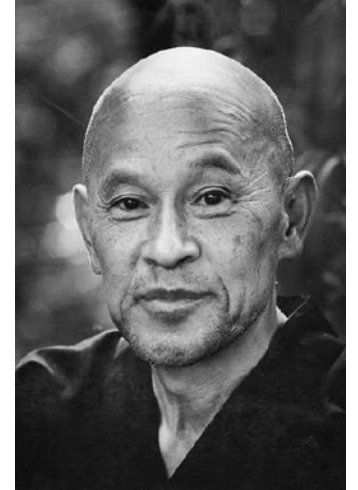
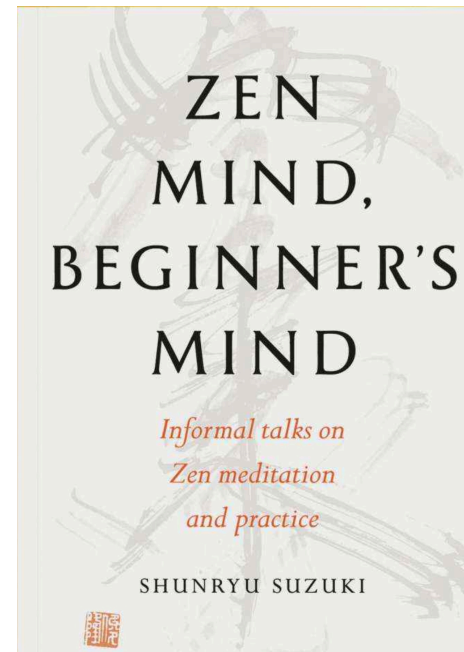
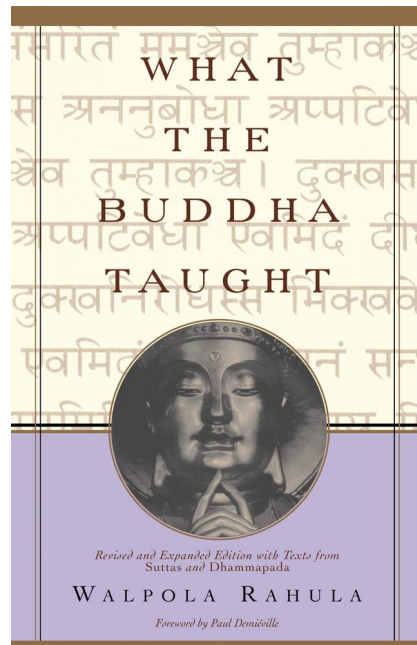




# ***Fundamental of Buddhism and Meditation***

**Bennington College      Fall 2024**

**Prof. Dor Ben-Amotz**



See other suggested books, resources and assignments in the following syllabus and slides

## **DAN 241 I: Fundamentals of Buddhism and Meditation**

Fall 2024 (2 credits) W 8:00 am, room VAPA D208

Professor Dor Ben-Amotz ([dorbenamotz@bennington.edu](mailto:dorbenamotz@bennington.edu))

Office hours Wed 10 am to noon or by appointment

In this class we will investigate the basic tenets of Buddhism and the practice of meditation. The class will focus on discussions of the reading and writing materials as well as in-class meditation experience. The goal of this course is to deepen our collective understanding of the intimate connection and complementarity of Buddhist ideas and meditation. The class discussions will encourage both skepticism and open mindedness as we dive deeply into the vast ocean of Buddha's way. Course activities will include reading Buddhist texts and writing essays that reflect and expand our collective understanding. There is no prerequisite for this class besides curiosity and a desire to understand what it is all about.

Textbooks: "What the Buddha Taught" by Walpola Rahula and "Zen Mind Beginner's Mind" by Shunryu Suzuki, as well as other recommended (optional) books and links.

### ***Learning objectives***

- *What is known about Buddha as a historic character, including his evolution from a wealthy and sheltered youth to an ascetic monk and disruptively transformative teacher.*
- *The meaning and significance of Buddha's four noble truths and eightfold path, and their relations to his enlightenment experience and subsequent teaching activities.*
- *What is known regarding the various types of meditation that Buddha actually practiced and their relation to Buddhism as a philosophical and religious movement.*
- *The historical propagation and evolution of Buddhism in Eastern and Western continents.*
- *The interconnections and interdependence of Buddhist ideas and meditation.*

## **Each class will include the following activities**

*Meditation   Reading   Discussion*

## **Reading Assignments**

*Each week, read at least one chapter from each of the two required books, in addition to browsing and reading selections from the optional books, links or other sources related to Buddhism or meditation.*

*Each week, in class, be prepared to participate in discussions and present comments or questions relating to what you have been reading.*

## **Writing Assignments**

*Maintain a journal consisting of independent paragraphs each of which describe a particular idea related to the course material, written in simple language understandable to anyone interested in Buddhism or meditation. Write at least one paragraph each week and be prepared to read and discuss your paragraph in class.*

*Write an essay relating your own experience to ideas and activities in this class.*

*Submit preliminary draft of your essay and journal before October break (Long Weekend).*

*Submit the final draft of your essay and journal at end of the semester.*

## **Assessment Criteria**

- *Attendance and active participation in class discussions.*
- *Completion of weekly writing assignments.*
- *Completion of preliminary and final drafts of your essay.*

# ***Primary Reading Material***

## **•Required Books**

- [What the Buddha Taught: Revised and Expanded Edition with Texts from Suttas and Dhammapada](#)
- [Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind: 50th Anniversary Edition](#)

## **•Optional Books**

- [Being Nobody, Going Nowhere: Meditations on the Buddhist Path](#)
- [Crooked Cucumber: The Life and Zen Teachings of Shunryu Suzuki](#)
- [Zen and the Art of Saving the Planet](#)

## ***Additional On-Line Reading Material***

- A) Life of Buddha (from the Pali Canon)  
<https://www.accesstoinsight.org/ati/ptf/buddha.html#bodhi>
- B) The Tree of Enlightenment (Fundamentals of Buddhism)  
[https://www.buddhanet.net/pdf\\_file/tree-enlightenment.pdf](https://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/tree-enlightenment.pdf)
- C) What the Buddha Taught (free PDF)  
[https://dn790002.ca.archive.org/0/items/WhatTheBuddhaTaught\\_201606/What%20the%20Buddha%20Taught.pdf](https://dn790002.ca.archive.org/0/items/WhatTheBuddhaTaught_201606/What%20the%20Buddha%20Taught.pdf)
- D) Zen Mind Beginners Mind Archive  
<http://shunryusuzuki2.com/ZMBM17.asp>
- E) Crooked Cucumber: Life & Zen Teachings of Shunryu Suzuki  
<https://www.cuke.com/cc21/chapters.htm>
- F) The Essence of Tibetan Buddhism  
<https://www.lamayeshe.com/shop/essence-tibetan-buddhism-book>
- G) Questions of an Old Lady (related to emptiness)  
<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh171.html#UT22084-059-014-section-1>
- H) Shunryu Suzuki Archive (cuke.com)  
<http://cuke.com/>
- I) Classic Buddhist Texts (84000.co)  
<https://read.84000.co/section/all-translated.html>

