

## Transcript of the Talk on the 12th Tenet of the 40 Tenets of Plum Village: Precepts are Mindfulness

<https://youtu.be/f-pPrFTaaQw?si=ILzr2P8Y2wOGlfwi>

00:00: So, dear respected Thay, dear noble community, today is the 30th of June in the year 2021 and we are on the 12th tenet of the 40 tenets of Plum Village we just finished in order of intervening retreat on Sunday and so last week there were many people here and this week we have we are close again so they're just the monastics so it's a cozy and the monastery so last week we were talking about mindfulness concentration and insight the three trainings so and if you've been to any of our

03:03 monasteries you know we have in Sanskrit on the Plum Village logo smoothie mindfulness samadhi concentration and prajna says insight and these are the three main trainings of Plum Village practice and as I said they they arise together so it's not like we start with mindfulness and then some time later concentration arises and then insight but already when mindfulness is present concentration and insight are also present and they used the example of a triangle so let's say we have a triangle and that is made of points a b and c

04:46 if we draw a line down the middle of the triangle say we have another point d and we as soon as we draw that line two new triangles automatically and simultaneously manifests so this new triangle abd it doesn't arise separately from the triangle acd but by drawing one line they arise simultaneously so in the same way when we practice mindfulness concentration is already there right away they arise uh simultaneously so it's like looking at a multifaceted jewel you might look at one facet and see

05:41 mindfulness and you look at another and its concentration but it is it's the same jewel and in the same way within mindfulness concentration and insight we have the eightfold noble path you could say mindfulness concentration in insight is a kind of a summary of the eightfold path and that had the insight our teacher as a young monk that mindfulness are precepts mindfulness is not separate or different from what we call the mindfulness trainings so usually we think of precepts as something we can't do right it's

06:47 something that we restrain our body we restrain our speech we restrain our actions in some way so that we don't say that hurtful thing or do that hurtful thing to ourselves or to others with when we look at it in terms of mindfulness training so we it's

not just a merely a constraint or an outer form but it's aware of the suffering caused by doing harm I make I am determined not to kill not to steal and not to engage in sexual misconduct and so forth not to steal not to drink intoxicants so mindfulness is at the core it's not

07:35 just for the sake of the form that we practice the precepts but it's because it is infused with mindfulness and so in the tradition when we have this group of three the first one is precepts or maybe we can say better virtue morality which is sheila so you'll see sheila samadhi prajna and the inside of this week's tenet is that shmiti is sheila it means mindfulness is virtue mindfulness is not separate from the precepts from morality from a noble way of living because mindfulness helps us to be aware

08:55 of the harm that we've caused the kind of suffering in ourselves and in others so we say something hurtful we do something hurtful and that person suffers and we're aware of it so then we are mindful of it and we learn how to restrain ourselves from doing that thing or saying that thing in the future and so I updated the three trainings last week we talked about the three these as the three timeless trainings tree is uh three it's the same root as the English word three three three and shiksha is to train

10:13 we train ourselves so the three and as I pointed out they're often qualified by taintless or non-leaking anastro last week we learned about the leak leaking because if we train ourselves by conditioning our mind to to eat a lot of cake we like cake we like sweet things and then we so we find ways to live our life so we can have more cake like we have lunch and there's a sweet cake when I came back to Deer Park from Plum Village I was surprised that many times at the end of the food serving table in solidarity hamlet

11:35 there's cake and it's very sweet the cake in France sometimes we rarely rarely have cake but sometimes we have it and it's it's not so sweet um but some I don't know why in the United States the cake is so sweet and so I found I actually I could not eat it mostly because I didn't feel so good in my body afterwards so I was mindful of my body and I was aware of the suffering and so then my mind becomes conditioned not to eat the cake but many of us we we crave the sweetness of the sugar cake the the

12:23 frosting and and we may do things throughout the whole day work in our job work in our take care

of our family everything just to have one moment where we can sit down and eat that piece of cake and so somewhere in the back of our mind is some kind of craving that's conditioned by our experience and our pleasure of eating the cake and so it's like throughout the day we are leaking we are doing other things in our activity but in the back of our mind we're like oh but eventually I have my piece of cake

