

40 Tenets. Class 17 Transcript: The Third Noble Truth Can Be Called the Truth of Happiness

Class 17 — The Third Noble Truth Can Be Called the Truth of Happiness

URL: https://www.youtube.com/live/TfFvGsmMcKU?si=P85AvQNIJ3_X5OiN

Dear friends, In tonight's class Thay Phap Luu will discuss the 17th tenet. The 17th Tenet "The Third Noble Truth can be called the truth of happiness." This class is based on a book written by our teacher called "Làng Mai nhìn núi Thúu" or "Plum Village Looks at Vulture's Peak" (an English translation is currently in progress but not yet available). The book describes the essential characteristics of Plum Village practice and teachings.

[00:00–00:03] Introduction

Dear friends joining us online. It is a quiet week in the monastery — no guests, cool autumn weather in Deer Park. We continue studying the 40 Tenets, arriving at the 17th tenet, which teaches that the **Third Noble Truth can be called the Truth of Happiness**.

[00:03–00:06] Why “Happiness” Instead of “Cessation”

Traditionally the Third Noble Truth is called “the cessation of suffering”. Thay proposed calling it **happiness** because “cessation” can be misunderstood. People may think cessation means everything stops — body, feelings, consciousness — and feel afraid. This fear arises because we are caught in notions of birth and death.

[00:06–00:10] Being, Non-Being, and Emptiness

We usually imagine life as beginning at birth and ending at death, with non-being before and after. The Buddha discovered that this view comes from misunderstanding the nature of things. Being and non-being are concepts, not realities. The universe is full of phenomena operating since beginningless time. Our cells contain ancient elements; air and water circulate endlessly. When we observe deeply, ideas of being and non-being dissolve. This is the insight of **emptiness**: nothing exists separately; all things inter-are.

[00:10–00:12] Happiness and Suffering Inter-Are

Suffering is the absence of happiness; happiness is the absence of suffering. Like light and dark, they depend on one another. Thay often said he would not want his students to live in a place with no suffering, because then happiness could not exist.

[00:12–00:17] Meditating with Suffering

When physical or mental pain arises, instead of avoiding it, we hold it gently with mindfulness — like a mother holding a crying child. This non-violent presence transforms suffering. Some practitioners embrace themselves gently, remembering the continuation of their parents in their own bodies. This nurtures compassion and acceptance.

[00:17–00:22] Review of the Four Noble Truths

1. *Dukkha* — suffering
2. *Samudaya* — its causes
3. *Nirodha* — cessation
4. *Marga* — the path

“Marga”, the path, comes from a word linked to deer trails in the forest. It refers to the way that leads to the cessation of suffering. Cessation means the cessation of **grasping**, not the cessation of the five skandhas. We do not eliminate body, feelings, perceptions — we release attachment to them.

[00:22–00:30] Samudaya — The Causes of Suffering

Traditionally, three cravings give rise to suffering:

- craving for sense pleasures
- craving for being
- craving for non-being

Craving (*trishna*, “thirst”) is illustrated by the hungry ghost realm — beings who can never be satisfied.

Craving for being includes ambition, identity, status, possessions.

Craving for non-being includes rejecting aspects of ourselves, especially when confronted by others’ perceptions during practices like Beginning Anew.

Letting go of both images — our own and others’ —allows deeper understanding.

[00:30–00:36] Craving for Sense Pleasures

Sense pleasures arise at the six sense doors — eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind. Chocolate, alcohol, entertainment: none inherently wrong, but craving creates imbalance.

They expanded the early teachings by showing that craving is not the only cause — the entire **path of suffering** also plays a role.

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[00:36–00:44] **The Path of Suffering vs. The Path of Happiness**

Just as there is a Noble Eightfold Path, there is an **ignoble path**:

wrong view, wrong thinking, wrong speech, wrong action, wrong livelihood, wrong diligence, wrong mindfulness, wrong concentration.

Right view begins with letting go of fixed views.

Right thinking is thinking with kindness.

Right speech, action, and livelihood reduce harm.

Wrong action creates fear and enmity; right action brings stability.

Right livelihood today must also consider ecological impact: fossil fuel use, resource extraction, and climate destabilisation all reflect collective wrong livelihood.

[00:44–00:47] **Right Diligence**

Right diligence means watering wholesome seeds and not watering unwholesome ones. Wrong diligence is fuelling anger or dismissing joy. Joy is essential nourishment; simply being alive is a miracle.

[00:47–00:49] **Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration**

Right mindfulness is gentle awareness. Wrong mindfulness is awareness used for harm — such as a sniper's precision. Deep meditation dissolves the dualism of subject and object.

To dwell happily in the present moment — *dharma-drishṭa-sukha-vihāra* — is the Buddha's teaching. Happiness is available now.

Right concentration sustains this practice over time.

[00:49–00:53] **The Third Noble Truth as Happiness**

Calling the Third Noble Truth "happiness" prevents misconceptions. Cessation is the cessation of suffering — and this is happiness itself. Understanding the path of happiness reveals how we walk the path of suffering in each moment.

[00:53–00:55] **Conclusion**

The Four Noble Truths are immediate and practical — like noticing discomfort in the eye and understanding its causes. The Buddha is a great healer of body and mind.

Next week we continue with the **18th tenet**, on free will.