

2008-09-28 Seven Factors of Awakening

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SPEAKERS

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Many people are concerned about economics these days. And I read somewhere headlines I didn't read the article but headline said something like many people are turning to religion

and so I don't know where to better placed in US Treasury or in religion. And so a little bit of my mind today since, you know, we're kind of a religion here and maybe people come here sometimes like, well, hell so I want to I want to start with this story from In this very special monastery at the beginning of every year, the abbot would meet with the new monks, who had joined the monastery over the preceding year. At the meeting, he would instruct them to pack their bags. He was going to take them on a pilgrimage to the holy sites of Buddhism. Knowing a pilgrimages that Buddhists will take to places in India, where the Buddha was born, enlightened, first thought, taught and died. The new new monks couldn't believe their good fortune. And after their first months in the monastery, some of the new monks were bored. Some were unsure why they were there, and others were restless. On the day of the departure, all the older monks in the monastery stood by the gate to send off the abbot and the new monks. Leading the group the abbot first took them to a hospital. There the monk spent many hours of visiting the sick. Then the abbot took the group to an old age home. The new monks, many who are quite young, were amazed at the ravages of old age of some of the residents of the home. The Abbot then took the monks to see a hospice and the hours there, the monks spent time with people in all ages of dying, including a long silent vigil with someone recently dead. The Abbot then led the group back to the monastery. There they first visited a monk sick in the monastery infirmary. The new monks were struck by the sparkle of joy, which radiated through the tired eyes of the patient. Then they went to visit to the oldest resident of the monastery, a 96 year old monk. The new monks were amazed to see the love and acceptance, the toothless frail and stooped monk head. Next, the abbot took them to the hospice wing of the monastery. Here they were introduced to a monk who lay days away from his death, radiated radiated a palpable piece that lingered within them for hours after. Finally, the abbot took the monks to the meditation hall. When they were all seated, he said, You have seen the holy sites. These are the sites that motivated the Buddha to awaken. Once you are awakened, sickness, old age and death will not trouble you anymore. So the holy sites of Buddhism and so the collapse the United States economy can be seen as a holy site. Holy moly.

Not that it's a good thing, but that it somehow can be very motivating. and motivate not right not only to kind of, maybe change direction or lives or question what's really important, but then also motivated to some kind of healthy response. So in the time of the Buddha, there are many people who responded to the Buddha, certainly, but also to their encounter with sickness, old age and death. And there's a wonderful collection of poems or songs from the women, the nuns, who were disciples of the Buddha, in his first generation, and they brought these beautiful poems about their practice in life.

And here's one and then done as I left, my daytime resting place Come up on the riverbank after a man took the hook and said to the elephant, give me your foot. The elephant stretched out it's seeing what was a wild

human concentrated

elephant. The elephant was under the command of an elephant.

Your mind wilder than an elephant? Yeah. Oh. So she was inspired and so that inspiration she went back into the forest and concentrated in her mind,

rather than concentrating their minds in practice, four or five times, probably over a long period of time, four or five times, I left myself. I had no peace of mind, no control over my mind. I went to a nun, I thought I could trust. She taught me the Dharma, the elements of body and mind, the nature of perception, Earth Water, Fire and wind. I heard what she said, and sat cross legged, seven days full of joy. When on the eighth, I stretched my feet out. The great dark, was torn apart. Her awakening with a strip described As a great dark torn apart

named Chawla. I was a nun mindful there sided and self composed. There is a piece that evil does not No. And I entered peace, like in the era. And Susie pachala said a nun who has self possession and integrity, will find the peace that nourishes and never causes surface peace that nourishes

This is a form of the conversation between Charla personification of temperature, his job is to keep people from getting enlightened. He says,

composed, established mindfulness and entered the elements of body and mind you still happiness. Who told you to shave your head? You look like a renunciant to me. Why do you practice this nonsense? Charla said everyone outside, dependent opinions, beliefs. They don't know the Dharma. They have no real understanding. But in the success of your clan, the students of Chucky Mooney, the Buddha, in the suckier clan, the foreigner sorry, in the suck your clan, which is the clan the Buddha came from it but in the subject clan, the unrivaled Buddha was born. He taught me the way, the complete overcoming abuse as follows. There is suffering, the cause of suffering, the end of suffering, and the great stills all suffering. When I heard his book when I heard his words, I rejoiced. So she also entered peace like an arrow. And when he challenges her that sell nonsense this practice she responds by saying but for making distinction between those who follow views, beliefs, and those who don't. And the Buddha doesn't offer a view doesn't offer a belief or an opinion or even a teaching, you know, an abstract way of tenants, but rather he offers a way of seeing our life, her way of participating in her life. Where we, what's important how he sees is to see the suffering, to see the cause of the suffering, to see the ending of that suffering and the path to its ending. And it's not meant to be a belief or a view any more than teach you how to swim. Learn to swim.

