

# 2008-12-21 Dharma And Mutual Benefit

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## SPEAKERS

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So what I had in mind this morning was to say just a few words, if I'm capable of that. And then opening up more to questions or comments, questions, mostly, you know, if you have any questions, I'd like to explore some aspect of practice. We could do that that way. So, the words are that, in thinking about this as being some people call it the holiday season, sometimes it's called the season of peace, occasionally, and that Nirvana or awakening is sometimes said to be characterized by peace and peace as a very important aspect of this practice. aim of the practice, hopefully we can become more peaceful people many ways. But interestingly, the Dharma is so Nirvana is sometimes characterized by peace. But the Dharma is not characterized by peace, the Dharma, it said in a very ancient kind of saying in Buddhism, the Dharma is characterized by non violence. Interesting. And, and then it's understood in this ancient Buddhist tradition, that whenever you have the non in front of a word, it often implies the positive quality, what's actually not just simply the absence of something, but the presence of something that the antonym so the, the non violence is understood to be compassion. So one of the qualities or the characteristic of Dharma is non violence or compassion. And so what's the relationship between peace and compassion or peace and non violence? I think the Dharma here is meant to be The teachings of the Buddha, the practices of the Buddha taught some of the qualities that develop in a person, some of the patterns that unfold for people as they do practice. And that the Dharma that teachings in the practice is characterized by non violence. And what I like about this is a piece is a little bit can be seen a bit more as being just me, you know that you sit and quiet, meditate, you become peaceful. Hopefully that peacefulness kind of radiates or benefits others as well. But peace has no quality in it, of being interactive. And it's something very profound but that piece of non written in a sense, non interactive piece, the piece is not defined by itself, not defined by other. It's liberated from self and other is a very profound thing. But the Dharma is interactive is connected. And sometimes when people do Dharma practice, they forget that the Dharma is Something you believe that has to do with relationships or the interconnectedness and that is that Dharma is characterized by compassion, or non violence. And this reminds me of repeated teaching of the Buddha, where he said a wise person considers what is beneficial for self for oneself, what is beneficial for others, and what is beneficial for both self and others. And for a long time, I thought this was just kind of emphatic rhetoric, self, others and self and others just you know, but I think this idea of a wise person engages in their life with some concerns and consideration, but what is beneficial all around, not just for me, so, it's not Certainly, the Buddha cannot be criticized for being just kind of offering a self centered centered kind of practice because he was very concerned about But how can we live our life to be a benefit of others as well. But it's very interesting statement beneficial for self and others. And I started thinking about this some more this last week when I heard on the radio discussion about vaccines. And so like a flu vaccine, or any kind of vaccine, but take the flu flu vaccine, so I could take a flu vaccine. And supposedly that's supposed to be beneficial for me. Great. But when I take a flu vaccine, I'm also one of the reasons I do it is I have a little kid at home who has asthma. And it protects him. It's not good for him to get the flu.

So I become a buffer small buffer, one person buffer between whoever does have the flu and my son because I don't get it.

