

## Transcript of Class 23. The 23rd Tenet: The Stream is always Flowing.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GH\\_Ts4rzUIE&list=PLm9\\_3psBwxqPvtI6Wj8x8OhVDIMwoda\\_i&index=24](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GH_Ts4rzUIE&list=PLm9_3psBwxqPvtI6Wj8x8OhVDIMwoda_i&index=24)

**Thay Phap Luu** discusses the 23rd tenet. The 23rd Tenet: "We can talk of a person as a continuous and ever-changing stream of five aggregates. This stream is always flowing. It is in connection with, receives from, and contributes to other streams of phenomena. We cannot speak of a person as an unchanging and permanent separate self." This class is based on a book written by our teacher called "Làng Mai nhìn núi Thửu" or "Plum Village Looks at Vulture's Peak" (an English translation is currently in progress but not yet available). The book outlines the core principles of Plum Village practice and teachings.

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So last week we talked about the bodies of the buddha and some of our brothers and sisters were in Glasgow, Scotland to represent the sangha and Thay's teaching to those who are doing their best to try to change the situation of the climate crisis, and this Sunday we listened to Thay Phap Yu and Thay Phap Lin, as well as Sister Thay Nin, they share about how to see that we are all interconnected that the way we live on this planet is affecting how others live not only people but plants, animals

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and minerals and that it's possible to transform our anxiety and fear around the climate crisis this is why Thay's teaching is so essential because fear can paralyse us and we feel we cannot do anything so it's important to recognize that that feeling of fear and anxiety is impermanent, and we are impermanent, and that there's freedom and we know that all of us here know that it's possible to change our way of living, change our habits, change our mind and that gives us hope that this is possible

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just that we come here together we decide to come to the monastery to live simply live in community, eat together, walk together, play together, and water the seeds of joy together, and we know it's possible to do it, because there's no other way except doing it together even we have all kinds of perceptions about each other, even we cause each other to suffer but somehow we have to do this together, so thank you for your practice, thank you for being a model for the world, just doing this practice

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um now like we learned in the dharma body of the buddha, we have the precepts body, we're here at the monastery we're practicing not to kill, not to steal, not to engage in sensual misconduct, and so forth and we have the concentration body, concentration on emptiness, signlessness, aimlessness. We get the insight that we are not a separate self, and that is the topic of this class, the 23rd tenet. (Writes on the whiteboard.)

***We can talk of a person as a continuous an ever-changing stream of five aggregates.***

***This stream is always flowing, it is in connection with, and interchanges with, other streams of phenomena.***

***We cannot speak of a person as an unchanging and permanent, separate self.***

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We talked about the 3 dharma seals, and we already covered that a few months ago; impermanence, non-self and nirvana, and so *non-self* is also a kind of concentration, for example when we look at this body we see that this body is made up of the earth, the air, the water, heat, and if you take out the water, the earth and

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the heat then you don't have anything left that you can call your "self" - this is me, myself.

Another way to look at it is with the five aggregates (writes on the board)

***body  
feelings  
perceptions  
mental formations  
and consciousness***

So we talked about how in realising that this body is not me, I'm not limited by this body, (another brother comes and adjusts the microphone), so we have the tendency to think this body is me ,but actually this body is just an aggregate of physical processes, right, so we have water, and air and earth and fire and

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elements like carbon and oxygen, nitrogen, all coming together, flowing cells, combusting the oxygen we breathe in through our mouth, and this wondrous interchange of fluids, of air, of heat, is constantly changing constantly, catalysing chemical reactions in our body, and wherever we look in that body we cannot find a cell, or something we can call the conductor; it's like an orchestra without a conductor, They liked to say... there this is beautiful music that is happening in the body like a grand orchestra, but no conductor

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and that is not for the point of um feeling like sad or lonely, it is for our freedom! It's actually a great freedom. Usually when you think about yourself, you feel a little bit sad, there's some kind of attachment that comes in. You start to look at your hand, and you remember when your hand was you were just a child, and you think oh gosh you know, I have all these scars on my hand it's getting older wrinkles and you miss that idea you have of yourself

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as a younger person. Or if we see the body of another like our mother or our father getting old passing away and then we start to feel sad, we think oh that self that is my mom- I am losing her because you don't see that she's in every cell of our body, we are the continuation of our mother, we are a stream that is flowing, that is that is flowing from the womb of our mother, into the present moment, and so the insight of no self is not for the purpose of negation but for the purpose of realising this wondrous

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Existence -- this wondrous experience of awareness, and not grasping onto anything.

