

on-Line at-Home Retreat:
March 23-27, 2022 (Wednesday morning
through Sunday afternoon)

Contemplating Birth, Aging, Illness, Death, Karma, & Fear in Covid Times

Buddhist legend tells of the Buddha-to-Be being visited by heavenly messengers: illness, aging, and death. These and similar life realities visit all of us, regularly, throughout our lives. Thus, Buddhist practice embraces them in recollection and contemplation. In Covid Times, even between variant surges, we have ample need to face and come to terms with them. Even more so when Covid has spread through forces that also spread environmental destruction, human rights abuses, and inequality. Absent the capacity to face these realities courageously, we cower in fear or lose ourselves in distraction.

The same Buddhist teachings also reveal how we give birth to ourselves and our world through our karma (actions). Illness, aging, and death — whether of individuals or ecosystems — will happen naturally. Through our karmas we either make matters worse or contribute towards healing. The responsibility of karma can be a curse, yet karmas guided by Dhamma are the path of liberation, such as from fear, anger, and confusion.

Along with Covid and a deteriorating healthcare system, with economic inequality and racial injustice, climate change also gives ample cause for fear and grief. There is much to fear and lots to grieve. What we do with our fear is karma and how we grieve is karma. Using the fundamental recollections outlined above, this retreat will explore how we might navigate the external realities and our inner responses with compassion and clarity. Buddhist tradition also advises that we embrace these realities as opportunities for kindness (*mettā*) and compassion (*karunā*).

This retreat will begin each day with a grounding and settling practice (guided meditation). We will take up classic Buddhist themes for contemplation with the aim of disentangling from the pervasive fear that is tearing our society apart in the midst of anxious times. These contemplations also foster compassion, equanimity, and gratitude.

*** [Register for a retreat here](#) *** [Pay the \\$100 Registration-Commitment Charge here](#) ***

*** [Ask a question here](#) ***

Retreat Overview and Parameters

In this **online retreat** (at home or in other safe accommodation) teaching will take place **via Zoom**. You will need the latest version of the Zoom app to participate. The online retreat format will support you in deepening your at-home practice, responding to the contingencies of the pandemic situation we face, and taking a break from the busyness and stress of modern life. You are encouraged to arrange your schedule to fully benefit from deepening your practice of *meditation, mindfulness, and reflection*.

Participants are expected to follow the entire retreat, participate with all the guided meditations and talks live or by recording, practice with each day's guided meditation and instruction, meditate on one's own, and explore the retreat teachings each day.

Schedule: We'll start with a **Guided Meditation at 7:30 am on Wednesday March 23rd** (all times Central) and will keep the following schedule of Online Zoom Sessions through **Sunday March 27th afternoon:**

7:30 am Guided Meditation: brief introduction & 45 minute practice

10:30 am Sangha Sharing & Reflection facilitated by Santikaro

7:00 pm Dhamma Talk and Q/R

Note: These times were chosen to allow all 4 US time zones to participate. The 10:30 am session time was chosen to allow folks to listen to the recording if they aren't able to do so live.

Practice formal meditation (“on the cushion”) at least 2 more times daily, more if possible, at whatever times work best for you, to make the most of the instruction and retreat opportunity. Add walking meditation, yoga, or qigong as able.

If you have a favorite book on these themes, whether Buddhist or otherwise, poetry or prose, you may wish to include light reading during the retreat. This is a matter of personal choice. Limit reading periods to 15 minutes each and leave adequate time for patient reflection and journaling.

If possible, take **Meals** alone or with practice friends, and keep them simple.

Noble Silence: within the realities of your living situation, limit unnecessary speech as much as possible, especially trivial and frivolous speech, as well as worry-perpetuating, complaining, and blaming speech. If possible, stay off the internet and don't check email. Make realistic choices that you can relax with. If you must use devices, create realistic guidelines for yourself to wisely limit net browsing and email activity. Whatever the current news cycle excitement, the basic patterns of aging, illness, loss, and death won't change much while you let them be. This is for the sake of practicing restraint and supporting meditative calm and clarity.

Personal responsibility: The retreat is your own responsibility, with the support of the online sessions. Do whatever you need to do each day, according to your circumstances, while keeping a focus on the Dhamma of breathing mindfully and investigating the reality of mind-body-life. You may need to make a few modifications in what I have outlined here, according to your circumstances. Please stay within the spirit of retreat.

An important aspect of **Home Retreat**, such as this one, is developing a practice that fits with your own home and life realities. That requires some flexibility. However, during Covid-19 many people have discovered that having to stay at home isn't enough to meditate regularly. They are finding that personal discipline and structure are important. This retreat offers some structure with which you can learn. And an on-line Sangha of Support.

While this pandemic persists and co-exists with other crises, we will create a sangha of similarly intentioned friends who support each other, even online.

All the sessions will be recorded: Links for accessing the recordings will be posted in the retreat's Google Doc. The audio from all sessions will be available after the retreat (on a Google drive).

Registration: Fill out [this on-line form](#) and send [\\$100 registration-commitment charge following the information here](#). This fee is to encourage commitment to full participation. Nobody will be refused because of inability to pay this fee. Please email us [if you cannot afford the fee](#) so that we can make other arrangements.

A few days before the course begins, you'll receive an email giving access to the **course's Google Doc**, which will be the on-line hub for information concerning this course, including the Zoom link, schedule, and links to recordings.

Dāna as Reciprocal support: Santikaro's time and teaching are offered on [a donation basis, as are all sharings from Kevala Retreat](#). Like many others, we at Kevala Retreat are facing income uncertainty during these times and your generosity is greatly appreciated. (We also recognize that many of you as also facing financial uncertainty.) The Buddha's teachings, sanghas of training and practice, places of practice, and practice resources involve the hard work of many people, technical skills, financial generosity, and an overall spirit of reciprocal service. As a participant in this course, in addition to the registration payment, we ask you to support our work in ways suitable to your means and abilities. The kindness of others has made this course possible; your help insures that such activities continue. Please [visit our dāna page](#) (separate from registration fee).

Preparation: A few days week before the retreat begins, we will send access to the Google Doc that includes Zoom details and access to recordings, along with further guidelines and suggestions for your participation.

Suggested reading from Ajahn Buddhādāsa: [Karma](#), [Birth](#), [Illness](#), or [Fear](#).

Best wishes for your practice of the Dhamma journey of life.

Santikaro & Kevala Retreat

[Ask questions here](#)