

2005-07-18 Paramis: Resolve

Thu, 7/16 9:55PM • 40:52

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

resolve, determination, practice, people, perfection, monastery, determined, life, buddha, lists, developed, sustaining, bit, zen, meditate, aspiration, support, renunciation, called, hut

SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

Good evening everyone. Can you hear okay? The speakers working okay? It's one thing to have aspiration to have an intention, a wish. A direction one wants to go in one's life, a practice a spiritual practice you'd like to do Inspire to do it tonight The thing to follow through with it, to actually act on it. So act live in such a way that you fulfill that aspiration, that inspiration that intention that wish. And for some people, there's a big gap between aspiration, wish and action are follow a follow through. And one of the elements of that follow through is in the Buddhist tradition can be called resolve or determination. Sustaining power, sustaining strength that carries one carries the aspiration and helps us to act on it. So it's not just an idle, wishing, dreaming or wishing or hoping. And the idea of aspiration or intention or resolve I like the word resolve. They say termination or resolve which that which gives action and persistence and follow through and carry through is very important certainly in the teachings of the Buddha. And the Buddha gave a lot of emphasis on action words, having a strong desire, strong zeal, zealous in one's engagement in spiritual practice. And there was a word that he used in Pali called *Adi Tana* and *Ali Tana* sometimes just translate this determination, sometimes as resolved, sometimes as sustaining power. And it is one of the parties, one of the 10 perfections and over the last year, I've ever since maybe October So, I have been giving one talk a month or so, here on Monday nights on the 10 perfections these 10 armies And tonight's tonight I'm going to talk about the perfection of resolve or determination. One of the beautiful things about the about the teachings of the Buddha is that he was a maybe in modern language, we'd call him a psychologist. He was a kind of an overall cost a scientist exactly, but he was a student of the mind. He studied the mind he studied all the different aspects of the psyche and how it worked. And he had an amazing analysis and understanding of the different forces and activities in the mind. And that understanding sometimes is presented in the many lists that the Buddha had the lots of lists and people sometimes laugh and smile and shrug when you listen this one more list. And, but the list the fact that it would it gives lists of mental factors factors that come into play and practice. points to us understanding that the human mind or The human heart, the inner life is an ecology of many different factors, many different activities. And it's a matter of bringing into harmony, or bringing into into relationship, many different

elements of that ecology that helps support and sustain practice over time. Some people have a tendency to look for just one thing, you know, kind of kind of look at one thing, this is the thing, this is how I understand things. And the Buddha tend to be systems oriented. So you look at a system of what's needed in the system of the human mind and human being too so the different elements of system can work together and function harmoniously. So all these lists are kind of pointing to the system and his process approach to that would often had and so one of these lists is the 10 perfections. And these are actually you know, I know them, but who would like to recite it 10 perfections here's what I'm going to test you. Let's even list them and you've been listening to this for many months now. You should know it very well. You would like to. Before I call on someone, anybody like anybody who'd like to volunteer? No, you're not going to go through it. Thank you. If you can speak loudly, maybe you don't need to use it or hear it. There it comes. Thank you. generosity, virtue, and sation. Energy. Patience. Wisdom. Can I start? Yeah. So she has determination, generosity, sation and your patience, truthfulness, determination, loving kindness. Beautiful yes so you had the 10 little bit out of order one, two of them. So there's generosity, the first one, then virtue, then reunion. See, we don't see ation. And oddly enough renunciation is also connected to the practice of concentration, practice of meditative concentration. And then there is wisdom. And a lot of these kind of follow each other in some kind of series. So, realization is a very powerful practice in Buddhism, and a lot of people, especially people, late people kind of react to that. But it's followed right after renunciation by wisdom. So it's wisdom that helps perfect renunciation so you don't get in trouble. And then there's effort, energy engagement. But then that's followed by patience. Because often when you engage energetically, maybe it doesn't go the way you want it to go. And so you have to be patient with the outcome and patient with your efforts. And then there is truthfulness. And then it's followed by the perfection of today, which is determination resolved. Then loving kindness, and the last one is equanimity. And it said that equanimity perfects loving kindness, so rather than be equanimity, and kind of like a party pooping kind of event, it's actually a scene in Buddhism as being a very exalted and sublime emotion that that really supports everything else. So today's its determination are resolved. And we are now at the eighth party right? Yep. And, and that's a little important to mention that because the termination is entered introduced after having first introduced the first seven. So that already is supposed to be a lot of kind of maturity in spiritual life engagement, reflection, understanding that precedes determination to resolve. And I like that because determination and resolve can also end end up causing problems for people, especially if there's confusion with striving or with kind of a super ego kind of willfulness, that kind of overlays and kind of suppresses or pushes one in some kind of way, which is not appropriate, kind of an egotistical way perhaps. And kind of self centered kind of will perhaps, but if determination for his fault is, you know, comes in the way have practice of generosity of ethics of renunciation of learning to let go properly, of, of wisdom, of making good effort of pay, you know, patience, then and truthfulness, then maybe it's much more easier to practice in a healthy way. Now these 10 perfections are only perfections these are the 10 qualities, you know, that many people understand and talk about truth and wisdom and energy and all these things. But what makes them a perfection. In Buddhism it what's the word is parmi is when they are connected to two other things. And that's one thing has to do with a relationship we have to the world around us. And the other has to do with the relationship we have we have with ourselves. And the first

