

Summary Notes of Tenet 7 lecture

Class #7: Not Born Means Nirvana and It Is Awakening to the Truth of the Deathless

<https://www.youtube.com/watch/S-pkE1nYCHs>

Intro: Sound check and guided meditation.

When we study these teachings we must still recognise that we have a long way to go as a collective. Two sons of one of the women spoke in a clip and it was so painful to listen to the sons speak about how their mother taught them not to discriminate and then she was killed by a senseless act of violence and discrimination.

Core Themes & Insights

[00:05:03] The 7th Tenet: Not Born Means Nirvana and It Is Awakening to the Truth of the Deathless

- “Not born” means nirvāṇa.
- Awakening to the truth of the deathless.
- No coming, no going; not same, not different; not being, not non-being.

[00:06:00] Ceremony Reflection:

- **A healing ceremony was held** for the 49-day memorial of the Atlanta shootings. Yesterday, *May We Gather* event in LA. Ceremony at a Japanese Soto temple and many Buddhist traditions attended to commemorate 49 days since the killings of women in Georgia mostly of Asian descent, brought the American-Asian community together to speak about the *paramitas*; generosity, morality, precepts, patience, energy, meditation. And to commemorate others who have been killed because of their difference and to look deeply into the violence that is in the collective consciousness. Monks and Nuns from many traditions spoke at this event and chanted Heart Sutra and verses of protection, peace and transformation.
- **Emphasis on compassion**, *pāramitās* (e.g. generosity, patience, meditation), and collective healing. It was an invitation to look into my own practice and look into ways that I still discriminate through the culture I inherit and have humility and patience.

[00:10:00] Discrimination and Practice:

- **Even as practitioners, we must examine inherited cultural biases.** We want to go deeper beyond all views all notions, and keep our kinds luminously open.
- **Cultivating *kṣānti pāramitā* (the perfection of patience)** is central to dissolving hatred. Patience is a very important parameter- to be able to not react when someone acts out of anger, when they blame. How can we have compassion for that person and allow them to meet a compassionate person- this is a deep act of the Bodhisatva, how to cultivate that patience in our practice. We must be able to go beyond hatred and anger.
- **The heart of compassion.** One of the priests from a Rinzai temple in Hawaii read the names of the women who had been killed. She had trouble reading the names. Anyone who dies- says Thay, we also experience that pain. We die a bit. Every time we hear of the suffering in the world we are able to die a little bit, and as a practitioner we can hold that without falling into despair and whilst seeing the miracle of being alive every day.

[00:12:00] Letting Go of Views:

- The Dharma is not about clinging to ideas or identities, even spiritual ones.
- True liberation arises from moving beyond views.

[00:18:00] Monastic Perspective on Non-Fear:

- Choosing the monastic path can help cultivate deep abhyāsa (practice) of non-attachment and non-fear.
- Even then, fear and attachment to the body remain to be worked with mindfully. We can respond to hatred and violence with compassion and understanding even if someone is threatening our own life. This is the Bodhisatva path. It's hard to follow when we have children or spouse as we have a deep drive to protect our loved ones. But we want to cultivate non-fear as monastics. We practice not being attached to our body so we can let go at any moment.

[00:19:30] Nirvāṇa as Present-Moment Realization:

- **Thầy teaches nirvāṇa is not far away**, not abstract. He brings it closer to the life of practice after centuries of “unconditioned Nirvana” as something far away and untouchable.
- **It is a feeling of release** to understand that and be free of fear.

- **It's a concrete, moment-to-moment realization of the unconditioned.** A day to day practice. But you have to be careful as what you think is unconditioned is conditioned. Just continue letting go and you can feel light and joyful and free.
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Teachings & Metaphors

[00:23:00] Horizontal vs Vertical Dimensions:

- Thay uses the model of Horizontal relationship between phenomena: worldly experience, conditioned reality. Waves. And the Vertical relationship between the waves and water, the relationship between the phenomena and noumena – that in every moment and phenomenon there is the ultimate, unconditioned within it.

[00:28:00] “Everything has already been nirvanized”:

- Just as the wave is already water, we are already the unconditioned — we only need to wake up. All thought and objects of our thoughts is at horizontal level. Anything we can perceive is at horizontal level.
- Where does the vertical come in? Imagine planes of time and space- at every point there is the opportunity to touch the ultimate, Nirvana. We just have to wake up to recognise that.
- Thay says the wave is already water it doesn't need to touch something it just needs to wake up to the realisation that it is water. The unconditioned nature (nirvana) is in everything.

