

Tenet 15, **Recognizing Conditions of Happiness**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xB1oa8TeGPg>

Recognizing Conditions of Happiness

This is a weekly class from Deer Park Monastery on the topic "The 40 Tenets of Plum Village" included in the FREE Plum Village App → <https://plumvillage.app>

The series is based on a book called "Plum Village Looks at Vulture's Peak" written by Thich Nhat Hanh. The book describes the essential characteristics of Plum Village practice and teachings. For an English translation of the tenets themselves, follow this link → <http://pvapp.to/40-tenets>

In this class Brother Phap Luu discusses the 15th tenet: "The awareness of suffering helps us recognize the existing conditions of happiness and also helps prevent the creation of wrong actions and the planting of negative seeds that will bring about suffering."

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uh oh this is very cozy um [Music] so dear respected sangha today's 28th of July in the year 2021 and we just finished our summer retreat with about 200 people here it's a wonderful moment for deer park to have actually people here we had tweens teens and many friends from all over the country in the world and now we've been enjoying lazy days so we don't have any guests right now and so it's a quiet day in the monastery and tomorrow we go back into our schedule

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so today I would like to present the 15th tenet and as well respond to questions that have been written in over the past 14 classes so I tried to compile the questions that have been put in the comments on the videos on the deer park YouTube channel as well as ones that you've written into our website and if I missed any questions please let me know so we'll see how we do with all of that okay so the 15th tenet is about happiness and suffering so the mindfulness of suffering helps us recognize the existing

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conditions for happiness existing conditions of happiness usually when we reflect on suffering we feel like we suffer more if we don't do it skillfully it means we just drown in our despair our worry or our regret but when we are mindful of suffering then we actually we don't get carried away by it we see this is suffering usually when we're suffering we're not aware that we're suffering we just feel lousy and depressed worried anxious and we're carried away by that emotion

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but mindfulness helps us to stop come back and see ah it may be that you have two legs and you can still walk it may be that you can still breathe hopefully you can still breathe it may be that you have eyes that can see and maybe that you have even one friend or one family member or some person who can listen to you already those are conditions for happiness so by looking into suffering we recognize all the good things that are already there so recognizing the existing conditions of happiness so mindfulness of suffering also helps

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prevent the creation the creation of wrong actions so it helps us to stop so usually when we're angry that's okay but if we're not mindful of our anger we say something we do something and we cannot take that back so the point of mindfulness to be aware of the anger I'm angry and I know because I'm training that if I say that thing I do that thing it's going to make me suffer and the other person suffer and when you get that realization you suddenly have the power to change the future there's a

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whole future there where you've said that thing and you've done that thing and you don't have to live in that future anymore you can live in another future where you don't say that thing and you don't do that thing so it's really like you have a multiverse in front of you of possibilities when mindfulness is there actually it's always there but we're usually not aware of it so mindfulness allows us to see that there are many possibilities an infinite number of things that we can

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say and do or not say and not do and we learn to recognize the tone of our emotion in that moment this is anger and I know when I speak out of anger I speak out of jealousy I speak out of despair that I may pull the other person into my despair into my anger into my jealousy and so I am determined not to say that thing not to do that thing but come back to myself and just breathe usually when we're angry at someone we want to pull in other people to support us in our anger so we have a team and we're all

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together angry at that other person or we want the other person to react that's what we're looking to we we're angry and so we know that if we punch then we want them to punch back because we want to fight because we want we don't want to we want our anger to spread like a wildfire we need them to know that we're angry but with mindfulness all that's important is that we know that we are angry and that this is a a wildfire here in california we know about wildfires and we want to contain it as soon as

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possible so it doesn't mean we're not aware of the danger of fire we we recognize the fire is there so mindfulness is not passivity we recognize the emotion is there and we learn how to stop to contain it not to allow that fire to spread beyond a certain parameter because we want to protect our loved ones we want to protect our friendship protect our relationships yeah there's so much suffering in the world we don't need to add to the suffering that is already there so with mindfulness of the emotion then we learn

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how to prevent the creation of wrong actions and the planting of negative seeds so I know that I have said things I have thought things I have acted in a way that has planted seeds of suffering in myself in others around me and as a mindfulness practitioner and just as a human being I recognize that those seeds will manifest at some point that suffering continues in the world and so this is where meditation comes in looking deeply into our own mind and our experience of life in the present moment and seeing

