's the nature of the mind: to know. We *have* to know. So bring this knowledge in and take it to heart. You have to be your own refuge, you know. If you're the sort that has to take refuge in other people, then you'll have to see things the same way they do, which means you have to be stupid the same way they are. So pull yourself out of all that and take a good look at yourself until things are clear within you. Keep contemplating things until there's just the "knower" inside. This knower isn't paired with anything else. It doesn't have a mate. It's single. It's one. It

doesn't have anything. So focus in on the knower and make it one. Get so that it lets go of everything. It lets go of pleasure, lets go of pain, lets go of equanimity. It's bright, all on its own. Keep focused there until there's nothing left but a state of oneness. Then ask yourself: is it male or female? There's no "male" or "female" in there at all. It doesn't place labels on anything. And when you've gotten there, that's the end of those issues.

Those who get stuck on mental phenomena are called Brahmās. Once they reach this point in their practice... The devas in their heavens still have their mates, but the Brahmās have no interest in sights, smells, sounds, tastes, tactile sensations. They're content in their oneness.... [END OF TAPE]