

2004-10-04 The Paramis

Wed, 7/29 12:36PM • 40:10

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

buddha, qualities, develop, people, practice, perfections, generosity, buddhism, important, wild pigs, realization, world, compassion, expression, armies, life, person, heart, perfected, parties

SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsda

Retreat we have here Friday. As Jim said, The theme is dāna paramita, dāna parmi. And dāna means generosity. And this Friday's retreat is something I do about once a month or so it's kind of a time to explore the Dharma in some other way besides sitting. We do some setting. We do some guided meditations, we have some discussions, sometimes you do some reading some exercises, we hang out, get to know each other. It's kind of a rich experience. And for the next year, it's not gonna be every month but for next year, whenever when I do these Dharma practice days on Friday. It's going to have a theme of the 10 armies, the 10 perfections and so this coming Friday, so the first one, which is the perfection of generosity. And then what I like to do this evening is to use this evening as a as a opportunity to introduce the concept of the parties. And then as we go through this year on Fridays, probably the, probably the Monday after the Friday, they probably gave a talk Monday night on that particular party here. So, maybe next week, I'll give a talk on generosity and generosity this Friday. And then in a month, I do the second one and so we go big like series of winds through the year. And so I'd like to give the introduction today to this topic of the armies and it's a very important one for people who are engaged in Buddhist spirituality. And provides the context support the expression of kind of growth that happens in people as they engage in Buddhist spiritual life. So the first thing I'd like to do is to give you the list of the 10. And, and then I'll explain if I explained first, then I would maybe pollute your minds, corrupt your minds with ideas of what they are. So what I thought I'd do is just go through the list quietly. Just state, the concept that the quality, it's a quality of heart, it's a quality of character being and, and then as I say them, why don't you see if you can, when it resonates inside of you? Do you recognize it in yourself, Do you have this quality inside yourself? Is it a quality that of yourself that you value to the quality of yourself that you have, but you tend to overlook? Is that a quality that you can't find yourself? It has no relationship or relevance to your life and to foreign, you know, foreign foreign idea. And if it doesn't resonate with you, then let it resonate for a while, can we repeat the word to yourself, let it go seek into your heart or into your mind or see what what is aroused in your mind and hearts bodies by hearing these particular ideas or qualities.

So the first quality is that of generosity.

And the second is virtue.

The third is renunciation. Can you hear me? No, I can't hear out there somehow changed. renunciation or letting go

and the fourth is a wisdom

The fifth is energy or strength.

The six is patience.

This seven is truth, truthfulness

and the A is determination

The Nine is loving kindness

and the 10 is equanimity.

So these 10 are called the 10. armies Parviz is a Pali word. It's a usually translated into English as the perfections. The 10 perfections. Sometimes people know them by their Sanskrit word, power meter, the power meters Very important in Mahayana Buddhism and sometimes they're considered ornaments of the heart, the adorn the heart in the presence to make a heart beautiful. The and they're very interesting qualities. Now there's a few people now but I think it started with Robert Thurman, that Tibetan teacher who threw up his hands. One day or some point that these Buddhists, all they ever talk about is practice, practice, practice. When is it going to when's when are we gonna have the performance?

Now hadn't occurred to me that we were practicing to perform like entertainment. I thought we were practicing like You know, practicing medicine, you know, that's the idea of practice. But in any case, the lens, the performance, and the idea, performance, points out to the very important concept. That it's, it's, it's crucial to express our realization, to manifest give manifestation gifts give expression, to our understanding to the way we're changed when we grow into spiritual life. And that's and that's important to emphasize because some people emphasize a lot the coming to a place of letting go coming to a place of peace or calm, coming to a place of personal transformation and change. And they can hold it really close to themselves. Got in a kind of a kind of a private world or kind of us Something which is just kind of involves an interchange, but not something that is acted on or expressed in the world or manifested. And there are Buddhist teachers who actually don't put a lot of value or say this way. They say something like, you know, realization is pretty easy. What's difficult is to manifest it in the world. And that's really the manifesting of your practice is really what's important. Now, the question is how, how is realization manifested? How is it expressed? And these qualities 10 armies are some of the ways in which realization flows through a person into the life that we live. So someone who has attained a freedom of heart, a freedom of mind, is someone who would almost naturally live a life of generosity. They do. open hand live, life is open. Did someone who has done away with all conflicts and all givenness in their hearts or compulsion would live ethically when they have virtue that such a person would practice letting go and help in a healthy way to wisely which is a fourth character to have some love. So some level of wisdom that wisdom would be would characterize their actions in the world. There would be effort or energy or strength as part of it part of that quality is not just the person that is just It doesn't just become kind of a inviting blob, you know, enlightened couch potato, but actually would exhibit certain level of strength of personal power. And, and there'll be a lot of patience with the how things are, there would be a dedication to truth. Would it be possible for someone who's fully realized to lie because that just goes to There isn't a place in the heart that would have that impulse to lie. And there would be some level of determination and resolve or kind of commitment, some strength to follow through with things that are important. And then there would be loving kindness and equanimity. Now, what I find fascinating about this, is that whereas these things are seen as kind of the manifestation or their expression of realization, they're also seen as the foundation and support for