13:06 and then i'll be I will be happy so everything I suffer and I do all these things but I have my piece of cake so that's so the difference with um these mindfulness concentration insight is these three taintless trainings or non-leaking trainings is that the more mindfulness the more concentration the more insight we have we don't leak like that it you get the happiness right away being mindful of your breathing breathing in I know i'm breathing in breathing out I know i'm breathing out there's mindfulness of the breath

13:56 there's concentration on the breath i'm established and able to maintain my awareness my mindfulness through the whole length of the in-breath and the whole length of the out breath so mindfulness is there concentration is there and insight is also there I see the impermanence of my breath flowing in and out of my body i'm aware of how as being aware of my body I feel nourished in every cell of my body oxygen passing through my bloodstream to the muscles throughout my body my organs so my body feels energized feels calm

14:57 so being mindful of the breath there is concentration on the breath with concentration on the breath there is insight on the nature of the breath the impermanent nature the nourishing nature of the breath so in the same way as a triangle they manifest together like a like a tripod in front of me the camera is on a tripod and if you take away one of the legs it will fall down so mindfulness concentration insight they manifest together and no matter how mindful you are it will not contribute to this leaking energy leaking out

15:44 in your your mind like craving that piece of cake we cannot really be truly present for the person in front of us or for ourselves because we're thinking about the piece of cake or whatever it is you know that thing that we crave maybe that compliment from our boss about the work that we did maybe it's a to get on on twitter or facebook and somebody liked what we posted there yeah there's something that there's some kind of um endorphin that's being

released that is conditioning the neural pathways in our

16:36 mind and that is the kind of leaking that is going on throughout the day so we have to with mindfulness and then maintaining that mindfulness and having insight into the nature of our mind we recognize in what ways we are leaking through our craving for things that are there in the present moment and also things that are in the future or reminiscing about the past so that is the the training ourselves in how to be leaking that's the asura but with the practice of these three trainings we we let go of these leaks

17:24 in our every day life so it's just a review of last time so we talk about sheila as including right action right livelihood right speech right mindfulness right concentration right effort or right diligence insight is right view right thought so in the in the three trainings we have the noble eightfold path so we look at the tenet for this week number 12 mindfulness trainings are mindfulness sheila is smarty mindfulness trainings and fine manners are concrete expressions of mindfulness

21:24 so mindfulness trainings are kind of neutral in previous classes I talked about appropriate attention yoniso manaskara and mindfulness trainings are what help us to cultivate appropriate attention it means that we we pay attention to things that give us joy things that nourish lasting happiness things like [Music] giving being generous like being kind so we pay attention to someone's kind words and then we make the effort ourselves to say a kind thing to someone else that is appropriate attention

22:38 so it's just like when we come up to the serving table or we open the fridge for something to eat we can choose do we want something that will make our body feel heavy and uncomfortable after we eat it or do we want to choose something that will make our body feel light and nourished and help us to heal so appropriate attention means we choose the right kind of food for our eyes ears nose and so forth our sense impressions yo niso manaskara so your nissa is it means uh together uh you you're just

23:43 um unified there's it's not fragmented yeah so our attention is together but on a wholesome object manaskara is making up the mind kara is to do to make and manas is the mind so mindfulness trainings are mindfulness it means that when we are aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life we refrain from taking life we make the determination to live our lives in such a way that life can continue so

as monastics we stop eating animal products as much as possible certainly we in the monastery we

24:39 serve vegan food to our guests I know I sometimes eat cheese still maybe egg once or twice a month but I make the determination to cause less harm so I don't want to eat the meat the flesh of living beings and in the way as well that I eat vegetables and grains I try to we try to do it in a way that it causes less harm to the environment and to the people who pick the vegetables and nurture the grains and so forth so we're always using our food as a way of as an object of contemplation we look into the food and see

25:32 what kind of harm has been done to living beings in producing this food and transporting it here to the monastery we live together we are many maybe 40 or 50 monastics at deer park and so we know that if we eat together then the amount of packaging and transport is reduced so we try to live in a way that we are reducing the the harmful footprint that we put on the earth that is a mindfulness training and we can say oh we just don't don't kill but we are an evolving community last week we learned about evolving dharma