So if you know if 80% of us in this room, have the flu that succeed, we provide a big buffer for those 20% who don't. Now some people who can't have the flu vaccine because they have immune problems, they have a variety of conditions that prevents them from taking the flu vaccine. So the 90% of 80% of those people who do take it actually supports the people who can't take it. So it's beneficial for so benefits ourselves but also benefits others. And, and the discussion was that when parents don't vaccinate their kids, which some parents don't do, because they feel there's all these mercury in dangerous stuff in vaccine, it's a reasonable concern for parents to do. But to have However, they then rely on all the all the kids, all the parents, families who are vaccinating the kids all around them reading a wonderful buffer. And so it's a little bit you know, self concern. You know, I'm going to take care of my kid, and let everyone else create a wonderful environment around me where I'm buffered from all these terrible diseases. So it's interesting how, you know, the interaction, the interrelatedness there that we have. And so how is it that practicing the Dharma or practice and living our life, how do we consider not self, but not just others, but also the mutuality, the interactivity of all of us how we work together. And so here coming here to practice at IMC and some people who practice in this kind of environment, find it very beneficial to sit together with other people. And they feel supported by others. You know, some people say it's harder for me, it's hard for me to sit at home still for as long as I sit here, but here it's easier because I feel the atmosphere of the group. One example. So we're benefiting from all these, so then people feel that way are benefiting from the group. That's nice, however, That person is getting that benefit is also providing that benefit to someone else. Isn't that nice? And sometimes people don't remember that, oh, the fact that I showed up and sat here, I'm supporting someone else, and who, who maybe he needs to support and perhaps some of you are quite contented, happy to meditate alone at home. And However, when you come here, you also your presence offers a certain kind of support for other people. And so this mutuality so the Dharma is a wise person considers how we benefit self and others. Practicing of generosity. generosity, is meant to be beneficial for you. opens your heart develops wonderful qualities is a source of joy and happiness for you. And hopefully, clearly, generosity is beneficial for others. But it's also beneficial for the whole system for self And others, because as we create an environment of generosity around us, then people treat us differently, that people treat their society differently. And I think that one of the things that we have here at IMC, I hope is we have a field of generosity into which many people come and benefit. Because there's a level of trust and goodwill, that that that is kind of built up as a kind of a community level, not just, you know, one on one or something like that. I make some sense to you. So the Dharma is characterized by non violence or by compassion speaks to this interactive quality that Dharma practice is about. And so when we practice, I think it's helpful to consider how is it how are we kind of interacting and how are we being supportive? When we do look at ourselves directly. In practice, then the Dharma practice is characterized by non violence is a very helpful kind of kind of reminder, can we be non violent and compassionate to what goes on inside of us? What happens to us we meet what happens here. I was very touched. Recently, I went to a class meeting my son's class parents meeting. And several of the parents, one in particular spoke up and said, You know, I think that my daughter is one of the more difficult children in the class. And I knew from other parents that something they talked in the bushes

and so I knew that there's this young girl was a little bit of issue. And, and here, the mother stood sat there, said, You know, I think my daughter is one of the big problems in the class. And I'm challenged with my daughter. And we and we do we spend a lot of time at home trying to figure out how to work with my daughter how to work with her behavior, and what's going on and As she spoke, it certainly opened and softened my heart towards her and to the daughter to hear that. But what impressed me so much was the the, the very, very honest and taking responsibility, but kind of matter of factness, in

which this woman is willing to kind of expose herself and say, This is what I'm struggling with, as if it was almost as if it wasn't a problem. It was a problem to address but almost like a undefensible kind of on kind of tremendous acceptance. And then it was very sad and to see that some of the parents responded to her didn't have the same broad acceptance when parents spoke up, oh, you know, it really starts with a family you know, and you know, and so here here was someone who was willing to kind of say, this is my situation, and defensive me and defensive about it kind of broadly accepting. You know, I thought this you know, she was kind of compassionate for herself situation. And then she got, you know, stabbed a little bit. But I'm so inspired by people who speak, this is a situation, you know, I'm neurotic. You know, or I'm afraid or I have this issue with anger. And this is what I'm working with. And just, you know, there isn't any criticism or, you know, added animosity towards himself hostility for having a statistic. This is this is what's going on. This is what I'm working with. Not acceptance in the sense that great. I'm just going to continue being angry. But yeah, I'm an angry person. And this is what you know, my situation is and I'm not going to be embarrassed or defensive about it or doing my best. So how can we meditate with that kind of approach to have that kind of honesty about ourselves? Here I am. This is what the situation is not being defensive about it not being offensive about it. But immediate in this nonviolent approach this compassionate approach, that's the quality of the Dharma, how to sit here without When we do that, that tends to be conducive to peace and have peace and happy, peaceful, happy, peaceful about who we are and what we are. And my hope and I think my, my understanding is that that level of peace, nonviolent, peaceful approach not being in conflict with what is, is one of the best avenues for discovering the peace of awakening, the peace, that steps beyond the concepts, we have the limits, we have the boundaries we have of self into this great kind of possibility of being alive without all these concepts and ideas that that limit us when the Buddha analyzed violence. He said one of the primary conditions for the arising of violence is people living in a lot of hard and fast concepts. So the being able to have the capacity of softening the hard and fast concept and being relaxed. I like that being relaxed is a stepping stone to peace, to be relaxed about this and softening the concepts. And so when we meet others, we don't meet them with hard and fast concepts, but rather we meet them with soft concepts and ideas that are flexible and malleable and open and willing to shift and change accordingly. So, awakening is characterized by peace, but the Dharma is characterized by our compassion. So those are my few words. And if that's your turn, their mutual interactive engagement to the Dharma. Now I turn it over to you. And we'll see where we go.