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that painful things that manifest are the product of seeds that have been planted from just as this body or just as this individual but we see that we are we are boundless so there is no me myself or my alone which is experiencing this but it is actually a part of a collective manifestation and so we are representing all of our ancestors representing our teachers our friends all beings and all of them are there experiencing this hurt that is manifesting in this other person who is also representing all of their

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ancestors their teachers their friends and so forth and this is a process that's going on and it's really happening but it is simplistic just blame that person we need to look more deeply as practitioners we need to accept that they are just one part of all the conditions that have brought about this suffering so this is where the teaching on the seeds in mind consciousness is very helpful this metaphor of right that we've seen already before of a garden that is down in the store consciousness

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this is mind consciousness this is just a before to help us understand our mind and store consciousness is not an individual matter it is individual and collective we can think of it like a candle that illuminates the space around it when it is surrounded by hundreds of candles then the illumination is even greater so we can see one flame but we see that the the whole light that is a the collective consciousness and so there's no there's no boundary of one candle and the light of the

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collective so store consciousness is uh we can think of it like that he said it is we can see it as the the earth itself and in the earth there are seeds some seeds have been planted consciously but others have just been there naturally for hundreds of millions of years generating plants growing up producing flowers fruits and further seeds and there are seeds that are in the soil and they need certain conditions to manifest and we know that here in california when there is a forest fire many plants come up out of the soil that

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otherwise would not have a chance to grow because of the established plants that create shade and use the water and once the chaparral is established but when you suddenly there's a burn you have all kinds of new plants that have a chance to get the sunlight in the water and those seeds were there but the conditions were not sufficient for them to manifest so when there's a major change in our life when we move somewhere when we lose our job maybe when we lose our partner it may be like that

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like a forest fire has burned across you know the chaparral of our daily life but and we think we suffer so much but if we look at this is something manifesting from seeds that have planted been planted from long before and now new plants will have a chance to manifest that otherwise would not have had a chance to grow then we don't see it as a good thing or bad thing but it's just change it's impermanence so the same is true of our mind we can look and see that there are seeds there

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seeds like compassion understanding even we don't see us as a compassionate person but the seed is there and if we surround ourselves with compassionate people if we study the dharma we have a chance to take care of ourselves because we first have compassion for ourselves we learn how to water that seed of compassion then it can start to grow there was one teacher and uh I really love this story and he was giving a dharma talk and there was one man who said I suffer so much because I just

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I want to be generous but I can't I can't be generous I try so hard to to give and but somehow I just can't do it and so the teacher said to him well try this you can take an apple in your hand and your left hand and you breathe in and out and then you give the apple to your right hand and then you hold it in your right hand and then you can breathe in and out and then you can give the apple from your right hand to your left hand it's kind of training you start at the very basic

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so you're giving something this apple to yourself from one hand to the other and then you know once you get down that you can learn to give the apple to somebody else because we don't have to wait around and just think I'm not a compassionate person I'm not a generous person what I love about the dhamma and meditation is that it's like therefore now we can do it any moment and of course we can just go on autopilot and continue to do our habitual ways of thinking acting and speaking but

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right now you also have a chance to stop be aware of the suffering and see the conditions of happiness that are there so you can put an end to actions which plant the seed of suffering in ourselves and in others in the collective consciousness and you do that right now you don't have to wait until you're with somebody else it's it's always available just like the breathing it's always there for us so meditation practice is portable available in every moment and we can be generous to ourselves we can

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be compassionate to ourselves that is a fair way to train our compassion to train our our generosity to train our patients we don't have to you know wait for somebody else to be generous to them but the more we do it to ourselves the more we can do it to others and generosity also means not doing things like sometimes not eating that extra dessert after the meal you know you see this is you get the inside this is not going to be good for me I'm not going to sleep well I'm going to you know damaging to my body and you

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just practice not eating it and you don't have to tell anyone it's this is the self-compassion and sometimes you can eat it too it's not to eat or not to eat it's not the question it's awareness of suffering that is the key and recognizing ah I already have enough conditions to be happy I don't need to eat that piece of chocolate or that cake or whatever it's very simple things meditation but it has profound effects um and it's not a you know it's not about right or wrong

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but it's about awareness

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of suffering this is the deep Plum Village teaching of course the buddha taught about right and wrong because he wanted to help people to avoid you know perilous paths difficult situations but the deeper teaching is that we cultivate an awareness of suffering ourselves that we see that ah I'm not going to say that I'm not going to touch that we know in our workplace in our family there are things that are so delicate and sometimes people are baiting us they dangle it in front of us and they

