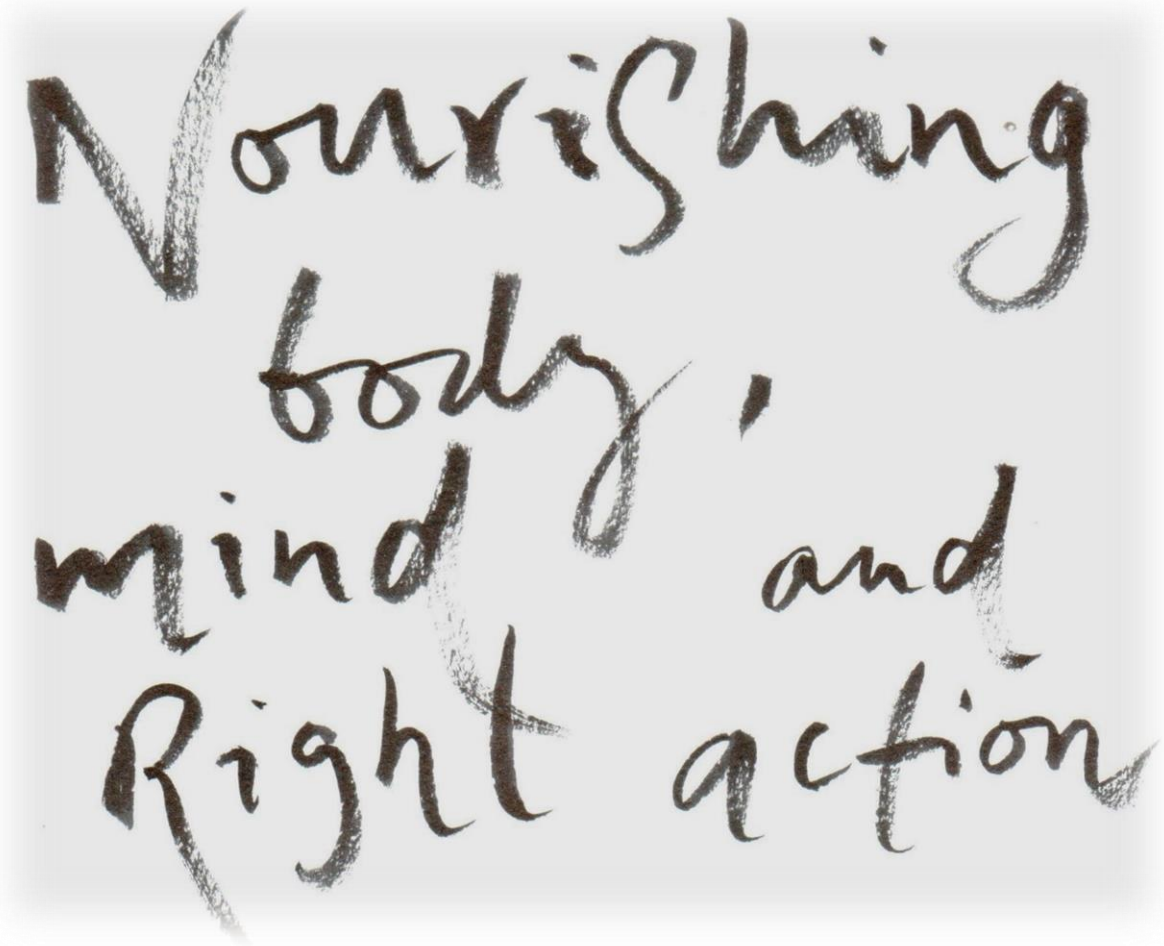


90 Day – Fall Retreat 2019

Teachings at Deer Park Monastery



Nourishing
body,
mind and
Right action

Dharma Teachers will offer talks on Sundays with the Noble Eightfold Path and Four Nutriment as a foundation for transformation and healing.