Thank you for that talk was really great. And I just I'm off on another trip, but I think it has something to do with the season. Just thinking about joy and gratitude. And, you know, sometimes when I tune into my body, I notice obstructions in different places. And so sometimes I have an obstruction to the joy and gratitude that I'm feeling. And as I, as I deal with the obstruction, I seem to deepen into joy and gratitude. So I'm wondering if you could just say some things about deepening into joy and gratitude.

Hmm.

Well, I'll tell you, the first thing that comes to mind is you know, it's, I think it's to be expected that human beings will have obstructions, tensions and difficulties, a variety of different kinds of attachments clinging, normal and sometimes I'll sit with some tension in my body that I have. And it would be nice if I could just do the magic wand of mindfulness and just, I could all go away just like that. But it doesn't usually work that way. it sometimes takes a while for it to kind of dissolve and settle and all that. But I get a lot of joy that I have a practice that can meet those things. So it's one thing to be concerned about how quickly they go away, quickly, they get fixed. That's another thing to know. Wow. I don't know how long it's gonna take. But Wow, I have a practice that can beat this and to be honest by it, that has offers me a path through it and with it and helps me to find a place to be peaceful with it or compassionate with it. And maybe I'll succeed today, but I'm so glad I have a practice. So that brings me joy. And what

that does is that it shifts Little bit also involves a shift of attention focus from the problem from the object to the subject. And as I said, some recently made aware toys may be here. But there are three things involved there problem. There's a problem that we have. Many of you can probably dream up, think of all kinds of problems you have. Most people most human beings have problems with you because to see a homo problematic rather hopeless homosapiens. And so, there's a problem. And then it's our relationship to the problem, how we relate to the problem. And then there's this the subject the person who has the problem and most people focus on the problem But if you focus on the subject, sometimes the subject can disappear, then the problem, you know, goes away. So, you know if, if I, for example, made a terrible example, but for example, if I'm concerned that people see that I have a certain status. And then the problem is that people are not treating me with enough respect for my status. So I could address the problem with those people out there and educate them.

Or I could look at the relationship and say, Well, you know, they just, they just don't know how you know, they're understand, and it's okay, I'll just leave it, leave it the way it is and be relaxed. Or I can look and say, Look, Gil You seem to be caught up in the status thing. Why don't you just dissolve that? So I dissolve the status thing. And poof I don't have a problem with those people anymore. So when we focus on the practice the Dharma, it helps us to step out of the orbit have the problem, and that we don't live in the problem anymore. And we don't live in the problem anymore, then we should still address it and be responsible for it. But our identity is not tied to it. We don't define ourselves by that. So part of part of what we do is we shift the identity shift understanding of self in relationship to it as well. To make some sense, you're thinking about how it applies.

Let me think.

Yes, it was a great question, your first question, deepening joy that way, and maybe other people here today will have other comments.

And because this is the season of taking vows or we want to change with the new year or the solstice or something, I was reminded of a practice that a teacher, somewhere in Marion County, taught me one time and her name was Wendy. And I remember her last name, and she wasn't the gardener. She was a keto teacher. And so every year she's Wendy Palmer. Right, exactly. Fierce woman. Wonderful, but anyway, every year she would take a quality that she wanted to work on, like generosity or kindness or something, and then she would remind herself all year that well, if I were more kind, how would I have responded in this situation or if I was more patient, would I have I said what I said, and remarkable that you remember how to do it. Remember it'll all year, but instead so that it gives you an avenue to make the practice of wanting to be more patient instead of just saying, I want to be more patient this year and I want to be more kind this year and I want to be more generous this year. That it breaks it down to some way that we might actually learn how to take more of that quality in

beautiful. Thank you, they bring you joy, do that way

and I remember to do it

I really appreciate the comment that you made.

