

Practicing All the Time

May 15, 2016

Close your eyes and watch your breath.

The meditation is not about the breath, it's about your mind. But to get to the mind, you first have to give it something to focus on. So focus on the breath. Once the mind has been brought into the present moment, then you can notice what's lacking inside.

The word for meditation in Pali, *bhavana*, means to develop. You're developing your inner wealth. And you have to ask yourself, "What are you lacking in right now in terms of your inner wealth?" Are you lacking concentration? Are you lacking discernment? Are you lacking mindfulness? Well, try to develop those qualities.

By reminding yourself to stay with the breath, that's exercising mindfulness.

You're making sure you stay with one thing. Don't just let everything come in and drag you off every which way. That's how you develop your concentration.

And when you figure out how to get some control over the mind, that's how you begin to gain some discernment.

These are qualities you want to develop all the time.

Today we're commemorating the passing of Ajaan Fuang. He died thirty years ago as of yesterday. One of the teachings he'd like to say often was that you want to be practicing all the time: You want to make your practice timeless. After all, the word "to develop" doesn't mean you have to close your eyes and sit still. You can develop your mind anytime as you go through the day: As you're driving around, as you're working, dealing with other people, you can always try to develop good qualities in mind. That way your practice becomes timeless.

Or as he would say, make your practice *samma*. The word means "right" but it also means "just right," and it also means you want to do it all the time. "Just right" doesn't mean a middling right. It means whatever is appropriate for the task.

Sometimes if really strong anger comes up in the mind, you've got to deal with strong measures. Other times the problems in the mind are a little more gentle, so you treat them with finesse. In other words, you try to figure out what's just right for right now. And always keep on top of right now.

If you develop inner wealth only for five minutes a day or ten minutes a day or once a week, then you should think of all the hours in a week that you're spending your inner wealth. Then the question is, are you operating on a profit or a loss?

You want to be operating on a profit. And you can. Just you work on developing good qualities in the mind all the time.

When a situation calls for patience, you develop patience. That's developing, too. When the situation calls for equanimity, when it calls for compassion, those are things you want to develop at that time when it's appropriate.

In other words, keep on top of things all the time—because your mind can create trouble all the time if you're not careful.

So you want to have at least part of your mind looking at the other part, making sure everything is running well, nothing's going out of bounds, and that you actually are developing good qualities in mind as you go through the day. That way, every one of those 168 hours of the week is going to be a profitable hour in terms of your inner wealth.

We commemorate the passing of the ajaans in this way because it reminds us that even people who developed really good qualities still had to die. We're all going to have to die at some point. The question is, are we going to die with profit in our ledger or a loss?

Ajaan Fuang was always counseling, saying that we don't have all the time in the world to practice. We have a human lifetime that we have no idea how long it's going to be. Once you're born, you're in a line and you may have a number in your hand but you never know what number they're going to call because they don't call the numbers in numerical order.

Sometimes you're in the human world a little time and then you're gone. Other people stay a long, long time before they're gone. But the real question is, "What are you going to do with that time?" Because for everybody, it's limited.

So you're trying to make the best use of it. Don't fritter it away. Don't do the books at the end of your life and see you've come up with a big loss. You want to come out with a profit: good qualities of mind that keep you happy now and will provide for your happiness as you go on to the next life.

So we're trying to make use of the fact that we're commemorating the passing of the ajaans this way by remembering: They warned us about how little time there is, and we should take that lesson to heart. Use your time to do good and then that's time that's well-spent.