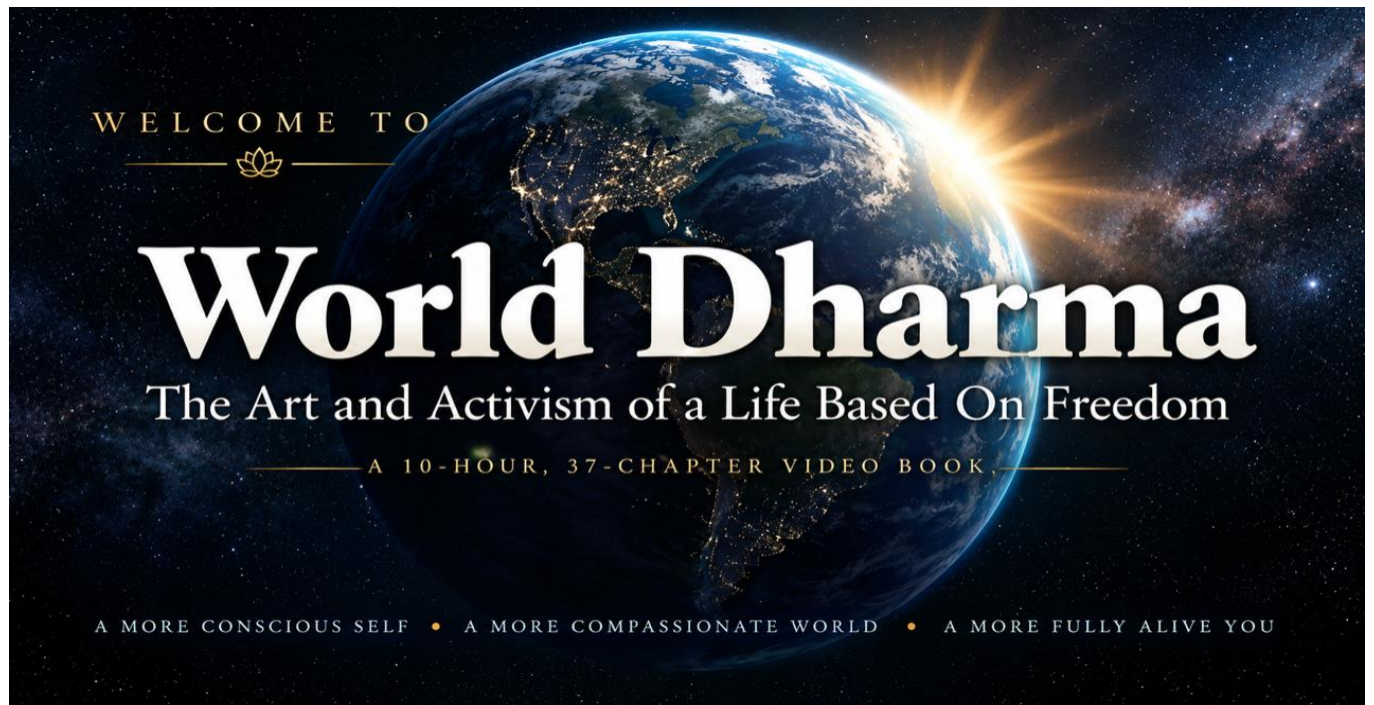




A Life of Inquiry in a Complex World

Announcing A Video Guidebook to the Practice of World Dharma

The Dharma Art of Mindful Intelligence • Finding Liberation Through Living

By Alan Clements

I have spent much of my life wondering what freedom actually means when it is removed from the sanctuary of abstraction and placed inside the beautiful, erotic, frightening, political, intimate, mortal actuality of being alive. What does mindfulness mean when the person sitting beside you is dying, when a country you love is being destroyed by dictatorship, when a relationship breaks apart, when your own body becomes uncertain, when war enters the village, when desire overturns your carefully constructed identity, or when you wake in the middle of the night astonished that consciousness exists at all? After nearly fifty years of living with these questions, I am releasing something unlike any book I have previously made: *A Video Guidebook to the Practice of World Dharma*, a ten-hour, thirty-seven-chapter journey into what I have come to understand as the Dharma art of mindful intelligence—the art and activism of finding liberation through living.

This is not a course in Buddhism, although Buddhism is woven deeply through my life. It is not a program for self-improvement, and I have no interest in manufacturing a more spiritually decorated version of ourselves. Nor is it a collection of answers pretending that the immeasurable complexities of consciousness can be domesticated into reassuring formulas. The video book grew from a more intimate proposition: that perhaps the most consequential territory we will ever encounter is the living immediacy of our own mind, and that learning to know this mind—its tenderness and terror, conditioning and imagination, intelligence and confusion, its capacities for cruelty, self-deception, beauty and extraordinary love—may be among the most radical responsibilities of being human.