So when the buddha talked about the five aggregates he talked about them as the aggregates of grasping - Upadhana Skandha, I think I shared about this -- it means there are the aggregates, skanda; you can look you can think of it as a as a tree when it branches go off, that kind of mass where you have branching off of different things right? So we have body feelings perceptions mental

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Formations, consciousness- these are different aspects of our experience in every moment that we try to grasp onto. as me, myself, or mine... and then when we believe this to be me, and that changes we suffer. So the buddha used an image of this like a river and a man in a boat he's going down that river, and there's reeds and grass, and we can say Cattails, and as he flows down that river he tries to grasp at the grass, but it just pulls out ,and the same with the reeds the same with the cattails he tries to grasp onto it but he cannot.

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And he just continues to flow --so that is like the present moment, always flowing, always changing, always in motion, not fixed, and yet in our thinking we want to make something fixed, something that's me, mine or myself and so we try to grasp at the grass on the bank of the river, but we cannot it just comes right out the flow is too strong, and um and we ourselves are also changing, as the one flowing down the river, so.... it's just a metaphor.

They talked about the Greek philosopher Herclitus who said

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that no a man cannot step in the same river twice, you cannot step in the same river twice, the river is always changing, and the one who's stepping into the river is always changing, so the one who steps in the river as well as the river are not ever the same there's nothing fixed, and that was an insight that he had, and that had an influence on Greek philosophy, and all of this is a what we call a concentration, on Non-Self, so reflecting on the impermanence of the body is a concentration it helps us to

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to let go of the block the blockages in our consciousness; we just shine the light of mindfulness somewhere where we feel oh gosh maybe you're thinking about someone in your life, and you're having a difficult relationship with that person, your whole day you might have arguments, arguing with that person, you feel sad because of what they said, what they think about you, what they feel, and you continue to just water that seed, but then you realise oh, that's because I'm caught in an idea of myself

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I just continue to it's just that person they said that thing, and you have a perception ,and then you continue to believe that you yourself are that thing, that they said, that they did, so the deeper practice I find is to go and look and see what is actually my experience, in the present moment, and I say ah if I continue to dwell on those perceptions, that that is myself, I feel sad I feel lonely, I feel cut off but if I come back to my breathing come back to my body not grasping, just aware of the breath

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Just aware of the body- just breathe out, and smile, so this is the body just the breathing, and joy can manifest, it can be a possibility of joy, just by breathing, no longer giving attention to that perception, that continue, you know what that person thinks ,or what you think they think about you.

I practice this very often and even as a monk living in the community, actually we have we can have a lot of perceptions about each other, and we live together, and we work together, and yeah and so I've learned that

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I can always learn from the perception, that someone else something they say or they do, but I don't have to believe entirely what they are saying, because they are also suffering, so I get in touch with their suffering and I also try to look how my I have contributed to that suffering and then from there I can change I can change my behavior so that is an empowering way it gives you the key to changing to opening the door to a new possibility and if I just continue to dwell on that perception then it just becomes like a

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like a merry-go-round you just keep going around and around and around and around and around in the same argument in your head and meanwhile you're watering the seeds it means you're stimulating your hormonal system actually to generate a feeling of fear anxiety sadness so and that has very little to do with what the other person that's just in your own mind that's what you're doing so the practice is making the choice to generate a feeling of joy to let go of grasping at that perception

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and so the purpose of the teaching on non-self is not to try to negate who we are, right? It's not to try to say that we don't exist, right, so don't misunderstand -- it's for the purpose of letting go of our grasping. *Obodana* is this grasping this energy of grasping. I think I told the story of these group of monks that were practicing and to look at the non- the impure aspects of their own body, in order to let go of their attachment to their body, and they saw this still attached

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to their body, and also attached to the beauty of another body, and so they heard this teaching of the buddha which is to reflect on this body, and not so beautiful aspects of the body, like the mucus and puss and saliva, and blood and intestines, and excrement, and all these things --which are also wonderful, but sometimes when we look at a person, if you're really like attracted to someone, I invite you to reflect on their bowels and their excrement is very helpful! You see all it's behind this wall of

