

# DOM – January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2026

## Chanting From The Heart - Sr Dinh NghiêM

### Sutra on Measuring and reflecting

Dear sisters, dear brothers, hello everyone. Before we begin a new sutra, I'd like to listen, I'd like to answer a couple of questions that I received, questions I received during the last session. So, to summarise the essential of the twelve co-arising of interdependence, when we study these twelve links, we recognise our profound, in Buddhism, the essential of the non-self.

We look to explain the existence or the phenomena with this attachment to self. And that's why when we study this, we remember to return to our self, to our way of thinking, why we think in this direction of the non-self, of interdependence, of interbeing, because attachment to self is the source of all suffering. And we know that in certain Buddhist schools, traditions, the idea of reincarnation is still present, and we too, within the Buddhism, we think about reincarnation to a self, to a conscience that continues from life to life, and that changes from body to body with the reincarnation.

And according to the sutra, the Middle Way, the Buddha said, we need to transcend this notion of self, of being, and of non-being, no-being. Because our seventh conscience that we can study, that different consciousness, that our profound conscience, the profound manas, always looks to attach itself to a self. And these twelve links, they remind us that even in Buddhism and in the teachings that we read and listen to, we dream, we have to be very careful, because there are still some teachings that can bring us to that direction of the self.

We have to be very careful. We need to identify and recognise that, so that we can have the right thinking. We must not nourish and return to this wrong path.

And so what we have to keep in mind, that's the essential and the summary of the twelve links that brings us to the right view, that is because this is, because that is, this is born because that is born. This ceases because that ceases, interbeing and interdependence. And then there's the question, is there a paradox between, with the fact of searching for equanimity, this duality, and the fact that in our practise and everyday life, we need to privilege one aspect.

So privilege action and non-action, that's a very good question. We can keep in mind when Thay, he would repeat, he would repeat after a sutra or after a teaching, we need, we need to remind ourself, what do I get out of these teachings, so that I can put them in my practise in everyday life and so that I may suffer less and that I can, and that I may be happier. So our goal is to liberate ourselves from suffering.

And that's very clear. It's not because that we study non-duality and equanimity that we lose this attention, this desire, this wish, and what does it serve, non-duality and equanimity. So

when we follow this path, it's, when we study non-duality, we go on the path with joy and we can be happy every single moment on this path, because we see that suffering can transform itself in happiness, in joy, because we see, we see that happiness is made of suffering.

And with this understanding, we don't go towards one of these extremes. We don't attach ourselves to happiness so that we reject suffering at all costs. With this non-duality, we can smile to our suffering, so we can smile to suffering and happiness at the same time.

Thank you for inviting us out of the bell every 15 minutes to allow me to come back to ourselves, to our breathing, to relax. So now there is no paradox between these two things, non-duality and our own practise. And that's why non-duality helps us on this path and non-duality helps us on the, is adding to our path and to our practise.

And how can we engage, and that's, there's a question, the next question is how to engage ourselves without, and remaining calm, that's it. When our thoughts go into the direction of non-duality, inclusiveness, we can, we can stay calm. I told you many times, some examples, some stories, when there was a catastrophe, a disaster in 2009, when our monastery in Prajna, Bhatnia in Vietnam, had been taken down and monastic had to go away, and everybody was very overwhelmed and confused, and shaken, everybody was shaken.

I think it was one of the most severe and tragic events that has happened in Plum Village, and Thay was very calm, peaceful, he was staying there to remind us that we cannot jump to the conclusion that if it's good or if it's bad, it could be good as well. And Thay, recall the story of Mr. Thay, in one of the sessions I told you this story of Mr. Thay, Mr. Thay is T-A-I, not like Thay, our teacher, and all our Chinese friends they know this story from Mr. Thay. I don't know, in Chinese maybe there's another name or another way of pronouncing it, and when we see, when we look into things in a length of time that is much wider, much longer, and with non-duality, we can stay at peace, because we don't know yet what's coming next, we don't know what's coming next, and what will lead.