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want us to give our opinion can we just love and not get entangled in the drama of other people's opinions by adding our own is very interesting if you do that you're there just to support the word dhamma means support it means like the foundation it's related to supporting like the earth that holds us up and so the buddha taught the dhamma for us support right we don't want to be our role as practitioners as teachers as spiritual friends is not to confront it is to support because

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it's like the the night without the night we cannot appreciate the light so suffering and happiness are like that they are not the um um they're like two sides of one coin so with less suffering you have more happiness and with more happiness the lesser thing but the happiness and suffering are not in conflict with each other it's not like these things are my happiness and these things are my suffering but they are actually inextricably and intimately connected just like night and day

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night is not in conflict with the day but they are the manifestation of the absence or presence of light yeah so they are they only make sense together just like birth and death they only make sense together birth does not make any sense without death without dying there's no being born and without being born of course there's no dying so so we don't celebrate birth any more than we celebrate death they are just manifestation the same phenomena we can listen to the sound of the bell

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so so negative seeds means seeds that will bring about suffering so the taught the four noble truths and I write them in in sanskrit because partly because it's very simple in sanskrit so dukkha dukkha is suffering and sukkah is and in in sanskrit it's very clear that they are just opposites so it's not clear in english happiness and suffering so sometimes ta I says well-being and ill-being so that we understand that they are they you cannot separate the two because it's very clear

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in in sanskrit and pal I sukkah and dukkha do means uh kind of like unpleasant and su means pleasant or good unpleasant or bad pleasant or good and ka is a well in in the very ancient sanskrit it just meant the uh like the is related to the axle and the chariot so when uh the axle is then your ride in the chery is very pleasant because at that time chariots were very important um to the the peoples that brought the ancient like indo iranian indo indian indo root of sanskrit language to um to india so they

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had horses because horses had been domesticated on the in central asia and they learned very uh one of the dominate dominant features were that they learned to pull a chariot behind a horse in battle and so that made them very effective fighters and so the car is like yeah when you have a the axle which is very smooth with the wheels then when you ride in the chariot it's like pleasant very smooth but if it is uneven or broken it feels unpleasant so so dukkha is not evil or something it's

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just like it makes things really unpleasant the thing that like thick and just make you know like pain suffering mental it includes mental physical uh unpleasant feelings emotions and sukha is a happiness a pleasant a nice a joy joyride this is not joyride anyway very very very pleasant uh experience means the arising of suffering so the cause what

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what are the things that bring about the arising of dukkha that make this unpleasantness this these blocks these this trauma happen so um this is to be

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understood the origin of suffering so this is why mindfulness is so helpful right so the mindfulness of suffering helps us to see the dukkha mudaya the ariya the what is what are the conditions for suffering and when we see the conditions for suffering see right away the conditions of happiness which is the third noble truth which means the cessation of suffering zuka that is the I helps us to remember that the cessation of suffering is happiness so there was a question in how can we let go of our attachment

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to happiness if we are attached to happiness yeah we we want to let go of all of our attachments so that we suffer less but what if we're attached to happiness I think this question is from anna maria leiras if the ultimate goal is letting go then shouldn't we also let go of happiness in the historical dimension happiness is impermanent and subject to arise and disappear if in order to reach nirvana we must water seeds of joy but joy is also impermanent then happiness must be to transcend joy and pain and happiness

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and happiness and reach a state beyond positive and negative feelings but doesn't this lead to think that then we must become detached and indifferent so when we talk about ultimate goal first of all we have to be careful because as the we're reminded in the heart sutra there's nothing to attain so anytime we talk about a goal we get caught in something that's out there beyond where we are right now so so first of all the practice is to come back to the present moment and see what's going on in my body right

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now it's always the first thing when we notice ourselves putting a goal some kind of happiness in front of ourselves a degree a position money power a situation maybe we just want our family to come together for the holidays for some people that's a big suffering for other people that's their dream for some people it's a dream the reality is suffering any goal that we put outside of ourselves that's something that then makes us become aware of the absence of the lack of the conditions of happiness that we

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have in the present moment because we lack that condition that ultimate goal out there we suffer in the present moment and so this is many spiritual practitioners in the past that get caught in in the future and in the present get caught in this idea of happiness that is somewhere else and that is clearly not what the buddha was experiencing and what he was teaching so of course he wanted to inspire his students to practice and go deeper in their practice but the experience of going deeper is itself happiness

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the practice gives us joy as we practice so letting brings joy right away if it doesn't bring joy then it's not really letting go so there's no attachment of course joy is impermanent happiness is impermanent and we cannot grasp on that happiness and joy because it will just go slip through our fingers like the air but if we learn to continue letting go and letting go and realize wow the more I let go the more joy I experience the more I let go the more happiness I experience and this is happiness born