realization. So, people who want to develop their spiritual life in Buddhism, develop their meditation practice. It's very helpful to have developed these perfections these qualities to senior qualities. And the stronger these qualities are, the easier it is to do the deep work of meditation and deep work of realization. And it's quite common in the Vajrayana tradition to point out to someone who reaches me There's an impasse in the practice, or somehow can't practice or is to say, oh, what you need to do is maybe stop practicing. But go develop these perfections, some perfections for a while, develop this power, the strength of inner quality, inner quality that comes with developing the power me. So, maybe you need to develop your generosity, or develop your ability to be determined to be resolute or develop your loving kindness or develop your commitment to truth. And so, you develop these things, and then you come back to the cushion, and they're going to carry you support, you give your strength for the work that happens on the cushion.

So what have what you see then is this beautiful circle, that the same things the same activities, the same qualities of heart are both the support for meditation for spiritual spirituality, and they're an expression of the of British spirituality fully grown. Follow that. So they You couldn't tell from the outside whether a person has realized or not. Because they're acting, they're doing the same thing. So there's a kind of a kind of a unity or kind of coming together of the support for practice and the expression and manifestation of practice. The mythological, these 10 armies as a list didn't appear in the earliest Strata. Buddhism didn't. The Buddha didn't teach them but they appeared soon after he died, and became has become very important down through the centuries in almost all schools of Buddhism. And they appear in a myth that also appeared after the Buddha died. But they're kind of a myth, Buddhist myth about when the Buddha first decided when the person who became the Buddha first decided to dedicate himself to becoming a Buddha And it said that this happened in mythological time in a form of rebirth. It actually not just a form of rebirth. There was many, many, many aeons prior to the birth of Siddhartha, Gautama and became the Buddha in historical times in our historical times. And there was a in a way, way back in the distant past, this person was born as Samanatha and Samanatha was a an ascetic, it says, sometimes described that he wore robes made out of some kind of animal skin, and he had long matted hair just like the rest of Aryan and he lived up in the mountains in caves and just ate bark. Sometimes it says it rather than deer, deer cloth, clear clothes, he wore just bark, clothes, clothes made of bark. And then one day, he somehow heard that A Buddha appeared in that Buddha back, way, way back, but his name was deep, deep and Cora deep concurrent means the maker of light. And this summit I got very excited. A Buddha, you know, it's pretty rare to see a Buddha, you know, so we missed ours, he was 2500 years ago. So, you know, he was born at a time where the Buddhists he was kind of excited. So he decided to go visit this Buddha. And he went to town because Buddha was supposed to come to town. And as the Buddha approached down the road, people were making offerings to the Buddha. And he was really, really impressed by the sight of the Buddha. And in seeing that Buddha, he decided that he would not simply become an ordinary enlightened person, but rather become the kind of enlightened person who's a Buddha who Who Buddha, someone who's not only enlightened, but is enlightened with a lot of strong personal qualities. So they have, they bring these amazing qualities to bear on their work of teaching other people. Also, a Buddha is also someone who's very unique, and that a Buddha is someone who discovers the path by him or herself. So that the Buddha usually appears in this mythology, in a world system in a world in a society where there absolutely are no Buddhists. And so, it's you know, a big deal to be someone has the capacity to discover these truths alone, without having to you know, having they're having a teacher who tells you or books or a tradition. So he did he decided he was going to become a Buddha. As different car Buddha was walking down the road he wanted to make an offering. But he was an ascetic. He had nothing to give you was going to give his bark rope to the Buddha. So but his long hair and road was kind of muddy had a mud puddle on the road. So he threw himself down on the road and flipped his

hair down on top of the mud so that Buddha wouldn't get dirty as he walked across the top of his thick matted hair. And,

