

Transcript of Class 23. The 23rd Tenet: The Stream is always Flowing.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GH_Ts4rzUIE&list=PLm9_3psBwxqPvtI6Wj8x8OhVDIMwoda_i&index=24

Audio Warning

Please note: there is a sudden microphone/audio blast in the recording.

A small distortion begins around 42:19, followed by a very loud burst of noise at approximately 42:42–42:43. The volume spike is abrupt and may be uncomfortable or potentially harmful when listening with headphones or earbuds.

Listeners may wish to lower the volume or skip this section of the recording.

00:00–09:00 — The 23rd Tenet

A person is not a fixed entity but a **continuous, ever-changing stream of five aggregates**.

- The stream is always flowing
- It interacts with other streams of phenomena
- It cannot be separated from the wider universe
- There is continuity, but no permanent separate self

04:45–06:49 — Interconnection and the Climate Crisis

The way we live affects the whole planet.

- Our actions affect people, plants, animals, and minerals
- Fear about the climate crisis can become paralysing
- Recognising impermanence and interconnection transforms fear into hope
- Community practice shows another way of living is possible
- Living simply and practising together supports collective change

09:00–14:00 — Non-Self and the Elements of the Body

Looking deeply into the body reveals it is made of changing elements.

- Earth
- Water
- Air
- Heat

Key insight:

- These elements constantly exchange with the environment
- The body is a **process**, not a fixed identity

12:21–18:11 — The Five Aggregates

A person consists of five aggregates:

- Body (form)
- Feelings
- Perceptions
- Mental formations
- Consciousness

Key points:

- These are **processes that arise and pass away**
- Suffering appears when we grasp them as **“me”, “mine”, or “myself”**

14:12–16:09 — The Orchestra Without a Conductor

There is no central controller within the body.

- The body functions like an **orchestra producing music**
- There is **no conductor directing it**

Insight:

- This understanding brings **freedom**, not despair
- It loosens attachment to a fixed identity

16:09–19:05 — Continuation Rather Than a Separate Self

Non-self does not mean we do not exist.

Instead it reveals:

- We are continuations of many causes and conditions
- Our parents continue within our body and mind
- Life is a **stream flowing through generations**

19:05–20:55 — The River Metaphor

Transcript of Class 23. The 23rd Tenet: The Stream is always Flowing.

The Buddha compared life to a person floating down a river.

- The person tries to grasp grass on the riverbank
- The grass cannot be held because the river keeps flowing

Meaning:

- Reality is constantly changing
- Grasping at permanence creates suffering

Parallel insight:

- Heraclitus — one cannot step into the same river twice

20:55–25:03 — Grasping and Perception

Much suffering arises from **believing our perceptions are fixed truths.**

Example:

- Someone says something hurtful
- We replay it repeatedly in our mind

Practice:

- Return to the breath
- Observe perceptions
- Allow them to pass

25:03–30:37 — Mindfulness of Feelings and Emotions

Feelings are impermanent.

- Pleasant feelings arise and pass
- Unpleasant feelings arise and pass

Working with emotions:

- Recognise the emotion
- Embrace it with mindfulness
- Investigate its causes

When grasping stops:

- Emotions naturally calm

30:37–34:36 — Consciousness Is Also Impermanent

Awareness depends on conditions.

Examples:

- Vision depends on the eyes
- Hearing depends on the ears

Key insight:

- If the organ changes, the corresponding consciousness disappears
- Consciousness is therefore **conditioned and impermanent**

34:36–35:37 — Enjoying the Present Moment

Understanding impermanence allows deeper appreciation of life.

Examples:

- Seeing colours and faces
- Walking with healthy legs
- Breathing freely

Practice:

- Enjoy conditions while they are present
- Do not cling to them

37:00–41:21 — Personal Search for Identity

After university the speaker felt trapped by social expectations.

Questions arose:

- Who am I?
- What should I do with my life?

Travelling and meeting others revealed:

- Many people live compassionate lives without titles or recognition
- Identity is less fixed than society suggests

41:21–44:36 — Activism and Self-Negation

He joined activist communities and rejected conventional lifestyles.

However:

- Rejecting identity alone did not end suffering
- Without mindfulness training it can become **self-negation**

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44:36–47:49 — Crisis and Solitude

Returning home created tension between:

- the identity others expected
- the life he had been living

He experienced:

- depression
- anger about ecological destruction

Nature became a refuge through long daily walks.

47:49–50:43 — Discovering Meditation

At a yoga centre he encountered meditation.

Key realisation:

- He did not know what to do with his life
- But he **could follow his breathing**

Breathing meditation provided:

- stability
- clarity
- relief from confusion

50:43–52:27 — The Four Establishments of Mindfulness

He discovered the practice of mindfulness of:

- body
- feelings
- mind
- phenomena

This shifted attention:

- from intellectual searching
- to direct experience

52:27–54:08 — Letting Go of the Story of Self

The problem was not the self itself but **attachment to a fixed narrative about the self**.

Key insight:

- Our life story can be told in many ways
- As soon as we describe it, it has already changed

Life is a **living process rather than a fixed narrative**.

54:08–56:18 — The Role of the Monastery

Practice centres create conditions where identity pressure is reduced.

Practices include:

- sitting meditation
- walking meditation
- working meditation

Purpose:

- to experience ourselves as a **flowing stream of processes**

56:18–57:38 — Interbeing With the Universe

Looking deeply reveals our constant interaction with:

- air
- sunlight
- earth
- microorganisms
- all living beings

The idea of a separate individual dissolves into a **network of relationships**.

58:00–01:02:00 — First Wrong View of the Self

Wrong view:

- The five aggregates **are the self**

Problem:

- When the aggregates change, suffering arises

Example:

- believing “I am always kind” or “I am always joyful”

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01:02:00–01:04:58 — Second Wrong View of the Self

Wrong view:

- A permanent self exists **outside the five aggregates**

Example:

- imagining a metaphysical soul separate from body and mind

Problem:

- Any idea of such a self becomes another **mental formation**

01:04:58–01:09:43 — Third Wrong View of the Self

Wrong view:

- The self exists **within the aggregates**
- Or the aggregates exist **within the self**

These are further attempts to preserve a permanent identity.

01:04:58–01:07:49 — Language and Illusion

Language can create misleading structures.

Examples:

- “The wind blows”
- “The rain falls”

But:

- wind is blowing
- rain is falling

Similarly:

- the self is simply the **activity of the aggregates**

01:08:39–01:12:47 — Nirvana Is Not a Self

The Buddha taught the unconditioned nature called **nirvana**.

Important point:

- Nirvana is not a permanent self
- It cannot be grasped conceptually
- It can only be directly experienced

01:15:59–01:17:41 — The Torch Circle Metaphor

Consciousness is like a torch spinning in the dark.

- It appears as a continuous circle of light
 - In reality it is a series of separate moments
- Because consciousness arises moment by moment:
- change is always possible
 - transformation is always possible

01:17:41 — Purpose of the Teaching

The teaching of non-self is practical.

Its purpose is to:

- reduce attachment
- transform suffering
- cultivate compassion
- guide the mind toward peace

Mindfulness reveals that **each moment offers the possibility of choosing a new direction for the mind.**