26:22 so when we practice mindfulness and we see mindfulness as the mindfulness trainings then we we evolve the mindfulness trainings because we're always finding new ways that our way of living maybe creating suffering or creating harm so mindfulness is a kind of creative energy that helps us to to look to to to change our behavior because what causes harm now might be different in 20 years or 40 years so the mindfulness the five mindfulness trainings the 14 mindfulness trainings of the order of interbeing

27:05 they are not static documents but they are things that grow with the community they've grown from when Thay first brought the 14 mindfulness trainings into manifest the when they manifested in 1960s they were very short and then through the 80s and the 90s as the order of interbeing grew Thay listen and discovered new ways that suffering was being caused by our actions as practitioners and as laypeople and then he helped together with the community to continue to to bring that into the mindfulness

27:48 trainings so the insight that comes from mindfulness and concentration is contributing to growing and evolving the mindfulness trainings and that is a great contribution of our teacher and our community to the buddhist tradition seeing that the precepts are not something that's just static we know

in the time of the buddha and afterwards that there were many incidents when monks or nuns followed their desire in some way whether sexual desire or craving for food or for recognition for prestige and because of that

28:37 they cause a lot of confusion and hurt in the monastic community or in the lay community and so based on that awareness the awareness of that suffering the monks of the nuns came to the buddha and asked buddha this happened and the buddha said he updated the precepts he he continued to evolve them and sometimes he he said to do it one way and then another incident happened and he said to do it another way and so that is a spirit that and and the community has continued to nourish that not to see the precepts as

29:21 something static but something that continues to grow based on our insight into actual concrete expressions of suffering that occur in the community and in the world so now we are looking into the trainings in palm village to around issues of social justice around issues of climate the climate crisis and finding ways to how we can update the trainings that already there are many things that address it but we learn that maybe it's there's more that can be put in there and that's coming from the awareness of

29:57 the suffering brought about by racism by economic inequality by the climate crisis and so forth I can listen to the sound of the bell I know that when I started meditating I wanted to learn every technique for developing concentration so breathing meditation practicing sitting meditation in the morning and the evening and you know learning the jhanas and going into meditative states and I had a lot of energy and I think many of us also approach meditation for this kind of um like with a technique-based approach

31:29 if I just learn the right techniques a mindful breathing of controlling my thinking then I can become a buddha I can get awakening as soon as possible and the the precepts like sheila yeah okay I I it's a bit slower you know I thought okay I need to do those things because I see that yeah when I said that thing or I did that thing [Music] that caused harm and I don't want to continue to do that but now after being a monk for more than 17 years somewhere around especially around my 10th year as a monk

32:14 I had a much different way of looking at it I found I actually found that the mindfulness trainings are the foundation for most of my happiness every day that by practicing the five mindfulness trainings practicing the 14 mindfulness trainings practicing the precepts of a big shoe I was I had a solid foundation

for my happiness I didn't need to make a huge effort to be happy I was happy just because I wasn't saying as much hurtful things as before I wasn't doing the kind of things that were causing harm jealousy frustration

33:03 anger, despair to myself and to other people so I this world opened up of this the power and the strength of the practice of virtue the practice of precepts that was completely absent or almost completely absent when I started meditation when I just wanted to you know get the big wow awakening and so mindfulness trainings are not separate from mindfulness they are um the very foundation of our mindfulness practice and my and our happiness and our joy are born from mindfulness so that's like that's a very

34:00 it's a wonderful calligraphy that I often wrote um mindful um joy and happiness born from mindfulness so with more mindfulness it means also concentration and insight we feel happy and mindfulness also means mindfulness trainings so I'm aware of what I say what I do throughout the day and that awareness allows me when I do do something harmful to notice it right away so it doesn't become so serious I don't get carried away by that desire by that craving to get that sensual pleasure this is the essence of this tenet

34:51 understanding that mindfulness trainings precepts are not just an outer form the buddha didn't want a bunch of robots or automatons just walking around practicing perfectly the precepts you have to understand that the precepts came from unskillful inappropriate attention in the early community the monks and nuns they they they were right around the buddha well in the beginning monks and then later the nuns and so they watched the buddha they saw how he spoke they saw how he walked they saw how he

35:35 went on alms around and so they didn't need a body of precepts they just watched the buddha and did what he did by doing that they felt happiness they felt joy but as a community grew bigger and bigger there were monks and nuns coming in who didn't have that direct contact with the buddha we know in the life of the buddha that there were many monks and nuns who actually never saw the buddha in person that's one sutra where a monk who had become a recently become a bhikkhu he comes and [Music] stays in a barn of a lay person