When I heard his words, I rejoiced. So one more from these nuns

This is feminine named Buta Tama the Buddha taught seven factors of awakening. They are there ways to find peace, and I have developed them all. So the seven factors of awakening, they are ways to find peace and I have developed them all. I have found what is vast and empty, the unborn. It is what I've longed for. I am a true daughter of the Buddha. always finding joy in peace. I've ended, okay. I've always find joy and peace. Not great. So she developed a story Seven factors of awakening. And what

you see in this Buddhist tradition is the teachings of the Buddha, that there are two primary forces. There's a kind of dichotomy set up that represent different directions that our human mind can go. The human mind or heart can go in the direction of suffering, or it can go in the direction of freedom from suffering. And that distinction is very important in this early tradition, partly because it's a very pragmatic tradition that tries not to kind of bring in a lot of views and opinions for what isn't the case but rather points to something that's pragmatically doable. And so, that distinction, what is it that brings suffering what is it that brings blindness? What is it that brings contraction, close down? What brings difficulty and then what is it on the other hand which brings awakening or freedom or light or clear seeing or relaxed expansiveness? What is it? What's, what are these? It turns out that there are different forces in the mind that one force at least in one direction and another force leads to another. And this early tradition puts a lot of emphasis on five hindrances, as being the forces that keep us in bondage, keep us in the dark, keep us blind. And a lot of practice has to do but freeing us from the five hindrances. These are the five hindrances we talking about them Monday evenings in October. So things like you know, being obsessed with desire, sensuality, being obsessed with aversion, being obsessed with sloth and torpor, I can be obsessed with that. being obsessed with restlessness and anxiety, and then being obsessed with that. And then on the other side of that is the seven factors of awakening. And so these seven factors of awakening are those forces which are liberating. bring clarity and light to the mind. So these are mindfulness, investigation, energy, joy, concentration, tranquility, and equanimity. So seven factors of awakening. And it isn't so much that these are necessarily These aren't again, not beliefs. But these are qualities of the mind that are operating under different circumstances. And so in some circumstances if we're suffering, chances are you're caught in some of these hindrances. As a person becomes freer, as the mind becomes more open, liberated, clear, seeing clearly what's here. These seven factors of awakening tend to get evoked, cultivated, strengthened, developed, they kind of follow in the wake, they're there. And they're really beautiful qualities. If you have some sense that Buddhism is a tradition, renunciant tradition that's about deprivation. You don't know anything about seven factors of awakening. They're the most precious and wealthiest things you can possibly riches, you could possibly have beautiful, beautiful qualities of heart that, you know can offer tremendous support in our lives. So the first one is mindfulness. And the second one is investigation

to be present, so there was a special monastery, there was an old monk who had become a hermit, and he lived far from the monastery. It was a two and a half hour, two and a half day trek on difficult mountain trails to visit the hermit but people like to visit him because he was reputed that if you went there with asking for advice, spiritual advice, practice advice. He always had just the right answer for you. And just amazing capacity to give you they're just tailor made advice just for you. And so people would go there, take that long, difficult track two and a half days. And when they got there, he would listen to them. And before he gave his advisors instruction, he would always make them promise that they would not tell anyone the advice he gave to secret and then he would give them his teaching construction. And he would say, what is it you're unwilling to pay attention to. And some of the visitors were perplexed by this. Initially, some were angry, honestly for that. But then they had two and a half days to walk back out of the mountains. And they taught they time they came out of the mountain. Everyone would say I don't know how he did it. But he knew just by teaching for me.

So what is it you're unwilling to pay attention to, to bring mindfulness to. So mindfulness is to be present. Mindfulness is to not only be present, but then to practice is more than just being present, but also to look carefully, deeply. What is this? What's going on here in this present moment? Not necessarily to analyze, to think about ignore, but to really to look deeply to feel deeply a sense deeply. What happens when we have full contact, deeper contact with this experience here. And it's remarkable how quick and easy the mind is, recoils or avoids for contact for being present here for this experience,

to find out what is here, what's going on and how easier just to be unwilling to look at parts of our lives. At a recent retreat, someone said to me a little bit in shock. At the realization I realized my life has been a lie. That's quite a thing. all areas of life that kind of hallways which were motivated and run our life sometimes attend to enough noticed. So they stop, pay attention to see what's here.

