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(Class #4) Nirvana Is Nirvana: There Does Not Need to Be a Nirvana With Residue or Without Residue

<https://www.youtube.com/watch/UoFinZOaziA>

00:00:00.239 Dear Thay, dear sisters, dear brothers,

00:00:03.917 welcome to our fourth class on the 40 tenets.

00:00:07.595 Today is the 7th of April in the year 2021,

00:00:11.613 and we're in the Still Water meditation hall of Deer Park Monastery,

00:00:17.540 sorry, the Ocean of Peace meditation hall.

00:00:21.167 The Still Water meditation hall is in Upper Hamlet.

00:00:32.433 It turns out that we suffer

00:00:34.648 because of our ideas about our feelings and our ideas about our body.

00:00:40.378 We think that when we have a painful feeling, that feeling is me.

00:00:48.453 And when we are sick and it feels like there is no peace at all in our body,

00:00:54.978 then we identify completely with those painful feelings.

00:00:58.837 You say, 'These feelings are me.'

00:01:01.689 And we find no way out of the suffering.

00:01:05.468 All that we're learning here

00:01:07.897 is to find a way to become free of our suffering.

00:01:14.988 The insight of Buddhism is that the freedom from suffering

00:01:18.555 comes from understanding suffering.

00:01:22.917 When we are sick and our body is in pain,

00:01:29.570 we can practice to see our feelings as a conditioned phenomenon.

00:01:43.443 Because of causes and conditions those painful feelings arise,

00:01:49.288 and we no longer are stuck or attached to those feelings,

00:01:53.732 but they are manifesting just like a rainbow manifests

00:01:57.560 with the right condition of water vapor and the sun,

00:02:03.968 just like a seed sprouts from the earth when the rain comes in the spring.

00:02:11.777 Our feelings are also of that nature.

00:02:15.123 They have conditions.

00:02:20.639 When we identify with those feelings,

00:02:23.896 and we say those feelings are me, that is when we get stuck.

00:02:29.676 In the last class, we talked about upadana,

00:02:33.259 the stickiness, the tendency to stick to our body,

00:02:39.502 to stick to our feelings, to stick to our ideas, and notions.

00:03:00.347 [upādāna]

00:03:09.088 [upādi]

00:03:11.369 'Upadi' is to stick to something.

00:03:14.165 It is also a word that is used to describe 'fuel'.

00:03:19.575 When if we think of a fire,

00:03:32.486 burning.

00:03:37.149 Maybe I can use some red.

00:03:46.202 When we look at the fuel,

00:03:53.315 we can see the fire is sticking to the fuel.

00:03:57.641 That is the meaning of upadana.

00:04:01.874 The flame

00:04:06.535 is dependent on the fuel.

00:04:10.647 It sticks, it seems to be -

00:04:16.608 Based on that understanding from just looking at the fire,

00:04:24.050 we have this sense of upadana as attachment.

00:04:27.215 It is like the fire of our afflictions

00:04:31.559 sticking to our body, our feelings.

00:04:36.470 And we can see the skandhas like the fuel.

00:04:42.066 That is why upadana also has that meaning of fuel.

00:04:49.273 In the early text of Buddhism,

00:04:52.987 the Buddha, when he talked about the five skandhas,

00:04:55.835 as we learned in the last class,

00:04:58.230 he often uses the phrase 'upadana skandha.'

00:05:01.829 It means that it's not only about the skandhas,

00:05:09.632 these aggregates of bodily form, feelings, perceptions,

00:05:14.831 mental formations and consciousness.

00:05:17.842 But it is the flame, the stickiness of the afflictions

00:05:23.072 that arise when this attachment is there,

00:05:30.828 attachment to our body, attachment to our feelings,

00:05:34.043 attachment to our perceptions, our mental formations, our consciousness.

00:05:39.855 The term 'nirvana' means 'extinction'. It means the fire goes out,

00:05:47.412 there is no more fuel.

00:05:50.739 [nirvāṇa]

00:05:54.708 Nirvana is 'extinction'.

00:05:58.102 We can think of its extinction of the fire.

00:06:01.561 We find a way to that by removing the fuel.

00:06:10.572 We remove the fuel,

00:06:15.180 then, the fire no longer has sufficient conditions to manifest.

00:06:22.609 We're no longer treating our body

00:06:25.071 as a source of fuel for our afflictions,

00:06:30.366 but rather we remove the stickiness,

00:06:35.611 the grasping energy,

00:06:41.105 upadana-skandha.

00:06:44.671 [skandhā]

00:06:54.098 Our practice is how to stop sticking

00:07:02.300 to our thinking, our perceptions.

00:07:05.276 We stick to our feelings. When we have a pleasant feeling,

00:07:09.672 it's associated with the perception.

00:07:12.341 And we try to find a way

00:07:17.786 to create, make manifest that perception again,

00:07:21.780 so that we can have the pleasant feeling.

00:07:25.426 We may have a very pleasant feeling

00:07:28.805 about a time when we were with our family,

00:07:31.936 with our mother, and our father, and everything was so wonderful.

00:07:35.629 In our heart, we have a memory of that moment.

00:07:38.153 Everything seemed perfect in the world.

00:07:41.293 But then, there's still suffering that comes. It's impermanent.

00:07:45.989 Our parents maybe grow old and die,

00:07:50.782 or they divorce, and there's bitterness.

00:07:55.023 Maybe if we were married, we're in a relationship,

00:07:59.756 and then that marriage falls apart. Maybe we suffer because of -

00:08:05.634 When our son or our daughter grows up,

00:08:09.046 then they live in a way that brings them much suffering.

00:08:12.111 And we suffer because they suffer.

00:08:14.856 But we hold on to that memory of happiness when everything seemed perfect,

00:08:19.798 and we try to recreate it.

00:08:22.613 So we try to bring the family together at the holidays,

00:08:25.680 but when they come together, they argue with each other and they complain.

00:08:29.659 It is not the wonderful memory that we imagine.

00:08:32.707 We are stuck on our perception.

00:08:35.566 And we think, 'If I recreate those conditions, I will be happy.'

