

# 2006-02-05 Buddhist Paths

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## SPEAKERS

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So I've had some conversations with people recently, where they're wondering what they're doing. Especially what they're doing in their practice life, their meditation life, their Buddhist practice life, and where they're going or what they should be working on. And the question when someone cautions me, you know, what should I be doing? Or am I on the right track? Or should I be doing some other things or where am I going with all this? It actually puts me in a little bit difficult position. Because there are so many different tracks that person can be on and that Who am I to say which track they should be on? I mean, I could just decide there's one track and you know, the track I want people to be on And then distract them on my track. But I find that hard to do. Yeah, when the hearing assist devices are not in the year, but they're plugged on, can we get this feedback? So if someone doesn't have it plugged in, they're here. So what I'd like to do this morning is to talk a little bit about the notion of a path. In Pali the word is maga. In Sanskrit, it's Marga. Some of you might remember, they're still around in Los Altos, but they're much more known in the 70s and unimarc. And Marga means path and Ananda means joy. And it's a very common Indian word. In fact, the word religion is a peculiar Western word, which has no easy equivalent in most non Western languages. And non Western people have struggled a little bit with how to translate the word religion because it's so peculiar. And, but the one of the ones that comes close to in, in Indian languages, is the notion of Marga or path. And Buddhism isn't in India, classically, it wasn't recognized as religion. They couldn't because they didn't have the word. And the birth rather it was recognized as a path. And there are many different traditions that offer different paths that you could follow. And the idea of a path also found in China and Japan places where they have the idea of the Dow That you can get into a way, a way of life the way the way. And so Buddhism offers a path. And sometimes that path is understood to be a path intellect, you walk on engaging, or sometimes it's even the idea you have to up the mountain, it's tough path to follow. And sometimes, the so called path is like and more to a stream. And a stream is something you enter into and it carries you someplace. And it's actually rather than being difficult, uphill challenge, it's actually quite a natural flow, you kind of get into the flow of the stream and naturally carries you down. And you have to harmonize with the stream, but the stream will take you where it goes. So it's not so

much your effort anymore. So there's this there are two different views there's sometimes held and what I'd like to say today is that offer Today's a variety of views and Buddhism about the path. And my hope is that I don't thoroughly confuse you. I don't want to confuse you by offering you a lot of options. Sometimes it's easier to come someplace and they tell you this is the right way. This is the true way, the one way and there's a lot of clarity. So that's part of the strength of it. So I'd like to basically kind of offer my my ideas, Nelson's idea, but there are three different kinds of paths offered in Buddhism. One is a kind of idea, what is the idea of a developmental path. This second is the idea called the path of letting go. And the third is the path of no path. So 3ds of path. And the path of no path is very interesting. And it kind of kind of exists in the context of the past. other paths, otherwise it has no meaning. So because if you take, you know, people down the Camino here and pick up some average american guys buying beer for the Super Bowl and tell them tell them, there's no path. Great, you know, I never, I never thought you know, never, never never crossed my mind. I'm glad that is considered such a high attainment. So generally, the idea of a no path kind of exists in the context of the first two, somehow or other. So the first one developmental path. And this is the one I think that has the most orthodoxy in Buddhism, the most central, the Buddha himself, very clearly laid out what he called a gradual path, gradual teaching a gradual path, and it basically follows a different mental model of a human being some people in new kind of modern language if if somebody might want to say evolutionary evolutionary model that people evolved, they develop over time. And I'm very, you know, much impressed by how human beings do develop developmentally. And especially if you studied with children. And I, my son goes to a school where they believe that each kid will more or less naturally learn to read when they're ready. And the different kids developmental, or different developmental, different ages, we'll learn how to read. And if you try to force them to read it first grade or kindergarten, some kids it works, they are ready to learn at that age. And some kids are not ready and so you actually do them a disservice you actually cause harm by trying to force them to learn to read when their minds are not ready for that, but rather the school then when it's interesting after completing the condition. A rich