# ***Buddhist Teachers in Person***

**Shunryu Suzuki (rare video recordings):**

[Ri and Ji: Meditation Instructions](#) (3 minutes)   [Virtue in All Things](#) (2 minutes)   [Sound and Noise](#) (4 minutes)

**Other Short Videos of other Buddhist teachers:**

[Ayya Khema: Anxiety](#) author of *Being Nobody Going Nowhere (Fundamentals of Buddhism)*

[bell hooks](#) about her meeting *Thich Nhat Hanh*

[Sister True Dedication \(student of Thich Nhat Hanh\)](#) *How can we meditate in a world on fire?*

[Thich Nhat Hanh](#) *Non-Fear*

[Lama Yeshe \(Tibetan Monk, associate of the Dalai Lama\)](#) *Laughing with Lama Yeshe*

**Longer Videos:**

[Study Yourself – Shunryu Suzuki \(26 minutes\)](#)

(audio recordings and images, compiled by the San Francisco Zen Center in 2023)

[Branches of the Sandokai – Shunryu Suzuki](#) (15 minutes)

[Zen In America – Shunryu Suzuki Documentary](#) (~1 hour)

[Ango Sara Tashker \(~ 1 hour\)](#) *Birds and Precepts* (Green Gulch Farm)

[Tatsudo Nicole Baden Roshi \(~1 hour\)](#) *Śūnyatā (Emptiness): Presence, Absence, and the Roots of Appreciation*

[bell hooks and john a. powell \(1 hr\)](#) *Belonging Through Connection, Connectivity Through Love: Oneself, the Other and the Earth*

[Laurie Anderson's Buddhism: Art, Meditation, and Death as Adventures](#) (38 min), an interview by Scott Snibbe

[Happiest Man on Earth | Mingyur Rinpoche](#) (56 min), Talks at Google



Shunryu Suzuki

Mitsu Suzuki

Mitsu: “could you please tell me what is gained from zazen? I don’t want to do it for no reason.”

Shunryo: “The practice of zazen makes you capable of dealing with a situation in the best way, on the spot.”

“...just sit, follow your breath, count your breaths, or keep yourself centered on your hara (the lower abdomen).”

*From “Crooked Cucumber” by David Chadwick*



Shunryu Suzuki

Mitsu Suzuki

Another time Mitsu told Shunryu that she was having trouble understanding lectures about Buddhism and asked if he could tell her in a few words what Buddhism was all about.

“Mmmmm,” he murmured breathing out slowly. “Accept what is as it is and help it to be its best.”

*From “Crooked Cucumber” by David Chadwick*







Shunryu Suzuki

Mitsu Suzuki

I think most of us study Buddhism like something already given to us. We think what we should do is preserve the Buddha's teaching, like putting food in the refrigerator. We think that to study Buddhism is to take the food out of the refrigerator. Whenever you want it, it is already there. Instead, Zen students should be interested in how to produce food from the field, from the garden, should put the emphasis on the ground. If you look at the empty garden you won't see anything, but if you take care of the seed it will come up. The joy of Buddhism is the joy of taking care of the garden.

*From "Crooked Cucumber" by David Chadwick*



“Suzuki-roshi, I’ve been listening to your lectures for years,” I said, “and I really love them, and they’re very inspiring, and I know that what you’re talking about is actually very clear and simple. But I must admit I just don’t understand. I love it, but I feel like I could listen to you for a thousand years and still not get it. Could you just please put it in a nutshell? Can you reduce Buddhism to one phrase?”

Everyone laughed. He laughed. What a ludicrous question. I don’t think any of us expected him to answer it. He was not a man you could pin down, and he didn’t like to give his students something definite to cling to. He had often said not to have “some idea” of what Buddhism was.

But Suzuki did answer. He looked at me and said, “Everything changes.” Then he asked for another question.

*From “Crooked Cucumber” by David Chadwick*



## ***David Chadwick's Chat with Peter and Jane Schneider***

[July 18, 2020 Podcast](#)

Peter and Jane Schneider were Shunryu Suzuki students and are the founding teachers at the Beginner's Mind Zen Center in Northridge, on the edge of Los Angeles. They were both at the first practice period at Tassajara in 1967 and lived in Japan for 22 years.



David Chadwick

Peter and Jane  
Schneider Runk

Shunryu Suzuki

## ***David Chadwick's Chat with Peter and Jane Schneider***

[July 18, 2020 Podcast](#)



David



Peter

Jane

David:

“Is there any advantage to being a Buddhist? [1:07:55] ... Picture yourself being somebody that doesn't know anything about it. They hear you came to Zen Center and you became a Buddhist, and that filled a vacuum, or you started practicing, well what is it, what practice, what fills the vacuum?” [1:09:13]

Jane:

“Your question is confusing to me. I don't think there is anything to get. Before, I always thought there was and now I know there isn't. There isn't anything to be gotten and there isn't anything to be made or done. We just deal with where we are right now and that's become the most exciting adventure in life for me, is just doing that, it doesn't matter what it is. It's become the real adventure in my life and it's opened up many doors of understanding of the world in ways that I never dreamed were possible, you know, for people to see the world without having to go out and try to conquer it. My life feels so much more adventurous now than it did, you know, before I went to Tassajara, when I thought I could do anything I wanted, but now, when I don't do anything, my life is incredibly adventurous and interesting.” [1:13:12]

## SETTING IN MOTION THE WHEEL OF TRUTH

*(Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta)*

(The First Sermon of the Buddha)

“The Noble Truth of suffering (*Dukkha*) is this: Birth is suffering; aging is suffering; sickness is suffering; death is suffering; sorrow and lamentation, pain, grief and despair are suffering; association with the unpleasant is suffering; dissociation from the pleasant is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering—in brief, the five aggregates of attachment are suffering.

“The Noble Truth of the origin of suffering is this: It is this thirst (craving) which produces re-existence and re-becoming, bound up with passionate greed. It finds fresh delight now here and now there, namely, thirst for sense-

pleasures; thirst for existence and becoming; and thirst for non-existence (self-annihilation).

“The Noble Truth of the Cessation of suffering is this: It is the complete cessation of that very thirst, giving it up, renouncing it, emancipating oneself from it, detaching oneself from it.

“The Noble Truth of the Path leading to the Cessation of suffering is this: It is simply the Noble Eightfold Path, namely right view; right thought; right speech, right action; right livelihood; right effort; right mindfulness; right concentration.

From *What the Buddha Taught* by Walpola Rahula

# A Sketch of the Buddha's Life

## Readings from the Pali Canon

<https://www.accesstoinsight.org/ati/ptf/buddha.html#bodhi>

### The Four Noble Truths

"Now this, monks, is the noble truth of stress: Birth is stressful, aging is stressful, death is stressful; sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are stressful; association with the unbeloved is stressful, separation from the loved is stressful, not getting what is wanted is stressful. In short, the five clinging-aggregates are stressful.

"And this, monks, is the noble truth of the origination of stress: the craving that makes for further becoming — accompanied by passion & delight, relishing now here & now there — i.e., craving for sensual pleasure, craving for becoming, craving for non-becoming.

"And this, monks, is the noble truth of the cessation of stress: the remainderless fading & cessation, renunciation, relinquishment, release, & letting go of that very craving.

