

Practicing Freedom

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In a profound way, this practice doesn't take us anywhere. Even more so, we get to the end of the retreat. The idea is to come back just where you were. Same place, but to see it in a new way.

It's not a matter of some perfect experience. It's not a matter of becoming free of suffering, though it's possible. The *Upaniṣads* begin with suffering and end with suffering, but we see the suffering in a whole new way, where we're not in suffering. We're in the awareness, the seeing of suffering with what doesn't suffer.

To know that we can be present, be aware, see, know everything about us, all of our experiences: that which is suffering, that which is free of suffering, that which is happy. To know it all by the seeing that does not suffer, by the knowing that feels like it's coming out of a vast absence of suffering. The awareness has wide space within which suffering and happiness can be, can coexist. The deepening levels of being with suffering at the beginning come to the deepest place: to know suffering by that which doesn't suffer.

In practicing insight, we learn to appreciate, maybe love, all the different ways that here and now are recognized, are marked. It doesn't have to only be marked by 9-10.

So here we are, the last full day of the retreat. So it's a day where, for a two-week retreat, you should give some careful consideration and choice in how you practice this day, so that both you can retreat, bathe, practice bathe, and take in something about what this has been for you. Recognize it and digest it and let it live in you in a way that maybe can't happen if you think you're supposed to be just unchanged by today. Just keep practicing the way you have. And maybe there's a wise way of preparing for leaving tomorrow.

So some of you might choose to maybe meditate less. Maybe sit on the deck and have tea more. Maybe spend more time looking for the banana slugs on the property. I don't think

I've ever seen one here, but they should be here at Santa Cruz. You've seen them already here. Look at that. I should spend more time looking for them.

So how you want to be here today is your choice, but also to be here in a way that doesn't stir things up either. And it's a valuable part of the retreat, this time. And it's possible to waste your youth by not giving enough care to this day. Do it consciously, be present. And notice all the different ways that the present moment is marked, named, or recognized, including the banana slugs. So may this day be a nice day for you, and care for yourself well.