

2007-10-07 Four Practice Questions

Fri, 7/31 6:00PM • 41:50

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

question, buddha, situation, clinging, people, find, answer, important, request, sense, hear, life, world, intention, great, dying, primary, sit, practice, breathing

SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsda

The first question is, what is the primary or fundamental intention you have in relationship to your spiritual practice.

There's a primary primary aspiration or sense of purpose or intention.

The second question What is the primary obstacle you have or hindrance to following through on that intention

Third question What is the primary opportunity you have to follow through and that intention, aspiration, sense of purpose

Final question considering your primary intention or sense of purpose for spiritual life

If you could ask a wise person, the Buddha perhaps one question with that one question be given your intention. You were going to ask one question what would that question be?

There is space in here goes on the other hallway to come in. You're welcome to do that.

Good morning I asked you a series of questions. And you know, the primary responsibility for Buddhist practice lies with you. And there's only so much that books or teachers can really do for you unless you somehow put yourself into it. And one of the, one of the good ways of putting yourself into it is to have good questions have questions you address questions, you try to respond to And also they come up with questions. And so you start with yourself, given who you are, given what your situation is, given your life, the life that you're part of what what questions do you have that somehow relate to spiritual life, a Buddhist life, life of the duration, a life that somehow comes out of your primary values and primary intentions for your life? You're to have good questions, you have to have the good, hopefully a good sense of intentionality, your sense of purpose, aspiration. Though, one of the great questions is, what is my intention? What is my sense of purpose? You don't have an answer, but even that's a good exploration. I was taught or told by one of the teachers of San Francisco Zen Center, that he defined the same training zone practice as a process of purifying one's intention. So you have an intention, and then you kind of work on that. you purify it, you refine it, you deepen it over time. And no other teacher at the Zen center said that encouraged us to come to him with our questions, but not without having reflect on them for a long time ourselves. And so just not just asked questions really easily, but just do our homework. And sometimes it was it took a long time before you can interview with a teacher there.

So we had a lot of time. And so the idea was to refine the question and he could find his expression was the kernel of the question, the essence of the question, and I found doing that that actually means in terms of the first wording of the question was Little bit abstract or distant or not quite to the point in spending time with a question getting to the kernel, the heart was really the issue was very, very valuable. And occasionally then the question didn't have to be answered the Bs, just kind of somehow that my own inner process with a question was what was important.

So

we could do two things. We can do a lot of things this morning. But we could do two things I'm thinking of. One is that you could ask me your questions. And depending on the kind of question you want to stay, say who question you have, I could try to respond some way or another. Because it seems appropriate or I can just thank you for the question. Or we can just spend next half an hour or so or next period of time hearing from different people, what their question is, And I don't respond at all. Because partly because that might be disrespectful of your process. Who am I to respond to these questions of yours? And also might be really, actually very interesting, very kind of deepening for all of us to hear a lot of the kind of questions you might have come up with. So what should we do? Just questions number two just questions. The people who seem to have some enthusiasm. Yeah. Just questions. Yes. Questions, while the people who want answers are being awfully quiet. And I was also taught that in, in these kinds of circles in Buddhist circles, there are no bad questions. So these are all questions are kind of windows or doors or something. They're important And that was also taught that I think comes from an ancient Buddhist Mahayana Buddhist sutra that you get really good karma for asking questions.

So I'm very eager to hear some of these questions you might have had someone good to use the mic so people can hear. And so who would like to start to break the ice? vitakka Hi.

So my question is actually very simple.

Um, I think I know the path.

How do I get myself to do it more

regularly in a more

habituated way. So the question is, do you think you know that? And how do you get to it more regularly and habitually? How do I get

myself to do it?

Great. Thank you. My question

arises from one of the sutta readings. I can't remember which one it was but the number but it's where the various speakers are, are answering the question How to enlighten the salad tree. And I was

in the very end, the Buddha gets his answer.