I first encountered this understanding in Burma, now Myanmar, where I entered monastic life and spent years practicing meditation in silence among monks and nuns under some of the great Buddhist meditation masters of that era. My teachers repeatedly brought the inquiry back to something disarmingly simple. The essential matter was not becoming Buddhist. It was knowing the mind. Not possessing a philosophy about consciousness, but becoming intimate with consciousness as it actually moves through the body: sensation becoming feeling, feeling becoming thought, thought becoming identity, identity becoming action, and action becoming the world we collectively inhabit. Mindfulness, understood in this way, was never intended to become an escape from life. It was an invitation to become almost unbearably intimate with it.

But what I eventually came to call *World Dharma* did not emerge fully formed inside a monastery. Its roots were certainly there, in the silence and rigor of Burma, but its actual form emerged through the collision between contemplative practice and the extremities of lived experience. It grew through my years in Burma and decades of traveling the world, and came into sharper focus during the war in the former Yugoslavia and later in Sarajevo, Bosnia, where the spiritual vocabulary I had inherited was forced into proximity with war, grief, displacement, ethnic hatred, courage, theatre, intimacy and the astonishing persistence of ordinary human tenderness. There, the distance between meditation and history became impossible for me to maintain. Dharma had to be capable of entering the burning building of the world.

And it had to enter the burning building of one's own life as well. Across the decades there was love and suffering, romance and rejection, belonging and exile, addiction and sobriety, solitude and relationship, health and illness, the ecstasy of creative expression and the devastation of watching what one cherishes disappear. These were not interruptions to some more authentic spiritual journey. Increasingly, I understood that they *were* the journey. The contradictions themselves became the practice ground, because liberation, if the word has any living meaning, cannot depend upon arranging existence so that only the experiences we prefer are permitted to enter consciousness.

Something began emerging from these apparent opposites that I could no longer adequately describe simply as Buddhism. It was not a rejection of Buddhism; quite the contrary. My gratitude for the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha and the teachers who introduced me to the extraordinary discipline of mindful awareness remains immeasurable. But the inquiry had crossed boundaries. It had become a kind of *trans-Buddhism*, a *trans-spirituality*, not because it had transcended the need for ethics, discipline or

contemplative depth, but because life itself had become too vast to be contained within a single religious identity. Psychology entered. Art entered. Eros entered. Politics entered. Theatre entered. Mortality entered. The body entered. Creativity and activism entered. Nothing essential could be left outside the door.

I began calling this *World Dharma*: an inquiry spacious enough to draw from the contemplative genius of the East and the psychological, artistic, scientific and existential investigations of the West without being imprisoned by either. It is trans-spiritual without being anti-spiritual, and it enters political reality without requiring ideological obedience. It is the art and activism of finding liberation through living. For me, this means refusing the ancient temptation to divide reality into the spiritual and the profane, the sacred and the damaged, the awakened and the unworthy. If Dharma cannot illuminate consciousness in the unedited conditions of human existence, then what precisely are we awakening from, and what are we awakening into.

This understanding changed the meaning of practice for me. Silence remained precious, but silence alone was insufficient. Meditation remained indispensable, but meditation could not become an alibi for disengagement. Compassion had to acquire hands and feet. Awareness had to become relationship, creativity, courage, discernment and, when necessary, resistance. The inward revolution and the outward world could no longer be separated so conveniently. The fear we refuse to investigate privately can become remarkably dangerous when organized collectively. Conversely, the tenderness discovered while sitting alone with our own vulnerability can influence how we love another person, raise a child, create art, confront injustice, accompany the dying, or refuse to dehumanize someone with whom we profoundly disagree.

At the heart of World Dharma is also a fierce devotion to truth, and therefore to learning the difference between radical independent thinking and the strangely Kafkaesque condition of becoming unconsciously inhabited by propaganda, misinformation, conformity and collective suggestion. The danger is not merely that somebody else may deceive us. More intimate, and perhaps more difficult to recognize, is our extraordinary capacity to participate in our own deception—to protect identities and certainties through denial, projection, rationalization and selective perception. Mindfulness at its most uncompromising asks us to observe this machinery within ourselves before condemning it in others. To know one's own mind is therefore an act of epistemic freedom: the willingness to distinguish reality from illusion, evidence from belief, what we know from what we merely want to be true, while remaining sufficiently humble to recognize how easily certainty itself can become another hiding place.

