

2009-02-15 Seven Factors of Awakening Equanimity

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SPEAKERS

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This morning will be the last talk in the series of the beginning of last week's on the seven factors of awakening. And today we'll be talking about the seventh which is equanimity. It's the last in the series. And you find that that the quality of equanimity word appears in variety of lists in Buddhism, Buddhist lists, it always appears last and not because it's an afterthought, but rather there's some sense that these lists have certain kind of progression to them. And then equanimity is the crown jewel of Buddhist practice equanimity, this the quality of equanimity the state of equanimity. The approach of equanimity is something that's meant to come along with as Buddhist practice is brought to maturity and so on. The other aspects of Buddhist practice cultivation of mindfulness and ethics and all these things are in the process of building towards a wonderful, wonderful quality by equanimity. Some people when they hear the word equanimity, and here, the idea of creativity is highly valued in Buddhism feel a little bit suspicious. Because equanimity can have associations of being aloof or indifferent. And that's not what they want. And so it's just so it seems like oh, I don't know if I want the second empty thing. So I'll talk about it some today. Today, the topic recommended is in the context of the seven factors of awakening. So there's seven factors starts with mindfulness. There's investigation, there's effort, there is joy, tranquility, concentration, and equanimity. And these are seven faculties that we all have. We are the faculty for mindfulness faculty, for investigation, these different faculties. And so these are faculties that we have that get developed and strengthened in the course of doing Buddhist practice. And they're, they're in the service of awakening, of being awake. And I'm very, very fond of this, this word awake, partly because of its ordinary meanings associations with it. If you if you are if you're asked to be mindful and then some then later you're asked to be awake. Be mindful to what's happening in the situation, versus being awake to what's happening in this situation. I think there's a little different different connotation, different kind of idea that comes out of that. Some people especially if they're doing mindfulness practice, get little kind of when they see here at the mindful, they start kind of noticing what's happening. They just in and of itself, what's happening here in here and they're here in here, here now. But will you be awake? At least for me, there's some other connotations or associations with that. One of the views of being awake to something is to be awake is not to interfere with what is happening with a situation. Mindfulness, if you've well studied in mindfulness practice, you understand that mindfulness also doesn't interfere. But sometimes a lot of things come along with a mindfulness Oh, when I'm mindful, I'm supposed to get concentrated with a mindful I'm supposed to be economist when a mindfulness supposed to kind of be nonreactive. When I mindfulness I'm supposed to notice a very carefully and deeply what's here, penetrate what's going on. There's a lot of extra baggage that can come along with the idea of being mindful. Whereas the idea of being awake I don't think comes with what I do. Do you suppose to change anything, just to be kind of alert in a certain kind of clear way to what is happening, alert, attention and not interfering attention. The idea of being awake also has the

idea of, at least in my mind, a certain level of clarity about what you're paying attention to what's what you're awake to. Awake also has more to do with a subjective state of how we are, as opposed to what it is we're awake to. Whereas mindfulness is good, both. Mindfulness is something how you are in relationship to things, but also mindfulness. You're paying attention to what's there, what's there, whereas awake emphasizes more the subjective state of the mind, the quality of the mind. And then, and then it also is very interesting about mindfulness. About what wakefulness to be awake to a situation

