

2008-10-10 The Five Hindrances Introduction

Desire 3 of 6

Sun, 8/2 12:26PM • 23:21

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

hindrances, desire, people, operating, ill, restlessness, category, aversion, person, fear, pursuit, choose, predominate, acting, feel, version, pain, necessarily, object, reinforces

SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

Sometimes people will recognize that one of these five hindrances is operating for them. And they will take it as a as evidence of personal or personal failing. And terror terrible I am, I have desire. I'm such an awful person can't believe it, I have this ill will. And it's often said that the hindrances just come with being a human being. And that is not necessarily something to take personally like, personally, fall just comes with being a human. And all humans have to deal with them. And it's as being a very mature maturing about addressing them, looking at them and seeing them and not being so worried about their presence and be upset by their presence. But taking As the food and the fuel and stuff, where we find the path we can develop ourselves and cultivate our practice. And so that, you know, desire just operates and, and then we get swept up in its world. So that's frequently said, and, but there's really two sides, I think to our involvement with the hindrances. One is that it's just a kind of a, you could say kind of an innate capacity to have these operate and they bubble up and we have to we have to deal with them. But then also, what we frequently think about are concerned with becomes the inclination of the mind becomes a habit becomes a disposition. And so whereas some of it is just spontaneous, what we were born with would become come into this world with if we keep acting on it, Keep reinforcing any one of these, then we act on it and get into it indulge in it, then it's not necessarily anymore. It's the natural arising. Something where we've chosen to be involved in to stay connected to and, and then they get to that reinforces it. And I've seen this in myself that if I pursue certain kinds of things, certain desires, that I'm left with lingering kind of wanting more wanting desire, it's not just I'm not just free of it. And you know, it, there's a kind of a momentum that gets it going. And that sometimes this desire, the momentum of wanting, I've noticed that when the when the when I stopped wanting that particular thing, that the momentum is still there. And then momentum, momentum, momentum of desire feels uncomfortable. And that discomfort, begs to be filled with the object of desire. And so off, I run, I don't go running that much, but, you know, you know off for the night, you know, try to fill it, and then that reinforces it kind of, and it has a huge consequence, even when it's not very strong, the scent the hindrance, but acting on it or allowing it to kind of course through us and have it say on us. Any one of the hindrances, I think we get a little bit disconnected from ourselves. And it's most clearly seen with desire and ill will, that if you're running off into a zone, your will, you're running off after an object, something else that you want, rather than being intimate and connected to what's happening here. So for example, if what you want is a person sexual desire is really the person that's the person out there and you're concerned with you think about how wonderful would be but you don't really notice what's going on here. Or a same thing with anger. If you're angry at a person. You're focusing on the person, and you might not notice what's going on inside of you. And with both desire and ill will, there's a cost for us here. And it's very interesting to look at the cost of being caught up in the world of Central desire, choosing to go with it during allow it to go keep going. And so one immediate one is I think there's a

disconnect with ourselves, we don't see ourselves very well we don't in touch with ourselves. And that disconnect, that alienation feels uncomfortable, and it tends to be fuel for further involvement with the hindrances. It also but then then we're more likely to act on it if we're not connected well, and ourselves. We don't know ourselves that well. It's much easier to go to automatic pilot on these different things that come along, and be swept away in them. And sensual desire there's no shortage of human beings who have