and so the Buddha, Dipankar Buddha saw Samantha there on the ground and saw that he had the kind of personal qualities that would make a Buddha someday. And then he made a prediction and said, sometime way down in the future, this fellow here will become Shakyamuni Buddha. And so he was very happy some. It was very happy about this prediction. And he went back to his cave in the mountains. And then he contemplated What does it take to become a Buddha and he saw that he would have to develop 10 qualities, these 10 parties not just little bit, not just nibbling, but he had to bring them to perfection in him because only when they brought the full perfection with that person be ready for that final transformation that makes up the Buddha and he saw that it was gonna take a long time to do that. And as the mythology plays itself out, it was going to take him in innumerable number for innumerable Calpis. Now a culpa is a very long time a copper so long that if you take a granite block that says one square cube and once every hundred hundred years a a made with salt or with a sorry Natan Varanasi came by and brush that Block. One capaz how long it takes to wear down that one mile square granite. Now it takes for some people say three some traditions say three some things for if you're impatient to do the three number of these culpers aeons is for a person to do all the practices and stuff that it takes to develop these perfections to the point that you can become a Buddha.

And so then the Buddha this guy submitter then in his next lifetime, then there's started practicing these perfections. And there's these stories, kind of like Ace, Ace of failure tables kind of stories of how the Buddha in different lifestyle lifetimes perfected these different quality qualities.

As as a tariff on tradition developed in Southeast Asia, these 10 qualities began to be understood not only important, not only important for someone who wants to become a Buddha, but for anybody who wanted to attain any degree of enlightenment at all. And any kind of enlightenment or realization, they needed to have these qualities to some degree. Now, some people are born with them. And then the Buddhists would say, when I was last I, you know, they'd been doing a couple of culpapas already, you know, the last lifetime they develop these, but who knows why certain people are born with certain kind of inner qualities and some are not, but some people are born with qualities that carry them. And some people develop them the course of their lives, they have, they're, they're taught certain qualities growing up qualities of generosity or kindness or truth telling or something. And some people are a need to, you know, develop them once. They're adults. Some people never develop them. And because they don't have them, they become tremendous barriers to developing a spiritual life. I mean, could you imagine someone being able to get really deep in meditation, and who has dedicated their life to lying or being cruel? It just, it doesn't work, you know, it just, they would just come up against this wall, they just couldn't go any further. So as a terrifying tradition developed, then it became understood that anybody who wanted to develop some degree of spiritual maturation needed to have some of these qualities you didn't have to perfect them to the degree needed to become a Buddha, but you need to have them little bit. Now, what I find also fascinating about this, is that the book, someone who dedicate themselves to become a Buddha does so out of compassion for the suffering of the world, in order to help others that's really the underlying motivation that gives strength and power to someone want to become a Buddha. And the Param these parameters, these are not these parameters are qualities which are completely connected to that movement of compassion. It's ways of developing compassion and giving expression to compassion. and compassion is developed as a path to compassion develops expression of compassion is developed in these 10 qualities. So, for anybody who wants to develop some degree of realization wants to take practice far enough to really be transformed. There has to be some quality of compassion that underlies their practice. Some people will actively cultivate and develop compassion. Some people just let it develop naturally. Because sometimes as people practice

in the hearts open compassion comes along with a practice. What it means is that You don't we don't Buddhist spirituality is not developed in isolation from people around us. But it's something that we understand it gets developed in the field of our relationships with people. And this is something that's been overlooked by a lot of practitioners, especially here in the West, where we're kind of young, new to Buddhism. And there's enough plenty enough practitioners who have mostly been in it for, you know, what's in it for me, you know, it's my, my practice, you know, get out of my way I'm focusing and Don't make a sound. And don't bother me, whatever. And so, there's a kind of keeping the world away. So is developing themselves. And the suggestion in this kind of teaching is that if you develop your practice in too much isolation from other people, without some understanding that you're practicing in the context of the field of beings, that you can't really take your practice as far as best as it potentially goes. So in the Buddha taught his spiritual life, he taught what he called a gradual path, which mimics very much the kind of gradual way in which human beings developed through childhood. Human human growth tends to be gradual. I, you know, I wish it was otherwise but you'd have a six year old and I have to be patient. You know, things grow slowly. And I can't rush it expect to be different. But I'm sure that you know, there was a time where I just couldn't believe he was ever gonna get toilet trained. How it's gonna happen, and I remind myself, I don't know any 12 year olds are still wearing diapers. I know it's I know it's gonna happen but I don't know how this is gonna happen. And so slowly that does happen. These things this