And I don't remember it exactly, but I was sort of curious to hear

him say that after the army rounds, whatever, that you would come back to the tiers setting and
and set as

long as you needed to to stop clean. And I was just curious about whether or not that refer to the
beacons or is an author Dr. Hansen not too good himself? Um, I'm assuming that once you become
enlightened, you've let go of the clinging and so he wasn't referring to our hands or himself. It was for
referring to the kids and the rest of us, but I'm sort of curious.

It's a great it's a great question. So the question those of you who are there, the surface study class
one discourses of the Buddha river it was some Senior disciples of the Buddha were sitting around
talking in a beautiful natural setting. And they asked each other the question, Who is that? Who would
illuminate this beautiful natural setting. And so each of them answers according to their own specialty,
their own mastery. So the person who's who's has a great memory says those The first is memorized
we learned a lot of teachings of the Buddha would eliminate first and has great meditation experiences.
The person who's meditated great, great meditator would eliminate the setting, the person who has
great you know, great practice person has great ability to analyze the Dharma. So the each kind of the
Buddha says, great, each of you have great answers, according to your own capacity. And they asked
him we would go out Who would you say illuminates this beautiful place? And then Buddha sighs said,
What Hillary said, the person that comes back the monk comes back from his alms round, sits down to
meditate. And in order to sit there without getting up until awaken and become friable cleaning. So that
that that expression of the Buddha really meaningful for Hillary interesting questions on that, what is
that mean? And I can imagine that it's a little bit of a statement like that. The challenge to many of us
was what sit down and not get up until we flick over clinging? Well, I can let go of some of my stress.
But you know, I don't know enough about the Buddha's teaching that you know, there's a lot of clinging
that doesn't out you know, it's not the babies obviously there they live in between just quiet down You
see, there's a lot so what does it mean to sit there until there's no more clinging? And then I probably
would have heard your questions also was a relationship maybe between someone sitting here like a
Buddha and the non Claiming other people. How do we relate to each other in our practice? Thank you.
Someone else.

I'm wondering if

enduring peace and serenity is possible, and whether it would require a period of monastic life.

Great, so is enduring peace and serenity possible? That's a good question. And the expression
enduring is also very rich one and then it does require a period of monastic life. Thank you.

Several years ago, I heard I don't know how to pronounce his name, some young people shade speak,
the guy who wrote Tibetan Book of living and dying. So he's just really jovial, jolly guy. And he comes
out on the stage of some big auditorium in San Francisco just chuckling about

getting your bags packed because

you don't know when the train is coming

in.

So my question is, you know, what is dad in?

Am I going to be ready?

So, getting your bags packed, because you don't know when the train is coming. And he's getting ready for death. And so what does it mean to get ready? And how much baggage Can you take with you? I think i think i think i think there's a limit.

It's a good question. Thank you. Many people, there are plenty of people who engage in Buddhism as a preparation for dying in response to the whole death thing.

Some of my questions were sort of wanting to know the future.

Another question was sort of

Is it?

Is it really possible

to move ahead as

a group of people,

human beings, because those who are achieving wisdom and enlightenment keep dying off and being replaced by young people who are ignorant of the world of the past. So my question is, is it really possible to move forward errors always starting over because of that?

So another as a group,

yes, there's looking at human beings as a whole,

is their social development, evolution, development growth? And are we you know, this is our fate to kind of go over the same wheel, growth and decay and re discovery over and over again, the same mistakes over again. Thank you.

My question is, is there a relationship between how we treat the outside world and how we treat ourselves? And is it you know, how do we understand that relationship?

Great. So what's the relationship between self and other how we behave towards others and our inner life? And it's a great question to explore.

My question is about letting go

and understand the way I understand the idea around letting go is you do whatever you can and the maximum of what you can have something you wish, whatever reasons you can reach, and then you let go doesn't mean you just sit down and forget about everything. But then the question is, when do you know how to stop or where to stop? You can always think there's, there's more to do. There's more to

achieve. And then I don't find a solution because you cannot let go because you never know when you have done your max.

So interesting question. So if letting go is relevant, only relevant. Once you've done your best, then how do you know when you're doing your best and when it's time to let go? It's a great question and

I'm not supposed to respond. Thank you.

We live in a in a culture that stresses achievement and,

and doing things and being successful.