conditions, environment, enriched environment, which conditions so that for each kid when they're ready to start reading, the conditions are there that is possible and to learn. And, and so you see, in my son's class, some kids are really fluent readers, seasoned second grade, are really fluent readers. And some can't read yet. I mean, some some kids, you know, it's kind of like magic when the car turns on. And, look, there they are. And so some parents report, you know, this school that, you know, they get kind of worried by the end of second grade or third grade little bit worried because, here in workplaces, you're supposed to start learning to read in kindergarten, you know, it's kind of forced on you. And, but there's like magic, something switches on someday, one day or something and just like magic takes over. So, there are no you know, fifth six, seven eighth graders in my son's school. We do not know how to read And it's like what, you know, we were kind of slow and toilet training our kids. But it was kind of reassuring to know that, by the time kids are 13, they're toilet trained. So I knew it was gonna happen, you know, just a developmental thing kind of happens, you know, and not to be too worried about it. So this thing about learning to read, you know, it's a developmental thing somehow happens if the conditions are rich enough for that to happen, the conditions are laid, something will happen and don't force it. And then a whole bunch of things, you know, in life are like that, as children grow up, that there's a whole bunch of stages of development

and growth that kids go through, that you could try to rush. Or you could just allow it to happen its own time and its own way and it's much more I think, healthy for the children to let their own evolution develop and happen on its own. When I was trying to teach my son how to catch a baseball with a glove, I try to give them simple ideas like idea how you do it, how you hold you, the first darkening is like four or five, like how you hold the glove. And he got really upset with me or with himself. And anytime I tried I was very gentle and soft, you know, if you hold a glove like this, rather than always like this, turn it over. And he would, you know, be kind of teary eyed. I realized that doesn't work at Target, tell them what to do. Let's just throw the ball back and forth. And he can catch it like this if he wants to let me catch the way he wants. And we can't we've got me through a lot of balls. And he is a really good baseball player now. And he's like, you know, people in print. Wow, look at that. He could throw really hard just yesterday, my wife said, Wow. You can hear the bad, you know, goes into my glove and it hurts. And, and so you know, he can catch kids really well. He knows all the techniques now. But it came from repetition and practicing practicing practicing in his own way. He was ready to learn how to do it. So the children as they grew up, develop, grow developmentally. And I think there's something very profound about trusting that developmental growth and not forcing it and not fitting it into your agenda or agenda. But creating certainly the rich conditions that allow that to happen. I mean, if there are no books at all, and environment, the kids maybe never learned to read, right, you have to have some conditions in place. So I think developmental model is well recognized in children as they develop. And then the question is, when we turn 18 or 21, the magic age whatever that is, we become an adult. Does the developmental development of the stop, that's it, you're not allowed to develop anymore? Or is it continued development into adulthood through adulthood into old age? You know, are their developmental stages or their developmental The developer, excuse me, for that happen to kind of naturally zone if the conditions are there were to happen. And I think the answer is yes. I think all probably all of you have written where adults have recognized yourself, in various ways have grown in the time that you have been an adult. Some of the concerns fears you might have had when you were younger, you know, gone. I know, I know one person who, when she was in graduate school, a few about 20, late 20s. She was petrified to talk in front of a graduate seminar class of eight people. I mean, it would take days of preparations and, you know, she'd be kind of frozen she could have to in front of the class and be frozen to do public talking in front of her other fellow students, which is so petrifying. And now 1520 years later, that's not an issue anymore. She can talk in front of people and she doesn't like it exactly, but She's not petrified. So here she's learned to deal with that fear and kind of learn to evolve and grow. Just as there are developmental stages for children and their growth, it's my impression that there's developmental stages, natural ones, in the development of the parents, that just as we're parenting the children, they are children in us. It's not the right term, equivalent term their children in us and, you know, and there's a growth and development in, in all kinds of situations. So it's not strange, then that this would apply, be applied also to a spiritual life. And so the Buddha had this developmental model of how you follow the path and develop the path. And what I like to argue is that if you don't take some responsibility for the development of Your heart in your mind. It will develop anyway. And if you don't take responsibility for it, then it's going to be it's going to, it's going to be influenced by the other forces that maybe you'd rather not influence you. There are a lot of people in our society who pay top money. Those of you who are going to watch