And, and I was thinking about ease and

because you were talking about

compassionate

loving kindness and

and then how some people respond in a way that's very, maybe violent and more constricting constricts. And so I was thinking, you know, I grew up in a very violent atmosphere. And I'm sure some people whether they wanted to or not, they've been exposed to very severe violence in the form of war in their countries and things. And I found that by practicing a certain type of movement, I was really shocked because I was it was kind of like moving meditation, not Tai Chi, but something else. And I noticed, wow, you know, I never felt this ease or this spaciousness before, because I was always doing things in such an extreme way. And a lot of my movements are like that. And so this was allowing me to feel more at ease and comfort internally. And I think that would lead to respond with more people. and ease and give other people that chance also to be who they are without responding in a way like you're saying

offensive versus

no remember the other word

defensive and offensive but just coming from a place of spacious ease.

And

and maybe I just have to one question I was doing

I was gonna ask because is the season of giving. And I was gonna ask how to

give to yourself

how to how to practice generosity toward yourself and the comparison between generosity versus indulging. Because the culture is always telling you, oh, you deserve that. And then what happens with addiction is that it gets psychologically First and it becomes the way to actually give in a way that's meaningful or filling the needs don't get addressed. They, you know, you start doing indulging instead of,

it's a great, it's a great question. It's a fantastic question. The difference of between taking care of oneself and practicing in a way that this way focuses on self in a way. And when is that healthy? And when is it narcissistic? When is it self indulging? And the one of the one of the things I find myself as a teacher, it's sometimes hard for me, even when people come and talk to me about their practice, for me to do notice to see this is only occasionally Don't worry, you know, as you're talking to me, but it's hard sometimes to see sometimes the difference in a student's between when they're narcissistic Self involved with their practice and when when it's actually a healthy self, you know, personal mindfulness. Because you're sitting here you're in retreat, for example, in meditation, you're sitting, close your eyes. And the primary thing you notice is what's going on this psychophysical being here. So you start noticing your attentions and your activity of your mind, your feelings, your emotions. And so then index you know, your that's what you're grappling with working with. And so you come and talk to a teacher you talk about, you know, I had this experiences what happened to me into reasonable but then sometimes it just feeds into this narcissism of self and I'm most important you know, it's all about me and you know, negotiating the self and all this. So how to how to negotiate that is, anyways a teacher I



find occasionally a little bit hard. Sometimes it's not hard, sometimes Claire's, narcissistic, but sometimes I thought, Oh, how do I find that difference? And so how do we do so I think just note note knowing that there's an issue I think is important. And I don't I don't think I have any good answer for you. I wish I did. But I believe that if it's narcissistic or self indulging, that if a person is sensitive, the mindfulness is strong. They can feel how that's off, they can feel the suffering or the tension, that that's part of that the restriction or the tightening of the hardness that's involved in that. But it requires being very, very common sensitive. So if you do like the movement thing you can do and get really calm and relaxed and peaceful. That's place from from that place, then you might be able to see that when it becomes self, selfish or self, indulging in some way. There's a way in which there's a tightening up, that happens, limiting constriction. Boundaries Get set. But when when the practice is leading to a greater peace that's more open, there's less boundaries, there's less things protect the less constriction less tightening. So that's the best I've come up with so far.

One question that the example that you had, when I guess as a child and your family and you're admitting you're fighting your child is difficult to another group of people or other families or whatever. And I was wondering, is there any way to sort of the person is admitting difficulty to somehow