is they're connected to compassionate concern for others, that somehow that inequality that's called Then developed supports our compassionate concern for the world around us. If there's no compassion, it's not connected to compassion, then it's not a part of me. The second quality is it's connected to liberation, our own liberation, our own ability to be free to be at peace. And those work beautifully together. This idea of compassionate concern for others, and this compassionate concern for our own liberation and peace. And they support those to support each other and complement each other and protect each other. So that one doesn't get in trouble. One doesn't kind of get too one sided. There's a beautiful definition of what Buddhist practices that I like that says that Buddhist practice is is not giving up. Doing anything which cause causes harm to ourselves or to others and doing that which brings benefit to ourselves and others. And that's a very simple definition. It has the benefits of not having a lot of metaphysics in it or anything metaphysics it's you don't have to believe in some deity or super natural kind of understanding of consciousness or our relationship with a Cosmos or anything, it just letting go of what causes harm to ourselves or others. And that movement or being concerned with suffering and liberation of it is at the heart of compassion in the heart of this idea of liberation. Why is it important to say, and that is that in the developed Buddhist tradition, Theravada Buddhist tradition, it's understood that in order to someone to really mature well deepen spiritual practice, these 10 perfections have To be developed to some degree, they have to be there some degree. And so what some people will do is try to cultivate and develop these different elements of the inner ecology. So they sustain us, support us carry us in the long term project, of developing our good heart, our ability to not cause harm our ability to become free. And, and so, if these 10 qualities are needed, then there needs to be some connection between compassion and liberation. There should be some connection to other people to the Cathy spirituality in the Buddhist sense, can't be self serving only. It can't be divorced from our sense of our care or concern for the world around us. There has to be some openness to the world around us our relationships, and in that openness, then there can be growth of certain kinds of inequalities with that with very close to the world around us. Our spirituality is kind of inbound only only about myself, Me Myself, me, myself and I, then it's not gonna go anywhere. So determination, resolve, talk a little bit Personally, I love the quality of resolve because I believe it's been one of my strengths. I've done a lot of meditation practice, done a lot of retreats, and very grateful for what meditation practice has done for me. And sometimes people think that I have an ability to get concentrated, because of because of the experiences I've had and whatever. And I don't think of myself as someone who has much ability to get concentrated. But what I do have is because I don't think I have that some people have an innate capacity for concentration. And it's really wonderful to meet people like that who seem to have that kind of ability and I never thought of myself as having edibility. But what I have is I have a capacity for resolve. And so when I set myself to meditate on retreats or my daily meditation practice, I've sat with resolve. And that resolve is what has helped me to get concentrated. It's kind of sustained me carried me, kept me going. And resolve is something that determination is very important quality in many endeavors. Because many, many worthwhile endeavors in human life are not accomplished easily. You can't just say, you know, I'm going to sit down and meditate and become a Buddha. But that doesn't happen that easily. You know, you know, I'll do a weekend retreat. And I'm sure that that you know, be this age, this age is next Savior. The it takes a while to develop ourselves, and often that development and growth, the duration of the of the