Super Bowl today know very much some of you know it's the most exciting part of Super Bowl is the advertisements. And he's I've been noticing in paper a little bit all these articles about the commercials at the Superbowl, I think they're the maybe the highest costings, advertisements in television, is that true? They're really expensive, right? So people don't pay all that money unless they think they're going to influence you, or the people who are watching you, but the people so that forces our society, they want to influence our mind and our growth and who we are. And they're quite insidious, quite powerful. politicians do it. And you know, the Politics of hate the politics of fear, go really deep into the psyche, the the, the, the news of fear, the way in which fear is used on television, to draw people in to watch local news, you know, and it's been been reports about how the reporting of terrible tragedies local tragedies, has, has gone up, while the number of tragedies have gone down. And this is the impression I get from television things are really bad. And so inculcates fear in people who don't, are not careful. So there's these forces in our society that are gonna affect our own hearts and minds who shape it. And if we're passive recipients to that passive participants in that we're going to be shaped in a certain way. And and, you know, no way around it. What Buddhism says in a sense is you should take responsibility for the shaping of your own mind and heart. You should just leave it to chance leave it to other people to shape it, but you should Take responsibility for that shaping. And the human heart. human mind is not a static thing. You don't get to be 21 or something, whatever age and that's it, you know, but rather it's something's actually always fluid. And Buddhism teaches that the mind the heart is a process and a process is always changing and fluid. Now, keep reading in the in the paper that they keep discovering more and more how plastic the brain is. It used to be they thought the brain was fixed, but now they realize how plastic it is. So the Buddha offered a developmental model of the path. And but there are there are many models of the path in Buddhism. And there's one that's the one that Buddha offered but it says the Buddha offered different models with different ways of holding it. He offered the Eightfold Path, he offered the 16 stages of or the 12th stages of purification, he offered the three trades DC offered the seven factors of awakening, you know, there's there's things that I understood it kind of as a path of development and growth. There's a gradual path that he described, begins with generosity and goes to ethics and goes to concentration goes to mindfulness and other things in between. He offered a variety of paths. So which one is the right one? How should you kind of if we wish to engage with you, where's your starting point? And then outside of what the Buddha had to teach in Buddhism itself, there's so many different ideas of a path directions. Now, some of this idea of a path has to do, where the path ends, where's the path taking. And there are different ideas of where the path can take you where the end end might be. And in basically, orthodox Buddhism standard traditional Buddhism as it evolved in India, there are three different goals. So, you know, there's not a unitary thing, this is the one true goal. But there are three of three ultimate goals a person can pursue. There's the pursuit of your own liberation. There's the pursuit of your own liberation, so that you could help liberate other a lot of other people. And then there's a third one, which is kind of like a strange category, which is, you can get liberated all on your own without any help, and that very few people do that. So we don't usually we'll talk about that. And, you know, you know, we don't have to talk about that because, you know, you wouldn't be here. And so the so the first one is usually associated with Theravada Buddhism, that is pursuing liberation for yourself, and the second is usually associated with money. Under Buddhism, we pursue liberation, but it's really, so that you can help