is that? Where does wakefulness exist? Where does it abide? Where you find it? mindfulness, you can kind of find, like, okay, I suppose to be mindful here, see? Okay. You know, there's three things he says, his particular function of the mind that you can engage in. But where do you find being awake? You know, where do you find that? And those of you who ever have been lucky enough to be really awake, sometimes nice sleep, nice nap, whatever. Well, you know, you've been maybe you've been sleepy and tired and drag it for days and weeks. And then finally, you know, what's this? Is this strange? Oh, I'm not tired. I'm awake. So where does the awake lie? comes along with certain qualities, and some of those qualities of wakefulness, or the or identify with the seven factors of awakening. You might not think of it that way. But there is a quality of mindfulness of recognizing what's going on around you. When you're awake. There is a quality of something like investigation, there's a more kind of clear, clear understanding what is happening when you're awake to the situation, to be awake to the situation. I think it also in my mind is associated with a certain degree of wisdom of what's happening, not just recognizing the details of what's happening. Like you go into a situation with your wits. You know, you're supposed to kind of be wise street smarts. Go into situation be awake when you go in means that you're also kind of wise perhaps the situation. So the investigation is the wisdom side of it. There's some kind of energy With being awake, there's a certain sense of hopefully, well being the joy factor well being with being awake. And then and then there's also a degree of, I don't know, seems to me hopefully there's a degree of tranquility of calm with being awake. It feels energized, but it is not restless. It's not agitated. It's not typed up. I'm not sure it's agreed which there's concentration in being awake, but there might be and then is there equanimity. And equanimity here is means a variety of things. One of the things that means is to have the mind non reactive to what's happening. So situation to maybe is difficult, not difficult, it's beautiful. And the mind will do some things in react in relationship to that. The most common ones is to before and against the situation. And so the mic can very quickly get involved in variety of activities being for and against. If it's against something, it might contract, that might feel stress, it might close down, it might lash out, it might start judging, it might start being critical. It might, you know, run away, get afraid, variety of things. If it's a pleasant thing we want to go towards, then there might be pleasure associated with that, but there might be grasping holding on just searching out planning for it. You know, a variety of kind of forward kind of movements of the mind. This is can be innocent enough, it's appropriate enough in certain situations to be for and against things. But to have the mind on automatic pilot of being for and against, doesn't give the mind much freedom. And you see, that's one The advantages of meditation practice one of the benefits of it is you get to find out how not free you are. You know, so we can advertise, we have big sign outside here saying, Come to IMC and discover how not free you are supposed to know when we're come. But that's just the beginning to get a give you kind of kind of see that layout, that the terrain of your mind and to discover how your mind is not so free. And so that equanimity is, is moving the mind towards freedom, where it doesn't react automatically, to any situation at all, including the inner situations, or inner thoughts and feelings that might happen, or memories and plans and all that doesn't pick it up and get, you know, involved in it.

And so the idea of being awake, that clarity and openness, that transparency, that visibility of kind of being awake creates a lot of space in the mind or an awareness, for experience just about abide in it

experience just move through it experiences to be without us doing anything about it. Later we can do something about it. But initially to have that ability to let it just kind of be the experiences to be there to have a difficult feeling to be afraid and have the fear kind of be there in an awake state, or that clarity and openness, of attention of awareness, that the most conventional way we can call being awake. not interfering with it, nothing to do anything about it just is there it is. Now, a way to be awake because I said earlier also points back to a little bit more of the subjective side of what's happening. So we're looking at the subject. And the subject is a very interesting aspect of our lives. Because the subject, you know, you the self is something that you take with you everywhere you go more or less and, more often more nonetheless. And so it's a common denominator. in all situations that you mostly, pretty much always find yourself in. So if you find yourself in a whole series of difficult situations where that conversation was difficult, that thing at work was difficult. The shopping experience was difficult that driving experience was difficult. He goes through the whole day will always difficult things. And you were in today's employ the world just for difficulty that world out there. That's fine, you can do that. But what about turning around and looking at the subject? Who had all those difficulties? That's the that the you know, the one common thing except the generic idea of the world to a terrible world is that the generic thing is that we're going to have generics right thing but the common thing then through all those things, is the self is you. So then you can ask yourself, Is there something about me about how I carried myself how I engaged in all these different situations that contributed to the difficulty, or that made it difficult for me more than had to be? What was the I hear? The Zen master Dogen as a wonderful quote to paraphrase teaching He says, For the self, to advance his delusion, for the for all things to come forth and confirm the self is awakening. So for, for the self to advance for you to take off, here I am and I'm in charge, I'm going to I want things I don't want things. This has to be about me. And I'm going to kind of go through the world and somehow reference everything to me that Zen master Dogen says is the illusion So, how do you what what do you so you know, you're not just innocent until proven otherwise. You come into the world, you enter into the world with some, some attitude, some approach some idea of self A big part of Buddhism is to turn around and question what what do you bring? What's the attitude that you bring. And so to understand that, and then if the Dogen says what awakening is, is to allow all things to come forth on their own and then they tell you who you are. So rather than assuming who you are and think you know who you are, you enter into it into a situation that you discover yourself a new in each situation. And 80 of all things come forth, suggest maybe a receptive mode of being here you are you ready? So you enter situation maybe in a more receptive mode. What's here let's discover what's here. Let things occur and happen as opposed to coming into situation and involving yourself being self directed these are having the self being charged first the self ideas trying to prove the self or get something for himself. So to be in this receptive mode it was moving towards this idea of being awake. So, and then it's interesting idea of Dogen that you discover who you are when you allow all things to arise on their own. Now all things doesn't just mean external to you. It also means internal to you. So there's something about the impermanent, changing, flow phenomena and experience. When we can discover ourselves. We can't hold on to it. As soon as you say that's who I am. Then you're going to dance the self. If you're willing moment by moment to discover fresh allow things To be there. So so part of this is to question this idea of who am I that what's the attitude? What do I bring into all these different situations?