heart, involves a lot of struggle, a lot of facing demons inside of us, darkness inside of us that are different aspects of who we are. And so what is it that sustains us, it carries us in difficult times, the boring times the challenging times. And at least for me, one of those things has been resolved the termination is what I'm doing. I'm going to do it, then I'm going to see it through I'm going to follow through. And so, you know, day in and day out, so just hang in there, hang in there, hang in there. And then slowly, slowly, what needs to get aligned, what needs to get integrated, gets aligned and integrated. And then I'm able to get concentrated and, and develop my practice. I like the word resolve as a translation into English. Maybe this is kind of too cute, but I kind of like it myself because the word resolve comes from I guess Latin kind of word, solvent or solution, and like dissolve. And so they, I guess the original meaning of resolve was to untie or to loosen or to dissolve. And so, inherent in the word resolve is that movement towards release. Whereas the word determination to me feels harder, I'm gonna be determining or to hold myself this way. Whereas when I'm resolved, there still has to be a dedication, determination. But the word itself is a reminder that there's that admission in Buddhist practice, there's a movement towards release that has to be part of it. And that's a protection against the super ego or the kind of the egotistical will the strives as it has to be this way, I'm going to get something I'm going to do this. You can be very determined. To let go you can be very determined. They're dedicated, resolved not to clean so if there's so it's almost like Buddhist practice is the antidote towards clinging. And so you want to be very careful that your resolve doesn't have clinging as part of it. So your resolve, I'm going to be resolved here, not to hold on, I'm going to be resolved not to get attached. And, you know, it's a wonderful movement there to just hear I ended up going to resolve to be open. Rather than being determined and tight and, you know, uptight about it. I have to get something right now. That's why I like the word resolve. It kind of reminds me of this dissolving this letting go. I tie the so that they know so one of the questions about determination and resolve is what does it take to have resolved determination? What does it take to to be inspired Enough to hang in there. And really kind of do what it takes to see something through to the other side to really follow through on something. When we have so many different desires or so many different wishes or so many different messages or society what's important sometimes there's a fear stands in the way of resolve and determination. I have a great aspiration to get developed my spiritual life, I have a great yearning for it. But to follow through and be free to follow through, because maybe then I don't know all kinds of things, you know, I won't be able to take care of other things that need to be taken care of. And, and so I don't think I'll go and retreat this year because of it go on retreat this year, then I'll miss the World Series or miss you know, the opportunity to work more or put more savings in the bank or, you know, I'm worried about my finance Or I'm worried about this and that what my neighbors are gonna think my family's gonna think there's a lot of a lot of different things that can stand in the way was following through. So part of the work of resolve and determination is to look at what stands in the way of our interests. Since the way of following through on our interests, and as always, in Buddhist practice, whenever there's an ideal and determination here is an ideal. It's healthiest, very healthy, to look at what stands in the way of the ideal. Because if you just kind of determined to go for the ideal, still be dangerous. But if you understand all the forces that stand in the way of the ideal, then there's the opportunity to let go of all those shackles, all those barriers. And then if the barriers aren't there, then something has a chance to come forth with inside of us deep inside kind of a natural movement.

Oh, yeah. And it's my honor. Understanding at least my experience, that determination, resolves this kind of strength. And says, I'm going to do this with follow through here I am, is not just something that we decide to do, but can be when the barriers fall away something that the heart or the inner life wants to do, it kind of flows out of us. And so it's not something that takes a lot of kind of grading or kind of struggle, but it's rarely, sometimes kind of, it's what kind of flows out of us most naturally, easily. When the goal is the right goal. Part of determination is having a wise goal, having something that's worthwhile being determined about. So there's a lot of things in life maybe are not so worthwhile to be, can be determined for be resolved. This is what I'm going to attain. So some of this has to do with a careful study, a careful consideration of what is what is worthwhile, what do I really want to do what's really important for me in this life. What is it that I want to work towards and develop in this in this light? I, some people like to do a imaginary exercise where you imagine in 10 years or in 20 years, where would you like to be? What would you like to look back at that you've done 20 years in the future, or 10 years or five years, it seems to me always very far away. When I think back five years, or 10 years or 20 years, it's like yesterday. So when I remember or that seems like yesterday, now, in 20 years, or in 10 years or five years, today is gonna seem like yesterday for 20 years, you know, so that to me, makes me a little bit super serious. I'll make a difference what I do now. The other thing I like around kind of the analogy is if you take two parallel lines. And I think the definition of parallel lines is they never meet, right, these are always in the same direction towards infinity. And, but then if you take just a little enlarge one of those lines little bit apart, doesn't take much effort just a little bit. Then in the first week, as you go out those two lines, you don't see much difference. The first, you know, mile or 10 miles you can see, but slowly, slowly, they start to diverge. And after that, if you have a long enough time, they've diverge quite a bit. So if you have a determination that has kind of a 510 20 year vision site, then a little change in your life in the direction of your life now You know, might not make much difference tomorrow, or next week. But in two years or three years or four years or five years, it can make a huge difference. Just something as simple maybe not so simple as being determined resolved, to be very careful with your speech. How you speak. To be very clear today I talked to someone who made her practice to pay attention to how she felt when she speaks to this all she did, how do I feel when I'm speaking? And she was shocked she had no idea there were so many feelings going on while she spoke, she just spoke right, you know, use what you have to say is what's important, right? And so you don't pay attention anything else but but you started paying attention what you felt and you know, it was very, very helpful to her to see that and very difficult. So do something as as something like that, okay. For the next year. I'm going to look carefully at my speech that Beginning to kind of turn those, you know that direction of your life in a little different direction. You might not see much change in the short term, but long term that can be big, big changes. So determination doesn't have to look dramatic at first. It's something that Okay, I'm going to do this and then slowly slowly changes the direction of the life so that in in in some time in the future, there's a huge difference. Now in the teachings of the Buddha, there's an interesting brief mention of what's what he seems to talk about is for things to be resolved about this Okay, so then, what should we be resolved about things so these are four things in that Modern Thai tradition of Buddhism, they have the same list of four. But here they seem to understand that to mean, these are four things that helps you analyze whether your, what your determined about is worthwhile is appropriate. So either way, it's