liberate a lot of other people as well. It's kind of like reading enough, or studying enough or whatever, doing enough work, so that you can cure yourself of some illness versus curing yourself of an illness. So you can, you know, and going to medical school. So if you go to medical school, then you can cure your illness and go to medical school, then you can help a lot of people have that illness. So the second route is that of becoming a Buddha, and it's, it's like graduate school, you know, it's like medical schools like to become a Buddha, it's a lot more work, it's a lot takes a lot longer, because you have to really go to, you know, Buddhist graduate school for a long time, in order to, you know, have the kind of development inner development and understanding insight that allows someone to be a Buddha more, some more. Another way of talking about these two paths is that there's there's tends to be a choice that people make at some point between a path a spiritual path that is mostly for benefiting oneself or a spiritual path that somehow is integrated with being of service to others. And there are people who will tell you, which is the right one. And they'll put, you know, there's people who will criticize the other. But I think that it's really an something that arises in each person's heart, that for whatever reason, if you allow the natural evolution of people's own hearts own particular dispositions, some people are more oriented towards being of service and to the others. And some people's not their disposition was not better than the other, by they just use different way of dispositions unfold. And that's the classic way in India in Buddhism, is that there's understanding that people do Different people have different dispositions, different character types. And there's a deep respect for that. And there's some idea that you know, that if you have, you know, an X disposition, that you should do the white path. If you have the x disposition, then you're the x path, we have the Y disposition to the Wipeout. They're both valid and wonderful in their own right. But if be respectful of your own dispositions, you have to what I like to I like to I like to see this is that just as children develop with the right conditions naturally, I like to see the path is something that evolves and develops inside of us. When we create the conditions for it. I think there's almost like there's an inner teacher or inner guidance or inner kind of flow that happens. If the right conditions are there. If but it requires a deep sensitivity to ourselves. We have people to listen deeply. We have people to stop and get out of our own way. If we're always preoccupied and concerned, but everything always works. We can't listen that deeply to what he wants to evolve or blossom inside of us. So we have to let that create the conditions. So that's something really, maybe shy, can bubble up and show ourselves, show us where we want to go, what's our mission? What's our direction? So as a teacher, I have 100. That view. I don't, I don't actually prefer actually not to tell people where they should go in their practice, like, this is the path for you. I'd rather I'm much more like trying to listen very carefully, or trust very carefully that each person kind of has their own sense. I'd like to or help a person find their own sense, you know, help the person say, What if you really listen deeply in your own heart? If you have developed that, use the mindfulness to really check in with yourself deeply, what is it that wants to come forth out of you? What's next for you? What is it you want to do? That's kind of my bias. And all this is to trust the natural unfolding of where it wants to go. And I believe that with enough sensitivity, with enough care with enough Enter with every kind of careful attention to the heart, that it's the desire for all hearts to evolve to their full capacity or to not to full capacity is wrong thing, but to evolve to liberation to be liberated. I think liberation is something which the movement of freedom is innate in every Harkey mind. It's because it is almost mechanical view of it. So it's not like submitted metaphysics. It's almost



a mechanical as if if you place a ball on a hill, it'll roll downhill. liberation in Buddhism is freedom from clinging and clinging takes effort. If you're going to hold and cling, you have to make put effort into it. And inherent in every moment of clinging is a counter force of release. Relax If you wind up a spring, there's a there's a powerful force in that spring to unwind. If you just let go of the plug, or if you fill a bathtub, there's, there's a tendency in that bathtub to drain out if you pull the cork, so the plug so when we cling, when the heart is contracted, or tight, or afraid, or filled with hate or desire, whatever, that in there in that clinging, there's a tendency to want to release to let go. And that because of that tendency, I believe that it's the desire of each art in a sense, to want to be liberated because lived to be liberated in Buddhism is to release all the all all clinging. So, a little bit, a little mechanical view. So in the in the developmental model of the Buddha, the idea is you have to do you have to develop your character, you have to develop inner strengths. And so there's a variety of inner strengths that person needs to work on. One of the ones that's most classically given first is generosity. And it isn't so much you should be generous for generosity, his own sake, it's valuable. But you want to develop generosity, because you want to develop a capacity, of generosity of character, generosity, in your own psyche, in your own mind and heart. And generosity is a movement of letting go. It's a movement of openness, it's a movement of connectedness to other people, all of all of which are very helpful to develop. The other thing is often emphasizes you need to develop your ethics, your integrity, and so without to develop, develop sense of integrity, commitment to truth, non harming it's really hard To engage deeply in this path. So there are people who spend a lot of