

Precious scars

A Vesak reflection

A blessed Vesak to you.

Kintsugi (金継ぎ, “golden joinery”), also known as *Kintsukuroi* (金繕い, “golden repair”), is the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery with lacquer dusted or mixed with powdered gold, silver or platinum, a method similar to the *maki-e* technique. As a philosophy, it treats breakage and repair as part of the integral history of an object, not something to disguise or hide.

Similarly, in the early Buddhist teachings, when we sometimes break a precept or make a mistake, we repair ourselves with a Dhamma lesson which makes us wear this wisdom like gold or silver filling up that lapse in our life. In simpler terms, when we make mistakes, they are precious moments reminding us that we have missed something precious, and to learn what is missing so that our lives are fuller and fulfilled.

The 4 noble scars

A wholesome way to strengthen ourselves in this way is to apply the 4 noble truths. These truths give us these precious meanings in the spirit of early Buddhism:

- (1) Just as everyone else, we, too, are bound to make mistakes.
- (2) Various conditions meet for that mistake to occur.
- (3) There are precious lessons for us to learn from this.
- (4) We should treasure this lesson and live its wholesomeness.

The 4 precious ways of learning and living

(1) **The crack method:** This is to touch up with minimal, delicate lines. Accept the mistake and then leave it where it is, in the past. We have made a mistake (we see it for what it is). We are **neither** the mistake **nor** a mistake. We live to love; to love is to learn; to learn is to grow; to grow is to discover our true self and real freedom.

This is **lovingkindness**: accepting ourselves just as we are, and others just as they are.

(2) **The replacement method (*makienaoshi*):** This is to switch to the positive opposite of the negative emotion. If we feel angry, we learn to happily smile at the anger and so free it away. Anger and smiling are incongruous: it is funny. Looking back, this will make us smile, even laugh at ourselves.



This is **compassion**: showing kindness to ourself or others even when we or they do not deserve it. It makes us a better person and leaves a deep message in the hearts of others.

(3) **The joint method**: We patch up the fault with a different piece of ceramic. This means that we learn a new skill or gain wisdom from the suttas or we see something beautifully new and healing in what we have learned before.

This is **gladness**: We rejoice in the completion of a task, and the wholeness of our own being that bring joy to others. There's always a part of others that remains with us—make this a joyful memory of that person.

The repaired item should not be used like before, but as an ornament (a reminder of truth and beauty), and it should be gently cleaned and cared for. This means that we are now a new person who should not live in the past or repeat old mistakes. We should now be able to show greater care in avoiding what are not helpful to us or to our loved ones.

(4) **Total acceptance**. Often enough, we may not be able to repair something which is badly broken. It's not anyone's fault: it is the nature of things to break up. Friends grow and go their way; their minds and hearts change with the days. Our happy memories are real enough to keep us happy, and to share that happiness with others.

We have lost no one really—it's just that they do not deserve us nor we them. But we remember the happy days we have with them. Even the best of friends and loved one must part. Joy is when we are together; joy, too, is when we are apart. For, we are now always a part of our lives. This is **equanimity**.

It means that there are always other friends and loved ones we should attend to and rejoice in. For, our true friends, the most important people in our lives, are those with we are with right now.

For this Vesak, we should reflect that Gotama Buddha is still within our living memory: he is our teacher, whose teaching is still with us. Since he is still in our memory, he is the most important teacher that we have. In this way, his teaching will always guide us in our lives.

For types of kintsugi, browse:

<https://www.invaluable.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/kintsugi-types.jpg>

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