

## *The Inner Saboteur*

*June 10, 2011*

A woman once came to meditate with Ajaan Fuang. A friend of hers who worked in the kitchen at the monastery had invited her there. The woman working in the kitchen told Ajaan Fuang beforehand that this woman had a problem: Every time she sat down to meditate, her body would start shaking very violently to the point where she couldn't meditate. Sure enough, when she came, she sat down to meditate and started shaking.

Ajaan Fuang had one of his students who was somewhat psychic look into what was happening. The student saw that the woman was being shaken by the spirits of two people standing behind her. They told her that they had been this woman's parents in a previous lifetime when she had killed them. They didn't want her to meditate and get away. So they were trying to make sure that she didn't escape to nibbana until they had gotten their revenge.

Many of us, when we meditate, have a similar problem: not that there's anybody standing behind us shaking us, but there's a part of us that's actually afraid of what would happen if we no longer had any greed, aversion, or delusion. What would happen if we really got good at the practice? What then? There's a part of us that's afraid that we would get away, depriving us of the pleasures we like, either when we were on the path to the goal or actually attaining the goal.

So, it's good to acknowledge that there are those voices in the committee and to learn how to look at them from a little distance, because we often identify with them very strongly. This is where the teaching on not self comes in handy. You have to ask yourself, "What kind of happiness do I want?" Do you want a happiness that's going to let you down, that's going to disappoint you? Or do you want one that's totally reliable? Do you have the conviction that there is such a happiness, and that you can reach it?

A large part of you will probably say, "No, no, no," especially to that last one. That's probably one of the biggest deterrents in the practice: the fear that you put a lot of energy and effort into the practice and then come up wanting at the end. Ajaan Maha Boowa admits that that was one of the things that discouraged him from practicing in the beginning. He didn't feel he was up for it. In fact, back in those days, the monks in the ecclesiastical hierarchy actually taught that nibbana was no longer attainable, that somehow the door had been closed. His fear was that it'd be a waste to put all that energy and effort into the practice with all the deprivations that the practice would involve and yet come up with nothing.

Part of what got him over the hump was meeting Ajaan Mun and being convinced that here was someone who really was able to do it. The other part was simply saying to himself: “Look, if I don’t really give it a try, I’ll never know. I’ll be haunted for the rest of my life, thinking, ‘Did I miss out on a good opportunity?’”

Here we have the opportunity as we’re sitting here right now. So try to get all the members of the committee together. Tell them, “Look, we all want to be happy. Nothing is accomplished by sabotaging our efforts. At the very least for this hour, let’s really get together and focus our attention on trying to do something about the mind, learning how to bring it to its object, how to keep it there, and really paying attention to what’s actually going on in the mind.” These, you might call them traitors inside you, the parts of you that sabotage your efforts: What do they accomplish? They accomplish nothing. If you follow them, you set yourself up to fail; and then, when the failure comes, you say, “See, see, see?” But nothing was ever learned.

If you really do care for your happiness, you want to give it your all. This is one of the big mysteries of the human mind: We all say that we want happiness, yet then we go ahead and sabotage our best chances for happiness. An important part of the practice is learning how to sort that out. Even before sorting it out, say, “Let’s really give it a try here.” For the time being, get all those voices that usually say, “No, no, no,” to say “Yes” to the breath and “Yes” to the exploration of the breath. It’s only in this way that we’re going to find something we never found before and see something we’ve never seen before.

After all, everything else out there in the world is something you’ve been through many, many times. Ajaan Fuang once said that if there are sensual pleasures you really aspire to, it’s because you’ve had them before, and now you miss them. Maybe it was in some previous lifetime. He said that just thinking about that is enough to give you a sense of dismay. If you get them again, you’ll lose them again. Then, you’ll miss them again, and you’ll struggle to find them again.

It just keeps going. It’s like going up a mountain with a gravel slope. You keep working your way up, up, up, and finally you stop, thinking you’ve gotten somewhere, and the gravel slope just slides down. It’s probably because we’re used to that kind of happiness that we don’t trust the happiness that the Buddha promises. We think, “It’s probably just another gravel slope.”

But he promises that it’s not. All the noble disciples who started out where you are now, who’ve made the effort, have guaranteed that once they found this true happiness, say, “This is different. It’s special.”

So, give it a fair chance. Give yourself a fair chance. The quality of *citta*, when

you're really intent on what you're doing, doesn't require superhuman intentness. There's nothing on the path requiring superhuman abilities. It's simply a very alive sense that anything less than the ultimate happiness will always end up as a disappointment, so this is something you really want to give yourself to. At least, give yourself over to the effort right now. Give it a fair chance right now. Don't let yourself be haunted by the nagging feeling that you had the chance but you didn't make the most of it. That's not something you want to carry around.