"And this, monks, is the noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress: precisely this Noble Eightfold Path — right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

See <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/> for more Pali Canon translations and resources

From: *What the Buddha Taught*, Chapter VI, page 56

A bhikkhu once asked [Buddha]: 'Sir, is there a case where one is tormented when something permanent within oneself is not found?'

'Yes, bhikkhu, there is,' answered the Buddha. 'A man has the following view: "The universe is that Atman, I shall be that after death, permanent, abiding, ever-lasting, unchanging, and I shall exist as such for eternity". He hears the Tathagata or a disciple of his, preaching the doctrine aiming at the complete destruction of all speculative views ... aiming at the extinction of "thirst", aiming at detachment, cessation, Nirvana. Then that man thinks: "I will be annihilated, I will be destroyed, I will be no more." So he mourns, worries himself, laments, weeps, beating his breast, and becomes bewildered. Thus, O bhikkhu, there is a case where one is tormented when something permanent within oneself is not found.'

Elsewhere the Buddha says: 'O bhikkhus, this idea that I may not be, I may not have, is frightening to the uninstructed worldling.'

From: *The Dhammapada*, see *What the Buddha Taught*, page 134

'All conditioned things are impermanent', when one sees this in wisdom, then one becomes dispassionate towards the painful. This is the Path to Purity.

'All conditioned things are *dukkha*', when one sees this in wisdom, then he becomes dispassionate towards the painful. This is the Path to Purity.

'All states (*dhamma*) are without self', when one sees this in wisdom, then he becomes dispassionate towards the painful. This is the Path to Purity.

From: *What the Buddha Taught*, Chapter VI, page 58

There is no term in Buddhist terminology wider than dhamma. It includes not only the conditioned things and states, but also the non-conditioned, the Absolute, Nirvana. There is nothing in the universe or outside, good or bad, conditioned or non-conditioned, relative or absolute, which is not included in this term. Therefore, it is quite clear that, according to this statement: 'All dhammas are without Self', there is no Self, no Atman, not only in the Five Aggregates, but nowhere else too outside them or apart from them.



**No-Self – Chariot Analogy**  
**Discussion Between Nâgasena and King Milinda**  
[https://sacred-texts.com/bud/sbe35/sbe3504.htm#page\\_43](https://sacred-texts.com/bud/sbe35/sbe3504.htm#page_43)

Milinda: 'I did not come, Sir, on foot. I came in a carriage.'

Nâgasena: 'Then if you came, Sire, in a carriage, explain to me what that is. Is it the pole that is the chariot?'

Milinda: 'I did not say that.'

Nâgasena: 'Is it the axle that is the chariot?'

Milinda: 'Certainly not.'

Nâgasena: 'Is it the wheels, or the framework, or the ropes, or the yoke, or the spokes of the wheels, or the goad, that are the chariot?'

And to all these he still answered no.

Nâgasena: 'Then is it all these parts of it that are the chariot?'

Milinda: 'No, Sir.'

Nâgasena: 'But is there anything outside them that is the chariot?'

And still he answered no.

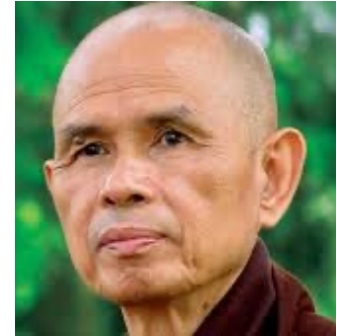
Nâgasena: 'Then thus, ask as I may, I can discover no chariot. Chariot is a mere empty sound. What then is the chariot you say you came in? It is a falsehood that your Majesty has spoken, an untruth! ...

Milinda: 'I have spoken no untruth, reverend Sir. It is on account of its having all these things--the pole, and the axle, the wheels, and the framework, the ropes, the yoke, the spokes, and the goad--that it comes under the generally understood term, the designation in common use, of "chariot."'

Nâgasena: 'Very good! Your Majesty has rightly grasped the meaning of "chariot." And just even so it is on account of all those things you questioned me about--the thirty-two kinds of organic matter in a human body, and the five constituent elements of being--that I come under the generally understood term, the designation in common use, of "Nâgasena."'

# *No Self*

by **Thich Nhat Hanh (1926-2022)**



Impermanence is looking at reality from the point of view of time. No self is looking at reality from the point of view of space. They are two sides of reality. No self is a manifestation of impermanence and impermanence is a manifestation of no self. If things are impermanent they are without a separate self. If things are without a separate self, it means that they are impermanent.

Impermanence means being transformed at every moment. This is reality. And since there is nothing unchanging, how can there be a permanent self, a separate self? When we say “self” we mean something that is always itself, unchanging day after day. But nothing is like that. Our body is impermanent, our emotions are impermanent, and our perceptions are impermanent. Our anger, our sadness, our love, our hatred and our consciousness are also impermanent.

So what permanent thing is there which we can call a self? The piece of paper these words are written on does not have a separate self. It can only be present when the clouds, the forest, the sun, the earth, the people who make the paper, and the machines are present. If those things are not present the paper cannot be present. And if we burn the paper, where is the self of paper?

Nothing can exist by itself alone. It has to depend on every other thing. That is called inter-being. To be means to inter-be. The paper inter-is with the sunshine and with the forest. The flower cannot exist by itself alone; it has to inter-be with soil, rain, weeds and insects. There is no being; there is only inter-being.

From: <https://www.lionsroar.com/looking-deeply-impermanence-no-self-nirvana/>

## CHAPTER III

### THE SECOND NOBLE TRUTH:

From: *What the Buddha Taught*, Chapter III, page 32-

Now, the Pali word *kamma* or the Sanskrit word *karma* (from the root *kr* to do) literally means 'action', 'doing'. But in the Buddhist theory of karma it has a specific meaning: it means only 'volitional action', not all action. Nor does it mean the result of karma as many people wrongly and loosely use it. In Buddhist terminology karma never means its effect; its effect is known as the 'fruit' or the 'result' of karma (*kamma-phala* or *kamma-vipaka*).

Volition may relatively be good or bad, just as a desire may relatively be good or bad. So karma may be good or bad relatively. Good karma (*kusala*) produces good effects, and bad karma (*akusala*) produces bad effects. 'Thirst', volition, karma, whether good or bad, has one force as its effect: force to continue—to continue in a good or bad direction. Whether good or bad it is relative, and is within the cycle of continuity (*samsara*). An Arahant, though he acts, does not accumulate karma, because he is free from the false idea of self, free from the 'thirst' for continuity and becoming, free from all other defilements and impurities (*ktlesa, sasava dhamma*). For him there is no rebirth.

The theory of karma should not be confused with so-called 'moral justice' or 'reward and punishment'. The idea of moral justice, or reward and punishment, arises out of the conception of a supreme being, a God, who sits in judgment, who is a law-giver and who decides what is right and wrong. The term 'justice' is ambiguous and dangerous, and in its name more harm than good is done to humanity. The theory of karma is the theory of cause and effect,

of action and reaction; it is a natural law, which has nothing to do with the idea of justice or reward and punishment. Every volitional action produces its effects or results. If a good action produces good effects and a bad action bad effects, it is not justice, or reward, or punishment meted out by anybody or any power sitting in judgment on your action, but this is in virtue of its own nature, its own law. This is not difficult to understand. But what is difficult is that, according to the karma theory, the effects of a volitional action may continue to manifest themselves even in a life after death. Here we have to explain what death is according to Buddhism.