And when we're awake, I have my suggestion is even conventional sense of awakensess. My suggestion is that when you're awake, and you notice how awake you are, you note and awake enough to feel the wakefulness that in the wakefulness itself, there is no self, there is no self concept. There is no self identity, there is no assertion of the self. assertion to the self might be happening as well. It is parallel or simultaneously. But the wakefulness state of wakefulness does How self have self assertion in it.

So, so in order to be a quantum s, it helps if we don't have a self we're asserting in this situation. And there's many, many ways of asserting itself. It doesn't mean that we become defenseless. The nice that we can become more acquainted about what's happening in this situation. So any situation happens and it arises in awareness. And we can experience it. But we allow it just to be there to kind of float and just be as it is, without being for it or against it without pushing it away or holding on to it without immediately judging it. That's good. That's bad. Let's discover what's here. That's all allowed a situation to reveal itself as opposed to let me make it hard to try to figure the situation out. So that this contributes to being more economists. So if part of equanimity is to be is to not be for against his nonreactive, attention and awareness and other quality of equanimity, it's connected to that but is to have a balance of mind or even mindedness. So, there's a certain kind of strength in the mind or stability in the mind, ballast in the mind or in the heart, so that the winds of the world blow, we also easily pushed around by it can keep our center keep our balance. So to have this ability to be stay centered, is also a very important part of equanimity. And that's important to appreciate because some people they hear the idea of Being nonreactive and open, allowing things to arise can if there is no inner core inner stability, it can feel like you and then there's going to be a victim of circumstances I'm going to be pushed around by things. But equanimity is also meant to be a form of strength. And so to have this, this inner core strength, where we're not so easily pushed around by things, makes it easier than to be open and awake to a situation. So, these earlier six factors are the factors of awakening mindfulness, investigation, energy, joy, tranquility, concentration, are all there to support and give strength to equanimity to try to become aggressive, Parliament's because it's a good idea. If you just hold yourself economists, I think is dangerous. I think it's better to strengthen and cultivate the heart in the mind. So that equanimity becomes just becomes your equanimity comes strengthened and becomes a resource as opposed to it's there as opposed to practice that you can apply and do. Hope you see the difference. So equanimity is not a practice to hold yourself economist Lee because then you're not an economist. So what are some ways of supporting equanimity? And there's a whole series of things supported and these supports can be cultivated and developed. So I want to give you so that certainly the other six factors are supports but may give you some other supports. As I go through this list, perhaps you can consider To what degree these qualities are present for you, and what what degree they become a resource for you or support for you. So you can be more economists in different situations. So the first is confidence, or faith? Do you have confidence in something? Do you have confidence in yourself? faith in yourself? Do you have confidence in the practice of mindfulness, faith in the Dharma, for example? You have confidence in that Did you have a path to walk or spiritual practice to engage in? To have that self confidence and faith in a path or a practice can help some people become economists because then they enter into very difficult situations. They know oh, well, I have a path in this. I don't know what to do here. I don't have to find my way. It's very hard right now. But I know I have I can take refuge in the practice and the path in my spiritual life. And so that's support. If you don't have a sense of a path, it's much more easily easily to kind of be tossed around by things. So confidence is one and the other one is your integrity, or your virtue. If you live a life of very poor integrity, stealing and lying and killing, and all kinds of wonderful things like that, chances are that it's gonna be hard for you to be economists. At least in Buddhism we teach. I hope it's true. That if you live a life of a virtue of integrity, then you can live a blameless life, a life where there's no cause, to feel shamed. upset. embarrassed, guilty. You can kind of stand up and hold yourself be upright without being apologetic for who you are. So to be unapologetic is a way of being economists. And so, integrity is a very important part of that. And the other is to have a developed mind, a well developed mind or heart, if you prefer. So, we have a mind which has many capacities, many, many capacities and we could try to deal with our life with the capacity that mine is in right now. Or we can develop those capacities. I think in many avenues of life areas of life, people know they can develop themselves. people involved in crafts people involved in certain work. You all work, people involved in musical instruments, art, they spend a lot of time developing themselves developing their capacities, developing greater concentration, greater mindfulness, greater presence, all kinds of skills they're developed. So in