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skin that is also you know, just like everyone, and so that helps you to get less attached right you know if you're if you're kind of obsessed with that person, their face or their whatever... so they were practicing this but they grasped it the wrong way, and they thought, because I have a body then I can never be happy, and so in order to change the situation, they actually committed suicide, and the buddha heard about that, and he had to give very strong teaching to his students

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The teaching of non-self of the impurity of the body, is not to reject the body, it is to let go of our grasping at the body, to see that this is an ever flowing stream, and you cannot grasp onto it, without causing suffering, so just practice letting go -- so non-self is the practice of letting go -- and if we continue to somehow deep down have this idea that we are a separate self, deep down inside of us, there will always be some kind of blockage, some kind of subtle grasping, that is making us somehow suffer, and that's what the

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mindfulness practice helps us with.

I mean it's a meditation it's a way of cultivating the mind to just let go to go and we say go with the flow right, but it means let go of the flow, don't try to hold on to it, just see whatever it is in you that continues to grasp, and then you train yourself in your sitting meditation to attend to those things which are there, and are clearly impermanent like the breath, so that's why we start with mindfulness

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of breathing, because the breath is --we cannot say there is a self in the breath. It's very obvious that nobody gets caught and I think the breath has an identity or a self, right and so from that starting point then we can start to apply it to our body and we see ah this body is always changing, and what I think of as me is also changing, and so there's

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nothing permanent and then we continue with feelings we see ah okay, pleasant feelings, they come they go and then we just let them.

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Unpleasant feelings they come and they go and we let them flow, and then the same with our perceptions we say ah these thoughts, I have every day I wake up oh no the same birth thinking, about that person thinking about you know those words, those difficult conversations that we've had, and we suffer, so just let it go

And the same with our mental formations, our anger is impermanent. Thank goodness, imagine if our anger was permanent -- so we don't repress the anger we fully recognise it.

So just like Heraclitus

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stepping into the stream - the stream is there, it but it's a continuum. And sometimes we are in the rapids and it's frothing right with white water, and then it becomes calm again, so the practice is not to deny that sometimes the water is turbulent, so when anger is there we fully recognise it, we let ourselves shine the light of mindfulness on it so that we can see and understand, why is it angry, just like when we look at the stream, we understand that there's more slope, in the course of the riverbed

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and so the water has to flow more quickly, and it is not as deep, and so it passes through the rocks, and it's very agitated-- and so the same is true of our anger. When we look into the anger, we can recognise it accept it, and hold it in the light of mindfulness. So we talk about embracing our anger with mindfulness for the purpose of understanding "ah these are the causes and conditions, these are the perceptions, these are the feelings, that I've been holding onto that have brought about the conditions for this

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anger to manifest."

And also we can experience the feelings that come with that anger are those feelings pleasant are they unpleasant and then by letting go then the anger becomes less as we no longer grasp.

So emotions like anger despair there's some kind of grasping underneath that there's something that we don't want to let go of, and that is our body, our feelings, our perceptions, mental formations, and even our consciousness like in our awareness, there's we want to be aware like this my I am

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aware of my eyes, my ears, my nose, my tongue, body, and mind and I want to and I think that awareness is me but I know that that awareness is impermanent; that this awareness will also pass away, and if my eyes become damaged, then my visual consciousness that I think of as me experiencing the world, is not there anymore.

I realise it's dependent on my eyes, the same for my ear, my nose, so Thay often invites us to get in touch with the wonder of being able to see in the present moment being able to see

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all the millions of colours, the faces of our friends on the path; not for the sake of grasping but for the sake of really recognising the wonder of the present moment, so that we can fully enjoy it while it's still here, and then we feel if we go blind, we can still be happy and joyful because we've really enjoyed our eyes while they're working.

The same is true of our body, our legs, we have two legs that can walk so enjoy when you can walk like going on the gatewalk today, walk down to the in the moonlight

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and it's such a wonder -- not everyone has legs in good working condition, but those of us here we're able to walk and so we can enjoy our walking.

Just these simple things bring so much happiness, so enjoying in the present moment what's going on, allows us to let go of our grasping. So, enjoy your good health, but you know that it's impermanent, and then you're free.

So the way to not get caught in this idea of nihilism or annihilationism, like these monks that try to kill themselves to be free

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is to recognise that there is a continuum.