There is something luminous in that intimacy with truth. Awakening, as I have come to understand it, is not omniscience, spiritual perfection or immunity from confusion. It may be something far more tender and demanding: an increasingly undefended relationship with actuality. We begin noticing the stories we manufacture, the wounds from which we interpret the world, the identities we defend, the information we accept because it confirms us, and the realities we resist because they threaten who we imagine ourselves to be. The luminosity is not somewhere beyond this human complexity. It appears within the very act of seeing clearly, of becoming less frightened of what is true,

and discovering that intimate awareness can hold contradiction without immediately converting it into ideology.



A Video Guidebook to the Practice of World Dharma is a distillation of this terrain. Its thirty-seven chapters range between approximately eight and twenty-five minutes, creating ten hours of teachings, reflections, stories and experiential inquiries. Accompanying them are sixty-one one-minute World Dharma practice reflections: brief invitations to interrupt the momentum of ordinary consciousness and return attention to what is actually happening. I wanted the form itself to remain human, something you can watch slowly, return to, question, disagree with, sit silently after, or carry into the circumstances of your own day.

Perhaps that is what I most hope this video book becomes: not something you merely consume, but something you enter into relationship with. I hope you occasionally stop the video. I hope something I say unsettles a cherished assumption enough that you close the screen and walk outside. I hope you test every observation against your own experience rather than accepting it because I spent years in monasteries or decades writing, teaching and traveling through these worlds. Dharma worthy of the name should deepen our capacity for inquiry rather than increase our dependency upon authority. I am not interested in creating followers. I am interested in the possibility that we might become more profoundly trustworthy to ourselves without confusing self-trust with the certainty that we are always right.

This feels especially urgent now. We inhabit a world in which artificial intelligence is transforming our relationship with knowledge and creativity, ecological disruption confronts us with consequences that transcend borders, and technologies engineered to capture attention increasingly mediate our experience of reality. Information travels

through algorithms, corporations, governments, political movements, social tribes and increasingly sophisticated systems capable of generating convincing simulations. Under such conditions, the quality of our attention has become a civilizational question. If we cannot recognize when fear has captured thought, when desire is masquerading as truth, when belonging requires the surrender of conscience, or when an algorithm has quietly begun determining what deserves our attention, freedom can become a word we continue using while losing contact with the experience it describes.

And still, through all of this, I remain astonished by the maddening miracle of being alive. Beneath our strategies and identities remains this mysterious capacity to become conscious of consciousness itself, to interrupt inherited patterns, to forgive, to apologize, to begin again, to make beauty beside devastation, to risk intimacy after heartbreak, and to discover tenderness precisely where certainty has failed us. I have witnessed these capacities in monasteries and war zones, in Burma and Sarajevo, among artists and dissidents, lovers and strangers, and in the strange laboratory of my own imperfect life. They are among the reasons I continue to believe that awakening is not withdrawal from the human predicament. It is an increasingly intimate participation in it.

Perhaps this is ultimately what World Dharma means to me. It is not another belief system to defend, another identity to acquire, another spiritual tribe to join, or another ideology through which to divide the world into those who understand and those who do not. It is an invitation into intimacy with experience itself. It asks whether awareness can become sufficiently spacious to encounter the whole catastrophe without abandoning intelligence, tenderness or the instinct for freedom. It asks whether we can remain awake enough to see what is happening, intimate enough to feel it, independent enough to question it, and compassionate enough not to turn our awakening into another weapon against one another.

So I offer *A Video Guidebook to the Practice of World Dharma* not as the culmination of an answer, but as the distillation of an inquiry. After fifty years, I know considerably less about the mystery of existence than I once imagined I might. But I care more deeply about the quality of consciousness we bring to that mystery, and whether our brief appearance here can become more lucid, courageous, compassionate, creative and free.

I invite you into these thirty-seven encounters not so that you can follow my journey, but so that perhaps something within them will encourage you to enter your own life more completely, including the places you have been taught to avoid, and discover within the complexity of living an intelligence no doctrine could ever give you. Perhaps freedom was never waiting somewhere beyond the contradictions. Perhaps the invitation of Dharma has always been more intimate and more demanding: to awaken here, within the unfinished actuality of our lives, and through the immeasurable vulnerability of being human, learn the art of finding liberation through living.

My heart to yours,

Alan Clements
Bali, 2026

AWARENESS
COMPASSION
FREEDOM
CREATIVITY
LOVE
COURAGE
A MORE
HUMAN WORLD



*Liberation
Through
Living*

*From my heart
to yours,*

I'm here to support you
in any way along this journey
of engaging the World Dharma
video book.

Alan Clements

ALAN CLEMENTS

AWAKENING WORLD DHARMA

— LIBERATION THROUGH LIVING —

A 10-HOUR, 37-CHAPTER VIDEO BOOK