And I guess the question that I have is that

how does what a bumps up against

a Buddhist

way to live? And maybe it's similar to the other man's question when do you say enough is enough?

So we live in a society of achievement, achievement and accumulation through values and how to Those values of our culture relate to the values of Buddhism or the practice of Buddhism, what happens when they're in conflict seemingly conflict? It's a great question.

I say one more thing.

Yes. This is also temple cleaning day.

Those who like to work outside it's a beautiful day before the back door

will take time for announcements before the end because other people other other ones of you were wondering when they're gonna happen following the back, so we wait for the mail like Thank you.

My question is, is clinging to not clinging? still clinging?

Thank you. It's an important it's actually a very important question and I would hope that the answers found in the question someone else?

This question seems to be so obvious and

simple that it boggles my mind that I have so much difficulty with it.

The nature of delusion and major wakefulness when I'm relatively wakeful, or I feel like I'm

wakeful. mindful.

The sense of

liberation is so wonderful

and overwhelming.

And then, when I'm so diluted, I'm so far away from mindfulness. And I just wonder how could I? And I know the answer how could I change my delusion? Enough? Or work on my delusion enough? So that was not so far away from from mindfulness?

Great question. Thank you. Great question. Questions. So fun questions, questions like that can you know, sustain one, sustain one and keep one busy for a long time? The, you know, some questions might have obvious answers, like you said, you might be able to have an answer. But simply there's one thing to have an answer. It's another thing to live the answer. And so to, to really feel they come back to the same question over and over again, allows us to kind of Live the answer, live the question in different ways in different settings and situations. So having a having a really prime some people's English practice or like, love having a primary question that they carry with them over and over and over again, and they apply it to different situations. Thank you.

My question also came from reading the sutta about the solitary growth and the six speakers who each had a different strike than their practice. And I noticed that there are some elements of practice expressed by those speakers that I find easier and more enjoyable. And we'd rather do more of in there some that I find more challenging.

And my question is

Do I have? If I find these more enjoyable? Are they my strengths? And should I pursue those? Or should I find more of a balance? And try to pursue the ones that are harder?

Great question. It's a good one. So it really is a question of, is using your strengths, but also our preferences, you know? How do we choose to choose what we prefer to choose what's easy for us to choose what's difficult? There's so many things we could do. And what what, On what basis we make choices. Please.

This is not meant to be facetious at all. But

a lot of times when you ask us for contemplations about what is your greatest question? In my mind

just shuts down. So, honestly my question really is how do I open myself up to questions and not just keep looking for answers. Thank you

How do you know your obstacles are if they don't reveal themselves to

you know what your obstacles are, reveal themselves to you? It's a great question. So people can have a sense that something's standing in the way, but it's obviously not clear. Something is preventing us from answering questions or have any questions. refer back to the previous question. Thank you

relates also to the question. The question What part what areas of our life? Are we basically unconscious? About we don't understand, you'll see that are important. There's some are operating influencing us and the effects on us. How do we get in touch with the unknown forces within us the

unknown motivations and choices, beliefs, feelings and things that are somehow having a big impact on us.

I find that the more relaxed I am in my meditation, the more natural my breathing is, but when I'm trying to focus on my breathing, and really try to regulate it, and really focus on Is it smooth is it Jagat as long as it's short and all those other qualities, that it immediately becomes quite unnatural. So I'm still having an obstacle with making my breathing, breathing the way I want it to be.

So the question is, how to pay attention carefully to your breathing and not interfere with it. Thank you. I've got a question.

Why is the world so screwed up?

Burma is just the latest example. But

why is the world so screwed up? And Burma is the latest example of this.

According to Hindu teachings, we are in the drip era. You Good sending toward the light

ascending to the light ascending towards the

Yeah, so the whole question of the state of the world? Why is it the way it is? And? And what's our relationship to that? Because the state of the world for many people, there's a big impact the state of the world has on individuals, and our sense of hope or sense of aspirational and do with our life is often very motivated by what we see around us and what's going on the world around us. So, the question is, what is going around what is going on out there? And and, you know, to the earlier question was, you know, are we all evolving to some great, wonderful, beautiful climax revolving some direction or is it you know, cyclical just over and over again to repeat the same problems and what good are my individual efforts if The world doesn't help or support the world in some way. Thank you.