So then the next factor of awakening is effort or energy. And I love seeing little children when they're in a good mood. well rested and well fed and all the conditions are right. And, you know, wonderful for the spark of energy and effort and engagement. Just they're just they're, their spines are up straight and there's completely present and engaged. It's a capacity, we all have to have energy, effort. And some degree of effort and energy is required to practice. There's effortless effort which can come there's effortful effort, but some kind of effort. And then make that point, say said this little cliché too often. But they still point by saying that mindfulness practice absolutely does not work. Unless it actually does not work, if you don't do it. So there has to be the effort has to be some engagement in it.

Some of making contact going into what's going on. motion was one of the more radiant monks in the monastery. The peace and joy that seemed to be out of him inspired everyone who met him. He never seemed to want anything. But he did have a knack of being in the right place at the right time when others needed help. No one had ever seen him bothered by anything. However, this didn't seem to diminish his thoroughness, in doing his job as janitor of the monastery. Since he always seemed to be at ease with his life as a monk. One day I asked him, if monastic life had ever been difficult. This is what he said. My life before coming to the monastery was very difficult. In fact, I'd consider taking my own life because the suffering was so great for me The monastery was the end of the road. I saw it as my last chance. When I first arrived at the monastery, I had a long interview with the abbot. He asked me lots of questions. And I told him things about my life that I never told anyone before. At the end of the interview, he welcomed me to the monastery. As I took my leave, I asked him what sort of spiritual practice I should undertake. Excuse me.

He faced me with such a lack of compassion and confidence that my first thought was that he was preparing to tell me something very important. But I was confused when all he said was always walk completely through the doors. For the rest of the day, I wondered if I'd heard The iPad accurately. How could walking through doors be pertinent advice to someone in my despair? Perhaps the habit was becoming senile as old age. But then, to my surprise, the next day the monastery doors started talking to me. Every time I went through a door, there was a faint whisper. At first I thought I was imagining it, and didn't give it much attention. But the whispering kept occurring. So I strained to hear what was being said. Let's see, seemed that each door said the same thing. by the afternoon I was able to make out the whisper and what each door said was, it is all empty. I asked the other monks if they heard the voices, but none did. Then I asked them if they knew what it is all empty meant. They just saw Mild and shrug their shoulders as if they didn't have a clue. Pretty quickly I decided that the voices reminding me of the life I had left behind and joining the monastery. All the possessions I'd had the many pursuits I had run after the recognition hide sought the womanizing, and I'd done all that was indeed empty. The doorway voices were reassuring me that I've made the right decision and coming to the monastery. They were reminding me that there was nothing anymore outside the monastery for me to go after. So at first the voices made me happy, reminded that the world My worldly affairs, were shallow. I threw myself enthusiastically into the monastic life. I entered through all the doors, I met everything that came my way. What a delight to have found a meaningful life. But the voice has continued to say that all was empty. And after a while, I began to have doubts about my monastic life. as well? Was this life also hollow and meaningless. To add to my concerns, the voices started to speak louder. Soon I felt as much despair about the monastic life as I had in my previous life, trying to grasp onto something that would give me meaning. I decided that I needed to devote more time to meditation and thereby develop

my inner life. Certainly the pursuit of some real spiritual attainment was meaningful. The meditation practice seemed to lighten my despair. And when my when my meditation was deep, I was filled with confidence. I began to feel quite happy, even happy go lucky. I found the key to happiness and was convinced that ever surpassing all the other monks in holiness but every time I left the meditation hall, the doors again said it is all Empty after a while dissuaded me, and I became increasingly angry. I was angry because the voices seemed to imply that my newfound identity as a deep spiritual person was empty. When my anger was too much for me to bear, I finally had to admit that I had been caught, that I've been caught in pride, and that my identity was indeed empty. After the anger passed, I still practice my meditation practice. After all, nothing else seemed to make sense. But then the voices started commenting on the meditation itself. I heard all as empty as saying that meditation itself was meaningless. With this, my despair returned more strongly than ever. I tried hiding in my room, so I wouldn't have to go through any more doors. I took I took the climbing through windows whenever possible. When I had to passed through a door. I ran, I ran, trying to distance myself from the voices. But by now the voices had gotten quite loud. As I ran down the halls the phrase, it is all empty, echoed after me. Okay, To be continued. So, efforts,