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From: Mindfulness Bell Issue #13 Spring 1995 – from talk by Thich Nhat Hanh on the Noble Eightfold Path

The Noble Eightfold Path is made up of **Right View, Right Speech, Right Livelihood, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration, Right Thought, Right Action and Right Effort**. Right View is the insight that we have within us of the reality of life. Our insight, understanding, wisdom, knowledge, happiness, and the happiness of those around us depend very much on the degree of Right View that we have. That is why Buddhist practice always aims at helping us develop a deeper understanding of what is going on within us and around us.

Right View is not an ideology, a system, or even a path. Right View is living insight that fills a person with understanding, love, and peace.

Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration, and Right View are the basis of the practice. The practice of Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, and Right Effort are easy and natural when the practice of Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration, and Right View have become solid.

Right Thinking is a practice, and its essence lies in mindfulness. If you are not mindful, your thinking cannot be right. If you are not mindful, how can you practice Right Speech? You can make a lot of people unhappy and create a war within your community or family. That is why mindfulness in speaking is the heart of right speech. Right Action – not to kill, not to steal, not to commit adultery, etc. – cannot be practiced properly unless mindfulness is the foundation of your being. The same applies to Right Livelihood; if you are mindful of the ecosystem and the suffering of other species, your attempt to practice Right Livelihood has a chance to succeed. If you are not mindful about what is happening to the earth, the water, the air, the suffering of humans and animals, how can you practice Right Livelihood? Mindfulness must be the basis of your practice. If your efforts are not mindful, those efforts will not bring about the good result you hope for. Without mindfulness, the more effort you make, the more you can create suffering and disorder. That is why Right Effort, too, should be based on mindfulness.

When you practice Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration is easy. The energy of mindfulness already contains the energy of concentration, and with mindfulness and concentration, you practice looking, listening, and touching deeply, and out of that deep looking, listening, and touching, Right View is the fruit. Understanding and insight grow. As Right View continues to grow, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, and Right Effort will become stronger. When you sit correctly, your thinking is clear, and you act accordingly and practice Right Livelihood. Everything depends on Right View, and Right View depends on Right Mindfulness.

***The following texts are excerpts from
Chanting from the Heart, published by Parallax Press***

From: Discourse on the Four Kinds of Nutriment

There are four kinds of nutriment which enable living beings to grow and maintain life. What are these four nutriment?

The first is edible food, the second is the food of sense impressions, the third is the food of volition, and the fourth is the food of consciousness.”

“Bhikkhus, how should a practitioner regard edible food? Imagine a young couple with a baby boy whom they look after and raise with all their love. One day they decide to bring their son to another country to make their living. They have to go through the difficulties and dangers of a desert. During the journey, they run out of provisions and fall extremely hungry. There is no way out for them and they discuss the following plan: ‘We only have one son whom we love with all our heart. If we eat his flesh we shall survive and manage to overcome this dangerous situation. If we do not eat his flesh all three of us will die.’ After this discussion, they killed their son, with tears of pain and gritting their teeth they ate the flesh of their son, just so as to be able to live and come out of the desert.” The Buddha asked: “Do you think that couple ate their son’s flesh because they wanted to enjoy its taste and because they wanted their bodies to have the nutriment that would make them more beautiful?” The monks replied: “No, Venerable Lord.” The Buddha asked: “Were the couple forced to eat their son’s flesh in order to survive and escape from the dangers of the desert?” The monks replied: “Yes, Venerable Lord.” The Buddha taught: “Monks, every time we ingest edible food, we should train ourselves to look at it as our son’s flesh. If we meditate on it in this way we shall have clear insight and understanding which puts an end to misperceptions about edible food and our attachment to sensual pleasures will dissolve. Once the attachment to sensual pleasures is transformed there are no longer any internal formations concerning the five objects of sensual pleasure in the noble disciple who applies himself to the training and the practice. When the internal formations still bind us we have to keep returning to this world.

“How should the practitioner meditate on the food of sense impressions? Imagine a cow which has lost its skin. Wherever it goes the insects and maggots which live in the earth, in the dust and on the vegetation attach themselves to the cow and suck its blood. If the cow lies on the earth, the maggots in the earth will attach themselves to it and feed off of it. Whether lying down or standing up, the cow will be irritated and suffer pain. When you ingest the food of sense impressions, you should practice to see it in this light. You will have insight and understanding which puts an end to

misperceptions concerning the food of sense impressions. When you have this insight you will no longer be attached to the three kinds of feeling. When no longer attached to the three kinds of feeling the noble disciple does not need to strive anymore because whatever needs to be done has already been done.

