

Ajaan Sao's Teaching

A Reminiscence of Phra Ajaan Sao Kantasilo

transcribed from a talk by

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translated from the Thai by

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Since the time of the Buddha, more than two thousand five hundred years ago, monks have retreated into the depths of the forests, mountains and caves, seeking physical isolation to aid them in the development of meditation and realization of Dhamma, the truth of the Buddha's Teaching. Whether in solitude or in small groups, such monks live a life of simplicity, austerity and determined effort and have included some of the greatest meditation masters since the

Buddha himself. Far from cities and towns, willing to put up with the rigours and hardships of living in the wild for the opportunity to learn from nature, and uninterested in worldly fame or recognition, these forest monks often remain unknown, their life stories lost among the jungle thickets and mountain tops.



Phra Ajaan Sao Kantasilo

A Revered Buddhist Monk in

# Thailand

## Born and Death (1861-1941)

In our day and age, the practice of going into the forest to meditate and follow the ascetic dhutanga practices began with Phra Ajaan Sao Kantasilo, the teacher of Phra Ajaan Mun and, by extension,

Phra Ajaan Singh and Phra Ajaan Lee. Phra Ajaan Sao was inclined to be, not a preacher or a speaker, but a doer. When he taught his students, he said very little. And those who studied directly under him are now elders who speak very little, who rarely preach, having picked up the habit from their

teacher. Thus, as Phra Ajaan Sao was not a preacher, I would like to tell you a little of the way in which he taught meditation.

How did Phra Ajaan Sao teach? If it so happened that

someone came to him,  
saying, "Ajaan, sir, I want to  
practice meditation. How  
should I go about it?"  
he would answer,  
"Meditate on the word  
'Buddho.'"



If the person asked, "What does 'Buddho' mean?"

Ajaan Sao would answer, "Don't ask."

"What will happen after

I've meditated on  
'Buddho'?"

"Don't ask. Your only  
duty is simply to repeat

the word 'Buddho' over  
and over in your mind."

That's how he taught:  
no long, drawn-out

# explanations.

Now, if the student  
was sincere in putting

the Ajaan's  
instructions into  
practice and was  
persistent in  
practicing the  
repetition, if his mind  
then became calm

and bright from  
entering into  
concentration, he  
would come and ask  
Ajaan Sao: "When  
meditating on  
'Buddho' my state of

mind becomes  
such-and-such. What  
should I do now?"

If it was right, Ajaan  
Sao would say,

"Keep on meditating."

If not, he would say,

"You have to do  
such-and-such. What  
you're doing isn't  
right."



For example, once  
when I was his  
attendant novice, a  
senior monk of the  
Mahanikaya sect  
came and placed

himself under his  
direction as a  
beginning student in  
meditation. Ajaan  
Sao taught him to  
meditate on "Buddh

O."

Now, when the  
monk settled down

on "B

uddho,"

his mind became

calm and, once it  
was calm, bright.

And then he

stopped repeating

"Buddho."

At this point, his

mind was simply  
blank. Afterwards, he  
sent his attention  
out, following the  
brightness, and a  
number of visions

began to arise: spirits  
of the dead, hungry  
ghosts, divine beings,  
people, animals,  
mountains, forests...  
Sometimes it

seemed as if he, or  
rather, his mind, left  
his body and went  
wandering through  
the forest and  
wilderness, seeing

the various things  
mentioned above.

Afterwards, he went  
and told Ajaan Sao,  
"When I meditated  
down to the point



were the mind  
became calm and  
bright, it then went  
out, following the  
bright light. Visions  
of ghosts, divine

beings, people, and animals appeared. Sometimes it seemed as if I went out following the visions."

As soon as Ajaan  
Sao heard this, he  
said, "This isn't right.  
For the mind to go  
knowing and seeing  
outside isn't right.

You have to make  
it know inside."

The monk then  
asked, "How  
should I go about  
making it know  
inside?"

# Phra Ajaan Sao

answered, "When  
the mind is in a  
bright state like  
that, when it has  
forgotten or

abandoned its  
repetition and is  
simply sitting  
empty and still,  
look for the  
breath. If the

sensation of the  
breath appears in  
your awareness,  
focus on the  
breath as your  
object and then



simply keep track  
of it, following it  
inward until the  
mind becomes  
even calmer and  
brighter."

And so the monk  
followed the  
Ajaan's  
instructions until  
finally the mind

settled down in  
threshold  
concentration  
(upacara  
samadhi),

following which  
the breath  
became more  
and more  
refined,

ultimately to the  
point where it  
disappeared. His  
sensation of  
having a body

also disappeared,  
leaving just the  
state in which  
the mind was  
sitting absolutely

still, a state of  
awareness itself  
standing out  
clear, with no  
sense of going

forward or back,  
no sense of  
where the mind  
was, because at  
that moment



there was just  
the mind, all on  
its own. At this  
point, the monk  
came again to

ask, "After my  
mind has  
become calm  
and bright, and I  
fix my attention

on the breath  
and follow the  
breath inward  
until it reaches a  
state of being

absolutely quiet  
and still — so  
still that nothing  
is left, the breath  
doesn't appear,

the sense of  
having a body  
vanishes, only  
the mind stands  
out, brilliant and

still: When it's  
like this, is it right  
or wrong?"

"Whether it's  
right or wrong,"

the Ajaan

answered,

"take that as

your standard.

Make an effort  
to be able to do  
this as often as  
possible, and



only when  
you're skilled at  
it should you  
come and see  
me again."