(Writing on the whiteboard)

Those are flowing continuum of this body of these feelings these perceptions, they're not just random, it's not just random events happening; there's cause and effect. And so how we keep our perceptions in the present moment they will affect how our feelings for example maybe in the future, what we attend to with our eye consciousness, ear, nose, tongue that will have effect an effect on our perceptions in the future -- so there's a continuum, there's a

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relationship --and that continuum is usually what we call a separate self.

We make the mistake, we think because it is relationship, there's a connection interchange between one thing and the other, that there's a permanent separate self and that is me maybe we can listen to a bell.

(Bell.)

When I finished university, when I finished college, I felt so I felt trapped. I had this degree but actually I felt like I was in some kind of prison, and many of my friends they were getting jobs

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some of them in finance, or going to graduate school, and my parents had gotten divorced, and I was asking myself like, "who am I?"

I want to know, I mean yeah getting a job -- he's making money, but what's the point of all that if I don't have a clue who I am, or what I'm supposed to be doing? And so at that time I just wanted to step out of this stream that I felt trapped in; this this high velocity rapids that I found myself just coursing down

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to step out, so the only thing I could think to do is to leave the country, okay? And so I went and I lived with a friend in Ireland, and I ended up getting a job teaching English in in Spain, and I just I didn't have an answer, but I said okay I want to step out of this this stream, this crazy stream of career, and which I knew was not going anywhere.

And yeah, and I met many teachers, sometimes just on the street asking myself this question you know, "Who am I?" and I learned without calling it that this teaching on non-Self.

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I learned about how many people there are out there who are doing kind things, good things, for themselves, for others, without putting a name on it, without having a title, without having a salary, without having a resume or curriculum vitae right, about all the kind things they've done, the compassionate acts they have done to themselves and to others.

And so I wanted to go deeper into that that space, and just go with whatever happened. Which can be dangerous also, especially if we don't have a

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mindfulness trainings.

And....yeah... I don't want to go too much into it but I got involved in activism, and I was living in squats in Paris and just getting like the leftover bread from the bakery, going dumpster diving for food, and getting whatever's left over at the market, and living together with young people who were living like that, and I just I just wanted to go deeper and deeper, just letting go of any idea of myself, almost like self-negation in a way, I didn't I didn't have this practice yet

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but somehow I knew that the story of myself is not true; I can tell myself many kinds of stories, and ultimately none of them will be completely true, they're only just approximations, and at some point, after a few years of living like that I came back to the US, and I was after four years of university, and then maybe three years something like that like I hadn't lived with my parents for seven years, and by now my mom was divorced and living by herself. She's a wonderful person, she's just

**NB: there is a very loud audio blast (sound/mic issue)**

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For those listening on headphones it can be quite a shock and dangerous for ear drums.

It starts with a small one at 42:19, and then there is a very loud audio blast of noise at around at 42.42. and then again at 42:43....

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one of the most amazing moms, but it was so difficult to be a 20 whatever three to 24 year old ,who's living on their own and coming back to suddenly live in his mom's house, and the idea that my mom had of me was not somehow in conjunction with the reality that I had been living, and I could not explain, and so I felt this kind of deep cognitive dissonance, and I could not go to see some of my old friends, I felt some kind of shame, like I could not explain this experience, now I would call

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experience of non-self, of becoming free of my idea, or the idea which is imposed on us by our community, by society, by the way we look, the way we talk, the way... and so forth.... and what we do, and so for many months I ended up in a depression, I actually felt I was so angry, I was angry I didn't want to get a job, because I didn't want to have a car, and a house, and family and kids, all these things, that are just creating and exacerbating the climate crisis, this is this is like 1999, around 2000.

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But I didn't know what can I do, what kind of way of living can I embark on, that is not going to just contribute to this crisis that we are living on the planet earth, and so the best I could do was just to go for walks every day in the forest. Luckily my mom's house is in the forest near the river that I grew up on. She had moved to a different house than the one I grew up in, but not far away, and so I would just go for long walks in the forest every day and I didn't know

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much about meditation at that point, but I had my dog who was quite old. It's a beagle named Pepper actually. I felt after that one dog, I don't think I can ever have a dog again. I don't know if you've ever had a dog that's just so wonderful, then you feel like you can't possibly have another dog like that. Anyway, I'm a monk so I can't have a dog! It makes it easy! And I always remember one day that I was so confused and so angry and I didn't have anyone that I felt I could

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communicate what I've been experiencing to, and it was snow, it had snowed-- so there's snow everywhere and I went for this long walk and many miles away from the house on the road, and my dog Pepper he had a like a radial collar and there's a boundary around the house because he's a beagle, and they love to wander, so my mom had put this collar on him to keep him from going out of the yard, and I must have been maybe three miles away from the house and suddenly he came

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from running up behind me, and I'll never forget that moment, because I was so alone.

