

“Beginning Anew: Renewing, Refreshing and Restoring My Practice”

Plum Blossom Sangha January 2022 Hybrid Retreat

January 16, 2022

Session 3: Beginning Anew, Parts 3 and 4: Working with Our Suffering

Opening Ceremony

Homage to Thay

Silent Meditation

Review of Previous Week

Guided meditation (Music: Deep Peace Guitar- Pablo Arellano)

Please take your relaxed and alert meditation posture.

When we sit in meditation, attentive in openness to *whatever* arises, we are developing our courage and compassion and diligence.

(Music)

(59:59) Allow your eyes to close lightly.

(59: 50) Inhale long, exhale slowly with a sigh. In. Out.

(59:00) Allow your body to fall into a place of rest and non-striving.

(58:40) Allow your worries and restlessness to drop to your feet.

(58:00) A poem by Hafiz

“There is a Beautiful Creature
Living in a hole you have dug.
So at night

I set fruit and grains
And little pots of wine and milk
Beside your soft earthen mounds,
(57: 20) And I often sing.

(57:10) But still, my dear,
You do not come out.

I have fallen in love with Someone
Who *hides* inside you.

(56:45) We should talk about this problem--
Otherwise,
I will never leave you alone.”

— Hafiz, [I Heard God Laughing: Poems of Hope and Joy](#)

56:10 Every human being wants to be appreciated and loved by *others*....but what we are often *most* lonely for is our *own* loving and acceptance.

55:35 Let's see if we can coax that Beautiful Creature who hides inside us out of its hole.

55:20 Inhale long, exhale slowly.

54:00 In a time when he was suffering, Thich Nhat Hanh said that in order to give himself warmth, nourishment and protection, he held his face in his two hands.

54:25 I invite *you* now to do the same: gently hold your face with both of your hands.

53:00 Inhale long, exhale slowly.

53:35 Let your own touch soften you

53:25 and remind you of what a beautiful creature you are.

53:10 Offer your beautiful self— warmth.. nourishment.. and protection.

52:45 Now bring both of your hands to your heart, placing enough pressure there to feel your heartbeat.

52:25 Inhale long, exhale slowly.

51:55 Let your own touch soften you

51:45 and remind you that you are loved.

51:35 That you are *love*; you are love itself.

51:20 Now hold one of your hands in the other and begin to slowly, gently caress your two hands. Palms..... Fingers ...thumbs.

50:30 Inhale long, exhale slowly.

50:05 Let your own touch soften you

49:55 and remind you of the kindness you do with your 2 hands.

49:30 Now rest one hand on each of your thighs.

49:10 Inhale long, exhale slowly.

48:50 Let your own touch soften you

48:35 and remind you that you are strong and stable.

47:55 You have been searching for that which is already here. Which has *always* been here. Beauty. Compassion. Courage. Determination. Creativity. Love. Warmth. Nourishment. Protection. Kindness. Stability.

46:45 Fall in love with that Someone who hides inside you.

46:35 Call it out of its hole.

46:25 Feed it fruit and grains
And little pots of wine and milk.

46:10 Sing to it.

45:40 Begin to fade until 45:00

Walking Meditation

Dharma Talk

All of us think that we should be happy, so when life gets hard, we feel like we've done something wrong. We criticize ourselves, or feel victimized, or get aggressive or in some other way experience dukkah—the Buddha's word for *all* suffering: we feel anger, loneliness, shame, physical pain, fear, anxiety. Dukkah is like being shot by an arrow.

Dukkah, the Buddha said, is a *natural* part of the human being story like breathing and laughing and sneezing.

Misery, on the other hand, is like being shot by a *second* arrow in the same spot. This second arrow, which we fire ourselves, can take the form of *judgment*—"How could I have been so stupid?", or *worry*—"What if the pain never goes away?" or *self pity* "Why does this have to happen to me?" Or aggression or shame or hate or depression. We can quickly conjure up in our minds a hell for ourselves that multiplies the stress and pain of the first arrow, which is the actual circumstance.

So our job is to train ourselves *not* to magnify our pain by getting carried away in fear, worry, anger, blame and or despair. We have to learn to take the arrow out; we have to put down our bow and our arrows.

Our Beloved Dharma Brother, John Snyder, who died of ALS in 2017 wrote a poem about the 2nd arrow. John said,

Every being in this mad time lives with an arrow in its heart,
so said Gautama Buddha. Learn to take the arrow out,
he said, then help others do the same. Hate, fear, and anger he said,
are like a second arrow beside the first.

