

Class #21 — A Human Being Can Become a Buddha

(00:01:33) In the Manifestation-Only teachings, we can visualise the mind as having a portion that appears and is experienced moment by moment as consciousness. The purpose of practice is to penetrate our own delusion—to remove the veil of our perceptions, especially our wrong perceptions—so that we may directly experience what is happening in our body, our feelings, our perceptions, and the rest of our mental life.

(00:06:42) Traditionally we speak of six sense bases, though we now know there are more, such as proprioception and balance. The Buddha focused on the senses we become easily attached to: sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, and mind-objects. These are the experiences we habitually chase or resist.

(00:12:47) There is a Chan teaching from the Watou lineage: “What is this?” It is a question we can ask in any moment. Sadness—what is this? Anger—what is this? Jealousy—what is this? Even something pleasant: apple pie—what is this? It cultivates a mind of wonder and openness: no judgement, no need to define, only curiosity.

(00:17:04) We have a seed of anger. When it manifests, who is recognising it? We usually say “I am recognising it”. But in each moment of consciousness, subject and object are born together. The moment anger manifests as object, the “I” who perceives it manifests as subject. They inter-are; one cannot exist without the other.

(00:23:46) We can attend to anger and make it grow, or we can attend to the breath, or our steps, or neutral sensations in the body. Returning to the breath waters mindfulness. It breaks the cycle of feeding the anger with more thoughts, stories, and narratives.

(00:29:16) For centuries, human culture—especially within empires—has been structured around extraction: from the Earth, from other beings, from labour, from entire communities. This tendency persists, and we now live inside these systems without knowing how to stop.

(00:33:04) Without awareness, we take not only material things but also emotional energy—sometimes walking into a joyful room and draining it with our anger or heaviness. This too is a form of taking what is not given.

(00:41:10) The twenty-first tenet states: As a human being, you have the capacity to become a Buddha. And: As a Buddha, you continue to be a human being. This is why countless Buddhas are possible.

(00:47:30) The Buddha himself hesitated to teach after awakening because he foresaw that people would misunderstand. He awakened as a human being and discovered the Four Noble Truths: that suffering exists, that it has a cause, that the cause can be removed, and that there is a path leading to that freedom.

(00:53:00) What moved me most when I first came as a layperson to Maple Forest Monastery in 2001 was not that Thay was present—he wasn't—but that his students radiated peace, compassion, and awakening. I felt the Buddha's presence in the sangha. That convinced me that real transmission was occurring.

(00:57:38) Thay taught that one Buddha is not enough for our times. We need many Buddhas. And here at Deer Park, we are doing nothing other than helping each other become Buddhas. In truth, you already are a Buddha—you need only let go of the perception that you are not.

(00:58:04) Thank you for your practice. If you have the chance, read *Old Path White Clouds* slowly—one short chapter at a time—so its insight can seep into store consciousness. But be careful: many people have become monks or nuns after reading it.