36:21 and he sits in meditation and that evening and then the buddha actually came along by himself and to the same layperson and asked can I stay in your

barn this evening and so he went into that barn and he saw the monk there and but the monk had never seen the buddha so he didn't know this was the buddha he just thought it was some other ascetic wandering ascetic and so the buddha came in and and he said oh this this this this young monk this young ascetic is very mindful practicing meditation what if I ask him

37:00 some questions and so he asked the athletics so under what training did you go forth and who is your teacher and he said my I have gone forth in the dispensation of the awakened one the buddha and he is my teacher and the buddha said ah are you lovely and what is his teaching and then the monk proceeded to give the teaching to the buddha not knowing that the buddha who the buddha was and then the buddha said oh that's very lovely how about this and then the buddha started to teach that monk and then the monk somewhere in

37:34 the middle of getting the teaching from the buddha he realized this is the buddha it's very embarrassed because this was his teacher but he didn't recognize it and so then after the buddha gave the teaching he he bowed and he said I'm so sorry bhagavan usually they use the term bhagavan the blessed one or in chinese it was translated as world honored one I did not recognize you and the buddha said yes that was a mistake not to recognize your teacher but it is it is a show of your progress that you are

38:18 able to begin anew and recognize your mistake so he was very kind very gentle so I you know it's hard to see how that situation actually happened I like to try to look through the words and imagine that monk just being a little bit proud you know he just became a buddhist monk and he's going off by himself and so he's and it's that pride that doesn't allow him to see the buddha in front of him and so the buddha is able to cut through his pride and then he sees ah wow some some some of our monks are like

38:58 that I don't know the nuns but I know we've had brothers who sometimes and I I see him myself too that kind of pride where you think you come into the monastery ah maybe a few weeks I'll be as enlightened as tal and the sangha will invite me up to give the dhamma talk and everyone will follow what I say just like Thay because I I will be you know I can I have the same awakening the same nature I don't know if that still happens I remember when sister dakhnl was smiling when we were novices in 2003 2004 sometimes there

39:36 were a few monks like that I remember sitting in this hall and tal was embracing one monk who said I don't need to come to tai's dhamma talk anymore I already learned everything and tal gave him a hug he said it's okay you can still come to the talk just for fun even though you you know you learn everything you already know Thay is teaching so sometimes we we have that kind of pride in chinese they call it the stink of zen sometimes we get we think we are progressing on our path but our pride is

40:16 actually an obstacle so the practice of sheila helps us to keep humble our mindfulness trainings keep us humble in our heart open so by learning the fine manners by learning the precepts we are never too sure of ourselves so we we can say ah are you sure I remember when we were novices and we first were practicing the novice precepts and we we love to correct one another if we did something wrong because you just learn these precepts and so then you're you're looking around you're thinking every moment you know this is the way i

41:03 should hold the cup with both my hands so there's i'm very aware of holding the cup and then when we see a brother who's not he just picks up the teacup and he's drinking it like that we say practice with two hands you become a teacher right away right you remind your other novice brother navas brothers can be very annoying to each other I don't know if the sisters also but it happens a lot in the brothers hamlet and so that's the kind of pride right we we want we we feel uh resistant to learning the fine manners

41:40 learning the precepts and so we have to turn around right away and teach them to somebody else instead of really deeply steeping our own way of living in the precepts for years and years even now 17 years as a monk I still feel i'm i'm learning many of the fine manners and the precepts every time I read them I say oh gosh there's something new I see a mirror reflected in my own daily practice and if I can bring that awareness in I see more gentleness more kindness more openness in my way of relating to my brothers and

42:28 sisters and to the sangha so it's very beautiful this unification this coming together of mindfulness and precepts mindfulness and the mindfulness trainings that I propose and these the mindfulness trainings are concrete expressions so it's not theoretical when we focus just on the technique or our c in our mind just thinking we can believe ourselves to be very mindful but we are unaware that those around us who see how we are kind of like a

bull in a china shop right we're breaking things through our speech

43:30 through our thought through our action we are actually hurting and the sangha sees it but because we are we believe ourselves to be a great practitioner we don't see it ourselves so so when when a young man or young woman young person comes to the monastery mainly the brothers and sisters just look for someone who's open you can be very diligent come to every activity but you're not open to receiving the insight and the input of your brothers and sisters and a person like that cannot be accepted as a monk or none