...  
When this physical body is no more capable of functioning, energies do not die with it, but continue to take some other shape or form, which we call another life. In a child all the physical, mental and intellectual faculties are tender and weak, but they have within them the potentiality of producing a full grown man. Physical and mental energies which constitute the so-called being have within themselves the power to take a new form, and grow gradually and gather force to the full.

...  
As long as there is this 'thirst' to be and to become, the cycle of continuity (*samsara*) goes on. It can stop only when its driving force, this 'thirst', is cut off through wisdom which sees Reality, Truth, Nirvana.

## Discussion Between Nâgasena and King Milinda

<https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=-xqINgAAAEAJ&pg=GBS.PA111>

### BOOK II. CHAPTER 2.

1. [40] The king said: 'He who is born, Nâgasena, does he remain the same or become another?'

'Neither the same nor another.'

'Give me an illustration.'

'Now what do you think, O king? You were once a baby, a tender thing, and small in size, lying flat on your back. Was that the same as you who are now grown up?'

'No. That child was one, I am another.'

'If you are not that child, it will follow that you have had neither mother nor father, no! nor teacher. You cannot have been taught either learning, or behaviour, or wisdom. What, great king! is the mother of the embryo in the first stage different from the mother of the embryo in the second stage, or the third, or the fourth<sup>1</sup>? Is the mother of the baby a different person from the mother of the grown-up man? Is the person who goes to school one, and the same when he has finished his schooling another? Is it one who commits a crime, another who is punished by having his hands or feet cut off<sup>2</sup>?'

'Certainly not. But what would you, Sir, say to that?'

The Elder replied: 'I should say that I am the same person, now I am grown up, as I was when I was a tender tiny baby, flat on my back. For all these states are included in one by means of this body.'

'Give me an illustration.'

'Suppose a man, O king, were to light a lamp, would it burn the night through?'

'Yes, it might do so.'

'Now, is it the same flame that burns in the first watch of the night, Sir, and in the second?'

'No.'

'Or the same that burns in the second watch and in the third?'

'No.'

'Then is there one lamp in the first watch, and another in the second, and another in the third?'

'No. The light comes from the same lamp all the night through.'

'Just so, O king, is the continuity of a person or thing maintained. One comes into being, another passes away; and the rebirth is, as it were, simultaneous. Thus neither as the same nor as another does a man go on to the last phase of his self-consciousness<sup>1</sup>.'

'Give me a further illustration.'

'It is like milk, [41] which when once taken from the cow, turns, after a lapse of time, first to curds, and then from curds to butter, and then from butter to ghee. Now would it be right to say that the milk was the same thing as the curds, or the butter, or the ghee?'

'Certainly not; but they are produced out of it.'

'Just so, O king, is the continuity of a person or thing maintained. One comes into being, another passes away; and the rebirth is, as it were, simultaneous. Thus neither as the same nor as another does a man go on to the last phase of his self-consciousness.'

'Well put, Nâgasena!'

# Nirvana, the Waterfall

*Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind by Shunryu Suzuki*

<https://shunryusuzuki2.com/OtherFiles.asp?ID=62>

NIRVANA, THE WATERFALL *“Our life and death are the same thing. When we realize this fact, we have no fear of death anymore, nor actual difficulty in our life.”*

If you go to Japan and visit Eiheiiji monastery, just before you enter you will see a small bridge called Hanshaku-kyo, which means “Half-Dipper Bridge.” Whenever Dogen-zenji dipped water from the river, he used only half a dipperful, returning the rest to the river again, without throwing it away. That is why we call the bridge Hanshaku-kyo, “Half-Dipper Bridge.” At Eiheiiji when we wash our face, we fill the basin to just seventy percent of its capacity. And after we wash, we empty the water towards, rather than away from, our body. This expresses respect for the water. This kind of practice is not based on any idea of being economical. It may be difficult to understand why Dogen returned half of the water he dipped to the river. This kind of practice is beyond our thinking. When we feel the beauty of the river, when we are one with the water, we intuitively do it in Dogen’s way. It is our true nature to do so. But if your true nature is covered by ideas of economy or efficiency, Dogen’s way makes no sense.

I went to Yosemite National Park, and I saw some huge waterfalls. The highest of these is 1,430 feet high, and from it the water comes down like a curtain thrown from the top of the mountain. It does not seem to come down swiftly, as you might expect; it seems to come down very slowly because of the distance. And the water does not come down as one stream, but is separated into many tiny streams. From a distance it looks like a curtain. And I thought it must be a very difficult experience for each drop

of water to come down from the top of such a high mountain. It takes time, you know, a long time, for the water finally to reach the bottom of the waterfall. And it seems to me that our human life may be like this. We have many difficult experiences in our life. But at the same time, I thought, the water was not originally separated, but was one whole river. Only when it is separated does it have some difficulty in falling. It is as if the water does not have any feeling when it is one whole river. Only when separated into many drops can it begin to have or to express some feeling. When we see one whole river we do not feel the living activity of the water, but when we dip a part of the water into a dipper, we experience some feeling of the water, and we also feel the value of the person who uses the water. Feeling ourselves and the water in this way, we cannot use it in just a material way. It is a living thing.

Before we were born we had no feeling; we were one with the universe. This is called “mind-only,” or “essence of mind,” or “big mind.” After we are separated by birth from this oneness, as the water falling from the waterfall is separated by the wind and rocks, then we have feeling. You have difficulty because you have feeling. You attach to the feeling you have without knowing just how this kind of feeling is created. When you do not realize that you are one with the river, or one with the universe, you have fear. Whether it is separated into drops or not, water is water. Our life and death are the same thing. When we realize this fact we have no fear of death anymore, and we have no actual difficulty in our life.

When the water returns to its original oneness with the river, it no longer has any individual feeling to it; it resumes its own nature, and finds composure. How very glad the water must be to come back to the original river! If this is so, what feeling will we

have when we die? I think we are like the water in the dipper. We will have composure then, perfect composure. It may be too perfect for us, just now, because we are so much attached to our own feeling, to our individual existence. For us, just now, we have some fear of death, but after we resume our true original nature, there is Nirvana. That is why we say, "To attain Nirvana is to pass away." "To pass away" is not a very adequate expression. Perhaps "to pass on," or "to go on," or "to join" would be better. Will you try to find some better expression for death? When you find it, you will have quite a new interpretation of your life. It will be like my experience when I saw the water in the big waterfall. Imagine! It was 1,430 feet high!

We say, "Everything comes out of emptiness." One whole river or one whole mind is emptiness. When we reach this understanding we find the true meaning of our life. When we reach this understanding we can see the beauty of human life. Before we realize this fact, everything that we see is just delusion. Sometimes we overestimate the beauty; sometimes we underestimate or ignore the beauty because our small mind is not in accord with reality.

To talk about it this way is quite easy, but to have the actual feeling is not so easy. But by your practice of zazen you can cultivate this feeling. When you can sit with your whole body and mind, and with the oneness of your mind and body under the control of the universal mind, you can easily attain this kind of right understanding. Your everyday life will be renewed without being attached to an old erroneous interpretation of life. When you realize this fact, you will discover how meaningless your old interpretation was, and how much useless effort you had been making. You will find the true meaning of life, and even though you have difficulty falling upright

from the top of the waterfall to the bottom of the mountain, you will enjoy your life.

