

Class 11 Summary: Mindfulness, Concentration, and Insight

Lecture held on June 23, 2021, Ocean of Peace Meditation Hall, Deer Park Monastery. The monastic who is teaching this class is Brother Phap Luu. He is white male in his 30s, wearing brown robes, has a shaved head, and has a gentle disposition and smile.

Video: 01:11:40 <https://www.youtube.com/live/1j5lxmjslF4?si=7TCZMiT0ENdG-g2i>

A Living, Evolving Dharma 00:04 – 21:56

Dharma in a Time of Change:

“Plum Village is an explicitly an evolving tradition.” (07:05)

The Dharma is not fixed; it evolves to meet changing conditions. Like a river, it maintains continuity while also flowing forward.

“The 40 Tenets are not set in stone — they reflect Thầy’s insight at that time.” (09:13)

Tradition should be flexible. Thầy emphasized that as conditions change, so too must the Dharma forms — including practices and community norms.

Evolution and Conservation:

“Even the most progressive among us carry a conservative tendency.” (17:04)

Evolution requires both new growth and preservation. The analogy of the **horseshoe crab**, unchanged for millions of years, reminds us that some forms endure because they work.

“Some brothers left the sangha because there was no organic farm... and a few years later the thing they were passionate about manifested.” (20:26) Change takes time. Patience is necessary for community evolution and personal insight.

The Core Tenet: Mindfulness, Concentration, and Insight 21:56 – 01:10:22

“Mindfulness, concentration, and insight are the essential practices that give rise to liberation.” (21:56)

These three are foundational to Plum Village practice and appear throughout the Buddhist tradition, often paired with the five faculties or powers.

Precepts as Mindfulness Trainings 24:15 – 27:02

“Precepts are mindfulness. They are not separate.” (24:15)

Thầy reframed *śīla* (precepts) as *mindfulness trainings* — a more living and engaging term. Ethical behavior arises naturally from awareness.

Taintlessness: Ending the Leaks 27:02 – 44:07

“Asrava means leaking.” (27:02)

Without mindfulness, our energy and awareness “leak” — pulled away by desire, distraction, and dissatisfaction.

“I’m leaking somehow — I’m not fully with my step.” (40:32)

The practice of mindfulness is likened to plugging a leak in a balloon or a pipe. With awareness, we preserve our vitality and presence.

Synchronicity and Cellular Mindfulness 47:25 – 50:37

“There’s a synchronicity when we cultivate mindfulness in every cell.” (47:25)

True mindfulness is not fragmented. Like a current animating a computer, it brings coherence and aliveness to body and mind.

“Without mindfulness, we are like zombies.” (51:28)

Popular culture’s fascination with zombies reflects an intuition about disconnection and unconscious living.

Concentration: Sustained Mindfulness 50:37 – 59:05

“Concentration is mindfulness sustained over time.” (50:37)

Concentration deepens mindfulness and leads to insight. The more steady our attention, the clearer our understanding becomes.

“We become aware that we already have enough.” (52:02)

This recognition ends the endless grasping for fulfillment elsewhere.

Insight: Seeing Through the Illusion of Self 59:05 – 01:04:05

“This present moment is the fruit of our thinking, speech, and action.” (01:00:01)

Insight reveals that what we think of as “me” is made entirely of non-self elements — parents, culture, conditions.

“There doesn’t have to be a self or soul... We are just like all phenomena, a river flowing.” (01:01:00)

This is the insight of *interbeing* — a recognition of the constructed nature of identity and the reality of change.

Mindfulness Trainings as Skillful Means 01:04:05 – 01:08:07

“The mindfulness trainings are not commandments from God.” (01:05:32)

They are practical guides that arise from community experience and are aimed at reducing suffering and increasing joy.

“With increased resolution, we can see more clearly how one thought can lead to suffering.” (01:06:11)

As practice deepens, clarity increases — allowing us to act with precision and compassion.

Sharing the Practice, Walking Together 01:08:07 – 01:11:40

“Sometimes we just need to be around happy people and borrow their energy.” (01:08:44)

Even before we understand fully, we can benefit from being in a mindful community. Joy is contagious and opens the path.

“These are the three taintless trainings: *mindfulness, concentration, and insight*.” (45:26)

These practices stop our internal *leaking*, help us dwell deeply in the present moment, and awaken insight that transforms suffering.