either for things to be resolved on, or for things that help you. Be clear about your determination. The first is truth, to be determined about truth to be resolved about truth. So to be truthful, to live an honest life, to be dedicated, determined to live what's honest and truthful. The second is discernment, sometimes called wisdom, to be resolved or are dedicated to being discerning. And discerning takes effort means kind of when you're present in life, to look and see what's really going on. Look twice, look three times Think about a little bit. At the end of the day, reflect a little bit about what happened during that day. What really happened there. Some people like to journal to understand better, ask questions, ask questions of yourself, to be discerning to explore, to kind of question what's going on in deeper way. The third resolve is that of generosity. over and over and over and over again in the Buddhist tradition in teaching to the Buddha. He emphasizes the tremendous benefits of practicing generosity. Over and over, he talks about practicing generosity. So the third resolves the resolve to be generous. The fourth resolve is resolved for peace, to be determined to be resolved, to be peaceful, to not to not be in conflict, to work through our conflicts, to let go of our conflicts, or to face them in realistic ways and you know, not not be in conflict with ourselves. For many people in the modern West, it's during conflict with themselves. And often we're in conflict with others. And sometimes because we're in conflict with ourselves with ourselves, we get into conflict with others. And in fact, if you find yourself in conflict with other people, it might take a little bit of time to discern whether that's just a tip of the iceberg. Represent represents some way in which you actually conflict with yourself. might see, you know, it might be interesting to ask that question. So for things to be resolved on, or these are four ways of looking at resolve, I'm determined for something now. Is it? Is it connected to truth? Is it connected to being wise? Is it connected to being generous? Is it connected to being to peace or becoming peaceful? So when we have something we're determined about, we can look at these four qualities See this you know, help us understand determination we have. I find a little bit interesting that the way that Buddhism is often taught in the West, there tends to be a lot of language of acceptance, of acceptance, just accepting things as they are as they are being present being open. And all very wise teachings, but I don't hear as much the teachings are being determined or resolved of, you know, being had the sort of strength of stability. Here I am, I'm going to do this. I'm going to hang in there. I'm going to stick to it. Okay, this is what it's like. There's sometimes like a warrior like a, I think I really do this. I'm going to really be dedicated like a warrior to be accepting and open Here I am to do this. And kind of have spine in the practice we have dedications of strength, to have power since a power or since have great vision of what's possible and follow through. And I think it's really necessary to have that if a per if a person wants to follow through on the practice, that the Buddha was actually offering the direction the Buddha was pointing towards. determination and resolve from he is connected to strength to power in regards to this idea of determination, resolve and perhaps is connected to discipline. Again, back to my experience. I spent about three years 345 years practicing in Zen monasteries and temples. And one of the characteristics of that practice is that it's very much a group practice. And in fact, that Zen center I was practicing, you're actually discouraged from practicing alone. Because if you practice alone, it was, it was a little bit egotistical. Like you should just follow the schedule. When everyone goes to meditate, you should go meditate, but you don't go meditate extra. Because, you know, you're kind of like attached to your spiritual practice is too much, right. So there was a story of one of the very early Americans who went to their early 60s who went to