## *The children who remember their past lives*

What happens when your toddler is haunted by memories that aren't hers?

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2024/05/02/children-past-lives/>



# Children who claim previous life memories: A case report and literature review

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## Abstract: Objective

Academic investigation of thousands of children who claim past-life memories has been developed worldwide for five decades. However, despite the scientific and clinical significance of this substantial body of research, most clinicians and scientists are not aware of it. This study aims to report a case of a child who claimed memories that match his deceased granduncle's life and to perform a literature review of the main characteristics and implications of children's past-life claims.

## Method

We investigated the case through interviews with the child and first-hand witnesses, and conducted a documental analysis to verify possible associations between the child's statements and facts from the deceased's life. We also performed a CT scan of the child's skull to verify possible associations between anatomical features and a fatal wound from the alleged previous life.

## Results

The child presented most key features typical of such cases of claimed past-life memories. He made 13 statements about the previous life; nine were correct (e.g., the mode of death and a toy the granduncle had) and four were undetermined. The child demonstrated eight unusual behaviors that matched the previous personality's habits, interests, and manners. The child has a birth defect (a rare occipital concavity) that is compatible with the firearm injury that caused the death of his uncle.

## Conclusions

The characteristics of the reported case fit the cross-cultural patterns of children who claim past-life memories, and it has scientific and clinical implications that need to be better known and investigated.



## **Birds and Precepts**

by Ango Sara Tashker at Green Gulch Farms

"do not kill means...  
forget the self and realize profound connection,  
beyond our ideas even of connection"

*[minute 19:16]*

Shunryu Suzuki said:

"We say do not kill. But do not kill doesn't just mean don't kill flies or insects. Actually, if you say 'here is a fly, should I kill it or not?' it is too late. We always have this kind of problem, even before we see the fly. In duality where there is me and there's the fly, the completeness, the oneness, is already obscured. This is the kind of problem humans have."

*[minute 43:57]*

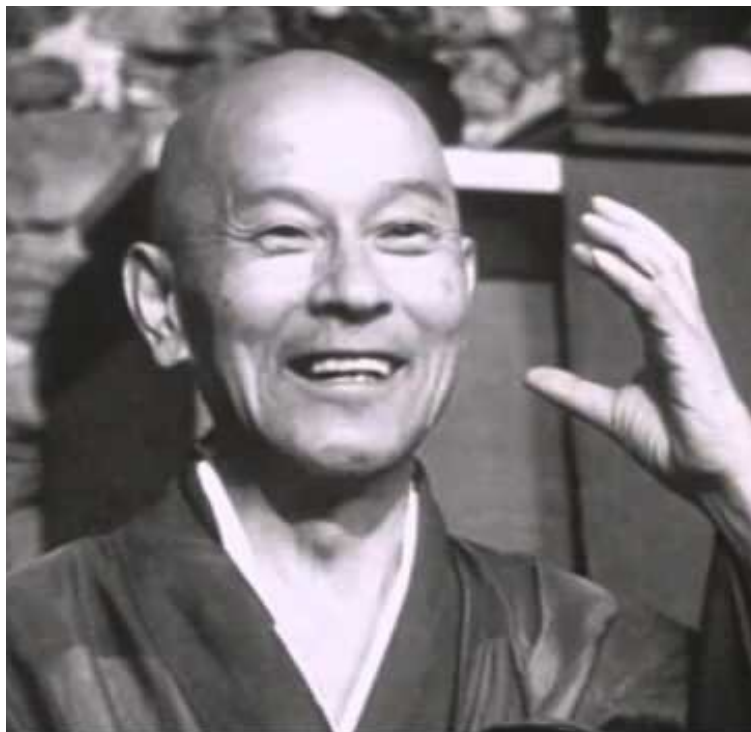
"It is not possible for anything to be killed, so the only way is to be grateful for everything that you have, that is how you keep our precepts".

*[minute 49:07]*



## The Only Desire That Is Complete Is Buddha's Desire

[File name: 69-04-08 –[original audio](#), shortened to ~25 minutes]



[Recently] I was talking about denial of, you know, desires. This is very confusing, you know – may be confusing. Our way is not asceticism, but actually, what we – if you read, you know, our precepts literally, there is no difference [laughs]. But what it means is completely different. What is the difference is what I want to talk about tonight. Or what is the difference between “to study” and “to listen to.” “Go to the master and listen to what he says” and “to study.” Or why you started to study Zen. There must be some reason why so many people come and – come to Zen Center and practice Zen and study Zen. I think this is because of the – because our culture – our civilization – came [laughs] already [to a] dead end, and if you realize that you cannot go any more – any further more. So someone who notice – people who notice that this is the dead end may come to Zen Center [laughs, laughter] to find out some way to go further. That is, you know, your feeling, you know, whether or not you understand what is dead end or why we came to the dead end.

The foundation of our culture is based on individualism. And individualism is based on, you know, idea of self, you know. And from the time of Renaissance, we awoke in our human nature, and we started to put emphasis on our human nature rather than, you know, something which is called “divine nature” or “holy nature.” We put more emphasis [on] how – what we are and what is human nature. And we wanted to express our human nature as much as possible. But – and, you know, the human nature – holy nature, you know, or buddha-nature, were replaced by human nature. And that human nature is not what we mean by buddha-nature. This is, you know, starting point of mistake. So whatever the – whatever thought may be – communism, or capitalism, or individualism – all those thoughts are based on individual right, or individual power, or individual – supremacy of individual.

So, for an instance, you know, individualism or capitalism seek for the freedom of our desire, our freedom, you know. But capitalism – or – but communism rather put emphasis on equality of the profits or right. But equality of – equality and freedom is not, you know, compatible, you know. If you want to be free, you know, from everything, if you want to extend your desire freely, limitlessly, you know, you – you cannot divide things equally, you know, because you want to extend your desire as much as you can. If each one of you extend, you know, their desire, it is not possible to – or have – to possess things equally. But our conscience – our conscience always tell us, you know, “You should be free from – you should be free in extending your desire. It is all right. It should be all right to act freely, to possess things as much as you can, if you don't disturb people.” But if you have too much, you know, when others do not have so many – so much, you don't feel so good. So [laughs] that is not compatible thought – those are not compatible.

Why, you know, this kind of – this individualism and to – and – or desire – freedom of desire and equality of our right is compatible is because our thought is based on, you know, self-centered idea. We, you know – when we say “equality,” equality means, you know, equality of our human power. When we say “desire,” “limitless desire,” “freedom of desire,” it means “our” freedom, “my” freedom, or “someone's” freedom.

So there is no idea of holy being, or Buddha, or God. There's no idea of it which will make some rule to – some background to give appropriate position to equality and desires or freedom. So those idea – those thought – if it is necessary for – for us to accommodate those thought without difficulty, it is necessary to postulate some big fundamental idea of non-selfish desire or limitless boundary of – boundary of material or place, which is not just material or spiritual. Something beyond spiritual and material is necessary. That is so-called-it “non-selfishness.”

As long as our life is controlled or based on a selfish idea, you know, it is not possible for every thought to find its own place without fighting with each other. So there's no wonder why we have difficulty in our life when we – when our life is based on just, you know, superficial idea of self or individual.