Buddhism, just like many other areas, Buddhist practice also focuses on developing the mental skills and capacities, qualities that we have. So develop the capacity for mindfulness, for investigation, for generosity for compassion, to develop these capacities, we become stronger and stronger within us. As these qualities become stronger, then they become supports for equanimity, because we have some strength to carry with us. We're not pushed around by things so much, to have a capacity to be concentrated or to become you're much more likely to be equanimous if you're calm. So, a big part of Buddhism a huge part of Buddhist, traditional Buddhist training, is to train and develop these inner qualities, to looking for ways to develop them. And then another support for equanimity is to have a sense of inner well being. Well, how do you develop that? in a variety of ways, these first three ways support well being. Another is to appreciate the value of feeling well being feeling happy or joyful or delight, delighted or well being perhaps I like I love the word well being to feel a sense of well being, dictate detect time for you to do those things that brings a sense of well being And hopefully those things are not things like winning the California Lottery. But rather perhaps spending time with friends, perhaps spending time in nature, meditating, having tea. I hope that people who meditate are discovering a capacity for well being that comes from doing less, not doing more capacity, well being that comes from that kind of just letting go and just kind of opening up shedding all the busyness of the mind shedding the fear and the resistance in the heart and just kind of being just being it's there's a lot of strong forces in our society that interfere with our ability to have a kind of grounded natural sense of well being. And so it's very important to notice what those forces are. And be careful not to succumb to them.

It's also important to be very careful with the forces in your own mind. And these days, there's a lot of people who are afraid with the economy. And it's, you know, it's understandable, quite understandable, people will be afraid. But it's necessary to allow the fear to interfere with cultivating, developing, tapping into senses of well being. If we're obsessed about the fear, it's very hard to feel well being. Do we need to be obsessed? Are there other ways of dealing with our fear that having it always there? So well being and this is also a very important part of Buddhist spiritual life is cultivating a sense of well being. So underneath the advertisement outside here, that says come to IMC and discover how unfree you are The second line would be come to IMC and discover or improve your capacity for happiness or well being, and happiness. So, what other things another area of the develops acronym it is concentration. It's one of those skills we develop it deserves its own category to develop a stable, focused, concentrated mind is one of the really strong ballasts for the mind. If the mind is stable, calm or centered, it's much less likely to be pushed around by the things of the world. So the equanimity often follows at the heels of concentration. And in fact, the seven factors of awakening, its concentration is penultimate. And then equanimity is ultimate step and other important area of equanimity is having insight. So the more clearly you understand what's happening, that insight and what's happening here, the more there can be insight where that can be easily can be equanimity. The pre eminent insights, perhaps in Buddhism is not taking things personally. Don't take things personally. And, and that has layers and layers of wisdom behind that statement. But to be insight means not to take it as a statement as an understanding, but actually to see, to see clearly that what's happening right now does not need to be taken personally. And one of the ways that I see that is taken personally is to see That there's no coat hook for that hat.