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from letting go so we talk about happiness and joy born from happiness that cause it's not true happiness it's just an attachment in vietnamese thought lee sin he lacked um lee is like cutting off or putting at something at a distance listening distancing ourselves from those things like sense pleasures that bring about attachment so if we find ourselves compulsively on the internet clicking to look for sexy images of women or something like that that is uh attachment so we need to put a

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distance we need to say I need to step back from this maybe I need a good spiritual like we do in the monastery we go on the internet together so that you have another person there and so your awareness changes when that

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other person is there from when you are just alone and that train that trains our mind to think like ah the more and more I go on the internet with somebody else present the more that I cultivate an awareness that it's not just an individual who's compulsively looking for erotic

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pictures but it's actually my ancestors my community I'm doing this with all of them and so we we don't we we prevent the creation of wrong actions so we we we learn to to lead to let go of that to or put a distance yeah so the fine manners that we practice as monastics and the precepts help us to to do that there are you know formal guidelines for monastics that allow us to not get into situations where we continue to become attached to certain sense pleasures most sense pleasures and then that helps us to to let go

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to be more free in our way of living in the world and then with time we see well I'm quite happy like this I don't need those like sexy images I don't need to go to a bar or a club or whatever I can be happy right where I am so there's no goal so already when we talk about an ultimate goal we have to be very careful that just come back to our body come back to our breathing and just practice letting go right here and right now and the happiness and joy come with letting go and then if we get attacked happiness

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and enjoy then we practice to let go even more and you so there are always more and more things that we can let go of I often told the story of the one day when he was the buddha was sitting with monks in the forest and the farmer came along and he was very agitated worried and out of breath and he's uh running through the forest and he stops and sees the buddha and he says dear dear buddha I i've lost all my cows they're all of my wealth I don't know what to do I'm I'm ruined please have you seen my

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cows and the buddha said we're sorry we have not seen your cows you'll have to continue on and keep looking for them and then the farmer went on and the buddha turned to his monks and said do you know that you are not most do you know that you are the most fortunate people on the planet you don't have any cows to lose so that teaching is an invitation to for us to look and see what are the cows that we're still holding onto the cows that we think are the source of our happiness but they are actually they actually may

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be the source of our suffering and just throw those cows away just let them go no longer think these cows are me for mine our projects our dreams our ultimate goals can become a cow and because we want to realize them we suffer so we let them go just let them go and they will find their way don't worry about them it's like our children when they grow up we've we've transmitted through our way of living the best that we could and now we just let them go we always just support but we don't

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continue to be an obstacle and try to mold them to be the image of what we ourselves feel is lacking in our in our own lives that is the suffering of the parent but if they learn if you let go of your children then you can touch true love true happiness they are a free person and they you every cell in their body contains you as their parent but they cannot be truly be truly happy until you practice letting them go so this uh happiness born from letting go is very powerful so if it is a happiness

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that we get attached to it's not true happiness we need to look again and see what is true happiness because true happiness has the quality of letting go and that is a teaching of the third noble truth dukkha neroda so when we um we realize the conditions that give rise to this ill-being suffering then we can learn to let go of them no longer continue to water to plant negative seeds because we recognize them for what they are not because I told you it but because you experienced it in your life

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you look into your life and you see ah when I said that thing when I did that thing you can you have to be honest

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and see what the fruit of your actions are and as a monk I also make many mistakes I continue when I'm not the mindful to plant negative seeds but I but I have the monastery and I have space to then reflect and I go for the sitting meditation and I see ah yeah now that emotion was still there that desire I was still grasping onto something and that's where that suffering is so

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I learned oh there's more to let go more to let go more to let go so that's the the training and when you know when you see that happening you say ah then you're on the path yeah and that's the fourth noble truth is the path is a cessation of suffering which is happiness so letting go of the condition give rise to suffering is the very definition of happiness any happiness that doesn't involve letting go of the conditions that give rise to suffering is not true happiness and of course that happiness is

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impermanent because seeds are there they've been planted in the past and they but if we are on a path we will know how to embrace those difficult moments when they arise when situations through actions that we've done in the past that our ancestors that our society has done in the past and those manifest as racism uh violence hatred abuse we know that those seeds are also in our consciousness it may not be in this lifetime that we've committed these actions but we are experiencing the fruit of