Asceticism before Buddhism – asceticism before Buddhism put emphasis-- they practiced asceticism for their future, you know, good life: to be born in some place where they have lot of enjoyment or more, you know, perfect world. That is, you know, a kind of selfish extension-- extended selfish practice. But our mortification is not based on selfish desire. The purpose of our practice is to control our desires so that our desires find its own place and act properly. We control our desire. And so that every one of us, you know, without any difficulty, to extend our desire, we practice mortification.

[minute15:35] ... [minute 32:52]

[minute 32:52]

So instead of putting emphasis on Soto way, or Rinzai way, or Tendai way, we put emphasis on nothingness. Everything comes from nothing, and our way will be extended forever, limitlessly. That is how we study Buddhism.

Our desire, you know – our desire – when it – the desire based on selfish, you know, idea, that is not acceptable. We cannot accept that kind of desire. But our – when our desire is based on-- when our desire is unselfish desire, we – that is how we extend our way.

So [there is a] difference between mortification of asceticism in preB- [?] – Buddhistic practice and asceticism. Our way is different. And the way to control our desire looks like same, but actually completely different. This is the most important point (and I didn't refer to this point on this lecture-- when I give lecture at Tassajara).

So to control – to extend our desire is to be strict to ourselves, you know. Without being strict with ourselves, we cannot do anything, because that will be the wrong practice. So first of all, you should – we should reflect on our practice. And before we say something, you know, we should reflect on ourselves. This is a very, very important point. You should not rely on some teaching, but you should reflect on yourself, and polish up yourself, and get rid of selfish idea as much as you can, even though you attained a wonderful attainment or enlightenment. If you do not polish yourself – if you forget to polish yourself – that enlightenment will not work. That is not real enlightenment.

When we realize ourselves, and when after reflecting on ourselves, and when we are able to see “things as it is,” whatever the thought may be is acceptable: “Capitalism is all right. Communism is all right. Nothing wrong with it.” But when we, you know, understand things – when our understanding is based on selfish idea, and when we try to force our opinion to others, then, without reflecting on our way, and when you attach to your own idea, rejecting other's idea, then you will be – your effort will end in dead end [laughs], you know. After all, you should fight – you will fight with others, that's all, and both will be hurt. You cannot survive any more because you lose your background-- true background.

[40:05]

...

*Later in this talk, while responding to questions, Shunryu Suzuki said:*

When you think “there is nothing wrong with extending my desire” then if someone says you should control your desire, then you will feel bad – you will feel some restriction. That is “control” in its ordinary sense. But when you reflect on your desire and understand that your desire is pretty selfish, then naturally you will limit your desire to some extent. That is not control. That is the way desire should be. There is big difference. Do you understand?

## ***More Shunryu Suzuki Quotations***

from [Cuke.com Archives Daily](#)

In short, Zen will be understood by your direct experience. And if you want to have direct understanding, you must have some confidence, strong conviction to study it. “Whatever happened, I must understand it.” This is very important. “How long it takes it doesn't matter. I will study it.” Without this kind of direct experience based on strong conviction, you cannot attain enlightenment. October 17, 2024

Zen is not something to study, maybe like you study science or philosophy. Zen is something to listen to. “Listen to” means with an empty mind, to accept the truth without seeking what your teacher says. Just listen to it with an empty mind. Then his words will penetrate into your mind. October 14, 2024

Actually, Zen is not something to talk about, and also it is something to talk about [laughs.] If you understand Zen in that way, your understanding will be perfect. If someone asks you, “What is Zen?” you may say, “Whatever you say, that is Zen.” And you may say, at the same time, “Whatever you say, it is not Zen.” [Laughs] both are true for us. October 11, 2024

You should not interpret words always in the same way. It is how we study Buddhism. If we read the same word the same way every time, that is another mistake. So constantly, we must open our eyes, open our mind, and see the situation. That is the point.. October 10, 2024

# *Ānāpānasati Sutta*

from *Awakening of the Heart, Essential Buddhist Sutras and Commentaries* by Thich Nhat Hanh)

The Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing

## SECTION ONE

I heard these words of the Buddha one time when he was staying in Savatthi in the Eastern Park, with many well-known and accomplished disciples, including Sariputta, Mahamoggallana, Mahakassapa, Maha-kaccayana, Mahakotthita, Mahakappina, Mahacunda, Anuruddha, Revata, and Ananda.<sup>2</sup> The senior *bhikkhus* in the community were diligently instructing *bhikkhus* who were new to the practice some instructing ten students, some twenty, some thirty, and some forty; and in this way the *bhikkhus* new to the practice gradually made great progress.<sup>3</sup>

That night the moon was full, and the Pavarana Ceremony was held to mark the end of the rainy season retreat.<sup>4</sup> Lord Buddha, the Awakened One, was sitting in the open air, and his disciples were gathered around him. After looking over the assembly, he began to speak:

“O *bhikkhus*, I am pleased to observe the fruit you have attained in your practice. Yet I know you can make even more progress. What you have not yet attained, you can attain. What you have not yet realized, you can realize perfectly. To encourage your efforts, I will stay here until the next full moon day.”<sup>5</sup>

When they heard that the Lord Buddha was going to stay at Savatthi for another month, *bhikkhus* throughout the country began traveling there to study with him. The senior *bhikkhus* continued teaching the *bhikkhus* new to the practice even more ardently. Some were instructing ten *bhikkhus*, some twenty, some thirty, and some forty. With this help, the newer *bhikkhus* were able, little by little, to continue their progress in understanding.

When the next full moon day arrived, the Buddha, seated under the open sky, looked over the assembly of *bhikkhus* and began to speak:

“O *bhikkhus*, our community is pure and good. At its heart, it is without useless and boastful talk, and therefore it deserves to receive offerings and be considered a field of merit.<sup>6</sup> Such a community is rare, and any pilgrim who seeks it, no matter how far he must travel, will find it worthy.

“O *bhikkhus*, there are *bhikkhus* in this assembly who have realized the fruit of arahatship, destroyed every root of affliction, laid aside every burden, and attained right understanding and emancipation.<sup>7</sup> There are also *bhikkhus* who have cut off the first five internal formations and realized the fruit of never returning to the cycle of birth and

death.<sup>8</sup>

“There are those who have thrown off the first three internal formations and realized the fruit of returning once more.<sup>9</sup> They have cut off the roots of greed, hatred, and ignorance and will only need to return to the cycle of birth and death one more time. There are those who have thrown off the three internal formations and attained the fruit of Stream-Enterer, coursing steadily to the Awakened State.<sup>10</sup> There are those who practice the Four Establishments of Mindfulness.<sup>11</sup> There are those who practice the Four Right Efforts and those who practice the Four Bases of Success.<sup>12</sup> There are those who practice the Five Faculties, those who practice the Five Powers, those who practice the Seven Factors of Awakening, and those who practice the Noble Eightfold Path.<sup>13</sup> There are those who practice loving kindness, those who practice compassion, those who practice joy, and those who practice equanimity.<sup>14</sup> There are those who practice the Nine Contemplations and those who practice the Observation of Impermanence.<sup>15</sup> There are also *bhikkhus* who are already practicing Full Awareness of Breathing.”