00:08:42.695 That is why, Thay, our teacher, often said

00:08:47.424 that our biggest obstacle to happiness is our idea of happiness.

00:08:53.057 We need to be able to let go of our idea of happiness

00:08:56.576 in order to touch happiness, to touch nirvana.

00:09:00.759 That means the practice of letting go is the way of unsticking ourselves,

00:09:07.935 releasing.

00:09:12.093 If you look at the a representation of the human body

00:09:19.818 based on the number of motor neurons associated with the parts of our body,

00:09:28.397 then we look very funny.

00:09:30.877 Our hands appear huge,

00:09:34.005 because the number of motor neurons in our brain

00:09:36.938 associated with the movement of our hands

00:09:39.735 are far greater than those associated with, say, the movement of our elbow,

00:09:46.147 or the movement of our,

00:09:49.372 I don't know,

00:09:52.170 our leg, or our hip maybe.

00:09:56.299 Because we have very articulated hands.

00:09:59.214 These marvelous hands.

00:10:01.878 We have learned, we have developed -

00:10:05.208 Many of our skills as human beings

00:10:08.094 come from our ability to manipulate our fingers and our hands.

00:10:18.312 We know from the study of neuroscience of people who have lost a limb,

00:10:25.354 that they often suffer so much because it's not only that they've lost the limb,

00:10:34.635 but the limb is actually very strongly clenched.

00:10:40.690 It is a phenomenon that happens to many people who lose a limb.

00:10:45.268 They are not able to release it.

00:10:48.532 Many of them are not able to release that clenched fist.

00:10:51.961 The limb is no longer there,

00:10:54.727 but in their mind, the motor neurons associated with that hand

00:10:58.427 are like...

00:11:01.023 They are very tightly clenched

00:11:04.098 For many days, and some of them for years,

00:11:06.842 they're not able to release and relax that limb.

00:11:12.227 So one professor, I don't remember his name right now.

00:11:19.093 I almost remember it, but I'll probably get it wrong, so I won't say it.

00:11:22.569 He is right here, in San Diego.

00:11:24.826 There is a very brilliant, simple technique which he devised,

00:11:30.038 where he actually would put a mirror and make it in such a way that it appeared

00:11:38.212 that the other intact limb of that person appeared to be also there,

00:11:46.188 where their missing limb should be.

00:11:52.075 And by looking in the mirror and seeing the mirror image of their other arm,

00:11:57.542 they are actually able to relax finally.

00:12:02.913 It is called phantom limb syndrome.

00:12:07.863 They are able to relax this phantom limb that is no longer there.

00:12:13.608 I tell that story just to illustrate

00:12:16.604 that within us there's a kind of hand and it is always grasping.

00:12:23.749 As we learned last week,

00:12:26.727 the five skandhas

00:12:31.455 they are like slices of a tangerine.

00:12:35.752 We have the slice of our body, the slice of our feelings,

00:12:43.561 the slice of our perceptions, mental formations and consciousness.

00:12:50.711 So body, feelings, perceptions, mental formations and consciousness.

00:13:07.249 We are exercising that internal hand

00:13:15.542 that is grasping at our body, is grasping at our feelings.

00:13:19.544 We have a pleasant feeling, we want to have more of it.

00:13:22.967 And as we learned, these are also feeding into one another.

00:13:27.544 Just thinking about that moment of happiness with our family

00:13:31.587 brings pleasant feelings.

00:13:35.766 And so we want

00:13:37.498 to bring about the kind of volition as a mental formation

00:13:41.500 to make that happen, to bring our family together again,

00:13:45.028 to recreate the conditions of happiness that existed in the past.

00:13:50.736 But because many conditions may have changed,

00:13:54.950 we actually have the perception that we are not appreciated, that our family -

00:14:00.058 We put all this effort in and they come together

00:14:03.397 and they still complain about each other

00:14:06.227 and make nasty jokes about each other.

00:14:09.915 And we suffer so much,

00:14:11.727 because all we wanted was that feeling of happiness.

00:14:15.201 We were grasping at it.

00:14:17.157 So we do everything in our mental formations

00:14:19.767 to try to create the conditions for happiness.

00:14:22.452 But if we're able to let go, this is the insight of the Buddha,

00:14:26.249 we practice releasing

00:14:29.244 that phantom limb within us,

00:14:32.177 the phantom fist or hand that is grasping at our body,

00:14:39.134 at our feelings, at our perceptions, through training our mind.

00:14:44.229 Breathing in, I know I am breathing in.

00:14:50.024 I let go of the future, of the past.

00:14:55.001 Breathing out, I know I am breathing out.

00:15:02.978 It is just mindfulness of the breathing.

00:15:12.213 (Bell)

00:15:17.228 (Bell)

00:15:40.705 The breath is a wonderful object of meditation,

00:15:44.724 because no matter how hard you try to grasp onto it,

00:15:48.480 you cannot take it.

00:15:52.661 It is very hard to stick to your breath.

00:15:55.949 So the Buddha proposed the breathing meditation

00:16:01.086 as a way to train ourselves to practice letting go.

00:16:06.266 Many of us, when we begin to bring our attention to our breathing,

00:16:11.697 we get stuck with trying to control our breathing.

00:16:18.057 And we get caught in the muscles around our lungs and our diaphragm,

00:16:23.952 because we've had so much conditioning

00:16:33.065 to try to control whatever we put our attention on.

00:16:42.098 We look at the screen, we have the mouse, right? We control the mouse.

00:16:45.993 We go around, I open this, I open that, right?

00:16:49.508 That is the kind of conditioning. We see it, we want to change what we see.

00:16:55.652 Buddhism teaches us to observe what is going on within us and around us

00:17:03.392 through our eyes, our ears, our nose, tongue, body, mind, and let go.

00:17:12.617 Let go of trying to control, trying to manipulate

00:17:17.994 through our six senses

00:17:20.826 our body, our feelings, our perceptions, and so forth.

00:17:25.003 And then we feel free.