energy engagement meeting which they're not always easy, sometimes meeting what's there is challenging. And there can be a lot of motivation not to be present. And a very important part of practice is to have the effort, the energy, the engagement to engage and stay present, stay engaging with what's going on. And then engagement gives you rights rise to joy. Very important part of the path the Buddhist path is developing a sense of well being. Well being that comes from many different sources. There's the well being that comes from contentment. So as a whole Practice of contentment, discovering how to be content. There is a certain kind of contentment. There's a joy that comes from engagement from engaged doing what we're doing meditation practice, hopefully it comes with a strong sense of joy. well being, that not so in some ways is comparable to the joy, the well being come from being really absorbed and a good book. There's a kind of a newer absorbed into one thing, the way we're fragmented and divided and self consciously preoccupied, tends to fall away. And that kind of full engagement in one thing tends to bring a sense of well being delight to joy. So, some point, through a variety of sources well being happiness, joy, from being on the path to doing the practice begins to happen. It's kind of follows an awake, you don't have to even try to try to develop it. But sooner or later joy, delight becomes part of it. There's a story of a wealthy man, the time of the Buddha businessman, very wealthy in his time, who became a monk left it all behind and became a monk. And the other monks talked about him behind his back and said, He's used to luxury and having servants everything, you know, so easy for him. He's not going to manage his renunciant although he runs it all they have is one row of a bowl. They sleep outdoors, you know, shirt, surely, he's going to leave go back to his old life soon. And then one day in the monastery, they heard him he was off meditating, grove of trees, and they heard him yell out, be happy, happy. And they looked at each other. Yep. He's happy because he's decided to go back to slay life. And so they went nest them. Why did you yell out happy And he said, Oh, when I was wealthy I had locks on on all my doors side guards posted everywhere. He was dangerous for me to go about. It was always concerned and worried and upset about it, you know? And now, I don't have anything to lose. I think for anybody to steal from me. I don't have to keep my doors locked. And I'm free. I'm relaxed. I'm so much happier this way. So happy. How do you get happy? How do you get content? So the next factor of awakening is calmness or tranquility. And be relaxed. How do we find how do we discover how to be relaxed? Can we be relaxed? It's a great protection in Buddhist practice. If you remember the key, being relaxed, close to 10 for the practice, I've known plenty of people including myself, who gotten tense and trying to practice trying to get something I have to get concentrated, choice but to be joyful and be at ease with how things are. And

two young men enter the monastery at the same day on the same day. One was an overconfident aristocrat who entered the monastery with a sense of entitlement. The other was a sign of a local farmers who spent his life helping on the small poor family farm. During their entrance interview, the abbot asked them why they were becoming monks. The aristocrats said they have come to climb to the highest achievement of human life. to experience the bliss, the glory and the brilliant light of liberation. The peasant said, I implore and unschooled and I have no hope of enlightenment. However, I hope to see the Dharma and the everyday things and activities of my life. I see the truth in the food I eat, and the work I do and the people I encounter. Within six months, the peasant was graced with liberation. The aristocrat is still striving on courageously. So to be at ease, what does it mean to be at ease to find our ease with how things are the next factor of awakening is concentration. So this these two factors together tranquility, concentration or close, close at hand, the often quite closely connected because as we get more concentrated, there's deeper calm that can come As we're calm, there's easier to get concentrated. The venerable monk was always always appeared peaceful. This was not so unusual among the monks of the monastery. However, this venerable one was unique and that he remained peaceful and calm. Even after entering the busy and noisy bustle of the town market. He was the monastery shopper who in most days spent hours bargaining for the best prices for the produce he bought for the monks. When asked how he managed to remain peaceful, in the busy marketplace, he said I entered the monastery looking for peace and quiet. I spent years in the harried world of commerce and people. I long for the silence the monastery was rumored to have I was delighted with my first weeks in the monastery. However, as I settled into the silence of the Place, I was shocked to learn that the real noise was within me. It was the busyness of my own mind that oppressed me, not the activities of the world. Now it doesn't matter where I go, I carry the great silence within me. So what does it mean to find to be concentrated composed, be a piece pleased with how things are. There was a monarch, a great country who didn't feel much peace to the monarch asked the ministers. I would like to have a contest. Whoever can paint to a painting that best depicts peace will get a great price. They sent the Jews out to the country and many people submitted their paintings. The minister Went through them all. And monarch reviewed them all, one at a time. And they gone through almost all of them. And they were obvious things. They were beautiful pictures of Alpine lakes are peaceful and calm and still are beautiful, calm ocean sunrises is very peaceful and tranquil. Look. It was beautiful, idyllic paintings of the deer and the meadow, Bambi. And there was even paintings of Sunday morning meditation at IMC and the monarchy we rejected them all. And ministers of what we do, which seems to be rejecting them all. And they said, finally, well, there was one more painting that we thought wasn't we didn't really need to bother to look at because it's such an agitated, almost violent painting. It's not peaceful. Pull it off. So the monarch said, oh, let's look at it. We've looked at everything else, nothing seemed to work for me. And so they brought out the big painting. And it was really, in some ways a violent, agitated painting. It was a painting of a very powerful waterfall. And it was you know if you've ever been to big waterfall cascading powerful water

