

Plum Village Forty Tenets
Class 22 Summary Study Notes

Tenet 22: The Bodies of the Buddha

1. Joy in the Dharma and Engaged Practice (00:00:38 – 00:09:36)

Spirit of the teaching:

- To “play in the Dharma”.
- To soak in the rain of the Dharma.
- To allow impermanence to teach and heal directly.
- This experience does not begin at birth or end at death; it continues.

Context:

- The UN Climate Conference in Glasgow was taking place.
- Monastics were present offering meditation and calm energy.

Engaged Buddhism means:

- Not withdrawing from collective suffering.
- Sending collective mindfulness into global crises.
- Recognising that practice has a non-local quality.

Even in stillness:

- Mindful breathing contributes to collective transformation.

2. Expanding the Meaning of “Body” (00:09:36 – 00:14:17)

Recap of Tenet 21:

- A human being can become a Buddha.
- A Buddha remains a human being.

This class explores:

- The many “bodies” of the Buddha.

Invitation:

- Let go of narrow ideas of body as only physical form.
- Expand understanding beyond flesh and bone.
- Recognise multiple dimensions of continuation.

Because humans can become Buddhas:

- We also have these bodies.

3. Two Early Bodies: Physical Body and Dharma Body (00:17:49 – 00:22:53)

Physical Body

- The historical body of the Buddha.
- Born, lived, and passed away.

Dharma Body

Originally:

- The continuation of the Buddha through teaching.
- The living expression of actions of body, speech, and mind.

Key insight:

- Our actions are our true continuation.
- Thought, speech, and bodily action are like fruits from a tree.

Orange tree analogy:

- Fruit quality reflects care of the tree.
- Our present life reflects past conditions.

The Dharma body continues:

- Through teachings.
- Through transformed lives.
- Through ongoing practice.

4. Mahāyāna Creativity and the Three Bodies (00:22:53 – 00:35:29)

Mahāyāna:

- A movement to revive the spirit of awakening.
- Not trapped in literalism or rigid categorisation.
- Creative and experiential.

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Manifestation Body (Nirmāṇakāya) (approx. 00:27:45 – 00:28:57)

- The visible, physical manifestation.
- A skilful expression of awakening in human form.

Enjoyment / Retribution Body (Sambhogakāya) (approx. 00:30:13 – 00:32:44)

- The fruit of countless wholesome actions.
- The “bliss body”.
- Includes both:
 - The five aggregates.
 - Our environment.

Insight:

- Our present circumstances are fruits of individual and collective karma.

Dharma Body (Dharmakāya) (approx. 00:33:44 – 00:35:29)

Expanded meaning:

- Not only teachings.
- All phenomena.
- Suchness itself.

The Dharma body:

- Is inside and outside.
- Is the whole phenomenal universe.

These are lenses for practice, not theology.

5. Five Bodies from the Mainstream Schools (00:37:42 – 00:43:08)

Precepts Body (00:38:47 – 00:43:08)

- Energy generated by ethical conduct.
- Creates safety and trust.
- People feel ease in its presence.

When intact:

- There is warmth and protection.
- One does not fear being harmed or exploited.

When violated:

- This body is damaged.
- Happiness and stability weaken.

Precepts are:

- Protection, not control.
- A foundation for practice.

6. Concentration Body (Samādhi Kāya) (00:44:11 – 00:55:10)

Energy generated by sustained concentration.

Examples:

- Impermanence.
- Non-self.
- Nirvana.

Concentration on Impermanence (00:44:59 – 00:45:39)

- Seeing arising and passing away.
- Reduces fear of birth and death.

Concentration on Non-Self (00:45:39 – 00:48:42)

- Letting go of rigid identity and preference.
- Example: eating without clinging to likes and dislikes.
- Actively releasing attachment to control.

Concentration on Nirvana (00:50:56 – 00:53:21)

- Touching the unconditioned.
- Not clinging to conditioned phenomena.

Song “I Have Arrived, I Am Home” (approx. 00:51:38 – 00:53:21):

- Returning to the present moment.

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- Stability and solidity.
- Dwelling in the ultimate.

Insight:

- We use conditioned practices to touch the unconditioned.

Precepts and concentration are interdependent:

- Without ethics, concentration destabilises.

7. Insight Body (approx. 00:56:35 – 00:57:21)

- Energy of deep understanding.
- Arises from mindfulness and concentration.

When strong:

- Behaviour changes naturally.
- Habits weaken.

When weak:

- Old patterns repeat.

Insight is visible in transformation.

8. Liberation Body (00:57:21 – 00:58:48)

Energy of freedom:

- Peace.
- Calm.
- Non-reactivity.

It manifests:

- When conditions are supportive.

It disappears:

- When fear, anger, and attachment dominate.

Its stability depends on practice.

9. Liberation Body Due to Wisdom (00:58:48 – 01:05:34)

- Stabilised liberation.
- Rooted in continuous insight.
- Not easily shaken.

When wisdom is present:

- Liberation becomes imperturbable.
- Delusion no longer dislodges freedom.

This corresponds to full awakening.

10. Decision-Making and the Dualistic Mind (00:59:34 – 01:01:56)

Common question:

- Should I do this or that?

Teaching response:

- The real issue is presence.

The dualistic mind:

- Compares endlessly.
- Creates paralysis.
- Pulls us away from the present moment.

Freedom is not in choosing correctly.

Freedom is in being fully present while choosing.

11. Bodies as Practice Lenses (01:05:34 – 01:07:14)

All these bodies are:

- Ways of looking.
- Mirrors for practice.

Questions to examine:

- Is my precepts body intact?
- Is my concentration stable?
- Is insight transforming my habits?
- Is liberation present?

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These bodies:

- Manifest and disappear according to conditions.
- Depend on actions of body, speech, and mind.

12. Core Integration (01:07:14 – 01:08:01)

Explored in this class:

- Physical body.
- Dharma body as continuation.
- Three Mahāyāna bodies.
- Five bodies of ethical and meditative cultivation.

Central insights:

- Our actions are our continuation.
- Ethics stabilises life.
- Concentration steadies the mind.
- Insight transforms behaviour.
- Wisdom stabilises liberation.
- All phenomena participate in the Dharma body.

The bodies of the Buddha are:

- Not metaphysical abstractions.
- Not distant theology.
- Practical dimensions of awakening.

They are available here and now, in this very body and mind.