00:17:28.112 And we have much less fear, because we see this body is just a manifestation

00:17:33.842 and it is subject to death.

00:17:36.293 It is subject to being born and subject to dying. It is a conditioned phenomenon.

00:17:42.730 A conditioned set of millions and millions of phenomena

00:17:49.390 that are the cells in our body metabolizing sugars, generating energy,

00:17:56.171 taking in the oxygen from our breathing

00:17:59.134 and using it in a catalytic reaction to produce energy in our cells

00:18:05.607 so we can move our muscles, we can digest the food that we eat,

00:18:10.191 we can continue to breathe, we can feed our brain,

00:18:15.085 all those neural connections which are firing

00:18:18.892 in a low wattage electricity, electrical firings.

00:18:24.140 That is all going on, this is wonderful manifestation.

00:18:29.781 The wonderful thing is that it goes on quite well without our intervention.

00:18:36.279 Without an 'I' or 'me' to make it happen.

00:18:40.536 If you let go of your ideas about yourself,

00:18:44.886 you continue to breathe, you continue to smile you continue -

00:18:48.300 And usually, you will feel much happier.

00:18:55.838 I remember one monk, Ajahn Sumedho.

00:18:59.916 He used to say: 'When I think about myself, I feel depressed.'

00:19:05.714 He was not saying that in the sense of 'Because I am a lousy person',

00:19:11.076 but he's literally saying, when I think about a self,

00:19:14.606 when I have an idea about self, I get stuck.

00:19:18.401 I think I am like this, and I am not like that.

00:19:22.440 Ideas like, I am and I am not, as we are learning,

00:19:26.988 are always going to lead to suffering.

00:19:29.654 And they are always delusional.

00:19:33.693 Letting go of our attachment is about removing delusion.

00:19:41.064 Uprooting our tendency to fantasize,

00:19:47.446 to speculate about reality.

00:19:59.275 Last week we learned the third tenet,

00:20:03.985 which is that nirvana is the cessation of delusion and the afflictions.

00:20:17.580 [avidyā]

00:20:19.872 In Sanskrit, 'avidya'.

00:20:22.478 I don't want to use many Sanskrit terms, but some are very important.

00:20:27.616 Avidya.

00:20:29.856 'Vid' is 'knowing things as they are',

00:20:34.551 to know or experience; and 'a' is a negation.

00:20:38.178 So avidya is ignorance or delusion.

00:20:43.891 [delusion]

00:20:51.283 Because of this stickiness,

00:20:54.441 sticking to our body, sticking to our feelings,

00:20:57.724 grasping onto our impermanent and fleeting feelings,

00:21:10.656 that is the nature of delusion which gives rise to afflictions, klesa.

00:21:17.021 [kleśa]

00:21:19.037 Which we also learned last week.

00:21:25.947 [afflictions]

00:21:31.524 In Buddhism we don't focus so much on sin, we talk more about afflictions.

00:21:41.084 We talk about unpleasant emotions like anger, irritation, jealousy, fear,

00:21:50.834 because those afflictions make our present moment very unpleasant.

00:21:59.677 Somebody who is in a moment of anger is suffering very much.

00:22:05.649 That doesn't mean the anger is something bad, or that it's a kind of sin.

00:22:11.181 But it is an affliction, it feels unpleasant.

00:22:14.704 When we're angry, we want to do anything we can do

00:22:17.986 to bring about the cessation of that anger.

00:22:22.352 So we need to learn and understand the anger.

00:22:26.030 That is why, we don't want to treat it as something evil.

00:22:30.560 In Buddhism, anger is not evil, it is an affliction.

00:22:34.037 We need to learn to understand it, understand its roots.

00:22:38.380 Just like we remove the fuel from the fire,

00:22:42.631 we learn how to remove the conditions that feed the flames of our anger

00:22:47.739 so that it dies down.

00:22:49.979 We don't repress it, we don't try to smother the fire, that is not nirvana.

00:22:55.322 Nirvana is finding a skillful way to remove the conditions,

00:22:59.712 to remove the fuel

00:23:01.899 so that the flames can no longer stick to the fuel, continue to burn the fuel.

00:23:11.063 We remove the element of upadana. We don't remove the skandhas.

00:23:15.992 This is a big misunderstanding

00:23:19.191 that Thay is trying to help us to correct.

00:23:23.867 In some interpretations of Buddhism, they've started to say that

00:23:29.692 there was what they call 'nirvana without residue'.

00:23:35.851 It means when there is nirvana with the cessation of the skandhas,

00:23:40.912 the cessation of the body, the feelings and perceptions.

00:23:44.692 After the Buddha passed away, they say that he went into nirvana without residue.

00:23:53.317 There are no longer the five skandhas.

00:23:57.711 And so, later Buddhist scholars

00:24:01.807 distinguish between nirvana with residue and nirvana without residue.

00:24:11.335 It makes our lives very confusing

00:24:14.611 and brings about all kinds of misunderstandings.

00:24:29.382 Today, the fourth tenet.

00:24:42.418 Oops! I lost my place somehow.

00:25:05.744 Okay.

00:25:16.008 Nirvana is nirvana.

00:25:21.868 It is very fun.

00:25:24.599 [4 Nirvāṇa is nirvāṇa]

00:25:37.151 It does not need to be nirvanawith residue or without residue.

00:26:09.082 [It does not need to be nirvana with residue or without residue.]

00:26:50.418 This point of viewhas led to a lot of misunderstanding.

00:26:56.084 This point of view of nirvana with residueand nirvana without residue.

00:27:02.377 After the Buddha's passing -

00:27:09.084 We know in the Buddha's time,he spoke many times about nirvana,

00:27:12.983 the nature of nirvana as the unconditioned, the unmade.

00:27:16.743 And that is not something that the Buddha acquired,

00:27:20.808 but that he was able to touch by letting go of his grasping on his body,

00:27:26.486 his feelings, his perceptions, and so forth.

00:27:30.030 Not seeing them as me, myself, or mine.

00:27:35.691 When the Buddha passed away,

00:27:42.915 then people started to say, 'Now the Buddha is completely nirvanized.'