And now, many years later, we have seen that the dissolution of the Patna Monastery allowed Plum Village to develop many monasteries all around the world, with the presence of monastics everywhere, because our brothers and sisters of this monastery were allowed to go somewhere else to continue on their monastic path. And from this event, we have had Plum Village in Thailand, we've had the monastery of Magnolia Grove in the United States, and other monasteries. And what is the sense of our personal practise regarding engaged Buddhism? So engaged Buddhism, that, to answer this question, I could spend a whole session, over an hour and a half, but to really sum up, summarise, first of all, I need to ask the question back, what is engaged Buddhism? How do you understand engaged Buddhism? To answer this question, we need to really understand what it means, engaged Buddhism.

It's a practise, it's an everyday life practise that goes into all aspects, at work, in all our activities, in our family, and this practise answers to your everyday life questions, to your everyday worries, and what can we contribute to our world today? If our world today is a world of chaos, of worries, so what can we actually contribute? Can we contribute the energy of peace, love, to this world, or can we contribute the energy we let ourselves be drifted away by the collective energy, by a collective consciousness that goes towards war, destruction? So now we will continue with the sutra, Discourse on Measuring and Reflecting. So the Discourse

on Measuring and Reflecting. During one of our sessions, I told you that once Thay started a monastic community in Plum Village, after the ordination of Sister Chan Khong and Sister Annabel Suchanduik.

So in Plum Village, Thay started to establish the tradition of the three-month rains retreat during winter, and indeed this retreat has been open to lay friends as well, and most of the participants were lay friends. There were other monks and nuns who came from different monasteries, and there were some who stayed back in Plum Village forever, like Thay Yak Tan and others who after a few rains retreats, or winter retreats, went back to their monasteries. And the first winter retreat Thay taught Buddhist psychology, or we can call it the study of the mind.

And one, two, three retreats, three retreats later, three-month retreat later, Thay taught the sutras, the sutras first from the Southern school. So Thay taught the sutras first from the Southern school, and after Thay passed two winters to teach the sutras from the Northern school. And in the previous sessions I explained to you both traditions.

And some teachings from these winter retreats, some friends of Thay and us, have transcribed them to publish into a book. So it's the book called the Diamond Sutra, so the teachings of Thay on the Diamond Sutra, the Sutra of Bhimbakirti, the Lotus Sutra. These are the sutras that Thay taught the sutras from the Northern school.

And we can see that during this time Thay has really studied the Chinese and Pali canons to teach the sutras. And just a few years before that Thay collected the sutras in order to create the Diamond Sutra. And the Diamond Sutra was the first chanting book of Plum Village.

He selected a certain number of sutras to establish and create the first chanting book published in 1988 for Plum Village. That was a year of Sister Chan Khong and Sister Chan Dik's ordination. Thank you Lily.

And in this first book of verses, I don't have it here to show it to you. When I'll be back at Plum Village I will try to find this book. And in this book of chants they didn't have this discourse on measuring and reflecting.

Eight years later when he reviewed and revised this book of chants he added this sutra. It's a sutra that was taught by the venerable Shariputra. In this book of chants there are two sutras that were not taught by the Buddha but by the disciples of the Buddha.

Another one we have already seen and we've already discussed and that's the sutra on the means of bringing an end to anger and it was taught by the venerable Shariputra. And we're going to study today the discourse on measuring and reflecting. And it's really important for monastic life.

And when the monastic community at Plum Village was founded he added this sutra in the book of chants and he taught it. And I've said that it's very important for monastic life but I think it's very important for community life, lay community life with the community of interbeing, with the members of interbeing. And during this period in 1996, so he put together this book of chants in 1996.

When he added this discourse it was in 1998 and during this period he established the shining light practise at Plum Village. And so every year during the rains retreat of three years during the winter the nuns and monks practise the shining light. And before the full ordination or receiving the lamp we also practise shining light for those who receive the lamp that receive the precepts.

And the lay people and so the lay people who do the rains retreat at Plum Village we also encourage them to practise shining light. And we see when we live together the sutra is really important. It helps a lot when we live together in a big family.

The sutra really supports us in our shining light practise. Before I continue with another idea, except when we live alone we don't need to practise according to the sutra. But even when we live alone and we need to work and have contact as a human being, we're a social animal.

We always have contacts with others and interaction with others. And the more we live with other people in a community or with our family or with colleagues at work, the more we have little conflicts and we rub each other in a certain way and we have experiences in life. When I say community life, I'm not talking about like community life at Plum Village, but more like having to work with others.