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our ancestors both our blood ancestors our spiritual ancestors our land ancestors and we can smile and like the buddha said we can bear it up we can it doesn't mean that we we just accept it as a victim but we learn to breathe mindfully and continue to recognize that those seeds that have been planted in the past may also be continued to be planted if we don't transform in ourselves the very root of those actions so that is how we change the collective consciousness you can listen to a bell

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so manas from class 3 asked i've been wondering how experiences and emotions such as love which can be immensely positive are approached in the Buddhist tradition thank you for touching on this how are and then how are mental health challenges such as intrusive thoughts in particular discussed or understood from a Buddhist perspective so love is understanding that's that's a very basic teaching of the buddha we cannot truly love unless we understand and particularly understand the nature of suffering so when we love

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ourselves it means that we understand ourselves we understand that the suffering we experience in the present moment is due to causes and conditions when we don't understand we cannot truly love ourselves because we just it just seems like chaotic randomness right we say we we believe we when we don't uh look deeply and see the causes and conditions that given rise to our experience of suffering continue on and we feel like we are just a victim of circumstances and we suffer more and more and more and

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more we cannot see that there are reasons why this suffering is manifest and those reasons have to do our own actions with the actions of our ancestors with the actions within the community so with the eyes of non-self we look deeply into the collective consciousness as well as our individual just like the candle is not like the from the collective they are all they are interpreting each other we look deeply into our own mind and there we touch the collective mind we see the many conditions that have given rise

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to that suffering that is true love from a Buddhist perspective because that gives rise to compassion understanding we are more kind to others because we say if we are kind then we water the seeds of compassion and understanding in them as well as ourselves if we are harsh judgmental critical we water that seed in our own consciousness and in the consciousness of the other person and it manifests as suffering so true love is understanding it's understanding the nature of suffering and that is also understanding

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our mental health now we have a modern understanding of mental illness and but if we look to the buddha's time from his eyes the whole world has mental illness so we all have a degree of mental illness and we're and that's because we don't understand the nature of our suffering and so the whole spiritual path is to help people to wake up to their own mental illness now we have a kind of stigma that gets attached to us if we say we have a mental illness but as Buddhist s and spiritual practitioners

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we recognize we all have some kind of mental illness and that's why we come together to live together because we want to transform that that illness that ill-being is just another way of saying mental illness in mind and body we can translate dukkha as trauma we can translate as mental illness suffering these are all just different words the point is can we look deeply into it and see its roots and learn how to be a skillful gardener to remove the nutrient that gives rise to that mental illness that trauma that

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suffering aiwana branist sorry if I pronounce your name incorrectly so asked after class three on the five scandas normally the fourth scandal is listed as the aggregate of compositional factors and we talk about it as mental formations so she wondered why this choice of word and is there any difference between the two terms so no there's no difference it's just words compositional factors mental formations the so usually the the term is samskara for the fourth scandal so it has we can talk it includes our emotions it

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includes our thinking so you know we have body feelings men perceptions mental formations in consciousness are the five scandals and um we talk about five scandals not for the purpose of creating lines between them but actually just looking at the same thing from different facets and it's it's more to do with the way in which we get those um to our body to our feelings to our perceptions to our mental formations and consciousness but it's not to say that they are clearly like separated from one another

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they interpenetrate each other and so in the Plum Village tradition we talk about um our five scandals being in harmony and one important reason way of keeping scandals in harmony is recognizing that they interpenetrate each other they're not my consciousness is not totally separate from my perceptions it's not totally separate and mental formations include perceptions in consciousness yeah formations scar includes feelings perceptions consciousness from a broader we can talk about formations from a broader

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perspective everything is a formation this body is also a formation anything that is made up of as you say compositional is a formation and as we know everything is built on everything else so um a table is a table but if we take the lay we take one leg off is it any more or less a table if we take all the hinges the nails or screws out and we lay it apart as different pieces we have a leg of a table the top of the table maybe the foot [Music] you know the bracing underneath we cannot think of the table without all

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of its parts and so having this formations in the five scandals is helping us to remember that all of these things are not like fundamental element things but they are all compositional they are all made up of something else of non-it elements actually this term is used in many different traditions in for example in the Hindu tradition samskar is a a ceremony like when you name nama samskara is when you name the ceremony of giving your name to your child when a few days after they're born or like a

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message this is a word for a special coordinated ritual what the buddha did was he brought that rich he he saw that inside our mind there are patterns of emotions thinking attention habitual energies which are manifesting which are conditioned by our way of living our way of getting attached to things and so samskara is a broad term to describe all of this kind of internalized we could say like internalized rituals into internalized uh formations ways of operating habitual ways of operating