00:27:49.445 Parinirvanized.

00:27:59.421 And they start to think there's some difference

00:28:01.983 between the nirvana of the Buddha after he passes

00:28:06.639 and the nirvana he touched while he was alive.

00:28:10.006 The main difference is that the nirvana he touched while he was alive,

00:28:14.400 was the nirvanawith the residue of the five skandhas,

00:28:18.448 the body, the feelings, perceptions,and so forth, that continued to manifest

00:28:23.262 although the Buddha wasno longer attached to his body,

00:28:25.947 attached to his feelings and so forth.

00:28:28.517 So there's no upadana-skandha,but just the skandha,

00:28:34.975 as well as the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind,

00:28:38.342 that observes the forms, feelings,

00:28:43.544 forms, sounds, tastes, smells, touches and tangibles

00:28:49.745 and objects of mind.

00:28:51.773 But all that occurs without any grasping, any stickiness.

00:28:57.580 The understanding that we learned in the third tenet last week

00:29:03.866 was that nirvana is the extinction,

00:29:07.056 is the absence of delusion and the afflictions.

00:29:11.475 It is not the absence of the five skandhas,

00:29:14.638 or the senses, the sense objects and the sense consciousnesses,

00:29:21.931 the 18 realms, 18 dhatu.

00:29:27.655 This tenet follows from that.

00:29:30.920 Nirvana is nirvana. It does not need to be nirvana with residue or without residue.

00:29:38.914 By the time of master Xuanzang -

00:29:48.517 Master Xuanzang lived in the 7th centuryand traveled from China.

00:29:59.153 He was determined tot try to bring back teachings, sutras,

00:30:07.515 that he perceived were missing in China.

00:30:12.545 So he went on a very adventurous trip.More than 10 years, almost 20 years.

00:30:20.868 He kept very detailed notesof where he went,

00:30:26.997 he went along the North of Tibet,

00:30:36.020 to the Taklamakan desert, now it's called.

00:30:40.828 And then, down through the Iron GatesI think they call, into the Hindu Kush,

00:30:52.502 and down into the valley of the Indus river and then to the Ganges,

00:30:59.979 and along the way, he observed many monasteries

00:31:02.756 that were thriving at that time.

00:31:05.306 We have a lot of very detailed record of India at that time

00:31:10.899 through his writings.

00:31:14.462 When he came back to China -

00:31:18.642 He eventually went to Nalanda, which is in Rajagriha,

00:31:23.649 near Rajagriha, near the Vulture's Peak.

00:31:27.881 Remember that we are studying Plum Village Looking at Vulture's Peak.

00:31:32.518 That is the title of this book of Thay.

00:31:36.696 Master Xuanzang studied with a great master there in Nalanda

00:31:42.341 and learned Sanskrit. Then he was able to come back to China.

00:31:46.719 At that time, there was a lot of support for Buddhism in China,

00:31:51.925 so he was actually given a whole team of young monks and other scholars

00:31:59.703 to help him to translate texts from Sanskrit and summarize many texts.

00:32:07.308 Because there were not many people who could read Sanskrit in China at that time.

00:32:13.481 He spent most of the rest of his life writing down or translating

00:32:20.273 many of the very important teachings of the Manifestation Only school.

00:32:25.967 By the time of Xuanzang,

00:32:28.203 they were already talking about four kinds of nirvana.

00:32:37.387 One was nirvana that is pure in nature.

00:32:48.986 [1 nirvāṇa that is pure in nature]

00:33:00.318 There is nirvana with residue.

00:33:04.313 [2 nirvāṇa with residue]

00:33:11.174 Nirvana without residue.

00:33:15.185 [3 nirvāṇa without residue]

00:33:31.949 And nirvana of no abode.

00:33:40.609 [4 nirvāṇa of no abode]

00:33:49.199 You see the great danger that is posed when we start speculating about nirvana.

00:33:54.595 Even the word nirvana is itself conditioned.

00:34:01.338 So we have to be very careful.

00:34:04.450 Over time, we start to treat nirvana as a conditioned phenomenon.

00:34:10.062 But the very nature of nirvana is unconditioned.

00:34:14.989 There is no quality that can stick to nirvana.

00:34:19.319 We cannot say it is blue or orange.

00:34:22.399 We cannot even say it has anything to do

00:34:25.846 with the word 'nirvana' that's written on the board or that I am saying out loud.

00:34:32.286 It is really beyond any kind of form.

00:34:35.833 'Nirvana' is just a word, it is just a sign,

00:34:39.428 and we do not want to confuse it with the nature of nirvana.

00:34:46.148 The insight of Plum Village is that we don't need any of these.

00:34:50.708 This is just a waste of our mental energy

00:34:53.628 trying to talk about nirvana with residue, without residue or no abode.

00:34:59.170 Nirvana is nirvana.

00:35:01.434 It is already pure.

00:35:05.215 We can't even really talk about it being pure,

00:35:08.644 because for something to be pure, we create the impure, right?

00:35:16.128 This is the insight of Plum Village. Nirvana is nirvana.

00:35:21.261 It does not need to be with or without residue.

00:35:26.077 We can listen to the bell.

00:35:32.060 (Bell)

00:35:36.749 (Bell)

00:36:02.754 They want us to learn about this so that we don't get trapped.

00:36:07.926 Because in our practice we can easily get trapped.

00:36:12.341 He said there are many hooks in the teachings

00:36:18.832 because of our attachments and the attachment of our ancestors.

00:36:23.556 Sometimes we just feel quite happy in our knowledge of things

00:36:29.904 and we don't want to go beyond our mere knowledge.

00:36:34.367 Last time I talked about two kinds of obstacles

00:36:41.043 which keep us from touching nirvana.

00:36:46.402 The obstacle of our afflictions, klesa,

00:36:52.876 [kleśâvaraṇa]

00:37:03.668 and the obstacle of our knowledge.

00:37:07.631 [jñeyâvaraṇa]

00:37:19.247 We learned 'klesa' is afflictions 'jneya' is knowledge.