And so the more we have experiences, that's how we can get lessons and we can have we can improve our relationships with others. At the time of the Buddha, the Buddha's disciples, they would give teachings and in this collection of sutras we see a lot, many sutras that have been offered by the disciples of the Buddha, by the monks and by the nuns. Yesterday when I was preparing for this course, I took down some, I wrote some notes.

There were some nuns like Sister Damatina and the sisters also gave teachings. At the end of the teachings, the Buddha would say to his teachers, you gave a wonderful teaching. I cannot do better.

I cannot say better. And I remember Thay, he really learned from the Buddha. I remember when Sister Annabel would teach or there would be journalists in Thay's huts and the journalists asked a question, Thay would invite Sister Annabel to answer the question and at the end Thay would say, I cannot, I would not have been able to answer better.

Now we're going to read the Discourse on Measuring and Reflecting. Thus I have heard on the occasion of Venerable Mahamoggalyana was staying with the Baghdad people at Sumo in the Deer Park at Baghdad. The Venerable Mahamoggalyana spoke as follows.

My friends, suppose there is a bhikkhu who says to the other bhikkhus, please talk to me, Reverend Bhikkhus, I want you to be kind to me and speak to me. If he has characteristics that make other people not want to talk to him, if he is impatient, not open, not good at accepting constructive criticism or the words of advice and instruction from friends in the practise, then they will think that they cannot speak to, teach or have confidence in him. My friends, what are the qualities that make others look on the bhikkhu as someone who is difficult to talk to? So this means that at the time of the book Uda, in the community, there were these events when a bhikkhu would ask another bhikkhu to talk to him.

You know that in the Vinaya, there is a practise to manage our difficulties in the community. So when there is a monastic that harms a lot and that is very obstinate and very, very obstinate and does harm, doesn't listen to anyone and causes a lot of difficulties in the community and that really disturbs the community and that is really, who is really obstinate and doesn't want to change and have ways, there are ways in the Vinaya to manage this. No one will speak to this monastic.

When no one can do anything, then the practise of silence towards this person is a means, is a way and when everyone sees that no one speaks and this person is completely isolated, then it makes this person reflect, why doesn't anybody speak to me? What have I done to wake this person up? So if we want this person to contemplate and does something to change the situation, you know the silence is very powerful. It's non-violent. The silence is very powerful and it has a great impact on the person and this person cannot support this silence and either this person will change but if they cannot change, change their ways, they will leave the community.

And so the monk who posed this question is either in this situation or almost in this situation but we see that this monastic is very nice and has compassion and he asks, please speak to me, have compassion for me, to talk to me. If the monastic utters this sentence, that means that he sees there is a problem. When the person doesn't see the problem, then there is a real problem.

When a problem says, oh I have no problem with the community, there's no problem at all, I don't have problems with other people, with myself, then that's a desperate cause. But this monk, he sees that there's a problem because nobody is talking to him so he asks other people to speak to him. And so it is possible to change and that is what's happening and that's what happened also in the time of the Buddha and that's what Mahamudgalyayana.

So then, then the elders of the community, the elder brother, explain why, why this monk has been in such a situation, why everybody, nobody was talking to him, nobody was speaking to him, why it was difficult to talk to him. And then the elder brother, our eldest brother, named one by one the characteristics, the different points why others could not speak to him. If he's impatient and closed, if he doesn't accept criticism, if he's not constructive criticism, words of advice and instruction from friends in the practise, then those who practise the path with him will think he's not one to be spoken to, he's not one to be instructed, he's not someone to have confidence.

And what are the qualities that make someone difficult to approach? And that's then the list. My friends, a bhikkhu who is attached to wrong desires, firstly, and then is controlled by wrong desires, is difficult to approach and talk to. There are other reasons that make it difficult to approach and talk to him.

So we're counting, impatient and intolerant, not good at accepting constructive criticism. And now, we're not talking about desire, or what we call wrong desires, and he lets himself be controlled by these wrong desires. And then he's constantly praising himself while de-praising others.