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so this is very important it's a kind of revolution um for look in the mind I mean think about this is 2600 years ago we're talking about in a very nuanced way the buddha was talking about the mind and not for the sake of just of just describing the mind but for the sake of freeing our mind so samskara is helping us to understand that our anger is not by itself alone it's not fundamental but it's something that is composed of other elements like our anger can be composed of our jealousy

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our sadness our hurt all these things and the in our heart is also composed of other things so looking deeply we see the causes and conditions thanks to every mental formation and samskara is primarily referring in this case in the scandals to um mental formations so I hope that helps that question ep hardy asks after the fifth class what's the difference between attachment energy and joining energy and I I read this a few times so I'm guessing by joining energy you mean like connecting because we talk

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about connection right or touching so when I look at myself and I notice that there's something this something stuck there I know it's attachment if it's not stuck then if it's flowing just like a river then that's the way that I know that's not attachment that's just uh you know it's like the river when there's something blocking it it finds a way around so we can practice to be like that we enter the you know there's a uh and there's an expression entering the

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stream or stream enterer so we kind of we go into the stream of the dharma and we want to recognize when there's something still stuck in our way of thinking we know it's attachment so that's that's that's my own way of knowing what is attachment and what is like interpenetration or like you say joining energy feeling connected yeah in fact it's the attachment which is the opposite it makes me feel isolated on my own you know it's it's I kind of think of it like when you're alone and nobody's looking

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in you you you go into the kitchen and you open the refrigerator and you look in you're like I can eat anything I want it's kind of that you know that my you know you feel like there there's there's attachment there it's okay you can do it you know but you recognize this attachment and you're working on it you let go and you you know or maybe in that moment you see this attachment you just shut the refrigerator door and you just go back and lay down and just follow your breathing and you say ah

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you see you you're able to let go of your attachment it's not my hunger which is speaking there there's something some emotion some feeling that we want to we want to get rid of it so we want to fill ourselves with food distract ourselves from that difficult emotion so that's recognizing attachment and what is feeling connected feeling joined that was a question from ep hardy I had another question I wanna stano in class six I didn't understand why the ultimate dimension is vertically represented is it possible

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to clarify this point and I think I did clarify this point the vertical and horizontal aspect of the horizon of the two truths so again this is just an image to help us it's nothing it's not anything absolute all of words teachings uh concepts they're all just um skillful means to help us to understand they're not for the purpose of treating as dogma so even the four noble truths as ta I often said they are to help us to be free and unfortunately some Buddhist s they treat it as like dogma are absolutely true then you

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miss the point the point is to help us to be free so this teaching on a historical dimension is also just a skillful means it is a teaching that came from the first few hundred years after the buddha's teaching many monks and nuns and lay practitioners but especially monks who were kind of scholars they wanted to categorize the buddha's teaching to kind of map it onto all of reality so that there was a dharma language that would correspond to every phenomenon in the universe and and by doing that

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they inadvertently perhaps made nirvana seem very far away like you have to learn this massive kind of intricate what they call the abhidharma in order to have any chance touching nirvana and so what started in the very simple and poetic teachings of the buddha became this vast and intricate and very inaccessible kind of scholastic morass of teaching so this teaching of the ultimate and historical historical dimension you know as far as we know originated from looking at the spoken words of the buddha for example

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the buddha sometimes referred to himself or he referred to ananda but we understand from the teaching of non-self that there is no real ananda or a that these are all just fictions and so we they they're they got stuck because they say but the buddha says there's no self but then he refers to himself as I sometimes and so that can't be right because he says there's no self so this kind of thinking like oh we could say overly rationalizing the teaching of the buddha and so so we started talking about

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there being two ways of looking it there's the historical dimension and the ultimate or sometimes it's written as conventional so in historical dimension the buddha talked about himself he talked about ananda they were walking through a sally on a beautiful day that's all happening at the historical dimension but the ultimate dimension there is no self there is no birth no death no coming no being no non-being and and eventually this teaching um was deeply integrated into Buddhist teaching to help us to not get

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stuck in uh confusing the historical dimension and the ultimate there's no contradiction between the teaching and no birth no death no being no non-being no coming no going that this is uh this is the quality of nirvana just as the buddha taught in the early Buddhist teaching when the buddha refers to himself or to ananda or to others in the historical dimension using conventional language so it's to help to get stuck in that and seeing these as being in contradiction to each other is that clear does that make sense so