## SECTION TWO

“O *bhikkhus*, the method of being fully aware of breathing, if developed and practiced continuously, will have great rewards and bring great advantages. It will lead to success in practicing the Four Establishments of Mindfulness. If the method of the Four Establishments of Mindfulness is developed and practiced continuously, it will lead to success in the practice of the Seven Factors of Awakening. The Seven Factors of Awakening, if developed and practiced continuously, will give rise to understanding and liberation of the mind.

“What is the way to develop and practice continuously the method of Full Awareness of Breathing so that the practice will be rewarding and offer great benefit?

“It is like this, *bhikkhus*: the practitioner goes into the forest or to the foot of a tree, or to any deserted place, sits stably in the lotus position, holding his or her body quite straight, and practices like this: ‘Breathing in, I know I am breathing in. Breathing out, I know I am breathing out.’

1. ‘Breathing in a long breath, I know I am breathing in a long breath. Breathing out a long breath, I know I am breathing out a long breath.’
2. ‘Breathing in a short breath, I know I am breathing in a short breath. Breathing out a short breath, I know I am breathing out a short breath.’
3. ‘Breathing in, I am aware of my whole body. Breathing out, I am aware of my whole



body.' He or she practices like this.

4. 'Breathing in, I calm my whole body. Breathing out, I calm my whole body.' He or she practices like this.
5. 'Breathing in, I feel joyful. Breathing out, I feel joyful.'<sup>16</sup> He or she practices like this.
6. 'Breathing in, I feel happy. Breathing out, I feel happy.' He or she practices like this.
7. 'Breathing in, I am aware of my mental formations. Breathing out, I am aware of my mental formations.' He or she practices like this.
8. 'Breathing in, I calm my mental formations. Breathing out, I calm my mental formations.' He or she practices like this.
9. 'Breathing in, I am aware of my mind. Breathing out, I am aware of my mind.' He or she practices like this.
10. 'Breathing in, I make my mind happy. Breathing out, I make my mind happy.' He or she practices like this.
11. 'Breathing in, I concentrate my mind. Breathing out, I concentrate my mind.' He or she practices like this.
12. 'Breathing in, I liberate my mind. Breathing out, I liberate my mind.' He or she practices like this.
13. 'Breathing in, I observe the impermanent nature of all dharmas. Breathing out, I observe the impermanent nature of all dharmas.'<sup>17</sup> He or she practices like this.
14. 'Breathing in, I observe the disappearance of desire. Breathing out, I observe the disappearance of desire.'<sup>18</sup> He or she practices like this.
15. 'Breathing in, I observe cessation. Breathing out, I observe cessation.'<sup>19</sup> He or she practices like this.
16. 'Breathing in, I observe letting go. Breathing out, I observe letting go.'<sup>20</sup> He or she practices like this.

"The Full Awareness of Breathing, if developed and practiced continuously according to these instructions, will be rewarding and of great benefit."

### SECTION THREE

"In what way does one develop and continuously practice the Full Awareness of Breathing in order to succeed in the practice of the Four Establishments of Mindfulness?"

"When the practitioner breathes in or out, a long or a short breath, aware of his breath or his whole body, or aware that he is making his whole body calm and at peace, he abides

peacefully in the observation of the body in the body, persevering, fully awake, clearly understanding his state, gone beyond all attachment and aversion to this life. These exercises of breathing with Full Awareness belong to the first Establishment of Mindfulness, the body.

"When the practitioner breathes in or out, aware of joy or happiness, aware of the mental formations, or to make the mental formations peaceful, he abides peacefully in the observation of the feelings in the feelings, persevering, fully awake, clearly understanding his state, gone beyond all attachment and aversion to this life. These exercises of breathing with Full Awareness belong to the second Establishment of Mindfulness, the feelings.

"When the practitioner breathes in or out with the awareness of the mind or to make the mind happy, to collect the mind in concentration, or to free and liberate the mind, he abides peacefully in the observation of the mind in the mind, persevering, fully awake, clearly understanding his state, gone beyond all attachment and aversion to this life. These exercises of breathing with Full Awareness belong to the third Establishment of Mindfulness, the mind. Without Full Awareness of Breathing, there can be no development of meditative stability and understanding.

"When the practitioner breathes in or breathes out and contemplates the essential impermanence or the essential disappearance of desire or cessation or letting go, he abides peacefully in the observations of the objects of mind in the objects of mind, persevering, fully awake, clearly understanding his state, gone beyond all attachment and aversion to this life. These exercises of breathing with Full Awareness belong to the fourth Establishment of Mindfulness, the objects of mind.

"The practice of Full Awareness of Breathing, if developed and practiced continuously, will lead to perfect accomplishment of the Four Establishments of Mindfulness."

### SECTION FOUR

"Moreover, if they are developed and continuously practiced, the Four Establishments of Mindfulness will lead to perfect abiding in the Seven Factors of Awakening. How is this so?"

"When the practitioner can maintain, without distraction, the practice of observing the body in the body, the feelings in the feelings, the mind in the mind, and the objects of mind in the objects of mind, persevering, fully awake, clearly understanding his state, gone beyond all attachment and aversion to this life, with unwavering, steadfast, imperturbable meditative stability, he will attain the first Factor of Awakening, namely mindfulness. When this factor is developed, it will come to perfection.

"When the practitioner can abide in meditative stability without being distracted and can

investigate every dharma, every object of mind that arises, then the second Factor of Awakening will be born and developed in him, the factor of investigating dharmas. When this factor is developed, it will come to perfection.

“When the practitioner can observe and investigate every dharma in a sustained, persevering, and steadfast way, without being distracted, the third Factor of Awakening will be born and developed in him, the factor of energy. When this factor is developed, it will come to perfection.

“When the practitioner has reached a stable, imperturbable abiding in the stream of practice, the fourth Factor of Awakening will be born and developed in him, the factor of joy.<sup>21</sup> When this factor is developed, it will come to perfection.

“When the practitioner can abide undistractedly in the state of joy, he will feel his body and mind light and at peace. At this point the fifth Factor of Awakening will be born and developed, the factor of ease. When this factor is developed, it will come to perfection.

“When both body and mind are at ease, the practitioner can easily enter into concentration. At this point the sixth Factor of Awakening will be born and developed in him, the factor of concentration. When this factor is developed, it will come to perfection.

“When the practitioner is abiding in concentration with deep calm, he will cease discriminating and comparing.<sup>22</sup> At this point the seventh factor of Awakening is released, born, and developed in him, the factor of letting go.<sup>23</sup> When this factor is developed, it will come to perfection.

“This is how the Four Establishments of Mindfulness, if developed and practiced continuously, will lead to perfect abiding in the Seven Factors of Awakening.”

## SECTION FIVE

“How will the Seven Factors of Awakening, if developed and practiced continuously, lead to the perfect accomplishment of true understanding and complete liberation?”

“If the practitioner follows the path of the Seven Factors of Awakening, living in quiet seclusion, observing and contemplating the disappearance of desire, he will develop the capacity of letting go. This will be a result of following the path of the Seven Factors of Awakening and will lead to the perfect accomplishment of true understanding and complete liberation.”

## SECTION SIX

This is what the Lord, the Awakened One, said; and everyone in the assembly felt gratitude and delight at having heard his teachings.