splashing up making this foam and steam and fog you know, just looked, you know, deadly to get close to what's going on here. This is not peaceful. So they got so that monarch got interested in got really close to the big painting. Ah, yes. This one. This one wins the prize. What is what do you see is kind of closely right here. He got close to painting you saw a little bit of it, a place where the water part a little bit, a part of the part and the little kind of opening. And you've looked through that opening in the water. You saw a little ledge, little edge was a little hollow, little hollow, someone had a bird and middle nest, and there was little bird, peacefully sitting there tending. It's x. So that's real peace, to find the peace in the midst of our economic crisis, the midst of our difficult life, not to retreat from our life necessarily. But how do we find that within we find the peace, not dependent on the conditions around us. And so then the last factor of awakening is equanimity. This is Fantastic capacity that is under usually under appreciated, like manipulating can seem to kind of like boring or dull or, you know, being nonreactive.

It's like pretty, you know, inhuman. But it turns out that quality of equanimity this powerful factor of awakening is kind of like the most sublime and most satisfying emotional disconnect can have. It's very alive. It's very vibrant or very luminous. The mind that is economists, but has this built in equanimity. It doesn't react. Like for things not against things. It maintains this luminosity cave to maintains its peace. It's not a ruffled, things come through. All kinds of things can happen. But the mind doesn't contract doesn't lash out. The mind keeps its equanimity. It's peace. It's kind of wonderful state. It's a wonderful place to be. There's a famous story of I think it's real Khan. I don't remember who it is but a Zen monk in Japan. And in his village, there was a teenage girl and marry teenage girl who got pregnant. And when the baby was born, the parents said, you have to tell us who the father is. And so she lied. And she said, Oh, to the village priest. So they parents angrily brought the baby to the village priest and said, This is yours. You have to take us to take responsibility for it. And he said, Oh, that's so. And he started caring for the baby. very lovingly, and responsibly, best he could. And after some months, the little girl, the teenage girl had a change of heart and, you know, maybe felt the pain, Mr. Child. So she went to her parents, you know, I'll tell you who the feel father is. That neighbor boy whatever. So then Know, the parents were kind of aghast what they'd done. So they went back to the village monk and said, oh, we're so sorry. We made a terrible mistake. You know, we would like to have a baby back now. And so the monk said, Oh, that's so good to be back. So, things come things go his reputation went up and down. But kind of teaching her story but equanimity. So then back to original story, for the story, but going through the doors, remember that one?

By now the voices had gotten quite loud. So ran down the halls, the phrase it is all in echoed after me. After a while, every thought I had every wish I hope for in every effort I made, was attacked by it is all empty, resonating throughout the monastery. Finally, I couldn't take it anymore. I ran toward the front gate of the monastery, I was going to find a tall mountain clip and throw myself off. It did not make sense to keep living if living was going to be so bad. But as I came to the front gate, the gate doors loomed large in front of me. I became too frightened to go through it. It was as if I could not survive one more voice telling me that it is all empty. After I stood frozen for a long time, remember the practice the abbot had given me on my first day in the monastery, always walk completely through the doors. The instruction has seemed so empty and meaningless when I first heard it now it's seemed to monumental. I could not manage to get myself to pass through the front gate. inside my head voice kept repeating. It's all empty. It's all empty. My mind couldn't find anything to rest on. Because when it did, I was reminded that this too was empty. My mind became increasingly contracted in on itself. It kept pulling away from everything I'd ever been attached to. The average instruction came back to me always walk completely through the gates through the doors that there was nothing for me to do. I took a step through the gates. Again, my contracted mind pulled away, pulled away from almost everything but itself heard. It is all empty. And with that, I let go of my mind. Then I turned around and reentered the monastery. Since that day, the voices stopped. And I never again worried about the meaning of anything. Neither despair nor hope are relevant for me. It is emptiness itself, which lives through me. So, when equanimity is well established,

the seven factors of awakening are well developed. Wonderful stage, so wonderful platform from which the mind can let go of itself. And so at the end, whether it's through the challenges Marquez, or through entering peace like an arrow. These early nuns, the Buddhist tradition points to a possibility for all of us. It's a possibility of an astounding level of peace, well being in freedom which will serve you as a repository of Inner Wealth much better than any American bank. Now you open the treasure door to your own hearts. Thank you