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this is where this teaching on the historical dimension and the ultimate then as we know manifested in the early propose looking at this using then I I kind of added a fourth or sorry a third dimension so we had two dimension we said okay we can think of the historical dimension as this line going in a horizontal and then the ultimate is the vertical and then I didn't explain it fully in that class so I I and we were talking about time and space right so um so the point is ta I was teaching that at any point

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in time in space well we only always have the now and the here it is possible to touch the ultimate it means the qualities of birth no death no being no non-being or nirvana but we don't go searching around in two dimensions or three dimensions or four dimensions for nirvana so this this model whether it's two dimensions or three dimensions the ultimate is always going to go beyond whatever dimension you're in so if you have three dimensions it's the fourth dimension if you have four dimensions it's the fifth

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dimension but you cannot like reduce it to any concept like time or space or an extension of it but at every point there is the possibility to touch nirvana that is the main point to touch the ultimate and so when ty talks about the vertical it means that we're going along it's just a metaphor we're going along a line from here to here like through time and at every point there is a possibility of touching the ultimate so that's the meaning of the vertical and if we are moving in three dimensions

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like here and then we we add a fourth dimension you see the point is that the ultimate cannot be reduced to any kind of measurable space so usually we talk about dimension it means some kind of measurable space so tyus is trying to help us to use an image to see that we don't have to go somewhere else to touch the ultimate the ultimate is right here and right now when we quiet our mind and come back to the present moment we see that as ta I used to say we have already been nirvana since beginningless time

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it's a bit of a mouthful but the teaching is that to free ourselves of ideas of beginning and ending like now we think of like the big bang and then eventually the complete heat death of the universe sometime long in the future right but again it's that tendency to want to create beginnings and endings and it's it's also just a creation of the human mind we're in our trying to understand the universe and the point is we're not going along a line progressing into the future but the

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wisdom of the buddha is that in the present moment is everything we need to be fully present fully happy fully free so that's what the teaching on the vertical means excuse me for uh going quickly this is a q a session I had a number of questions she also asked in class seven I'm wondering in the context of the historical dimension in what way does the ripening result of actions related to the concept of rebirth um what is could we you clarify tai's way of um talking about rebirth so in the um

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so we learn about planting in negative seeds it's planting positive seeds and we think oh since I planted those seeds I will receive the fruit of those seeds but we know that this body is impermanent these feelings are impermanent and so who is the one who experiences the fruit of actions because I'm not the same person who began this talk i've already changed just if you look at the contents of my stomach digesting through my intestines I'm already a different person than who started this talk let alone the

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cells which are constantly being born and constantly dying in my body and so um rebirth and death are happening always in the present moment and the teaching of Plum Villages to to understand rebirth in that way that by my way of thinking my way of speaking my way of acting I'm like um like an orange tree producing flowers and fruits and if the input is good it means if I take good care of my mind I'm a good gardener planting wholesome seeds then I try my best to in the my way of thinking in my way of

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speaking my way of acting to have those good seeds manifest and then the seeds that bring about suffering I learned how to invite them to go back down not to continue to strengthen them yeah so not suppress them but remove the conditions that give rise to my anger my despair and my jealousy so that is the concept of rebirth is happening at every moment every time we have a thought every time we open our mouth to speak every time we do something we are being reborn and so uh the concept of rebirth and and those

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actions are going out into the world so just like the buddha taught and we continue to be inspired by his teaching and get insight and just as ta I taught but is now silent because of his stroke we continue to receive the benefit of his teaching so those that is a rebirth that is transmission so the Plum Village way of looking at rebirth is as a kind of transmission and we don't see ourselves as this body and there's something within this body which then is reborn in another person um but rather we see all of our actions

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all of our thoughts continuing out into the universe as our rebirth and so ta I would always say you know and even in the time of the buddha his students often said we are like born from the mouth of the buddha born from the mouth of the buddha so through learning the dharma we are and practicing it we are constantly reborn and even also if we don't practice the dharma we are reborn whether we like it or not because we are impermanent the body continues to regenerate itself right so so meditation is choosing

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again in the multiverse of possibilities that can happen in every moment we try to choose ones with less suffering reducing the suffering for ourselves and for others and so we learned that since we're constantly being reborn if we take this moment right now to change another direction and then the next moment and the next moment in the next moment then we experience less suffering and more happiness so that is a short summary of rebirth tasha ames could you please speak to if and or when jumping off the plate is ever necessary

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on the path so I think I was talking about the one of the attainments which is froglessness so vietnam they say if you put the frog on the plate the frog will jump off the plate and then you put it back on the plate it will jump off again and you put it back on and so forth uh inside each of us we have that kind of frog so there's a kind of restlessness within ourselves and we go to one place and as soon as we are there we want to go somewhere else and then when we are there we want to go somewhere else and our life just becomes