00:37:27.658 In our daily life in the monastery,

00:37:32.406 we practice walking meditation, eating meditation,

00:37:35.972 coming back to the present moment,

00:37:39.231 being aware of our food where it has come from,

00:37:43.960 appreciating the wonders of life that are here and now.

00:37:47.656 And that is to help us to reduce our afflictions,

00:37:52.218 to see that this present moment

00:37:55.332 we already have enough conditions to be happy.

00:37:58.877 If we are able to look deeply

00:38:01.632 and recognize all the conditions of happiness that are already there,

00:38:05.653 when we are stuck onto a feeling, or stuck onto a perception,

00:38:10.249 when we have that perception we feel happy.

00:38:13.426 When we don't have it, we feel sad and so we suffer.

00:38:18.407 So by living together, walking together, practicing together,

00:38:22.753 and especially learning how to live together in harmony,

00:38:26.248 it means, letting go of our ideas in a meeting when we have a discussion.

00:38:32.707 I want to do it like this, you want to do like that and nobody wants to let go.

00:38:39.311 Actually, even those perceptions we cannot hold on to them,

00:38:43.149 but we are very good at making ourselves angry

00:38:47.379 and fighting for our position, our idea, our point of view.

00:38:53.205 So in that way, these are linked together.

00:38:58.202 Our knowledge, our idea, is also an obstacle.

00:39:02.948 And what we are learning in the 40 tenets is how to remove this obstacle principally.

00:39:09.507 How to understand the root of our afflictions in our attachment

00:39:14.584 to our way of wanting things to be, or wanting things not to be.

00:39:23.558 It is very interesting.

00:39:26.913 We look at the world and we start to make relationships between things

00:39:31.712 since we are a very young child.

00:39:35.992 Piaget, when he studied -

00:39:40.386 This was a master in Child Psychology.

00:39:43.917 When he was looking at his children growing up,

00:39:46.815 he noticed that at a certain age

00:39:50.614 when, say, I have this pen,

00:39:54.100 and I show it to a child who is very young, maybe like one year old.

00:40:00.640 And when I put it behind my back, the child will look with wonder.

00:40:05.007 They have no idea where the marker went. Where did it go?

00:40:09.057 Because it is no longer in their field of vision.

00:40:12.158 Something that was in their field of vision, now is gone.

00:40:15.639 But they cannot yet establish where it might have gone.

00:40:21.653 It is not in their vision, so it no longer is.

00:40:27.398 It is very simple. When something is visible, it is.

00:40:32.076 When it is no longer visible, it is not.

00:40:36.556 Then, at a certain age, they are able to recognize,

00:40:42.499 Ah! The absence of the marker means -

00:40:46.442 It is the conservation of matter, right?

00:40:50.059 The matter has not from something become nothing because it is no longer visible,

00:40:57.167 but there has to be some kind of conservation of matter.

00:41:02.845 And then they start to ask, 'Where did the marker go?'

00:41:06.291 And they pay attention, 'Ah! I saw him put it behind him and it's no longer there.'

00:41:12.801 Now they will know to run around behind, and they say, 'I found that marker!'

00:41:17.315 They know it is there because they know that things don't disappear for no reason.

00:41:25.555 But it turns out that a lot of us continue to have

00:41:29.701 this kind of conceptual understanding of cause and effect

00:41:34.405 and we impose on the world our understanding of how things should be.

00:41:40.472 This happens, so that should happen.

00:41:45.166 I studied hard, so I should get a good grade.

00:41:51.457 I worked hard on my exams in high school, and I took a lot of electives,

00:41:57.116 so I should get into a good university.

00:42:00.595 I paid a lot of money, I got my degree at university, so I should get a good job.

00:42:06.261 These are all kinds of assumptions that we make.

00:42:09.837 I am using just the tip of the iceberg,

00:42:12.686 but there are all kinds around color of skin, around the way people talk,

00:42:17.831 around the way we eat, everything.

00:42:21.961 We have all kinds of ideas about the way that things should be

00:42:25.342 in order to bring about the good effect, happy effect, that we want.

00:42:30.489 And the things that should be avoided, things not should be done like that.

00:42:38.905 That thinking of right and wrong

00:42:43.707 is actually like a veil

00:42:46.510 which obscures our vision of how things actually are.

00:42:50.583 We live in a kind of delusional world of the way things should be,

00:42:55.523 and we miss out an opportunity to actually see things as they are.

00:43:00.224 When we are confronted with this cognitive dissonance

00:43:04.713 between our belief system,

00:43:08.393 how things should be and the way things are, we suffer enormously.

00:43:14.075 So Buddhism is about letting go of our ideas of how things should be,

00:43:18.554 and rather looking at the world as it is in every moment.

00:43:24.113 That is the practice of touching suchness, of concentration on suchness.

00:43:33.722 The 'tathata', suchness.

00:43:39.684 [suchness]

00:43:44.728 [tathātā]

00:43:51.063 'Tatha' means 'like that', 'such'.

00:43:56.350 It doesn't mean anything except it is such.

00:44:01.509 And 'ta', the ending, means a noun.

00:44:06.639 So tathata means 'the it-ness of things'.

00:44:11.528 Thusness, the thusness. The suchness of things, tathata.

00:44:19.471 This class is fun, because we get to use these terms.

00:44:25.629 It's very helpful, I think.

00:44:28.228 There's not so many terms that you have to learn,

00:44:30.744 but learning a few of them is helpful.

00:44:32.894 It is a 2600 year old tradition,

00:44:35.841 and they're still studying

00:44:39.439 the same skillful teachings of the Buddha.

00:44:47.089 It is very lovely to go back to the early language,

00:44:51.176 because it is very simple actually, it is not very complicated.

00:44:55.941 Of course, through the years things become very complicated.

00:44:58.990 So Thay tries to help us to clear away all the complications

00:45:02.213 so that we see very clearly

00:45:04.693 and we focus more on our practice

00:45:07.217 than trying to just wade through masses,

00:45:10.687 reams of paper and scholarship just to try to get the essence.