to have a strategy to deal with the people who are seem to be inflexible about

what's the strategy? I think there's two two step two general categories of strategies that I could think of sitting right here. One is not be too concerned about what they think about you. You know, so I think not being concerned about being liked or, you know, two people don't like you or that credit, you know, say people say all kinds of things, and so not to be so sensitive to it. Okay. Well, you know, it's unfortunate they're saying that they it's unfortunate for them it's a little unfortunate for the groups unfortunate for me. But I'm not going to pick it up, I'm just gonna let it be I'm gonna be like an umbrella. And this is the render the rain just let it wash off. So there's a very healthy way of doing that. So that's one strategy. The other strategy, which is much more difficult, I don't know, which is more difficult. But the other strategy is to have the social skills, the communication skills to work with that. And, and so it might be as simple simple as saying, could be I can imagine sometimes it's very wise to simply and it's not offensive. It's not criticizing them for saying what saying what they did, but the parents might have sat there and said, Oh, ouch. That could be really wise. Oh, then everybody, oh, that had an impact here. But if the person said you don't know what you're talking, you know, that's really disrespectful of me or you know, then suddenly it's in conflict. But if you say Ouch, then I think it's a good thing. Kind of, you know, has a chance so ouch could be a very sophisticated form of communication. But there might be, you know, there's the whole learning social communication and learning techniques of how to talk wisely and I'm still learning. You know, it's, it's Betsy,

thank you for your talk, Gil. I was reminded of an example you use the example in the trade off between self and others in context. I was reminded of an example, an early example, that I learned here very poignantly from Taan, Geoff, who has taken many more than the five precepts. But he was talking about trading off values or letting go of a personal value, that he had taken one of the five precepts when he was at dinner, and a guest And then an element of hospitality. And he said, although he had taken the precept not to kill, and therefore made the personal choice not to eat meat, that in the circumstance that he was presented with a plate of meat as a gesture of generosity on behalf of the host, that he would gratefully accept that gift. So trading off a value that was dear to his heart, in exchange for accepting that which was offered with a grateful heart. I found that to be the most moving tribute. And I just wanted to share it as it occurred to me to be a second example to yours of the issue around vaccination. Thank you for your time. Thank you.

So I recently read an article in tricycle that relates to this idea of peace. And what was the non violence and confessions? Yes, is about zendo in New York, where they combine martial arts with mindfulness. And one of the students that worked his way up to become a teacher was very violent. He was surrounded by violence. And they were quite used to being searched by the police. And they would react, you know, before they were involved with this and Oh, they would react in a violent or upsetting way in the police, we get more aggressive. So he decided this particular student who worked himself up that he was just going to submit to the search, because he recognized that the police would stereotype all these guys have kids. And by submitting the process and we had nothing, what he had to let go of was the self victimization. And by letting go of that the police he noticed that the police got more relaxed and became a non issue a non event. So, this was using skillful means, both in from a peaceful aspect of sitting meditation and using martial arts to channel this violent tendencies, in contrast to the non violence that also manifested itself by his willingness to let go of this self victimization.

Great, lovely.

This is a question about receiving Dharma, that in our center here we have various kinds of views of Dharma talks from different visit. In their tradition, and I particularly have a problem with Zen talks, which we quite often have.

I've had more than one occasion when the person next to me turns and says, Wasn't that a great talk? And I'm like, boiling mad because it was so obscure. I couldn't figure it out. So I'm,

I struggle with this because

I, some of it is personal preference that I like the straightforward. But I still struggle with a little bit in terms of how can I relax that and find the Dharma in?

How can you find the Dharma in Zen? Well, maybe the indirect kind of way of approaching your question starting indirectly. Probably the most common comment I get at IMC, about the Zen toxic given here is comment. I thought it was a great talk. But when it was over, I didn't know what they talked about. So you know that there is sometimes an obscure quality or complex quality to the way Zen talks are offered. And some of it might be very skillful, some of it might be unskillful on the part of the teacher. That's what they do. And the so I think, you know, in terms of for you, for you, it might be more, you know, it might be nice to find that Dharma and the Zen, but it might actually be more meaningful for you not to look at the Zen and the teaching what's going on there, let that be what it is. But to look at what your relationship is, to not understanding and then the Might be a rich field which number of relationships that you're forming with that, that you'd be useful you'd look at and grapple with until such a point where you could come to IMC hear his talk, and say that was obscure. I have no idea what they talked about. But, you know, I, you know, I'm okay. I'm not angry, I'm not upset that you know what? So what is it that what happens inside of you that triggers you to get angry? And, and I'm not saying it's your your situation, but at all, but it could be that someone could feel like I don't understand what's going on here. This means that I'm somehow at fault. I'm not smart enough. Therefore, I'm getting angry frustrated myself. And so now I will take it out on the speaker because must be there someone has to be blamed for this suffering I'm feeling so it's a look at that and it might so I think the Dharma for you might be more deeply found by looking at your relations to all this by trying to discover what's there. And then now once you've once you've come to that place, we can peacefully listen to a Dharma talk, which is maybe even problematic, let alone obscure, then, then perhaps you're in a better place to pull apart the preferred, find the pearls that might be in there. Make some sense. Yes, thank you. No, no. But now to answer your question most directly. Where do I how do I find the Dharma in Zen? And then