practice at a haiji one of the great Zen trading monitors in Japan. And he had a very hard time there, and he but he was little bit overly idealistic and Rather than just following the program there, he was going to be the great Zen student, he was going to sit and meditate all the time and be this, you know. And so he was sitting there meditating extra, you know, so when you're supposed to be meditating and good stories, a nice story but so yeah, I'm warning you. So these monks in the monastery kind of ganged up on him, and, and, and one of them had a syringe. And the next thing he knew he was on the train out, you know, someplace, you know, going towards some other place in Japan. So if you go to a Zen monastery in Japan in Japan, be careful how much you hear the term SP wise I met the man I know him. He told me the story. So when I got lost my story about determination so for many years I did the Zen practice. And one of the wonderful things for Zen practice is that the collective energy of everyone practicing together, carries you along. So the bell rings, it's time to go meditate. You don't wondering, should I meditate now shouldn't is a good idea is a great idea. You know, you know, that's what you do is everybody's going you know, and you're supposed to go and if you don't go then I remember the first time I was at the Zen monastery Tassajara I just brand new monk there was all new. I was intimidated by the authority of Zen monastery, you know. And, and I was been there for a couple of months and You get up early in the morning really early. And one morning I overslept. Just a little bit, but I raced down to the meditation hall. Just I got there just after they closed the doors. Oh no, I'm late. And it was cold was the winter has anything else to do go back to my room until the doors opened again for the next meditation 40 minutes later. And I was back in my room. Oh, no, they're gonna kick me out of the monastery. I've blown it. No one ever said anything about this. Next sitting I went and sat. I never heard about it again. But I was so intimidated by Zen. I thought I was gonna get kicked out. Anyway, so Zen you know, in monasteries use. There's all this collective energy and support. And so the discipline of practicing diligently and practicing all the time getting up early and doing all the practice what was generated in part by being part of the group And I find it very I found it very valuable for me it was very supportive. Then I went to Thailand, and was introduced to be possible to practice we do here. And I showed up at a monastery and said, I'm here to learn what you have to teach me. And Abbott said, Okay, good. And he gave me a little, teeny little hut on stilts on the edge of the monastery. And say, he said, You stay here by yourself all day and all night. So if you can come over and once a day and have have, have your lunch at the lunch place, rather than once a day and come and have an interview with me, by the way, stay here and, and just meditate. And, you know, there wasn't any way to meditate with this little hut. It's just me and the hut and this very big pig that wandered around outside And what I discovered was, that's when I realized how much I had relied on the group support to practice in the Zen monasteries. And I realized when I realized that I said, oh, what's being called on now is that I have to find that ability that discipline, that determination in myself, rather than relying on the group. Now it's time for me to do this for myself. And because I've had those years of practicing with others, I think was a lot easier for me then to muster myself and find the determination, the resolve the strength of character that took them to practice alone for 10 weeks. In practicing, I didn't practice I moved a little bit from that hut. But basically for 10 weeks I practiced it sitting and walking meditation alone, and I had a great time. So the ability to say say that because determination, I realized that beginning of that first retreat in Thailand, that I didn't, I didn't necessarily have that strength to be able to practice alone. But I realized this is something I have to muster up and

find in myself by applying myself. And so that was something was developed in the course of those 10 weeks, was certain kind of strength of resolve or follow through determination to hang in there. When there was no support, no immediate support. There was no one watching. You know, in the Zen monasteries, in a sense, someone's always watching. So, you know, it's kind of like a little bit this for me, you know, am I doing it right? You know, I want to be a good Zen student. You know, I'm getting approval, all these wonderful things. But in the monastery in Thailand, there was no one to approve me. I mean, no one, no one could care less. You know, Maybe once. For some reason or other, I left my hut. And I was wandering around the monastery, which I wasn't, you know, I thought it was supposed to be doing. And, to my shock, I ran into the abbot. And, to my amazement, he just looked at me completely and completely unconcerned, unreactive way and continued on just on his on his rounds. As if, you know, there was nothing to judge about me nothing. What. And that was very freeing. And again, it showed me how much I was concerned but other people thought about what I did, and that, you know, so there wasn't anybody. I was doing it for myself this idea of learning in the sense that I was doing it for myself, it wasn't going to do it for other people, was very important lesson for me and learning this thing of determination resolve and to find how do I what is it that sustains my practice, when I'm not doing it? For what other people think would be up? Care. There's It was a theme there that was about to retreat in Thailand. So for some people, I think it's really valuable to spend a little bit of time practicing completely alone. Because it clarifies so much to reveal so much. And it helps a lot with the issues of determination resolve, and we find out what our, what the degree of resolve or lack of resolve is within ourselves, and what needs to be evoked and strengthened. Mustard, mustard up. And the last thing I'll say, is, in order for determination to be a perfection upon me, it needs to be connected to compassion. So please, always, as you practice and determined way resolved way dedicated way. Be sure that it's done compassionately with a sense of compassion for yourself, compassion for others. And let compassion be one of the guiding lights in your practice. Okay, I think that's enough. Thank you. So this Fridays when we do the next perfection, of loving kindness, and then plan for everything goes along by plan. Then next Monday, I'll give a talk on the perfection of loving kindness. loving kindness follows the perfection of determination to make sure your determination doesn't go wrong. Thank you