time developing their ethical life. I know some people who develop their ethical life before they meditate. I was very, very touched by this one. Some years ago, I met a woman who was a devout Buddhist, grew up Buddhist, and had a Buddhist teacher was engaged in Buddhist graduate. Buddhist studies in graduate school have made Buddhism her whole life. And I asked her, do you meditate? And she said, Oh, no, not yet. I'm preparing myself for that. I'm not worthy of it yet. I'm not worthy to meditate. And that was quite something. I thought, you know, you have to wait but, but still, I was very, very moved, that she took it so seriously that she felt she should prepare herself make herself worthy ethically, in order to be able to be ready to meditate. So ethical development to develop that capacity. And then to develop qualities like concentration, strengthen the minds capacity to get concentrated, strengthen the minds capacity to be equanimous in challenging situations, strengthen the minds capacity to be, have faith or have inspiration or have confidence. Confidence is very important. strengthen our capacity to, to make effort to have perseverance to be patient, strengthen our ability to have resolved and follow through and resolve, strengthen our loving kindness. The list goes on and on. And after a while you get a headache. Because you know, so many things you could do and develop. And, you know, where do you start? You could just ask me and I'll tell you where to start. If you twist my arm or you can kind of listen to yourself and see what is it it needs to be developed inside of you. What is it that maybe is a limiting factor a limiting factor for you in order to continue to develop it On the path, it might be that if anger is your limiting factor, maybe you need to somehow address the anger through loving kindness and develop that. Or maybe greed or fears limiting factor. And so maybe what you need to develop that then is maybe developed generosity as a path or as a practice. Or if you're impatient, you need to develop patience. So it's different people have different limiting factors. So recognize what your limiting factor is, and then try to work on that and that maybe shows you what you need to work on.

Part of the reason for developing these strengths, developing these inner capacities, is that the ultimate goal of liberation is not generally an easy thing to attain. It would be nice if you could just kind of sit down for five minutes, one day Meditate and get it over which you can get on with your life two important things to do. Right and so this liberation thing you want to get it done quickly. And there are people who have that attitude, you know, we get it over with so I can move on with my life. But the it's a it's a, it's a not an easy for most people it's not an easy endeavor, the mind has to be developed to a strong degree. And it has to be strong mind, it has to be a strong mind, but it has to be very soft mine to develop that together softness and strength the same time for many people takes sometimes years and years of good practice in order to develop those quality and that both having a strength and softness in the mind sets the conditions in the mind where the mind can finally let go in a deep way. finally relax in a deep way and the deep, letting go. The deepest letting go is synonymous with luxury. Buddhism, some people would like to just let go, you know, as they are, but sometimes you don't have you can't really let go very well, if your mind is kind of weak, mine has to be strong and well developed. I've read that secondhand third hand literature, that they did studies of musicians, great musicians. And they figured out or they calculated how many hours the musicians practiced before they were 20. Because some musicians start with five, right, early on. And what they what their study found is that the musicians who were the top rated by the time that they were 20, had done something like 20,000 hours of practice. That's phenomenal. Those were kind of like second rated, had done by the time they're 20 had done 10,000 hours. And those were kind of third rated had done 5000 hours by 220. So somehow that practice before, you know, young is really important, but it's the repetition that was important doing over and over and over again. And we'd like to believe that, you know, it's just a matter of having some innate talent when we just sit down and, you know, it's easy, right? But there's something very important that happens with repetition, doing it over and over and over again, my eight year old, I think he hates this idea of repetition. He wants to be perfect, just you know, first time, but slowly, slowly getting a sense of it. If you practice and practice, then you can learn something. And so repetition is really important for many human endeavors just doing it over and over again. When I was in graduate school, I had this professor who I admired her scholarship greatly, and she wrote his brilliant papers. And they were so fluid and they read almost Like academic articles about almost like mystery novels, they were so fluid and so well written, and so brilliant. And, and, you know, I'd go home to read my papers and he was like, pulling teeth, you know, so hard and so slow. And then one day, she showed me an early early draft of whatever papers