00:45:15.987 The 40 tenets are there to help us to do that

00:45:18.946 so we don't get caught in the hooks that are there, in the misunderstandings.

00:45:23.832 Tathata is always coming back to things as they are,

00:45:28.180 the suchness of things.

00:45:40.772 Not getting caught in rigid ideas or dogmatic ideas about how the world is.

00:45:47.117 We talk about impermanence, we talk about it in terms of a concentration,

00:45:52.080 it's not in terms of establishing an absolute truth:

00:45:55.096 this is the way things are.

00:45:57.489 Impermanence is a practice.

00:46:00.352 It means with mindfulness you become aware of the object of your attention

00:46:06.762 and you see that it has a nature to change.

00:46:10.826 It is constantly being born and constantly dying.

00:46:14.468 When you see that, you see that that is the nature of conditioned things.

00:46:18.816 But the statement that all conditioned things are impermanent

00:46:22.623 can be a trap if you get attached to it as a dogma.

00:46:26.059 Somebody comes to you and says, 'No, there is a permanent soul.'

00:46:30.653 We will live forever, eternal.'

00:46:32.659 And you say, 'No, it's not like that,

00:46:34.524 because the Buddha said all things are impermanent!'

00:46:37.364 And you get very angry, and you miss it entirely, you lose your practice.

00:46:43.340 Because it's not for the sake of declaring truth

00:46:45.857 that we say the Buddha said all conditioned things are impermanent,

00:46:49.350 it is for the sake of making us free from our suffering.

00:46:54.326 Because we get attached to things,

00:46:56.156 and we think of them as being permanent, we suffer.

00:46:59.376 Even the Dharma, we need to be able to let go of it,

00:47:05.081 let alone non-Dharma. That is the teaching of the raft.

00:47:13.927 The Buddha
00:47:21.470 in the sutra
00:47:29.628 on The Better Way to Catch a Snake,
00:47:33.457 or sometimes it is called the Sutra of
the Vulture Trainer,
00:47:37.160 because it is the teaching the Buddha
gives to a monk
00:47:40.217 who is caught in his idea about sense
pleasures.
00:47:48.275 He is dogmatically caught, he has a
wrong view
00:47:53.162 that the Buddha taught that sense
pleasures are not an obstacle
00:47:57.010 to the practice, to freedom.
00:47:59.728 And before he became a monk, he
trained vultures to hunt.
00:48:11.634 So the Buddha offered the teachings,
'My teachings are like a raft.'
00:48:18.708 [My teachings are like a raft]
00:48:34.477 The meaning of that is that a man
comes to the river
00:48:40.737 and he sees he cannot cross over the
river.
00:48:46.909 So he gathers together some reeds and
grasses,
00:48:52.903 and he starts weaving together a raft
out of the grasses and weeds.
00:48:59.164 Then he uses that raft to cross the river.
00:49:03.246 And putting all that effort into making
the raft,
00:49:07.424 when he gets to the other shore of the
river, then he thinks,
00:49:11.482 'Wow! There are many other rivers I
may need to cross.
00:49:14.951 What if I picked up this raft and I
carried it with me,
00:49:18.281 so the next time I come to a river, I will
already have my raft,
00:49:22.207 and I can cross the river?'

00:49:24.769 So the man may betries to pick up the
raft.
00:49:28.271 It is very heavy, and he's sweating,
and he cannot go very far carrying that raft.
00:49:33.930 Then, the Buddha said, 'Is that man
very intelligent?'
00:49:38.243 And the monks said, 'No, he is not
very intelligent.'
00:49:41.632 He said, another man comes along and
he does the same,
00:49:45.036 but when he crosses to the other
shore, then he leaves the raft there.
00:49:48.615 Perhaps someone else will be able to
use it to cross back to the other shore.
00:49:52.944 But he doesn't do it only because he is
a generous person,
00:49:56.100 but also because he is intelligent
00:50:01.551 and he knows that when he gets to the
next river,
00:50:05.431 using his skills that he learned from
making the raft
00:50:09.225 he will be able to make another raft.
00:50:11.841 And It would be very worrisome, very
tiring for him
00:50:14.818 to carry that raft to the next river.
00:50:19.498 So that metaphor, the Buddha used
that story
00:50:23.405 to illustrate how we need to treat the
Dharma.
00:50:28.623 The Dharma is like a raft.
00:50:31.015 We need to be able to, when we reach
the other shore,
00:50:34.235 to let go of the raft, leave it behind.
00:50:40.012 Even the Dharma, when we're able to
touch nirvana
00:50:44.331 we need to not get attached to it,
00:50:48.216 and not get attached to the words, the
phrasing,
00:50:50.799 like in a dogmatic way, like it's a
belief.

00:50:54.009 Because all of the teachings are just expedient,
00:50:57.043 they are just there to help us to get to the other shore,
00:51:00.457 but not for us to cling on to them
00:51:03.489 and hold on to them like some dogma or belief.
00:51:07.349 My teachings are like a raft.
00:51:15.924 You need to let go,
00:51:25.413 [you need to let go of them,]
00:51:38.969 you need to let go of them, how much more so, wrong teachings.
00:51:51.462 [how much more so, wrong teachings.]
00:51:56.007 Literally he said, let go of the Dharma, how much more so a Dharma.
00:52:02.207 It means non-Dharma.
00:52:15.917 What is wrong Dharma?
00:52:18.313 It is believing that this body is permanent, will last forever.
00:52:24.526 It is the belief that we have feelings that will last forever.
00:52:36.964 That if we grasp,
00:52:41.159 and we splurge and overwhelm our senses with all kinds of sense pleasures,
00:52:46.687 that that will lead to lasting happiness.
00:52:49.784 This is a kind of wrong understanding. It is not held up by experience.
00:52:55.226 But we can tell ourselves that.
00:52:59.326 We have to look in the ways in which advertising,
00:53:02.397 the way in which the websites that we go to
00:53:06.077 are constantly reinforcing the kind of belief
00:53:10.939 that leads, that is, we could say, is the wrong teaching.
00:53:16.450 We have to let go of the Dharma, even more so non-Dharma.
00:53:23.194 Maybe you look on your Twitter feed, or you even just looking at the newspaper,