“How should the practitioner meditate on the food of volition? Imagine there is a village or a large town near to a pit of burning charcoal. There are only the smokeless, glowing embers left. Now there is an intelligent man with enough wisdom who does not want to suffer and only wants happiness and peace. He does not want to die and he only wants to live. He thinks: ‘Over there the heat is very great, although there is no smoke and there are no flames. Still, if I have to go into that pit there is no doubt that I shall die.’ Knowing this he is determined to leave that large town or that village and go somewhere else. The practitioner should meditate like this on the food of volition. Meditating like this he will have insight and understanding which puts an end to misperceptions about the food of volition. When he arrives at that understanding the three kinds of craving will be ended. When these three cravings are ended, the noble disciple who trains and practices will have no more work to do, because whatever needs to be done has already been done.

“How should the practitioner meditate on the food of consciousness? Imagine that the soldiers of the king have arrested a criminal. They bind him and bring him to the king. Because he has committed theft he is punished by people piercing his body with three hundred knives. He is assailed by fear and pain all day and all night. The practitioner should regard the food of consciousness in this light. If he does he will have insight and understanding which puts an end to misperceptions concerning the food of consciousness. When he has this understanding regarding the food of consciousness the noble disciple who trains and practices will not need to strive anymore because whatever needs to be done has been done.”

Nourishing Happiness

Sitting here in this moment, protected by the Sangha, my happiness is clear and alive. What a great fortune to have been born a human, to encounter the Dharma, to be in harmony with others, and to water the Mind of Love in this beautiful garden of practice. The energies of the Sangha and mindfulness trainings are protecting and helping me not make mistakes or be swept along in darkness by unwholesome seeds. With kind spiritual friends, I am on the path of goodness, illumined by the light of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Although seeds of suffering are still in me in the form of afflictions and habit energies, mindfulness is also there, helping me touch what is most wonderful within and around me.

I can still enjoy mindfulness of the six senses: my eyes look peacefully upon the clear blue sky, my ears listen with wonder to the songs of birds, my nose smells the rich scent of sandalwood, my tongue tastes the nectar of the Dharma, my posture is upright, stable, and relaxed, and my mind is one with my body.

If there were not a World-Honored One, if there were not the wonderful Dharma, if there were not a harmonious Sangha, I would not be so fortunate to enjoy this Dharma happiness today. My resources for practice are my own peace and joy. I vow to cultivate and nourish them with daily mindfulness. For my ancestors, family, future generations, and the whole of humanity, I vow to practice well.

In my society I know that there are countless people suffering, drowned in sensual pleasure, jealousy, and hatred. I am determined to take care of my own mental formations, to learn the art of deep listening and using loving speech in order to encourage communication and understanding and to be able to accept and love.

Practicing the actions of a bodhisattva, I vow to look with eyes of love and a heart of understanding. I vow to listen with a clear mind and ears of compassion, bringing peace and joy into the lives of others, to lighten and alleviate the suffering of living beings. I am aware that ignorance and wrong perceptions can turn this world into a fiery hell. I vow to walk always upon the path of transformation, producing understanding and loving kindness. I will be able to cultivate a garden of awakening.

Although there are birth, sickness, old age, and death, now that I have a path of practice, I have nothing more to fear. It is a great happiness to be alive in the Sangha with the practice of mindfulness trainings and concentration, to live every moment in stability and freedom, to take part in the work of relieving others' suffering, the career of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

In each precious moment, I am filled with deep gratitude. I bow before the World-Honored One. Please bear witness to my wholehearted gratitude, embracing all beings with arms of great compassion.