and to my amazement, they were all sections crossed out and corrections in the margins and arrows this way, in that way. And I realized that it wasn't it didn't come off for pen or computer, you know, just ready made this, you know, in his perfected form. It took a lot of practice and doing it over and over over again, to craft these these articles were. So this idea of repetition then is also very important in a spiritual life. Many people would like spiritual life to be easy. They feel as somehow, if it's really important, valid spiritual paths should be quick. Get easy just wake me up immediately. And, and I think that these classically in Buddhism and teachings of the Buddha, repetition is really important to do to over and over and over again, you have to put in your hours in a lot, some of this development is really slow. Some of it you don't see the results, you know, in one week or one month or even one year. Some areas you find, find receive results right away, and some results take a long time to develop. There's a story of the dialogue being

asked that a big teaching he was giving. Someone stood up and said, Can you tell me the quick way to enlightenment? And as I was as the story was told to me, the Dalai Lama was silent for a long time. And then apparently, he started crying. And tears went down. And anything I don't remember exactly what he said, but it was basically how sad he felt that people kind of were approaching Buddhist practice, trying to find the quickest way. That that's really wasn't the point. Exactly. So I think it does take time. And it takes sometimes a long time there to develop oneself. So what kind of what do we do? What kind of practices do we do? I think we listen to our own hearts, learning to listen. So we have to give ourselves enough time and meditation enough time in kind of meditative contemplative atmosphere, to be able to listen to see what's really important. What are our important values and how we want to develop ourselves and we're going to want to go and then we'll find out. When I used to do a lot of retreats, meditation retreats, at the end of the retreat, my early years I didn't want to do one again forever. And then Five, six months would go by and I practice every day. And then it comes this intuitive kind of sense of it. I'm ready. I'd like to do that again. And then I'll go sit another retreat. And then Okay, not anymore. Not anymore after that a little while. And it was kind of intuitive sense. I kind of just went along with intuition. It was time to sit retreat, it was time to do that. Next, for Apple listen to what was going on inside. So then there's the second path, which is the path of letting go. And that's not as much champion in Buddhism as the first one. But you do find some teachers who emphasize this almost exclusively. It's all about letting go like Go like oh, let go, just let go, just let go let you go. Sometimes when teachers emphasize the rhetoric is all about letting go, sometimes it's in the context of like being in a monastery, being a monk calling a discipline, you know, it's really strict environment, you know, and like, you have to kind of have lots required of you a lot of inner development to strength building is happening, because you're in a really strict disciplined environment. And, and because the environment is so strict, the teacher doesn't have to say, Oh, you know, develop your, you know, patients develop your equanimity, develop your concentration, the teacher says, you know, just let go, it's fine, too easy, let go. Like go. And, and so, the content is sometimes very interesting in Buddhism. It's very important, I think, to understand that sometimes that rhetoric the teachings have been given or sometimes not, are given in a context and sometimes if you just read the books, you missed the context. Understand that so I saw that in, in the Zen monastery in Japan, where it sometimes it was a tremendous emphasis on concentration, concentrate, constant concentrate. But the whole environment was set up to, to support mindfulness. So the teachers didn't have to teach about mindfulness because the whole environment was about helping you Be mindful. And he just said, be concentrated. And if you took the instructions outside of its context, you think that that's it, those teachers were only teaching concentration practice. So you have to understand all that the context, but letting go sometimes seen as taught, sometimes taught, almost exclusively, it's very powerful to let go. And little bit the power of it is that is that if you let go of clinging, then it allows the natural unfolding to happen on its own. You're basically getting out of your own way. Letting Go simplifies all the all the obstructions, all the confusions, all the attachments to sell that exists in the mind. And it doesn't take very long if you let go a regular basis to begin experiencing the wonderful benefits of that, it is really wonderful to let go. The problem of letting go is sometimes if you haven't developed a lot of strength, you'll only let go. You know how to say it, if you only let go, like weakly, you'll be weak letting go, you know, and it's nice to let go. But, you know, you can't release something good. Not it's not a direct