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a series of wishing we were somewhere else and so the froglessness means learning how to recognize that restlessness within us and embrace it with mindfulness and see that that is a form of so um notice when so ta I used that image of the frog that always just keeps jumping off the plate and he said the first thing we need to realize when we come to Plum Village as monks and nuns certainly but also as lay practitioners is the attainment of froglessness when we look deeply we see that that restlessness may be very very deep

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in our ancestral uh the current of our ancestors for example as as an american who grew up in the states I realized that almost all of my ancestors you know fled europe in the late 19th century early 20th century because of poverty um vacant property so eventually they decided to uproot themselves to get a ship and come over here to the united states and in fact all of my ancestors at some point on my mom's side there's some that go way back to the pilgrim time but other than that mostly they are more

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recent and so I know that that restlessness that that that even though they suffered so much this just like hoping for a better place somewhere else this new land and so that's a huge accumulation of restlessness all those branches of our ancestors somehow uprooted themselves from the land of their fathers and mothers and ancestors and came over and experienced a lot of hardship and suffering and so I know that there's a kind of superficial restlessness like the frog jumping off the plate but

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there's even very deep deep deep restlessness which is wanting always to move somewhere else to find happiness in some other place that I inherit from my ancestors and so my practice is to look at that and say oh and smile to it when I noticed myself wanting to jump off to escape just get out of the situation where I am just get out of here go somewhere else is can I can I come back and just be with that just be with that restlessness so that's the teaching on jumping off the plate is learning to just stay on the plate and

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see the conditions for happiness that and then you get a lot of strength a lot of autonomy sovereignty over your own mind because you no longer are a victim of your situation but you're able to be fully there for it that is the teaching of jumping off the plate how to learn not to jump off the plate froglessness um and we use it that on the path to touch the cessation of suffering okay last question again from ep hardy from the 13th class how can I cultivate an awareness that what is best for the community

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means survival to me as an individual why does it seem that one community offers higher thought from community for the individuals and in another from individuals for the community I feel my activism is causing aggravation how can I change why does it seem that one community of higher thought from community for the individual as I think she means value is the community higher than the individual and others values the individual higher than the community so again we come back to this collective and individual

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so I like I learned from one of my elder sisters sister unim this image of the individual and many candles together and the light that comes from the one candle is not separate from the light of the collective they interpenetrate each other so I think that's very helpful we should not divide individual community because that's an artificial division actually the community is within the individual and the individual is within the community and actually there is no

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individual as we learn samskara formation so even

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the individual is made up of compositional factors so they are divisible they are not individual indivisible so we learned that we ourselves this body is also a community so an idea of an individual is is actually based in ignorance and it is a concept which has really plagued many communities countries around the world for the past and that I often said the 20th century was the century of the individual and the 21st century has to be a century of the collective of the community we could find a way to

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heal from this the terrible trauma from this concept of individual actually for millions hundreds of thousands of years millions of years really we've only ever known community and so this concept of individual is very very new and it's I think from a misunderstanding of the nature of action that we've been learning today if we have if we really penetrate this teaching on karma action then there's no longer this artificial need for an idea for an individual we create the individual because we want

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to understand how we cause happiness or suffering to ourselves and others and so we think that person he killed that person he stole that money he did that horrible thing we need he did that as an individual we need to punish him as an individual but we don't that means we completely forget about his teachers his community his class his economic situation we don't look at any of the factors and see that that person is only the aggregate of all of their line of ancestors their teachers their community which we

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are also part of so it's a way of kind of absolving ourselves of any responsibility for the actions of that person when we see that they're also a part of us and we have contributed to their violence to their their theft their criminal activity that is the inside of interbeing so we take responsibility um so yeah so I think when when a community values the individual it's based on ignorance it's based on a misunderstanding of our life of our way of living on this planet and we need to look

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deeply deeper with the eyes of no self and see that suffering is not an individual matter so thank you for listening and thank you for I also want to thank uh the brothers brother and neem brother and anne kenley and for all these weeks for supporting and brother min as well for supporting uh us to put these talks online we try our best it seems like people are enjoying it so I try to keep doing it originally this class started just for the brothers to go deeper into thai's teaching and that's

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uh you know so important that we continue to transmit that to the younger generation of monastics and I'm happy that people can enjoy it online and I'm thankful that the brothers are willing to do it even on lazy day today retreat so thank you brothers you