Protecting and Transforming

We, your disciples, who from beginningless time have made ourselves unhappy out of confusion and ignorance, being born and dying with no direction, have now found confidence in the highest awakening. However much we may have drifted on the ocean of suffering, today we see clearly that there is a beautiful path. We turn toward the light of loving kindness to direct us. We bow deeply to the Awakened One and to our spiritual ancestors who light up the path before us, guiding every step. [bell]

The wrongdoings and sufferings that imprison us are brought about by craving, hatred, ignorance, and pride. Today we begin anew to purify and free our hearts. With awakened wisdom, bright as the sun and the full moon, and immeasurable compassion to help humankind,

we resolve to live beautifully. With all our heart, we go for refuge to the Three Precious Jewels. With the boat of loving kindness, we cross over the ocean of suffering. With the torch of wisdom, we leave behind the forest of confusion. With determination, we learn, reflect, and practice. Right View is the ground of our actions, in body, speech, and mind. Right Mindfulness embraces us, walking, standing, lying down, and sitting, speaking, smiling, coming in, and going out. Whenever anger or anxiety enter our heart, we are determined to breathe mindfully and come back to ourselves. With every step, we will walk in the Pure Land. With every look, the Dharmakaya is revealed. We are careful and attentive as sense organs touch sense objects so mindfulness will protect us all day, so all habit energies can be observed and easily transformed. May our heart's garden of awakening bloom with hundreds of flowers. May we bring the feelings of peace and joy into every household. May we plant wholesome seeds on the ten thousand paths. May we never have the need to leave the Sangha body. May we never attempt to escape the suffering of the world, always being present wherever beings need our help. May mountains and rivers be our witness in this moment as we bow our heads and request the Lord of Compassion to embrace us all.

From: Discourse on the Dharma Seal

The Buddha said, “Emptiness is neither being nor nonbeing. It is free from all wrong views. It is neither produced nor destroyed, and it cannot be grasped by views. Why is this so? Because emptiness cannot be located in space. It has no form. It is not an object of perception. It has never been born, and the intellect cannot grasp it. Because it cannot be grasped, it embraces all dharmas and dwells only in non-discursive, nondiscriminative wisdom. This is the only true and right understanding, bhikshus! You should know that not only emptiness, but all dharmas are like that. This is the Dharma Seal.

“The Dharma Seal is also called the **Three Doors of Liberation**. It is the basic teaching of all Buddhas, the eye of all Buddhas, the destination of all Buddhas. Listen and receive it with care. Memorize it well and practice it right in the heart of reality. “Bhikshus, find a quiet place to meditate, such as in a forest under a tree. There you can see that form is painful, empty, and impermanent, and as a result, you will not be attached to form. You will reach the nondiscriminative understanding of form. Then do the same for feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousnesses. See that they are painful, empty, and impermanent, and rise above wrong views about them. Realize the nondiscriminative understanding of feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness. Bhikshus, the Five Aggregates are empty. They are produced from the mind. Once the mind stops operating in its usual way, the aggregates stop operating as well. When you see this, you will be liberated, free from all views. This is **emptiness**, the First Door of Liberation.

“Bhikshus, dwelling in concentration, see the dissolution of form, and be free from the illusory nature of perception vis-à-vis form. See the dissolution of sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental formations, and be free from the illusory nature of perceptions vis-à-vis sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental formations. This meditation is called **signlessness**, the Second Door of Liberation. Once you have entered this door, your knowledge will be pure. Because of this purity of understanding, the three defiling qualities of mind — greed, hatred, and delusion — will be uprooted. With these uprooted, you will dwell in the realm of non-discursive, nondiscriminative knowledge. When you are dwelling in this knowledge, views concerning ‘me and mine,’ and thus all views, no longer have the bases and the occasions to arise. “Bhikshus, once you are free from the view ‘I am,’ you no longer consider what you see, hear, feel, and perceive as realities independent of your own consciousness. Why? Because you know that consciousness also arises from conditions and is impermanent. Because of its impermanent nature, it cannot be grasped either. This meditation is called **wishlessness** (*aimlessness*), the Third Door of Liberation. Once you enter this door, you experience fully the true nature of all dharmas, and you no longer cling to any dharma because you have seen the unconditioned nature of all dharmas.”