parallel analogy, but it's like, you know, it's nice, it's nice to lift up weights, right, he's lifted one pound weight, it's nice little bit nice to get some exercise, but you're not gonna be able to lift up to 10 pound weight. So, if you want to let go of, you know, one pound weights, you know, you have to be only be kind of a, you know, you have to be very strong. But you want to go a 10 pound weight in the brain in the mind. You have to be stronger if development strike North us letting go. So So, letting go is sometimes taught, sometimes letting go is taught in conjunction with a path of development, the two go together very nicely not be considered separate that sometimes are considered separate by spending best to see them as being together on the same path. That one strengths we need to develop is a strength to let go. like letting go is sometimes one of the things that helps us develop in other kinds of ways. The third path is the path that is not a path path or no path. And this has a tremendous charisma or Power Authority in Buddhism, partly because the path of no path is often the how reality is seen from the perspective of someone who is liberated. So, someone who's done the whole path don't know the development. That's how you see it. There's no more path right? You know, where Go, you've done the work. And so, when someone's done all the work, there's a way in which there's sense of completion, a sense of fullness of just things are what they are. Also, the path of no path has a certain very powerful, it's very powerful because it's pointing to the capacity, a certain a certain capacity of the mind through capacity of awareness, not to be caught in the concepts of the mind. In often, sometimes sometimes people talk about duality, dualities of self and other devalues good and bad or kind of duality. Or you can talk about just concepts and comparative content concepts. And most of the ways in which people suffer in their lives, has its genesis in comparative thinking, and conceptual thinking. And so if you point to a certain kind of way of being alive, being present, that it's beyond The conceptual realm, beyond those kinds of dualities, it can be sometimes can be satisfying very quickly, feel very free, you can throw it open, very spacious, and all that. And so some people like to point in that direction, and some teachers are quite good at pointing to non dual realm or non conceptual realm are kind of a place where they sometimes identify with awakening. And one of the questions, what are the weaknesses of that approach is that sometimes people will think that there's some kind of deep letting go, when they've kind of get intuitive sense or a sense of this non conceptual realm. But they're not really free, because they're only free when they're not thinking. And there's all these latent tendencies, all these tendencies deep inside of us to cling to hold on to and get to be afraid to hate. They're still there. Deep inside. But as long as they kind of space out or stay in this non conceptual place, then it's not triggered. But bring back in the concepts, the latent tendencies are triggered, they'll come back. And always be free even Buddhist point of view. Like, you want to be free in all states of mind, not only in non conceptual, non dualistic states of mind, you should also be free when there's concepts, you'd be able to engage in the world of concepts and thoughts and ideas with with total freedom. And so you don't want to kind of just protect yourself from that realm kind of come back to some places not conceptual, you want to that's important place in Buddhism, but you don't want to only stay there you want to be able to do the inner work that allows you to let go of the deep attachments. We have Now the path of no path also also has it as a different kind of flavor different way of talking about it. Which, for me is personally is very important. And that is that one of the weaknesses of the developmental path is that the ultimate proof route to the path is only arrived at after a long period of practice, you know, might take you know, a long time. So, say that just got you

know, to really become a you know, fully liberated from maybe say any of you if you really want to gain to follow this path all the way. Maybe it's going to take you 10 years of really deep practice. Some of you some of you might not have 10 more years to live so, What does that mean? You're left out, if you left out, I'm not gonna happen to you. You know, I'm not going to come to IMC anymore. I'm better off playing pool or something. You know, something more fun. If that's, you know, make some sense, right? And also, for whatever reasons that are maybe quite personal, very deep, maybe some people I'm not going to take the path that far. Maybe they have certain inner complexes inner issues or something who knows. They're not going to have the capacity to take it all the way who knows how far they can go with it. And I think it's a very sad to set up in some way or others set up the idea that in order to be a successful human being a worthwhile human being a, a, you know, thank you. Human Being are something that you have to kind of reach the end of a path. I think it's really sad. I would hope that our sense or their sense of intrinsic, intrinsic worth, who we are as human being is seen as just being intrinsic, who we are. We have enough sense of self confidence