Majjhima Nikaya, Sutta No. 118, translated from the Pali

## Footnote 18:

<sup>18</sup> Disappearance, or fading (Pali: *viraga*): A fading of the color and taste of each dharma, and its gradual dissolution, and at the same time a fading and gradual dissolution of the color and taste of desire. *Raga* means a color, or dye; here it is also used to mean desire. *Viraga* is thus the fading both of color and of craving.

# ***Examples of Reading, Viewing and Writing Assignments***

## Reading

- 1) Read the short section called “Posture” – the first section in Part I of “Zen Mind Beginner’s Mind”.
- 2) Re-read Buddha’s first two “sermons” – the last two short sections in the “Life of Buddha” text that I sent you last week.
- 3) Read the short section called “Setting in Motion the Wheel of Truth” in the “Selected Texts” Chapter at the end of “What the Buddha Taught”.
- 4) Start (slowly) going through Chapters II through VI in “What the Buddha Taught” – initially you could skim these chapters, reading only parts that seem most interesting or that answer questions you have about the above (2) and (3) readings.

## Writing

Write a paragraph expressing your current thoughts or questions about the Four Noble Truths. Ideally your paragraph should be addressed to a general audience consisting of any person that is interested in Buddhism (who is not a member of the class). In other words, your paragraphs should stand alone and not assume that the reader has heard our class discussions (although you could perhaps incorporate ideas from those discussions in your paragraph). Don’t worry about whether your current ideas are right or not – they will undoubtedly evolve with time.

Your paragraph should be short – perhaps 100-300 words (but could be shorter or longer, if you find that is required in order to express what you want to say).

### Reading

- 1) Read *Control* – the third section in Part I of *Zen Mind Beginners Mind*.
- 2) Read Chapter V about *The Fourth Noble Truth* in *What the Buddha Taught*.

### Writing

Write a paragraph relating one or both of the above readings to your personal experiences or questions about Buddhism.

### Reading

- 1) Read the attached *Karma Readings* PDF file.
- 2) Read *Nirvana, the Waterfall*, which is the last section in Part II of *Zen Mind Beginner's Mind*.

### Writing

Write a paragraph relating the above readings to your personal experiences or questions about Karma and its relation to other concepts of cause and effect.

### Listening and Watching

Watch this Dharma talk video by Sara Tashker.

[Ango Sara Tashker: Birds and Precepts](#) (Green Gulch Farm, ~1 hour)

In case the above hyperlink doesn't work, here is the web address:

<https://www.sfzc.org/teachings/dharma-talks/birds-and-precepts>

### Writing

Write a paragraph relating Sara Tashker's Dharma talk to your personal experiences or questions about Buddhist precepts, birds, organic farming, or dual versus non-dual reality (not one and not two).

### Reading

Read the three consecutive sections called *Mind Waves*, *Mind Weeds*, and *The Marrow of Zen* in the book *Zen Mind Beginner's Mind*.

### Writing

Write a paragraph inspired by the above reading in relation to what else is going on in your life or your thoughts and open questions about Buddhism and meditation.

### Reading

Read the three consecutive sections called *Mind Waves*, *Mind Weeds*, and *The Marrow of Zen* in the book *Zen Mind Beginner's Mind*, as well as the attached edited transcript of the talk by Shunryu Suzuki that we listened to in class (before long weekend).

### Writing

Write a paragraph inspired by the above reading in relation to what else is going on in your life or your thoughts and open questions about Buddhism or meditation.

### Reading and Viewing

Read the section called *No Dualism* in the book *Zen Mind Beginner's Mind*, and watch the following talk by Tatsudo Nicole Baden called *Śūnyatā (Emptiness): Presence, Absence, and the Roots of Appreciation*:

[https://youtu.be/MODB7GeU8OI?si=ou5\\_8znlxNR\\_wuR0](https://youtu.be/MODB7GeU8OI?si=ou5_8znlxNR_wuR0)

### Writing

Write a paragraph inspired by the above reading and talk, in relation to what else is going on in your life or your thoughts and open questions about Buddhism or meditation.

### Viewing

Since there is no class this week (due to the Wednesday Plan Day), here is a link to a recent YouTube video interview with Nicole Baden, which you could watch as an alternative to our class discussion.

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=7xGb0MPoZes>

The interview is quite long (over two hours), and some of the discussion of monastic life may not be as interesting or understandable to you. However, I found some parts of the interview to be quite fascinating and revealing, particularly Nicole's discussion of her early life and how she ended up becoming a Buddhist -- that discussion begins at minute 45:00 and goes on for about 1 hour (including some interesting comments about meditation near 1:45:00).

### Writing

Write a paragraph inspired by the above interview, in relation to what else is going on in your life or your thoughts and open questions about Buddhism or meditation.

Note that Nicole eventually became a head teacher at Zen Buddhist Center Schwarzwald in Germany and Crestone Mountain Zen Center in Colorado as well as the Dharma heir of Richard Baker, who is himself the Dharma heir of Shunryu Suzuki – that part of her biography is discussed in the last half hour of the interview, after 1:45:00 (ending with a discussion of the comparison of Zen Buddhist and western psychology, and Buddhist precepts).

### Reading

Read the attached *Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing (A Napanasati Sutta)* from Thich Nhat Hanh's book entitled *Awakening of the Heart, Essential Buddhist Sutras and Commentaries*. You could skip the introductory Section One and focus on Sections Two to Five.

### Viewing

Watch and listen to the following conversation between bell hooks and John A. Powell, entitled *Belonging Through Connection, Connectivity Through Love: Oneself, the Other and the Earth*, which was part of a conference called *Dialogue at the Othering & Belonging Conference* (that took place about 10 years ago).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0sX7fqIU4gQ>

### Writing

Write a paragraph inspired by the above reading and discussion, in relation to what else is going on in your life or your thoughts and open questions about Buddhism or meditation.

### Reading

Read the four consecutive sections called *Bowing, Nothing Special, Single Minded Way* and *Repetition* in *Zen Mind Beginner's Mind*.

### Writing

Write a paragraph inspired by the above reading or class discussion, in relation to what else is going on in your life or your thoughts and open questions about Buddhism or meditation.

### Reading

Read any chapter(s) in *Zen Mind Beginner's Mind*, or anything else related to Buddhism or meditation.

### Viewing

Listen to the following Laurie Anderson interview. You may also consider listening to the talk by Laurie Anderson's Tibetan Buddhist teacher, Mingyur Rinpoche (see the link below).

[Laurie Anderson's Buddhism: Art, Meditation, and Death as Adventure](#) (38 min), interviewed by Scott Snibbe on [A Skeptic's Path to Enlightenment](#):

<https://youtu.be/4hlmkNjgtwQ?si=IHogFxiF2renXv7L>

You may also choose to watch the following talk by Mingyur Rinpoche:

[Happiest Man on Earth | Mingyur Rinpoche](#) (56 min), Talks at Google

### Writing

Write something inspired by the above viewing, reading, class discussion, or anything else related to Buddhism and meditation.

### Final Class Question and Answer Discussion

Think about a question for our last class discussion, when you will each have a chance to ask a question and to answer another question related to this course (or life in general)? There are no right or wrong questions or answers. Each question and answer will take about 2 min (some could be shorter, and some bit longer).