you know, up to a certain point, human beings are Growing up or baby, maybe up until the point of death, there's a gradual change and development happen happens maturation. And this Nath is this slight natural maturation which happens gradually was the kind of was the was the model for how the Buddha presented the spiritual path to people. Because as he went around India, he met people on many different levels of personal development. And there were people who were kind of had almost no personal development at all and some people who are very cultured or very developed. And so in presenting the teachings in some people who are quite advanced, he could give the teachings very briefly and they have what's called me a sudden awakening. But for people who weren't so you know, well developed, he would talk to this gradual practice that would carry them along. And in teaching the gradual, gradual path, the first two qualities that he always taught, had to do with our relationship to others around us. So right Rather than focusing on ourselves and our own suffering in our own development First, it would have always started with how we are in relationship to others as where the path begins. And that's seen in in a, in a 10, permissives. With the first quality is generosity. And the second is his virtue or ethics both only makes sense in relationship to other people, for the most part, I guess you can be generous to yourself. But you can be ethical to yourself, so people lie to themselves. But, but the idea is that you have this, you know, mostly has to do with who you're in relationship with. And so the first practice that the Buddha taught, it's kind of the first Buddhist practice for people is generosity. And you find in Asia, a lot of people who will put a tremendous emphasis on their own personal practice of generosity. They take it very seriously. And, and so it's really amazing to be In Buddhist Asia and experience, be in the receiving end, for example, of this tremendous show of generosity from the people there. I was kind of humbled and inspired and encouraged and over and over again by the low levels of generosity I received when I was practicing in Asia. And as part of the one of the reasons one of the reasons why IMC is organized in a field generosity as well, we have this data system here. We don't ask anybody to pay, because we wish what we want. It's a first Cardinal kind of practice, Buddhism is generosity. And so we've set up our center dependent express those are kind of the first kind of way in which we're organized here, as a field of generosity. And as people practice generosity, it puts them in relationship to others. And so then we have to kind of begin looking at our relationship to others. And look at where there are some wrinkles or some difficulties or Things You know, you know, are we, you know, is it healthy? Or relationships? Are they in some ways, a little bit unhealthy? How are they are relationships with others, because in order to have generosity to

develop, the relationship between people has to become healthy, isn't it? There's unhealthy ways of giving, but that doesn't really develop for spiritual life. So we put in this relationship in order of generosity so we can understand ourselves and work on ourselves. And use that as a mirror to develop ourselves and as a way of understanding others, of seeing others appreciating others, seeing where the need is seeing understanding others, seeing the effect this has on others. And so there's develop a sensitivity to the world around us. Same thing with ethics, that there's a sensitivity that develops then to towards others and to our relationships to others. And so when when you say that, and one of the things that we'll do then, hopefully is help support or strengthen the capacity for compassion. Were things important to say about this is that I believe here in the West, there tends to be in certain currents of Western thought, a sharp divide between self and other. And that's partly why altruism is very being altruistic has a very strong, very strong currents of thought in, in the West. And in India, especially with Indian Buddhism. They don't really have this concept of being altruistic. Westerners will read it into Buddhism. But the hint to read it into it