And he becomes angry, easily angered, and then he criticises, accuses or questions the friend who noticed his character, and questions his friend back, and answers in a different way. And

he does not succeed in explaining his behaviour when corrected. He's unmindful and ill-willed, he's jealous and greedy, he's hypocritical and deceitful, he's stubborn and arrogant, or he's worldly and clings to things that belong to this world, and finds it difficult to let go.

These, my friends, is the list. And by counting all these points, we have 18 of them. My friends, so the following paragraph is the repetition of all these points.

So, in our community of the OI members, or in our families, is there anyone who has one of these points, or two, or three? I think that as human beings we're not perfect, and ourselves, there's one or many points in us. And for sure, in our families, there must be some or many points in each member of our family, in each member of our community, n'est-ce pas? Right? Because we're not perfect. And when, when we're not perfect, we're not perfect and these points irritate us or make us angry, what shall we do in order to transform this irritation and this anger? My friends, my friends, one should infer one's own state by considering the state of others in the following way, that person has wrong desires.

And what is wrong desires here? Here we mean a passion, a desire that is attached, an attachment. And when we're attached, we want, we absolutely want this thing. For example, when we desire to play a game, today, there's a lot of addictions.

And when we play a game, there's a lot of addictions, amongst children, teenagers, adults. And there's more addictions today than there used to be. With the screens, the video games, and computers and laptops as well, it's an addiction.

Today, there are people that spend hours and hours on internet with their computers. And we, we think that, yeah, maybe we're thinking that we're working with a computer, but if we look deeply, we can see that there's addiction there as well. It could be an addiction or a desire.

When there's attachment, then we can't call it desire. Attachment is when we cannot stop, it's time to eat with the family and the person doesn't want to stop to eat. Because there is attachment to screens.

So now everywhere we go, we see people with their screens, on their screens. And today, when we go to the restaurant, for example, it's very sad. It's very sad.

In the past, when we were eating, whether in our families or in the restaurant, everybody was looking at each other, was talking to each other. And today, when you go to the restaurant, you will see that while waiting for the food to come, what is each member of the family doing? All children, parents, everybody has a phone, an iPhone, and they look. They're scrolling, they're messaging, they're texting, and when food's coming, people can eat, can stop, and then what do they do? They take a few spoons, they look next to them, to check if there's another message, another incoming message.

And this is really sad. And once, I saw, I saw a person with a phone, and he was talking to his grandmother. And I saw, I seldom, I sometimes go to Paris, very seldom, but I would go, I would take the train, the bus, then the metro.

And when I was really sad, I saw a young girl going to the bus with her grandmother, and this little daughter was so cute, and she was really talkative, and just talking and talking to her grandmother. and once they were both sitting she continued to talk and she was sharing so many stories to her grandmother and her grandma gave her a phone and I saw a switch, a complete switch from a very young cute and talkative girl who wanted to share her stories to her grandmother and as soon as she saw the phone she was fully absorbed, absorbed into the screen and she couldn't see anyone anymore, she couldn't see her grandmother, she couldn't, she wasn't talking anymore, she was fully absorbed by the phone. So this is a type of desire and currently I'm in the United States and I'm surrounded by my family and I've heard many stories and I heard that Bill Gates, many years before he started to launch many softwares, technologies like computer technologies and sciences, he didn't, his own children, he didn't let his own children when they were young, he didn't let them touch the screen of the computer.

People who are working in this field know really well that they're looking for, they're trying to attract the attention, they're captivating people, the adult, the children and for video games it's really, they put a lot of money to study and to research to find the best way to captivate, get people's attention and now a lot of people in the world are addicted to game, video games, computers, screens and this is the desire we're talking about in this kind of, in this sutra. All desire, all attachment and children can be so violent and angry when we forbid them to continue to play video games, continue looking at their phones or continue doing what they're doing on their phones which we actually don't know. This attachment make them become really angry and violent and like people who are addicted to drugs or so this is the desire we're talking about.

So you know at the time of the Buddha in the community, in the monastic community when They was teaching this sutra, I remember that at this time in 1998 we had directly thought that when we read this sutra, this specific line, we thought about the desire of a sexual desire because in monastic community the desire and the attachment, we don't have video games, we don't have other desires actually and we make the vow to live a life of celibacy and that's why we were thinking about sexual desire. We made the vow to live a life of chastity and if we cannot manage our sexual desire, we can fall into attachment with someone and for monks and nuns it's our proclamation because it's not easy as a human being. There is a sexual desire in us like any other living species.