caused suffering. to themselves and others through the pursuit of sensual desire. If you have never done that at all, probably you don't need to be here. And the you know, it just comes in as such an intimate part of human life to the struggles and the pursuit of this kind of particular kinds of desires. So it is a way of causing harm, and some people have ruined their lives in the pursuit of sensual pleasure in acting on indulging and are involved in ill will, hostility. So, from you know, subtle disconnect with ourselves to a dramatic and almost losing our lives or losing our lives through the kind of pursuit of these things, there's a whole range in between. Our community can be disrupted, families can be disrupted. A whole country can be disrupted when presidents pursue central pleasure and the wrong way the whole country can do history disrupted when The President acts on ill will, you know, so he's getting a huge consequences, how it ripples out. I think it's quite phenomenal that Buddhism encourages us to really stop and take a look at this stuff and try to understand it really well. And hopefully kind of in kind of a non judgmental way, there is a judgment in Buddhism, that it's better not to operate, caught in the grip of Central desire or ill will. So there's clearly a judgment or the evaluation, this is not useful to be caught in the grip of it. And the other side, that's, that's the judgmental side. The non judgmental side is the side of not being reactive, not being in conflict with the arising of this stuff. And rather, in a very generous way, stopping and looking at it, getting to know it well. So that's what we're doing here. Last thing I'd like to say is that different times in a person's life, different days, different weeks, different phases, and also for different personalities, different ones of these five hindrances predominate. So there are times when desire predominates. You know, some people are more desire type people, some people more ill will type people versus type people. So, for example, for me, I'm more desire type, like, like to have the wills that's so strong for me, but, you know, having things you know, is good. I say sometimes that I can have, you know, desires are a dime a dozen for me. So, you know, so I've learned over the years to recognize the function, the operation of desire, and, and, for the most part, these desires can kind of come and go, they're, you know, the cheap you know, and I don't get tricked by them as much as they used to. And some people are more averse to it and that's their thing. Whatever reason, the thing they're into and then some sometimes people are more the slot interpret type, some people are more the versus type. I mean the the, the restless anxiety type and then some people doubt is big people, some people are very filled with doubt. So, which one are you? Today are this phase of your life for this lifetime? What tends to predominate for you? which operates of these five what would you say is your strong suit? Is it desire centerset you know, sensual desire? Is it the verge aversion or ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness anxiety or doubt, that's what I'd like you to reflect on a little bit. And maybe it's popped up to you the answers obvious, maybe reflect on a little bit. So you have 15 minutes to place yourself in one of these categories. Well, some people feel like they equally fit in all of them. The multiple hindrance personality

and, and I think it's fair to say you know that all the hindrances operate in some way, but if you can choose one for yourself, you know, the one that seems to be the strongest or the juiciest, or, or just the one you'd prefer. If you can't decide anything at all. Just the one you prefer to be. There all equal. Yes.

If you if you have if you have physical pain and so in that case for some people what their mind gets caught up in reverse version and that's their version of you know I know someone who had knee pain and he would push back on his knee to hurt it back until they had knee surgery so that's he was version

was operating other piece someone else might be sitting here feeling knee pain and their mind goes thinking about designing the most perfect meditation cushion and how it's going to feel just the right texture and you can velvet and just kind of you know, it's more you know desire Oh yes. You know, they get the heat heat going in here my muscles will relax and feel so soothing. And the version is not a big thing just like how good it would feel. That's where the mind goes. So different people have different times, you know, different ways that goes, okay? Or it might just be I don't know what to do with this pain, you know? You know, I don't know what to do, what should I do? Should I move? Should I not move? You know, he didn't give any instructions around pain. I'm just, you tell me to pay attention to distractions and the pain is not one of the five hindrances. I'm distracted by it. And, you know, what am I supposed to do? Now? You know, I'm confused. That's maybe the doubt operating? Or it could be if you have pain sitting here and, and, and something's wrong. Something's not right. I can't do the exercise properly. What should I do? And you know, hope no one notices, and you could well worked up. Or it could be that you feel any pain and I was so excited. So looking forward to this day here. I'm just paid to give up. It's just, it's so hard. I'm painting. So that's maybe sloth and torpor. Are you sit here and pain? Oh looks pain is happening. Pain. That's interesting. He's like pulling and tightening and heat. And none of that none of that and then the hindrances are bring it. Any other questions? Maybe you need help with? Yes.

Yes. Yes. Yes. Yeah. So as always seems strange to many people that that they have his wonderful list of five. And fear, isn't it because people fears the primary hindrance that operates so pervasively. One explanation why it's not there is the one I gave earlier. That fear wouldn't be operating when you're really well settled in meditation and, and whereas These others might. That's one interpretation. The other one is that some people will put fear under the category of aversion. And, and someone else I know, likes putting it under the category of restlessness and anxiety. That's where they say fits. So I don't have, you know, the real answer for you. You know, or, you know, like the definitive answers, who knows, you know, and you're welcome to have six hindrances and include, include fear as part of it, that's okay. There's no limitation how many you can have. Yes.

I have a version to my knee pain. I can have an aversion to my knee pain. Fear, you know, I'm afraid my knee, you know, oh, it's always imaginary.