and the reason why altruism is not so big and in in India is that there isn't a sharp divide between self and other, as we have here in the West. And that plays itself out with the understanding that if we benefit ourselves, we're also gonna be benefiting others. If we benefit ourselves in a healthy way. We're also benefiting others. I mean, if you go out and buy yourself a Porsche, you could think as being self benefit, but that's not you know, what spiritual life is about at least spiritual benefit. So as you benefit yourself, you're benefiting others. And as you benefit others, you're benefiting yourself. So, and the western idea of altruism sometimes lends itself to the idea that you're supposed to be altruistic and give up concern for yourself, your own well being, to sacrifice yourself for the well being of others, for your kids, or for your spouse or for your God or for your country or for something. And in Buddhism, that line between self and other does disappear. It's important lines important distinction. But in terms of how we benefit each other and how we relate to each other, it gets blurry. How we if we benefit ourselves who benefit others, if we benefit others, we benefit ourselves. So someone who dedicate themselves to spiritual life in Buddhism, they might go off and practice by themselves alone for a long time. It's understood that their intense practice is also going to bring benefit to others around them, that there's a reciprocal relationship there. So the parties are, that part of Buddhist teaching is an expression of that part of practice that has to do with our relationship to the world around us and that we're not distinct and separate from others. And they were practicing in the field of others in an interdependent interconnected field. And that our compassionate concern within that field is an important quality to be developed in practice. If you want to take the practice This as far as as possible. Now remember the story of Samir de seeing deep encara So, he saw that he saw the Buddha walking down the road and seeing that Buddha he was changed he saw something he saw a possibility so possibility that he can become a Buddha. There was once a lion, a lion cub there was orphaned maybe never seen its parents and a group of wild pigs adopted this line. And this line come was lion cub was raised by these pigs and lion cub thought she was a pig I guess be Linus thought she was a pig and a wild pig and so she did take things you know, roll around the dearth of snorted and dunk you know, their snout in the ground and And, and got all matchy matchy matchy, matchy. Name changing and and so things were just fine you know, the Linus was quite happy you know living living a life of her family and friends the wild pigs until one day some lions came on the lion came around another lioness and who would, you know really knew how to be a lioness you know, strong and you know, majestic the way some lions can be. And, you know, knew how to do lion things and roar. And, and that pig that blood Linus who thought she was a pig, look. And yeah, and the visiting line said, No, you're not a pig. Oh, I see that now. I'm Alliance. Lyoness Oh, suddenly she's stood three inches taller. You know? So recognizing ourselves and someone else is sometimes very important. And so the story of Samantha recognizing himself in Dipankar Buddha, recognizing a potential equality, something aspect of who he was, was very important for him as part of the transformation. To learn to recognize somehow or other by seeing it in

others and having it reflected back, or there's other ways perhaps you're seeing it, but to recognize that we, we all have these beautiful qualities inside of us. Some people punctuation to say sacred quality, some people would say maybe divine qualities. Some people might know

a Buddha qualities but he's beautiful qualities Inside our own hearts, and they're not separate from who we are. There's a result, you know, I kind of believe they reside there in everybody's heart, even though they're covered over forgotten, or, you know or not or atrophied for some people, whether they're to be cultivated and found. And sometimes learning to recognize them and see them in others is a way of beginning to see the possibility in ourselves. So to learn, see the possibility of the object for being generous. Not giving, giving is too narrow of a word because that's an act. But generosity is a mood is a state. To be generous to feel generous. virtue is very different than maybe morality or rules. virtue is a state. The beautiful state is a state that said to adorn the heart, make it beautiful. Not just for other people before ourselves. Letting Go renunciation, which we'll talk about maybe three months. And only then help you understand. It's really beautiful. It's really a fantastic beautiful quality of art. Until then you can just kind of bracket that. But some people say wait a minute renunciation. That's not for me. And then now renunciation requires a lot of wisdom. And that's why wisdom is the fourth one, wisdom perfects reconciliation. And then strength, quality, strength through effort is something that we all can cultivate and developed. And that requires patients to perfect energy or strength, or effort. So the effort is good. truth, truth telling, I meet people that it really inspires me to meet people. Who, somehow, early in life, you know, have a tremendous dedication to truth. Sometimes I meet this and children sometimes, I don't know how they got it, but I wish I knew how to teach my son, you know, you know, a way to teach this to people or, and, but you know, just somehow, you know, they just feel so bad they feel somehow violated themselves and telling a lie, that they have this dedication to being truthful. And truthfulness is perfected by the set by this eighth quality, which is a determination. There's a connection between living a determined life to standing by your truth and truth. And then the ninth quality is loving kindness. And then it's in loving kindness is perfected by equanimity. Isn't that beautiful? I think it's beautiful. So, so, because we cultivate this powerful expression of loving kindness, kindness and care for others. But to bring it to perfection, you also called equanimity. equanimity doesn't dampen loving kindness, perfects it.

Part of the importance of these 10 armies is that they are qualities that can be practiced and developed in daily life. Some of the other qualities that Buddhists want to develop and cultivate, often are developed in concert in meditation practice or on retreat. And, and you can't develop some of these meditation things in your daily life as you go about so easily. But in daily life is understood to be a prime time to develop the parties. And so people who want to find some way of integrating or developing or dedicating ourselves to practice daily life will often focus On these, these 10, perfections, maybe one at a time, one a month, maybe just developing them and looking at it and reading and studying, it's like we're going to do or maybe once a year, once a year, or once a lifetime. You know, it's up to you. And, and the idea here is not to add something to your life, not to burden yourself with something, but to find a way to unburden yourself, find a way to sense subtract that which hinders the expression of these beautiful qualities there in each of our hearts. So my hope is that each of you will encounter some equivalent to online or Lyonsess. And in doing that, realize who you so that's the parties and I will wait for your bores.