So as a human being, we as monastics, we also have sexual desires just like any other being. So we have to manage our, we need to transform this and sexual energy and transform it into an energy of service so that we may continue on our path and we see very clearly that when there's attachment to sexual energy, we see that it burdens us and prevents us from living in harmony with all the others in our community. When we have attachment, we only see this person and we don't see anybody else.

So in a big community with 50 people and so we have this attachment, we only see one person and that becomes an obstacle in our monastic life. We cannot live in equanimity. We cannot live in non-discrimination.

We cannot live with authentic love that doesn't have any discrimination and that's why it becomes an obstacle. And also for the monks and the nuns, another obstacle is the desire for popularity of celebrity. In the beginning, it's very subtle.

It's really small. It starts with the desire for recognition. So when we do something, we want the other to recognise what we are doing.

And when no one recognises what we're doing, then we're not happy. The desire for recognition is the start of the desire for popularity, for celebrity. If I've served my community and worked a lot and I spent a lot of time to work for the community and then at some point in meeting, I see that a sister sees me differently than the rest of the community when the community doesn't see me and doesn't listen to me.

So for example, when I give my opinion and no one pays attention to my advice and to listen and my words don't have any weight, I feel vexed. I feel angry because then immediately I need to recognise that there's an expectation, a silent expectation in me. I have this expectation that my sisters see me as someone who knows everything, that is a big sister.

And so I expect that my sisters listen to me. And then I see that there's a desire for recognition. And that's the start that either my ego is already big or that I have a desire for celebrity.

And so the practise of mindfulness can help me recognise everything that happens in my mind. So from the moment that idea begins to rise and so we can recognise this with mindfulness in our community, it's very clear that such a person has an emotional attachment towards affection or that someone needs to be recognised or needs to be famous. And so we see that these desires will, when there's an attachment where we're completely into, we don't see anything else.

We don't see other people. We're no longer sensitive to the feelings of others. We're no longer sensitive to what we, to the harm we may cause to others or what we may do to others.

We don't see anything. We become obsessed by our attachment and desire. When somebody doesn't support us in our idea, we don't consider this person a friend anymore.

We don't listen anymore because we really want to continue with what we're doing. And that's one of the major causes of the following points. And so when we have these desires, we're going to continue to behave in this way.

And when we see somebody that has this desire and I find this person, if I have these desires and I let myself get carried away with this, other people will find me unsupportable. And so my dear friends, we need to take the decision to the following. So I will practise enough.

And that is the practise of reflecting on measuring. So in the text, I'm going to continue the session. We can see the passage.

We can practise by observing another bhikkhu. A bhikkhu is a monk that has been ordained with the great precepts. And we can contemplate like this.

Do I have in this moment wrong desires and am I controlled by these wrong desires? If a bhikkhu is reflecting this way, he knows at this moment I am attached to wrong desires and

controlled by wrong desires. Then we should practise diligently to put an end to these unwholesome mental formations and these desires. And if we reflect, we know at this moment I'm not attached to wrong desires and not controlled by wrong desires.

Then we should live with a feeling of happiness, knowing yet that we should practise diligently to nourish and encourage these wholesome mental formations. This method of reflection needs to be praised. In other cases, such as praising oneself and despising others, becoming easily angered and mastered by anger and so on.

So our natural habit is to be irritated, to be annoyed by this person who has these desires, who is praising himself or herself. And we have this inner mental formation and that's actually a knot in ourselves. And we will continue to speak about it to others.

And we're not happy, we're not joyful. It takes away all our joy, all our happiness. Because we are annoyed, we are angry.

And this is the natural habit. But if we practise this reflection, like in the sutra, then all these points in the other person doesn't take away our joy, our happiness. Because we come back to ourselves and when we transform these points in ourselves, then we are more joyful and happier.

Either we transform these points within ourselves or we don't have these points and we recognise that we do not have these points to transform and we're happy, we rejoice, we're happy. So in both cases we have joy and happiness. And it's the contrary of the mainstream, the general tendency.