[00:33:00] Karma & Collective Responsibility:

- Our actions of *body, speech, and mind* (trikarma) carry weight. That is something we can effect. The dharma is for human beings to learn this.
- But everything we are is a product of culture and ancestors. When a white man goes into a parlour and shoots asian women it is not only about the individual, its about the culture of ignorance and hatred that has been transmitted and is manifesting in the present moment and we have ultimate responsibility – that is the teaching of the Buddha.
- Social violence is both individual and collective karma. That knowledge that we have ultimate responsibility can set you free. We also have an unconditioned nature not caught in the cycle of our own set of conditions. We can stop, come back to our breathing and smile to the habits, seeds and tendencies that are handed to us, that are fed by our fear and anxiety.

[00:34:45] Stopping the Cycle:

- By pausing and recognizing conditioned habits, we open the possibility for freedom and peace.
- “I want to stand here as a free person.” We can make a decision to stand here as an unconditioned being and not manifest what we have inherited- there is so much space and freedom in that moment before you come back into the habit of anxiety.

[00:36:45] Thầy's Aspiration:

- Wanted to add the *Three Doors of Liberation* (emptiness, animitta / signlessness, apraṇihita / aimlessness) to the 16 steps of mindful breathing exercises.
 - It's good to be able to touch the joy and happiness and space and unconditioned within ourselves- just stopping and allowing it. It is not hard work. Then we can find skillful ways to maintain it.
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Practice Points

[00:42:00] Privilege & Practice:

- Having a human body is a form of privilege.
- If we are privileged to live in a monastery, we make good use of conditions offered by monastic or lay life to practice transformation — for self and ancestors.
- I can get attached to the delicious food and comfortable life as a monk and I lose my deep aspiration which is to make good use of those privileges.
- We should recognise what kind of privileges we have – we all have some sort of privilege if that is white privilege of just the privilege of having a body.
- We can practice for our ancestors who have given us privileges.
- Arrived at home sign based on Thay's calligraphy (bell)

[00:44:30] Retreat is for Deep Work:

- True retreats bring up deep ancestral and emotional seeds.
 - Suffering arising is not failure, but part of healing.
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The 7th Tenet Unfolded

Not born means Nirvana and it is the awakening to the truth of the deathless, the no-coming and no-going, the not same and not different, the not-being and not non-being.

[00:46:30] The Eight Negations:

- No birth, no death
- No coming, no going
- Not same, not different
- Not being, not non-being

48:55 Sings *At home, I am at home.*

We are part of creating the conditions for great suffering to ourselves and others. We feed into the store consciousness. The conditions of the man committing the shooting... he will live with the pain of that action. Everytime someone blames us and we act we are lured into the game of judging. Try look with the eyes of the unconditioned at the perpetrator and not feed into the conditions that don't allow them to flourish. No one wants to be in a situation where they are blamed and judged. Not allowing blame and judgement to penetrate our mind gives space for compassion. And we may be very surprised how the person responds. May not happen first or second time, but continue on the path and the possibilities and space arise free from the prison of perception.

[01:02:00] Transformation Insight:

- The body is a dynamic process — always being born and dying. Cells are being born and dying in every moment. Our body is a vast community of living beings – a multitude.
- Our suffering stems from clinging to fixed notions of self and permanence. Can we go beyond any concept of being born and dying. Being born has no meaning without dying.
- We touch the non-dual nature of reality.

[01:03:00] Quoting Lavoisier, 18th-century French chemist:

“Rien ne se crée, rien ne se perd. Tout se transforme.”

“Nothing is created, nothing is lost. Everything transforms.”

There is no loss- even in physics and science there is a notion of no birth and no death. Our body rots and feeds a flower, that is the nature of our body. So beautiful. Because of no birth and no death, living is possible.

[01:06:00] Root of Hatred and Fear and Violence:

- Discrimination arises from grasping at being and non-being, sameness and difference.
 - These notions are the foundation of suffering and violence.
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Closing Wisdom

[01:09:00] Dharma as Freedom:

- Dharma transcends even cherished spiritual identities.
- Let go of the raft — trust your present insight.

[01:11:00] The Man Who Lost His Cows:

- Classic parable: the Buddha tells the monks, “You are the happiest people alive. You don't have any cows to lose.”
- Ask yourself: *What cows are you still chasing?*