44:17 because even though in the form you do everything correctly but you cannot receive the input your your your way of practicing the dharma has become closed yeah so that is uh that is a kind of mindfulness bell and sometimes that has happened that's very strong medicine we've had to tell a young person who wanted to become a monastic that sorry maybe you wait another year and even you're very very intelligent you can give very bright answers about this that in the dharma the buddhist teaching but we see that actually you're not able

45:03 to receive input from anyone in the sangha there's no elder brother or elder sister that you are able to listen to and and and change your behavior and we sorry maybe the monastic life is not for you and the same is true whether you're a monastic or lay in our daily life with our family with our colleagues in our with our partner we may have created a kind of fortress and [Music] in that fortress we believe to be perfectly built and so anything any kind of um comment that suggests that there's some

45:53 something not quite right in that in our fortress that we built that house that we built of our mind it cannot penetrate we reject it right away with we shoot arrows back at the person who has given us that that jewel of an insight even if it's hurtful it's not to say that everyone is so mindful in the way they give input or feedback but if we are skillful we can find somewhere in there there's some kind of diamond like a jewel of insight that we're getting from that person even if it's full of

46:29 anger and jealousy and all these things if we just reject it we risk missing that that jewel that is there I like to look at my brothers and sisters and everyone really the coyotes the rattlesnakes you know the the the laurel sumac the the sage in the valley it's all they're all teaching the dharma in some way and [Music] when I get a yesterday typhoon and I went up on the mountain the brothers called

bulldog mountain and we were playing around like climbing up and down some boulders that we never

47:21 gone to before because uh he had seen one side of the mountain and I said oh i've never really explored that so I said we were here we are i'm like 45 he's over 50 and we're climbing around like kids on the side of the mountain up and down boulders yesterday evening and then he saw one boulder under an oak tree and he said oh we go up there and so we we climbed up and we had to kind of there was a bit of like dirt and earth and we had to push ourselves up on the earth and then to get onto the

47:55 boulder and then under the oak tree looking down at escondido after the sunset and we're just enjoying the view and then I I felt it felt something painful on my ankle and I looked down and there was a big ant like about big biting my ankle and then I looked around on the rock and I saw there were ants everywhere swarming around us big ants like that big it was oh and we were kind of on the edge of the cliff so we didn't know where to go but that was a bell of mindfulness in climbing up there we had disturbed the

48:35 nest of the ants somehow and they went into war mode and were giving us a dhamma talk saying please don't disturb our nests please uh you know be more mindful when you're climbing up here because we live here and we are trying to take care of the baby ants and the larvae that are there and so if you step on us we will come out and declare war and that's what they were doing so we had to find our way carefully to another rock and then we had some of them in our in our robe and and we had to help them to

49:17 get back onto the rock and so that is a that is one way to look at it is just like oh it's horrible these ants I can't stand them yeah that's a very like normal way to look at it but if you look more deeply you see actually no we were not so mindful in the way that we were we just wanted to play around to jump up on the boulder but we didn't there are living beings there and if we disturb the you know they they also just want to be happy they want to to live and when they feel threat then they fight back and that is the kind of

49:57 teaching so we learn to take steps with more mindfulness to be more aware of how we move through the wilderness and so the same is true for our partner our family our colleagues sometimes it's like that we we are having a conversation and we say something and suddenly we hit the ant nest and then and then the war starts and we were just playing

around we thought oh you know and we were careless with our words and we said that thing and boom there's some kind of drama some pain in the other person which is touched

50:37 and out of that pain comes many hundreds of ants swarming around in the form of words thoughts and actions so that is a that is a and we can the normal thing is just to react and we just you know fight back right and we could have done that we could have you know taken our shoes and started smashing the ants on the boulder but because we are practitioners we know that we that is not a solution we want to live in harmony with the ants because the ants are not going to go away we want to learn how to not disturb them