I was so angry, I was so confused and it's like he yeah maybe I exaggerated in my mind, but I felt like he had taken that pain of running through the shock of the radial fence, because he knew I was suffering, and he wanted to be there.

I don't know but that's what I felt in that moment and yeah, it's just this great companion that just helped me through this time, this difficult moment --as my mom also did

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but then I went to a yoga centre and I saw people meditating for the first time, and I just was able to sit there for 20 minutes or whatever, we would do different kinds of yoga, but I remember is just sitting there following my breathing, and suddenly just saying "Well I don't know what I'm going to do with my life, I don't know where I'm going, I don't know, I really don't know anything actually, I know I know lots of things, but I don't know anything -- but I can follow my breath, I can sit here, that I can do, and I found people who I could talk to.

I could explain what I'd been going through, and they listened and they understood, and I thought oh my gosh where have these people been? Everyone I talked to, they just say: "Well did you get a job? Did you do this?" and suddenly I remember this couple at the yoga centre, and I could explain what I've been through what I've been living this experience of non-self, I didn't call it that, but just letting go of the story that had

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been given to me by my parents, by my community, by my education, and I felt understood that was so important, and so I said okay I'm going to learn meditation, and a little bit later I went to... I think my mom heard about a Buddhist monastery nearby there were not many monks or nuns there but had a big Buddhist statue. There's a Chinese temple actually it's close to Blue Cliff monastery if you've been there, I think it's a temple something like that, and next to the Buddhist statue they had

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a little book that was called the four arousings of mindfulness, which we call the four establishments of mindfulness and it was in English-- on one page in Chinese on the other and I took that booklet, it was free, and I memorised it I said okay this is something I can do; it's not just philosophy for the sake of thinking, I try to think through suffering it doesn't work-- this is inviting me to come back to my body and just sit there. Just follow my breathing. I don't have to think about anything!

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I don't need to solve any problem, I don't need to impress anyone with my deep thinking, I just need to be aware of my breath, where in my body, aware of the movements of my body, the position of my body, the impermanence of my body, the same of my feelings my mind, and all phenomena, and it was suddenly joy manifested, just sitting there, I wear my breath, my body, my feelings, and I would do I would sit for 30 40 minutes, I would recite the entire Sativa in 40 minutes in my head mentally. It's a little bit

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Strange, but I was benefiting, I felt I saw myself, I saw my mind changing so quickly, and growing, it's like the sustenance, kind of food that I had been missing, and I it felt like my body is glowing with joy and happiness, and so that yeah, I can say within a few days I knew exactly what I wanted to do, I wanted to become a Buddhist monk, I wanted to live the dharma, and that's it, and so that's what I've tried to do until now. Not focusing on anything I don't need to attain anything I don't need to

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have a title or position, or even be a very good monk, but I just do my best to practice the dhamma, and to learn dharma deeper, to understand it, because the more I do it, the more free I feel, the more happiness and more joy, so that is that self that I found myself, crushing back into coming back to, coming back home, literally coming back to live with my mom, it's like I saw that that it's not that the self that I left behind, when I went to get rid of it, or the non-self that I tried to realise living outside

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the country that either of those are wrong, it's just that actually it's the grasping, it's the this idea that I need to have a story, that there needs to be coherence to this self rather than just this wondrous experience of this, there's the suchness of things, it's already enough, I don't need to have a story, even that story can be told many different ways, that's just it's just one way of telling the story, just like all of us we have so many we have unlimited ways of in which we can tell

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the story of our lives, it's because this is always changing, it's always growing and our way of looking is always changing and growing, and as soon as we've told the story, it's already past, it's already changed, so seeing this as a stream, that's always flowing and growing so coming to the monastery practicing the reason we have the working meditation we have sitting meditation, we have walking meditation, sleeping meditation, is to give us a space in an area where we can

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no one's going to pressure us to be anything-- we try to set everything up so that you don't have to be anyone yeah and we don't do it perfectly, we try our best, but even as monks and nuns we still have our perceptions and we still you know... are on the path, and that's why I always have compassion when I feel hurt by somebody something they say or do I think they're also on the path.