and self worth self sense of self completion, that we don't have to get anywhere in order to feel complete. Now, if you know that's not true for you, then maybe you need to do the developmental path. But if it's, you know, but my hope is that people have enough sense of it, you know, and the path of no path. Some of the versions of it are pointing back to the idea that right here and now, at this moment, there's a place of completion, or a place of perfection or a place of finding your certain kind of liberation is not the ultimate liberation, but there's a way of being liberated. In this moment right here, even though there might be buried in your psyche, places still have holding of attachment and all that. But right here, there's something very powerful. And the non non path sometimes pointing to this right here, what's right here right now, that is luminous, that is spacious, that it has a feeling of freedom, of peacefulness of ease. And I think it's possible to taste that short of following a long developmental path. And it said that mindfulness is one of the things that can give that give birth to that that a moment of pure mindfulness moment. And mindfulness is, in a sense, a moment of liberation. Though it's not always easy to see that or understand how that happens. But something about one moment of mindfulness is not for or against our experience. One moment of mindfulness is not measuring our experience. One moment of mindfulness, not clinging to experience, a moment of mindfulness, just right here and He's complete in and of itself. And, and so there's a sense that you can engage in a spiritual practice, like mindfulness. And even though you don't get very far, according to some developmental model, it's deeply satisfying this moment of doing the practice. It's enough. It's great. And some people find that that's really, really helpful. And I've known people, I've felt sad listening to them practice this because they get angry with a practice because they bought into a developmental model, that somehow they're huffing and puffing and try to attain but they're not getting their baby because they're huffing and puffing because they're too attached to the model. And so and so then they feel bitter about all their years of practice. aspect me so sad. I wish the person that early on had learned how deeply satisfying one moment of mindfulness can be. And so they don't regret the practice they've done because each moment was so wonderful. Isn't that great? However, each moment of mindfulness, if you, if you put those moments of mindfulness together, in quality way, will create the conditions. So the heart will evolve and change. Isn't doesn't doesn't mean that things have to stay the way they are. Things will still evolve and change. If you follow the path you'll develop yourself. Those moments of deep satisfying mindfulness

and you don't have to leave that those that development to chance. You can also gently or not so gently, appropriately participate in strengthening into Developing and following it more and more. So for example, you could sit more, you can meditate more. You can go on retreats, you can develop spiritual friendships, you can practice generosity, there's a lot of things you can pick up that feel natural enough to help kind of move the process along. Rather than just letting mindfulness and being present, be the only thing that develops a path to make sense. So two things, very fond of a quote by Suzuki Roshi, where he said you're perfect just the way you are. So you hear that you're supposed to Oh, yes, that's great. Let's relax. Yes, you're perfect just the way you are. And there's room for improvement. So the whole both together. So one of the ways I To hold the development of development model, or to hold myself as a practitioner, is that once you're on the path or the practicing, in a sense, you're kind of like being the path is being held in the palms of the Buddha. And that kind of being held in palms, but it for me, it means like, things are just, you know, things such as they are taking care of. Somehow you're being supported. Things are just right. So part of me can relax because I'm on the path. You perfect just the way you are And there's room for improvement. Both can be true. And then finally, from the Dhammapada. So happily, we live without hate among those with hate. among people who hate we live without hate. So happily, we Without misery among those in misery among people in misery, we live without the misery. So happily, we live without ambition among those with ambition, among people who are ambitious, we live without ambition. So happily we live, we have no attachments. We shall feast on joy, as do the radiant gods. Hell is the foremost possession, contentment, the foremost wealth trust, the foremost kinship and liberation, the foremost happiness. So, I hope you all take deliberation very seriously. But more important for me than that is that my view of human beings is that you give enough space, enough time contemplative time to lay allow the unfolding the blossoming of what is most beautiful in your own hearts. And I believe that if you allow that blossoming to happen in your own particular way that each of us unique that given enough time and development, give enough care and love, that it will blossom in liberation. Thank you