The general tendency is that we cannot learn from it if we don't have these triggers or we are sad because these triggers that others have, it makes us feel sad and desperate. And if we have them in ourselves, then we don't learn from them and we cannot transform ourselves and we don't change. Our own situation doesn't improve.

Thank you for Laila Lili for inviting us out of the bell. Where am I? And people would look into, and when someone saw a spot on their face, they would clean it. And when they didn't see it, they would be content and would say, my face is clean.

And so, dear brothers, when we see negative energy is enough, then we can practise with diligence and try to transform them. And in our observation, we see the opposite, then let us live in joy and let us cultivate positive mental formation. And then you see that these two sutras taught by Shariputra, Mahamudgalyana, are very practical and are very different from those of the Buddha.

We see that these two elder brothers have truly practised. And from their own experience, they gave these very practical teachings for the community. And they took examples of images to demonstrate to their brothers and sisters how to practise.

And so, our two venerable brothers, they were two main founders of the community. They helped the Buddha to instruct, to build the community, the monastic community. They were the two main pillars.

And when the venerable Shariputra passed away and attained nirvana, Ananda, he was the attendee of the Buddha. When he heard of the passing of Shariputra, Ananda could not remain standing up. He was so saddened, so profoundly saddened by his passing.

He was so sad that he could not remain standing. And so, these two venerable brothers, these two main pillars, through their teachings, we can see that they truly practised. And they gave advice, and they gave very practical advice.

And in community life, that's what happened. And so, what do we do to maintain our practise and to remain in happiness? And even our community, there's this or that person that has this or that affliction or negative seed. What can we do not to exacerbate the situation? And on the contrary, with our own practise, we can move forward on our path.

And that's how we can improve the situation in the community. It's very clear. The teachings are very clear.

And we can see that it comes from their own practise. So, it's not a theory. It comes from their own practise, from their own experience, from their own lived experience.

And so, and if we cannot see that we can apply this in our daily life, in our community, in our family, or in our working life with our colleagues, and now we have 19 minutes left for questions. Thank you, dear sanghas, dear sister Dinian. The question that really touches me, it's very clear when it comes to the monastics, because there's a very clear line through life.

But in a new sangha, there are many members of interbeing, but the practise is not the same. They're very, they can be diverse. And so, sometimes the means to communicate that things have changed, how, my question is, how can we, how can we accept the message and find a skilful mean to answer, to answer towards people who tend to communicate in a non-skilful way? People who sometimes, so let's say a lawyer, they use certain arguments to give more weight to a certain argument, and to a situation that is in fact not very precise, or sometimes instil doubt.

How can we receive the message that we need to change something, but to answer skilfully, but also be compassionate, compassionate towards the means of another? I don't know if it's very clear. Do you mean that for this sutra, for the sutra, everything is very clear? So, do you mean in our daily life, it's not necessarily clear-cut, and so we may, we're looking to be skilful in our ways, because things are not always clear, clear-cut, and we don't dare to say very clearly like the venerable Mahatma Gyalena. Yes, it's not that we're very, that we're afraid, but we need to overcome the fear to tell them a certain truth.

Sometimes the means that we use, they're sometimes mixed with the need to be right, to express our discontentment, to express our discomfort, and sometimes the message that we transmit is not very clear, because it's mixed with everything that makes us human. And so, does the question relate to the message, the message that we want to transmit, but the sutra teaches us how to manage our own feelings and sensations in our life, in our interaction with others, and when the other person behaves in a certain way, and how we manage, how to maintain our joy and happiness in our practise, in our way of directing our attention. So, how do we direct the attention, not to the other, but towards ourselves to see if we're like the other person? We don't seek to tell the other person that you have this or that flaw.

For the time being in this sutra, it's about how to live in peace with such a person. And so, the practise of shining light at Plum Village, we go a step further. When the other person wants to listen, wants to know their positive seeds and negative seeds for transforming, and the other person really wants to listen, then we will help them.

When the other person doesn't want to listen, there's no point in... Some people don't want to put on the camera. Thank you all for being here. And I would like, I would love to know how you put this sutra into practise.

I'd like to know how you put this sutra in practise. If you can practise in the... You can write to me.