I'm on the path and I don't expect them to be perfect, sometimes as practitioners we expect

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everyone else to be perfect, but every respect everyone else to understand our shortcomings, do you ever notice that it's like very quick to say like how that person's not practicing non-self, or they're not kind or compassionate, but we expect everyone else to understand when we're angry, or unkind, or right, so yeah so the practice centre is there for us to practice to be a stream flowing, to not have to be anything in particular, to not grasp on and actually when we realise

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that continuum happening in every moment, we see that we're intimately connected and interchanging with everything, that is everything else in the universe, with the air, with the sun, with the earth, with the bacteria in our body--there's ...we no longer have that artificial conceptual separation of this body, or these feelings or these perceptions that we create with our mind that cuts us off from the rest of the universe, we just there's an ebb and flow that's constantly happening

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maybe we can listen to another sound of the bell

*Bell. 57:38*

58.00 So the buddha taught that there are three wrong views concerning the self.

*Writing on the board.*

So the first one is that the body; or the feelings, perceptions, is the "Self"

It means the Skandas are the self.

The five Skandas are the self.

Snd so I think I've covered that pretty well, so that's for the if we have that wrong view, we think this body is me when the body changes then we suffer- and it's always changing, and the same is true of feelings perceptions we think oh I'm a

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mindfulness practitioner I should always be joyful, and yet we are sad and we wonder but that sadness doesn't it doesn't fit with my idea of who I am right myself, so but that's because we have a wrong view about the self, and perceptions. I'm always a kind person because I'm practicing in the monastery, so that when we hurt someone we cannot accept that we've hurt them, we think that they've done something wrong, they need to practice, it can't be possibly me that has contributed to the situation.

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and so forth... so that when we say "wrong view" it means it's a view that brings about suffering. If you hold on to the view in any way, that the five skandas, this body is me, then there's suffering.

The second wrong view is that the five Skandas are different self so we take the view that okay I can accept that this body is not me mine and myself and these feelings are not me mine or myself but there is a self outside of the body feelings perceptions mental formation

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and consciousness so there's some kind of metaphysical entity that is outside which then goes from one body to the other to another or so forth like a simplistic idea of reincarnation and so in it somehow that self is not affected by the vicissitudes of the five Skandas of the daily life right but if there is this self outside of the five Skandas is it can we be aware of it, and when we are aware of it, then isn't it consciousness or a mental formation, or a perception, so when we create

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an idea of the self, right away it becomes part of the five Skandas, because we have a perception about it.

We are aware of it, we're conscious of it, and we have an emotional response to it, feeling right, and so there's nothing outside of the five Skandas actually that can experience the self, so actually it becomes just a mental formation--a construct of our mind is that clear is everyone not clear right, once we have an idea like okay, I can accept that none of these five things are myself

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so then with mindfulness, I try to see where is so-- if it's not this body, if it's not these feelings, it's not these perceptions, not my emotions, or mental formations, it's not consciousness itself, that is the self but something somehow other--that is permanent, unchanging, all these things are changing.

But there is something that is not, then we will tend to grasp at that thing, we want to understand it, we want to touch it, and but that thing can, if we touch it, if we are aware of it

## Transcript of Class 23. The 23rd Tenet: The Stream is always Flowing.

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then already it changes, it has entered into contact with the impermanence of all things, you see, and so we see that actually there's nothing there--there's no conductor.

Let me give an example so Thay often would use to talk about the phrase "the wind is blowing" but now I ask you if there's no blowing going on, where is the wind? How can there be wind without blowing? So what sense does it make to say the wind is blowing, so the same is true of the five Skandas --So if we talk about this "self"

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which is somehow outside of the five Skandas, which has body, feelings, perception, mental formations, consciousness --well then what is that "self" without the five Skandas, this operating of the body, of the feelings?

The same could be true for the rain right? We say the rain is falling, so what sense does it make to say "the rain is falling" - if it's not falling, it's not rain! So we can just say "rain" - and we already know there's falling going on, and the same is true the wind, when we say the wind --there's already blowing

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going on, so there's no ....the very definition of the wind is "blowing", just like the rain is by nature "falling" and so there's no rain, just like there's no "elf" that is existing outside of the operation of our body, feelings, perceptions, you see.

If you take away the body, feelings, perceptions, mental formation, consciousness, then what Self can there be? Just like if you take out the falling how can you say it's Rain, or how can you take away the blowing and say it is wind?