51:17 to allow them to flourish to live their life fully and if we are more mindful of our steps then right away that changes the situation so if we bring the mindfulness trainings and mindfulness into our way of speaking our way of thinking how we have acting then we are much less likely to start a war with the ants in our loved one or in our colleague can listen to a sound of the bell so so in the mindfulness trainings of plum village the five mindfulness trainings the 14 mindfulness trainings we present the practice of the precepts

52:47 in a form aware of the suffering caused by such and such a thing I am determined and that is that is a declaration for the future in order to realize in a concrete way the equivalence between mindfulness trainings and mindfulness tal says all mindfulness trainings we can update the mindfulness trainings but all trainings that we develop and evolve in the future should have that format the precepts our mindfulness so we with the format aware of the suffering caused I am determined and so forth that is the

54:12 the prac that is uh how we infuse the precepts with my by developing and developing them with this format aware of the suffering cause that is mindfulness we are aware of suffering caused by killing by stealing by sexual misconduct so forth I am determined not to kill not to let others kill and not to engage in acts of killing that is the training so aware of this we train that is a mindfulness training and that is a profound update of the buddhist teachings that has been developed in the village tradition

55:06 mindfulness should be concrete not just theoretical we embody the practice and that doesn't mean we do it perfectly and you know that i'm not mindful 24 hours a day and there's still moments when I get carried away by anger or fear or despair

but I but much shorter and I learn how to right away bring awareness of suffering to the moment when the anger manifests when the despair or the fear manifests so I can see it as fear I can see it as anger so we have the mindfulness training on happiness that invites us to be aware of

56:06 our anger and not to say or do anything when anger manifests instead to try to go outside remove ourselves from the situation for the moment and practice mindful breathing and mindful walking and i've used that practice many times in the monastery we we all take that mindfulness training so when somebody has to go outside because they have a strong emotion then this community can easily accept that because we know that that person is taking care of their emotion they do not want to say or do something

56:46 based on that anger because they know that acting out of anger can causes harm and that harm in the moment it may be to the other person but the long-lasting harm is actually to ourselves that is the deep insight of buddhism everything returns there's no uh the universe is very precise and yeah those things we have done in the past that are harmful they if we look deeply we see that they they contribute to our are suffering in the present moment and in the future so through that insight we change our

57:35 behavior because we don't want to suffer nobody wants to suffer so that is the beauty of the buddhist path it's not based on a belief it's based on an insight ah I said that thing I did that thing I heard that person and I know that that person may suffer for a few minutes a few hours a few days but eventually it will pass but for you it will stay it comes back because our words our actions are a true continuation this body it will pass away these feelings will pass away but our actions continue on into the future

58:21 and that is I think why all of us are here we get that insight at some point in our life and we say I don't want to continue to do that but I don't know my ancestors and that current of my ancestors within me and my education [Music] my desire my craving has conditioned me to say those things to do those things that are hurtful and it makes me suffer and so I see that clearly so I want to let everything go because all the cars the career house you know family all these things they are impermanent and they are not

59:04 ultimately going to be the cause of our lasting happiness what will really bring about lasting happiness is understanding our mind changing our behavior practicing the mindfulness trainings and

being aware of the suffering caused by how we act so it's very easy that's why it may look difficult to become a monk or none but actually it's not so difficult because once you get that insight it is well I didn't find it very easy to go back anymore you can't really see the world in the same way anymore

59:41 I mean you can pretend and try to live you know the way you used to live but the suffering always comes back it's very concrete it's a concrete expression of your lack of mindfulness and that's not theoretical that's lived lived experienced so that's the beauty of suffering is inviting us to change through its very its own nature just the ends the ants are inviting us to change our behavior and it's painful but if we are we allow ourselves to be aware we we can listen so it's really a matter of listening to

01:00:28 the suffering being aware of it and then it's easy to make the determination to change our behavior okay we'll stop here for today thank you for your deep listening and thank you dear your sisters and brothers for supporting this for those of you joining on youtube I heard I saw that the creators of the plum village app they've integrated the course of these 40 tenants into the app so now you can you don't have to go on youtube anymore sometimes youtube takes you into other places that are not so nourishing

01:01:18 so if you like a more uh kind of carefully like to practice yonl so manaskara you might like to download the plum village app on your ipad or your phone and you can find the the 40 tenants class being regularly updated there as well.... thank you