Take them out! There is no time to argue the fine points of archery.

Move out into the world

as wounded healers.

The world needs this medicine: the strength of your dream, your
slowness to judge, your quickness to bless.

What *causes* this miserable second arrow? Ironically, the *cause* of misery is trying to *avoid* suffering.

But because we can't escape suffering any more than we can escape breathing and sneezing, we might as well learn to *embrace* it, to *learn* from it, to put it to some use.

So instead of asking ourselves, "How can I get rid of this hurt and find happiness?" we *could* ask ourselves, "Can I sit still with the suffering— just as it is— both yours and mine, without trying to make it go away.... until it has taught me what I need to learn?"

Can I—as Thay teaches us to do—*embrace* the loneliness or anxiety or anger or depression... and let it open me?

Can I drop the drama and stay *present* and *kind* to the ache of unhappiness in *any* of its many forms... and let it *soften* me?

Can I just let go of the *little* sufferings like the *inevitable* aches and pains, dissatisfactions and disappointments, so that I'll have the energy and the *skills* to handle the *big* sufferings when they show up?

Can I allow myself to become intimate with the ways I distract myself from dukkah? How I stay busy, hide out, freeze up, or attack, and how I try to fool myself and manipulate others?

To the degree that you can work with your *whole* being—your prejudices, feelings of failure, self-pity, depression, aggression, addictions; also your sweetness and tenderness—the more you will connect with other beings—people, animals, plants and minerals—out of that wholeness.

Let me see if I can say that in fewer words. The more you can acknowledge your wholeness—your strengths and limitations—the sweeter your connections with other beings will be.

This business of being human is hard, so be kind to yourself. That doesn't mean pamper yourself, let yourself get away with murder. It means be kind to your body where you might be holding a lot of striving.

Be kind to your mind where you might be holding a lot of striving.
Let go. Yield.

Take a break from the nonstop chatter of the mind. Most of the thinking may be not so helpful anyway.

When we bring our awareness to things they change. So enjoy and make use of the gift of the energy of mindfulness.

Allow yourself to explore and *rest* in the *wonders* of life.

Thay says, “We should not be afraid of suffering. We should be afraid of only one thing, and that is *not* knowing how to *deal* with our suffering.”

The 4th and final stage of the formal practice of Beginning Anew is to take *action* on the insights and understandings you garnered as you practiced the other 3 stages.

Our teacher says that Buddhism of ideas is interesting but the *benefit* of the Buddha’s teachings is not found in knowledge; it is found only when you put the teachings of the Buddha into *action*—into the things you think and say and do in your daily life.

As we’ve seen, the practice of Beginning Anew, with its ancient roots in the Buddha’s Pava rana ceremony, is quite revolutionary. We need to be courageous and curious and compassionate to even try to practice Beginning Anew.

But Beginning Anew offers us specific, concrete ways to “deal” with our suffering.

How will *you* deal with *your* suffering? What action will you take?*

Will you make vow to take the time to be still like a tree in winter?
Remember that the Buddha taught that *activity followed by idleness* is the *natural* order of things*

Will you vow to make the effort to *appreciate* your kindness and generosity?
Remember that you contain a *one-of-a-kind* capacity for creating aliveness, joy, and restoration in yourself and in others. Your loving thoughts, words and actions allow you to cast the beauty that is *unique* to you into the world— a world that is sorely in need of *them*—and you.
Will you make the effort to *appreciate* your kindness and generosity?*

Will you vow to call up the courage to PRAY for your actions that you regret?

This humble practice of *pausing* and *reflecting* on our regrets with honesty, compassion and kindness, without blame or shame.....
of *acknowledging and accepting* that, being human, we mess up now and then...taking some kind of *action to transform* the harm done
And *yielding* your unhappiness—really letting go of your story—
this *prayerful* practice will bring you peace.

Will you vow to call up the courage to PRAY for your actions that you regret?*

Will you vow to try to *embrace* your suffering?

Remember the Buddha asked his disciples to reflect on and embrace their suffering because he understood that uncovering and acknowledging our hurts *allows* us to Begin Anew. If we don't *recognize* and *embrace* both our limitations and our strengths, how can we grow?

So Will you vow to make the effort *embrace* your suffering?*

Will you be the wounded healer who moves inward and also out with the strength of your dreams, your slowness to judge yourself and others, your quickness to bless?*

(). May the fruit of our practice of Beginning Anew benefit ourselves which includes our teacher and all beings

~Terry Cortes Vega, True Virtuous Action
Dharmacharya