it is. It is one thing I learned, at least for me when I was practicing Zen and listening to Dharma talks, and was maybe you don't find it in the words, but you find it and how the person is. So some people are tracking the words really carefully the logic of the words and you know, that's some people that's what that's what they look for that was to understand. But, but sometimes in zen, it's what the how the how the person's showing up there and they give a talk what they manifesting how they are. That's the where the Zen is being conveyed. So nothing conveyed in the meaning of the words but in the spirit, the manner in which the person is there. And so maybe if you listen to don't listen to the words, but listen to the you know, something more obscure, so the more what person or, or something more personal, something more kind of us, you listen to the, the, the inner qualities of the person that are being expressed. Many years ago, 25 years ago, hearing a talk by Les Kay, who's the abbot of the mountain Zen center. And, and, and I was so inspired by the talk and what inspired me was when I could feel coming through or when I sensed Was his but that point 25 years of real strong intention and practice and to feel someone's intentionality 25 years of really strong intention around practice. That's what really, you know, inspired me what he actually said in the talk. I don't remember this day I remember you have no idea what he said. But I still have this palpable feeling of this this man with this very strong intentionality there. And someone else, you know, it's there. I remember there was 111, preseason senator

tom Gerudo, who gave us he was giving a Dharma talk. And he brought with him. I think it was an early copy a copy of the early edition of the enquiring mind. I think what it was, and I never seen anybody in that center, show get up and read and newsprint is a British newspaper, read an article in newspaper as Dhamma Talk. I mean, you're kind of like, like, you're supposed to do that you have to sort of reach for the image post have notes. But back when I was there, I suppose just kind of show up. But just be yourself. Right? And, but I had had this for me he had this quality of, of just acceptance and just being this is what he was. He wasn't trying to be anything special. He wasn't trying to be a special Zen teacher or, you know, he wasn't trying to manifest anything. And in that self acceptance, you know, for me, it was just being there and it was actually more self accepting and I don't remember at all what what it was he read, but his ease, which he just wasn't there was meaningful for me.

I remember going to one of your insurances retreat, and it was on sensual desire, and you had us doing an exercise talking between we've another person and that person was talking for 10 minutes. And then you had us not saying anything for five minutes. And then that was my turn in five minutes of silence. And I realized how beneficial it was because for the first time, really, I realized how much information was coming my way. And having five minutes to sit with that information. it to me gives me a lot of peacefulness. And then when we have to go things in life, it's a lot of information coming our way. And often we want to react to it right away. But I realized just dealing with it kind of retreats, and if I need to refuse, reveal Myself, then I could find peace. And then I was able to blossom and go back and open up because I dealt with it. And then from that piece we can find is when you take the time you swallow you digest you cannot reteach yourself. And then you can open up again in shoppings. Beautiful,

very well said thank you very much. There's a sometimes in our kind of extended circles, there's the instruction in speaking myyy speaking, to listen, pause, and then speak. And something very rich can happen in that pause.

So

thank you very much. And thank you for the year and for coming here and particularly thank you for the mutual equality in which I feel supported by you and we all support each other and I really feel like in the Dharma, Dharma is something we share. And, and really what should be sitting here from the



podium is the Dharma. And I should be sitting on the side because Dharma is our teacher Dharma will be sharing the Dharma was will we create this interactive Mutual beneficial way in which we support each other in practice together. So I feel very fortunate to be able to practice with all of you who come here and I look forward to another year of it. Thank you