Someone has two questions. Isn't that great?

just reminded me of a question that came up.

On a very concrete level it was,

how can I

plan and prepare for the Dharma friends like this afternoon?

If I'm staying in the moment,

and sort of the more general question is,

how can you be in the moment and yet, you know,

move forward

with your goals.

So how do you plan how do you Hold some goal in the future. How do you plan for something in the future if you're only staying in the moment? So like, I like to joke with my friends that I'll plan two years in advance to be someplace in order to tell them tell people to be here now.

So, thank you for all those questions and my hope in having them kind of stated today is that for all of you that you certainly find it valuable to reflect on questions and the range of questions maybe simulate different questions for you curiosities, interests. But the more important than that just kind of rather than leaving today inspired by answers, or certainty or you know, rather, in some great way, but you're inspired to actually engage in your life a certain kind of depth of seriousness is the right word, a certain kind of depth, that allows you encourages you to stay questioning what is what's going on here. And there's big questions about your life that you can hold and explore. But there's also the questions of the moment. And any situation you find yourself in is a completely open situation. And every situation you find yourself in is instant. Some ways an unknown situation. And it's unknown in many ways, in one of the unknown ways this is can be expressed in the question. Where is liberation found in the situation? Or whereas compassion family situation? Or what is the greatest need, that this situation here is calling for which the request of the situation I find myself in? And that was that that was a kind of a Zen question that sometimes was encouraged was, what's the request of the situation? And the situation in my mind isn't it's not just the external situation. It's not just your internal situation, but the whole situation includes you. So given this whole thing that's happening here now, what's the request? As opposed to what do I want? And if the request again includes what's needed inside what arises inside, it's very inclusive, but it's not limited to self or other but despairing In conclusion, if it was the request of the moment, and so we walk into situations, even situations we may be experienced many times before we think we know all the answers. We already know. What's the request of the moment? what's what's this given you know, this particular conjuncture combination of causes and conditions will never happen again, never happened before. So to enter in within, you know, what is this? What is this? What's the request? What's the need? What's, where's liberation? Where's compassion? So, having questions or asking questions, being very tough questions rather than certainty, I think is very powerful because it opens up to opens, opens things up to new perspectives, but also to new possibilities. And one of those possibilities, I hope, is the possibility for you to become freer become more liberated to become more, you know, less clinging, less afraid or less, less imposing on the situation, pre conceived ideas, or preconceived or important or bring to a situation preconceived sense of who you are, and what your needs are. And, you know, things, there's much more sense of openness open to possibility open to find out, find out new. And it's my sense, that very strong sense that, you know, every day I wake up or every situation and come into I'm kind of a new person, you know, in a sense, I don't really know who I am. until I've entered the situation, the situation that I'm in, helps, this helps teach me who I am. And so it may come with a pre existing idea of Gil, you know, it's kind of limited but to come a sense of, who am I who am I now? What's the situation with this world now? When I come into it, and then we all discovered together the questions earlier of the relationship between the external world and ourselves was a great question. And I certainly don't see it as being hard and fast division line between the world himself. And the situation of the world. We find ourselves in shapes us, defines us. And who we are, defines and shapes situation to some degree. It's a it's a mutual thing that arises together. And again, so it has mutual mutual, it's always shifting and changing. So have a sense of question, what is this What's going on here? Some kind of question helps open to open it up.

can be very helpful. But I think it also can be more importantly, perhaps, it can be liberating and helpful. If you don't have questions. It's okay not have questions. And they're certainly I think, a very valid

spiritual path without a question, I suppose. But But the questions, but they have questions is a great potential to kind of open things up. So

I guess, you know, the inspired answer to life's issues that you've hopefully take today is, you know, the interest in dealing with being a questioner.

And if you

read from here and are more inclined to ask more questions in the course of the day, that'd be really great. So thank you very much. So go forth with your questions.