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That is the trick that language can play on us. We talk about a self and we attribute qualities to itself and because we're attached to it, we can accept that these things are all impermanent, but we want something else to be there, as outside of all these impermanent things, and so the buddha there is the unconditioned, nirvana right, that is going beyond the conditioned world --but that is not something you can call itself, so we mistake nirvana sometimes for itself the unconditioned nature which cannot be grasped

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it can only be experienced, so we have to be very careful, because we are attached to this present moment, and we keep grasping, then we create a self, when actually it's just the unconditioned nature which is not a self, it's free from anything..... anything you can call any kind of quality, so we don't want to mistake that there is something outside of these five Skandas --that is somehow the self and then the third one there is this that there is a self in the Skandas or the Skandas are in the Self

Writing on the board: (On grasping, and trying to define self)

1. The 5 skandas are in the Self
2. The 5 skandas **are** different from the Self
3. *There is a Self in the 5 skandas.*

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So that the self is not the five Skandas nor do the five Skandas belong to the self but that they are residing in each other it gives you a headache they're all just convoluted ways of trying to keep our attachment to a self so instead of just letting go and seeing that this is all of these are just a stream a continuum, and that our experience of the present moment is not outside of that stream, we feel like we need something permanent a separate self and so we try to say that the self is in the five Skandas;

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we already accept that they are not the five Skandas except that they are not different from the five Skandas, so then we say well there's a self in the five Skandas, or the Skandas are in the self..... they are somehow mutually within each other, so this is just again grasping, it's this kind of attachment, we just want to put the self somewhere... so we missed the point, which is that this teaching is not for the purpose of description it's not for the purpose of philosophy or establishing some kind of

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[Music] existential relationship, but it's for the purpose of helping us to become freer and happier.

## Transcript of Class 23. The 23rd Tenet: The Stream is always Flowing.

when we see that the body is impermanent it is free it doesn't have a separate self then we are no longer attached we become less attached to the body we become less attached to our feelings and perceptions, and so for so long as we try to keep putting this something in there this is always something that we try to grasp because we want to arrive at the self, like I said in my own story I want to understand who

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am I, you know what am I doing what am I supposed to do, and actually that that question as for me as a young person progressed and so first I said, well who am I, why I could say I'm this name, I was born in this place you know, I did these things, I have these friends, I like to study, this I don't like study that, I like to eat this I don't like to eat that, but ultimately that's all just conditioning , so I think for me it's more helpful to go along and say well what what do I? What should I do?

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what do I need to do? I found that much more helpful

It's like even if I know who I am, I still won't know what to do, and that's when the dharma was so helpful, I can do this-- I can practice the dharma, I can try to I can follow my breathing, I can practice impermanence if I don't know what to do, I can do that, and the more I do that, the more I become free, the more I feel joy, so I want to keep doing that and so I don't need to I don't need to try to look go searching within these things to try

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to find myself, and I don't need to try to put these inside my idea of a self, does that make sense?

So it's so this teaching on the "wrong views around the self" is for the purpose of *freedom* and non-self is also gives us the insight of *impermanence* and when we see things as impermanence, we see non-self, so these two concentrations are going together, and just to finish, when we talk about a *continuum* we also see it as a like points of light-- a person who is standing holding a torch and the flame

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and turning it in a circle right at any moment, the torch is at one point, but we know in the darkness if you've ever seen somebody who throws fire, the appearance is like a continuum a circle, so when we look deeply into consciousness, we see that actually it's just made up of instance of consciousness, and that's for our freedom, because in every moment you can change, you can decide not to say that unkind thing, you can do you can say something compassionate it is... you

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can decide not to water the seed of anger, you can come back to your breathing, water sees a joy, if you see that at every moment, there's an opportunity to change, so if we continue to believe in the self, we think that this circle of light is one permanent entity, and we cannot change--- there's no chance for impermanence to happen, and that is why we get stuck in our thinking about myself or my "self" so meditation, mindfulness of breathing, mindfulness of consciousness, is for the purpose of seeing these

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instances of consciousness, and making a change, deciding seeing that this is possible to train our mind to go in the direction of kindness, to go in the direction of love, to go in a direction of peace, and not to continue to take the path of anger, or fear, of jealousy, so this is how the teaching on non-self is a deep training in Buddhist psychology-- in healing and transformation.

Okay thank you...

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