00:53:28.988 it can be watering the seeds of sense pleasure,
00:53:33.188 reinforcing the idea that you can get happiness somewhere else.
00:53:37.415 If you can be somebody important, somebody who's on the cover of a magazine,
00:53:41.118 somebody who is on the cover of the newspaper,
00:53:44.958 then you will have unending bliss.
00:53:53.483 Everything will be perfect, because you'll be a star, right?
00:53:59.410 I think most of us would right away think that idea is crazy,
00:54:05.464 but somehow, even if we think the idea is crazy, we still behave in such a way
00:54:09.931 we want to know what those people are doing,
00:54:12.205 those important people in the newspaper,
00:54:14.241 those important people on the cover of the magazine.
00:54:17.591 And we say, 'Well, we just want to know
00:54:20.369 because we're looking into the nature of human suffering.'
00:54:24.649 But you can do that, just find yourself.
00:54:28.295 Of course, we can always learn from other people's experiences,
00:54:32.324 but be careful, because one wrong way of grasping this teaching
00:54:38.752 is that people stop studying the Dharma.
00:54:43.392 They say, 'I don't need the Dharma,
00:54:45.573 the Buddha said the Dharma is like a raft. I leave it behind.'
00:54:48.739 But they spend the rest of their time
00:54:51.288 attached to their twitter feed,
00:54:54.668 or reading newspapers or whatever,
00:54:58.213 and watering the seeds of anger, desire, jealousy, and so forth.

00:55:04.673 We need to let go of them both. Not just the Dharma.

00:55:09.716 That is the teaching on the Dharma as a raft.

00:55:14.798 And by doing that, then we train ourselves.

00:55:18.193 We notice when we're caught in an idea

00:55:21.691 and we're able to calm ourselves down and come back to reality,

00:55:25.531 to the direct observation of things without the stickiness,

00:55:30.764 sticking to our perception, sticking to our mental formations

00:55:34.825 that we want to impose our idea on the world.

00:55:40.066 And then you have, you are -

00:55:42.730 That is the practice of engaged Buddhism.

00:55:45.681 Then you are able to help.

00:55:51.887 Somebody who's living in a delusive idea,

00:55:55.352 caught in their judgments, their worries, their fears,

00:55:59.160 is not able to do very much to help others to suffer less.

00:56:05.244 It's like the blind leading the blind.

00:56:08.868 Of course, there are situations of injustice

00:56:11.165 and there's real suffering in the world,

00:56:13.805 but we need to be able to see things as they are

00:56:21.042 in order to help, in order to touch the true compassion,

00:56:26.269 and be able to relieve the suffering in ourselves and others.

00:56:30.948 That is the deep practice of a bodhisattva, the practice of awakening.

00:56:43.204 This story of nirvana with residue or without residue

00:56:47.665 is a product of too much thinking about nirvana,

00:56:53.276 trying to add different qualities onto nirvana.

00:56:58.873 It's much simpler than that. Nirvana is nirvana. That's it.

00:57:05.366 The point is to touch nirvana, right? It's not to talk about nirvana.

00:57:14.991 It's there as a finger pointing at the moon.

00:57:19.719 We don't get caught in the finger. The finger is the word nirvana.

00:57:24.246 We want to directly look at the beauty of the moon.

00:57:28.292 That is the unconditioned nature, not the sign that is there to indicate it.

00:57:35.147 So whether we use the term god,

00:57:37.453 whether we use the term nirvana, Allah, Yahweh

00:57:43.243 it's all just a sign

00:57:46.956 helping us to touch what cannot be expressed,

00:57:50.802 what cannot be qualified, what cannot be -

00:57:53.865 What is unconditioned and uncreated.

00:58:03.698 We have to be careful of the path that is training us to get caught in our ideas.

00:58:11.480 The Buddha, Buddhism is ideas, words helping us to release ourselves

00:58:18.539 from our attachment to words and to concepts,

00:58:23.284 to grasping on our five skandhas.

00:58:29.346 Maybe we can hear a sound of the bell.

00:58:41.665 (Bell)

00:58:46.577 (Bell)

00:59:21.865 How can we describe nirvana? The Buddha -

00:59:39.621 We do have passed down

00:59:42.418 sayings of the Buddha doing his best to try to describe nirvana

00:59:50.277 for the purpose of awakening.

00:59:53.974 He is helping his students to wake up.

01:00:29.926 In the udana, which are the exhortations or heartfelt utterances of the Buddha,

01:00:38.004 there is a section on nirvana.

01:00:43.032 This is udana 8.3.

01:00:48.360 The Buddha is at Shravasti in Jetta's Grove, in Anathapindika's monastery,

01:00:56.185 teaching the bhikshus, the monks, and he says, 'There is, o monks,'

01:01:07.057 [There is, o monks,]

01:01:33.240 In the vocative we just write 'o'.

01:01:38.940 There is, o monks, the not-born,

01:01:54.157 the not-produced -

01:01:57.084 [the not-born, the not-produced]

01:02:01.525 Or we could say, not-arisen.

01:02:17.864 The not-made,

01:02:21.660 [the not-made,]

01:02:31.549 and the not-conditioned.

01:02:34.115 We could also say the unborn, the unproduced, the unmade.

01:02:41.689 [the not-conditioned.]

01:02:54.760 If there were no not-born -

01:03:00.629 Maybe we'll say if there were no unborn,

01:03:08.896 [If there were no unborn,]

01:03:18.497 unmade,

01:03:22.729 [unmade,]

01:03:28.508 unproduced,

01:03:39.676 unproduced, unmade, unconditioned.

01:03:47.252 [unproduced, unmade, unconditioned]

01:04:02.603 then you would find no escape,

01:04:09.182 [then you would find no escape here]

01:04:26.589 no escape here

01:04:31.560 from the born,

01:04:35.866 [from the born,]

01:04:43.041 the produced, the made,

01:04:50.499 [the produced, the made,]

01:05:00.800 the conditioned.