The person I know who a teacher I know who likes to put fear under the category of restlessness and anxiety wants to limit the second hindrance to ill will and not even he doesn't know he doesn't even include anchors part of it because not all anger He says his strong displeasure and, and so anyway for him the fear fear doesn't fit very well into the other teachers it fits really well because fear has to do with a certain kind of resistance pushing things away or not wanting something. So he defines anger a strong displeasure, isn't there's no it doesn't necessarily include a will. strongest pleasure. Under strongest pleasure. Well, you know, the question is one of the issues with the hindrances is in the, in the sutras, there's a relatively narrow, different kind of category. Each one is kind of narrow. The first one is sensual desire. But a lot of teachers find it useful to expand it out or people, practitioners can include all desire because it's almost any desire, it can trip you up. And so why just limited to use essential desire. And then the word for the second hindrance is ill will. And However, all kinds of other forms of aversion or anger can arise that don't necessarily have hostility as part of it, they will, it feels like he wants someone to you wants to heal for someone. But anger doesn't necessarily want to heal for someone or aversion doesn't necessarily want the URL for someone or something. And so but some people like to broaden and include any kind of version because it's such Big thing in our life. So I'm quite content, happy to make it quite broad and very inclusive. This because I think it's more useful at this point to think of it that way. Yes.

restlessness, anxiety.

It seems to be generated by doubt, by uncertainty, confusion resolved, and suddenly go there to that to these other places from that.

Right. Yeah, that's true. So there's one difference between the doubt or the uncertainty might not be distracting per se, but it's the catalyst for getting involved distraction. One way of thinking of the hindrances is there five strategies for dealing with challenges five, unhealthy strategy We're dealing with this challenges. When we feel something uncomfortable, some difficulty. Sometimes Different people have different strategies for responding. Some people will go, they want something. Some people want somebody to go away. Some people just give up. Some people run around anxiously and some people just have a lot of uncertainty what to do. So some people choose different strategies for how to respond yes.

Is that

ever accept without actually seem to get to the root of what's going on and so

I can buy stuff this morning.

And don't notice

worrying about all these things because

when I noticed I was talking to my Everything settles down.

Enough to.

Exactly. So that's why we want to stop and look more deeply and see what's really going on here. And sometimes, these hindrances don't have necessarily deep root, but sometimes they clearly have a realtor catalyst. Some just usually a discomfort that that you know, we're trying to cope with that discomfort and do something with it. The word that we the Pali word that we translate as hindrance, the word is Nirvana. Nirvana Rana. It shouldn't be to not be confused with Nirvana. Nirvana. According to the dictionary, it means to cover over to cover up to put a cover on something. hindrance has the idea of obstructing, but cover has idea of of hiding. And so I find it useful sometimes to investigate What is it called? What is the hindrance covering? Sometimes desire covers loneliness, for example, and sometimes it'll will or aversion covers frustrated desire, you know, so it's interesting to explore this and unpack it a little bit. Do you have enough to put yourself in a category, you think that's what I want to do now? Okay. Crossing over

maybe the first two hindrances have to do with your relationship to an object. So either you want the object or you want to go away, pull, push, so two different directions. So, you know, I want lunch or, you know, you Not another peanut butter sandwich, you know, so there's a version. And then the third and fourth hindrance have much more to do with our subjective state in relationship to challenges and what's going on, we can either have a drop of energy, or we can have a spike in energy. A drop takes the form of sloth and torpor, restlessness or spike and becomes restless or agitated or kind of something. So the first two have to do more of the object that we're interested in. The second is the second two have much more to do subjective state of energetic state. And, and the fifth one has to do with self doubt. So that's good enough for now. We're gonna spend a whole year on this. I just want to

give you a very general just general these categories and see if you can you think you have enough to put yourself in one for now. First today, just this last meditation or today or this lifetime, which which one of these five, you know, kind of is you'll get don't get there, they don't get their chance. Which which of these choose one that kind of more, more or less characterize yourself? characterizes you in whatever time span you want, whether it's today this morning, the second, but kind of quick. Ideally, it's something more like, Oh yeah, this I recognize this. This is really a familiar thing. And, yes, this particular one seems to be a bit more when it comes more frequently through

desire

to be ordered and beautiful.

could well be I don't think it's, you know, we can make hard and fast distinctions or barriers between some of these hindrances. They often come up together in different ways, so, you know, so that's part of your task is to see different threads that are operating here with it. Okay, so what I was hoping to do was, we will take a silent break for 15 minutes. And those of you who haven't put yourself in a category yet Would you please do so? And, and also, you might, it might be useful for what's gonna happen next for you to choose do number two So, what is it, what is it what is your which of the hindrances more predominant for you the most predominant and which is the second most predominant for we're going to do next but useful to have more options. And, and if you have a real hard time, you know, choosing because they're all equal or some of them are equal, and then just choose the one you like to be in Or if you're a versus version type person then choose based on which one you don't want to be.

Okay, so let's take the break. Thank you.