So the monk  
followed the  
Ajaan's  
instructions and  
later was able

to make his  
mind still to the  
point that there  
was no sense of  
having a body

and the breath  
disappeared  
more and more  
often. He  
became more

and more  
skilled, and his  
mind became  
more and more  
firm. Eventually,

after he had  
been making his  
mind still very  
frequently —  
because as a

rule, there's the  
principle that  
virtue develops  
concentration,  
concentration

develops

discernment,

discernment

develops the

mind — when



his

concentration

became

powerful and

strong, it gave

rise to abhiñña

— heightened

knowledge and

true insight.

Knowledge of

what?

Knowledge of  
the true nature  
of the mind,  
that is, knowing

the states of  
the mind as  
they occur in  
the present. Or  
so he said.

After he had  
left this level  
of  
concentration  
and came to

see Ajaan Sao,

he was told,

"This level of  
concentration  
is fixed

penetration

(appana

samadhi). You

can rest

assured that in

this level of  
concentration  
there is no  
insight or  
knowledge of



anything at all.

There's only

the brightness

and the

stillness. If the

mind is forever  
in that state, it  
will be stuck  
simply on that  
level of

stillness. So  
once you've  
made the mind  
still like this,  
watch for the

interval where  
it begins to stir  
out of its  
concentration.  
As soon as the

mind has a  
sense that it's  
beginning to  
take up an  
object — no

matter what  
object may  
appear first —  
focus on the  
act of taking up

an object.  
That's what  
you should  
examine."

The monk  
followed the  
Ajaan's  
instructions



and afterwards

he was able to

make fair

progress in the

level of his  
mind.



# Phra Ajaan

Singh

Khantayaaagam

O

A senior

# Buddhist monk at Wat Pa Salawan, Nakhon

# Ratchasima Province, northeastern Thailand.

# A Student of Phra Ajaan Sao Kantasilo

This is one  
instance of  
how Phra  
Ajaan Sao



taught his

pupils —

teaching just

a little at a

time, giving

only the very

heart of the

practice,

almost as if  
he would say,  
"Do this, and  
this, and this,"

with no  
explanations  
at all.

Sometimes I

would

wonder

about his way

of teaching.

That is, I  
would  
compare it  
with books I

had read or  
with the  
Dhamma-talk  
s I heard

given by  
other  
teachers. For  
example,



Phra Ajaan

Singh wrote a

small

handbook for

the practice  
of meditation,  
entitled,  
Taking the

# Triple Refuge and the Techniques of Meditation

, and in it he  
said that in  
practicing  
meditation

you must,  
before all  
else, sit with  
your body

straight and  
establish  
mindfulness  
directly in

front of you.

That's how he

put it, but

not how

# Ajaan Sao

would put it.

Still, the

principles



they taught

were one and

the same, the

only

difference

being that

Ajaan Sao

was not a

preacher, and

so didn't

make use of

a lot of

# rhetic.



Phra Ajaan

Phut Thaniyo

A former

abbot and

senior

Buddhist

monk at Wat

Pa Salawan,

Nakhon

Ratchasima

Province,

northeastern



Thailand.

A Student of

Phra Ajaan

Sao Kantasilo

# Born and Death (1921-1999)

As he

explained to

me: "When

we make up

our mind to

repeat

'Buddho,' the

act of

making up  
the mind is  
in itself the  
act of

establishing  
mindfulness.

When we

keep

thinking

'Buddho' and

are not

willing to let

the mind

slip away

from

'Buddho,' our



mindfulness

and

alertness are

already

healthy and  
strong,  
always  
watching

over the  
mind to  
keep it with  
'Buddho.' As

soon as our  
attention  
slips away,  
so that we

forget to

think

'Buddho' and

go thinking

of something

else, it's a

sign that

there's a

lapse in our  
mindfulness.

But if we can  
keep our

mindfulness

under

control and

can think



'Buddho,  
Buddho'  
continuously  
, with no

gaps, our  
mindfulness  
is already  
strong, so

there's no  
need to go  
'establishing  
mindfulness'

anywhere.

To think of  
an object so  
that it is

coupled  
with the  
mind is, in  
and of itself,

the act of  
getting  
mindfulness  
established."

That was  
how he  
explained it  
to me.

This was

one

instance of

how I saw



and heard  
Phra Ajaan  
Sao teaching  
meditation,

and should

be enough

to serve us

all as food

for thought.

# Glossary

# Buddho:

# a

# parikamma

(preparator

y) word for

the

# recollection of the Buddha

Dhamma:

Event;

phenomen



on; the  
way things  
are in and

of  
themselves  
; their

inherent  
qualities;  
the basic

principles

underlying

their

behavior.

Also,

principles

of behavior

that

human

beings

ought to

follow so

as to fit in

with the

right



natural  
order of  
things;

qualities of  
mind they  
should

develop so

as to

realize the

inherent  
quality of  
the mind

in and of  
itself. By  
extension,

'Dhamma'

is used

also to

denote any

doctrine

that

teaches

such

things.



Thus the  
Dhamma  
of the

Buddha

denotes

both his

teachings

and the

direct

experience  
of nibbana,  
the quality

at which

those

teachings

are aimed.

# Source

# From

# Website :

http://ww

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insight.org



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เขียนโดย Administrator

วันเสาร์ที่ 24 มกราคม 2015 เวลา 04:02 น. - แก้ไขล่าสุด วันพุธที่ 28 มกราคม 2015 เวลา 03:18 น.

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