01:05:04.701 [the conditioned.]

01:05:19.869 Udana 8.3.

01:05:26.562 [Udāna 8.3.]

01:05:29.071 'Tatiya Nibbāna Paṭisaṃyutta Sutta'.

01:05:34.121 'Tatiya' is third. The third nirvana -

01:05:38.898 The third section, the third text, sutra,

01:05:50.636 in the nirvana section.

01:05:54.365 'But since there is an unborn, unproduced, unmade, and unconditioned,

01:05:59.375 an escape is found from the born, produced, made, and conditioned.'

01:06:06.387 I don't write it there, but you can add:

01:06:10.566 'There is, o monks, the not-born, the not-produced and not-made, the unconditioned.

01:06:18.075 If there -'

01:06:21.437 Sorry, 'If there were

01:06:25.134 no unborn, unproduced, unmade, unconditioned...'

01:06:29.174 There are missing words here, 'You would find

01:06:35.189 no escape herefrom the born, the produced,

01:06:38.748 the made, the conditioned.

01:06:41.447 But as there is the unborn, the unproduced, the unmade,

01:06:45.326 the unconditioned, that is why you can find a escape

01:06:48.628 from the born, the produced, the made, the conditioned.'

01:06:53.587 This is the Buddha trying his best,

01:06:56.683 using words to describe nirvana.

01:07:01.932 At other times he just said, 'How can one describe nirvana?'

01:07:07.155 I almost imagine the Buddha,
 01:07:08.864 although I don't think the
 Buddhawould have just thrown up his hands.
 01:07:14.132 You can feel that just at some pointyou
 just can't - It's a silence,
 01:07:20.160 and the very presence of the Buddha.
 01:07:27.219 That is all we can use to attest
 01:07:30.464 to our trustin the awakening of the
 teacher.
 01:07:36.892 In another sutra, I won't write it
 down,the Buddha says,
 01:07:43.080 'There is o bhikshus, that dimension
 where there is no earth,
 01:07:47.359 no water, no fire, no wind,no
 dimension of infinite space,
 01:07:54.203 no dimension of infinite consciousness,
 no dimension of nothingness,
 01:07:59.795 no dimension of neither perception nor
 non-perception,
 01:08:03.842 no this world, no other world, no
 moon or sun,
 01:08:09.053 there, mendicants, there, o bhikshus,I
 say there is no coming or going,
 01:08:15.164 no remaining, or passing away,or
 reappearing.
 01:08:20.754 It is not established, does not proceed
 and has no support.
 01:08:27.049 It's unconditioned. Just it is the end of
 suffering.'
 01:08:36.073 So you notice that there's a lot of
 negation in here.
 01:08:42.152 In order to describe the unconditioned,
 01:08:45.365 we have to strip awayeverything that is
 conditioned.
 01:08:50.305 So not this, not that, not that, not that.
 01:08:54.755 And yet, there is still this trap of
 understanding nirvana
 01:09:00.415 as being identical to nihilism, to
 annihilation.
 01:09:07.779 That is a wrong understanding, as we
 already learned.

01:09:12.100 Nirvana is the absence of delusion and
 the afflictions.
 01:09:18.189 It can be witnessed by means ofthe
 skandhas, by means of the conditioned.
 01:09:25.005 In the historical dimension, we touch
 the ultimate.
 01:09:29.385 It is right in the heart of the historical.
 01:09:31.950 We don't try to get rid of the historical
 dimension,
 01:09:35.210 of the world of phenomena, of birth
 and death,
 01:09:39.772 coming and going, being a non-being,
 same and different.
 01:09:43.868 We don't try to rid ourselves of that
 01:09:46.522 like we are disgusted with the
 historical dimension,
 01:09:49.763 we want to live in the ultimate
 dimensionin every moment of our daily life,
 01:09:53.792 and so we try to push away the
 historical dimension.
 01:09:56.740 That is a wrong understanding, a
 nihilistic understanding.
 01:10:02.212 That is like, by cutting off life,we touch
 nirvana.
 01:10:08.362 That is a very wrong way of grasping.
 01:10:11.383 So in the Sutra on the Better Way to
 Catch a Snake,
 01:10:15.190 the Buddha talked about the danger of
 these wrong views.
 01:10:19.599 Even though we are negating,
 01:10:22.965 we are describing nirvana by means of
 negation,
 01:10:26.845 that doesn't mean that it is a
 rejectionof life. In fact, it is the opposite.
 01:10:34.020 It is the freeing of life.
 01:10:37.114 It is were we able to, as human beings,
 01:10:39.998 go beyond our jealousies, our
 anger,our worry, our fears,
 01:10:45.025 all these things thatkeep us stuck to our
 body

01:10:50.101 and be really free, And that's something that we can touch in the present moment.

01:10:57.645 I think that will be the next tenet.

01:11:08.213 The fifth tenet. It is possible to touch nirvana in the present moment.

01:11:13.507 It means, in the historical dimension you can touch the ultimate dimension.

01:11:18.585 And that will be the next class.

01:11:23.146 So thank you, dear friends, dear brothers and sisters for following along.

01:11:30.089 I encourage those of us joining online for the first time

01:11:34.344 to take a moment to go back and start from the first class.

01:11:40.946 This is the fourth class.

01:11:43.626 And also to follow the links on the video to the 40 tenets so you can follow along.

01:11:50.898 I try my best to write large on the board, but maybe it's hard to follow my writing.

01:11:56.771 So it's better to have the text there with you.

01:12:00.701 Hopefully, if we have more time, maybe we can make more materials available,

01:12:05.903 like some of these sutras that are quoted, and so forth.

01:12:11.774 But I have to see if we have enough capacity.

01:12:17.248 So thank you. We'll finish with three sounds of the bell,

01:12:20.610 come back to our breathing,

01:12:24.856 and enjoy just being present with our body

01:12:28.462 without any attachment, without any grasping.

01:12:40.918 (Bell)

01:12:45.746 (Bell)

01:13:08.243 (Bell)

01:13:29.021 (Bell)