Many of you many of you, many of many people are wearing all kinds of hats and trying to put it on their coat hook. But there is no coat hook for the hats of self. So really see that to turn around and see and see that's when you really look into the mind into the heart. For a place to hang the hat of self, we really look you will find no place to hang it. Then, another source of insight is to see how impermanent things are, to see things arise events. These insights then shade into wisdom into wisdom. Wisdom is not just necessarily just insight, but having some overarching or some larger kind of understanding of what

goes on in our life what goes on in our hearts and minds so that we can then understand it more wisely. So for example, the I find sometimes family life with small kids is difficult. I don't have much sometimes I don't have much tech with me. Sometimes I don't have much concentration, right of things I don't have. But sometimes I have some wisdom. And one of the wisdoms I have is just one of these days. Just one of those days. You know, just I don't know why it has to be this way. But it's just the kid woke up on the wrong side of the bed. And I don't know why we did all the things we could yesterday to have a good time as a family and this morning was crunchy sniping and his brother. So, how to deal with this deal the best we can. But to know just one of those kind of things come and go. This is temporary and permanent is a small piece of wisdom that can help me be more balanced and economist in a situation as opposed to a phenomena occurs in my mind sometimes. It's I call it the delusion of permanence. Oh, it's gonna be this way forever. Now, you've smart enough to know It's not going to be there forever. But my poor little mind can operate. Under this illusion of permanence. The operating principle is, oh, this can do this by forever. I'm always going to be I'm always going to be grumpy. I'm always, I'm always going to be depressed. I'm always going to be this way. Oh. And so wisdom reminds me. Oh, I've seen these things come and go before these things come, they go. They're here now. I don't have to take it. So personally, I don't have to be so fooled by it. I'll do the best I can. I've tried to be wise with it. And so that kind of wisdom sometimes can provide equanimity because less likely to react to situation to a situations difficult enough. It doesn't need me reacting and double it. So, to cultivate to have equanimity is a beautiful, beautiful quality for people who who have experienced strong equanimity. Perhaps you can almost recognize it as an emotion in its own right. So sad emotional way of being, as opposed to just kind of this is not being aloof, it's not being indifferent. There's a Association there's a phrase in Buddhism that are that associate some teaching the associates equanimity, with Grande. Usually it's called grandmotherly love and the grandparents love and the equanimity of a grandparent is comes from a lot of experience. Our grandparents you know, has raised kids right that's You don't be a grandparent unless you had your own kids. And so, now, contrast that with the lack of equanimity of first time parents. Which I know very well. You know, you knew this

first time parents, every little thing is so monumentally significant. And for a grandmother, the Wise grandmother loves the child. The Love is there as far as called grandmother we love but it's a love which doesn't get caught up in the drama of the moment with these kids. The kid will one minute say you know, when they're younger, especially like I know, it seems like three is the three or four h for this. And they can go like say I hate you. And then five minutes later I grew up I'm gonna marry you. You know so grandmotherly love you know, okay. Okay. Okay. And then now that I've been help us okay say parents stories but one of the things that I've learned I didn't know that this the parents did this. But I've learned to do it is these kids get hurt a lot. I didn't know how often kids got hurt, I forgot. But they get hurt a lot these little kids. So they're falling and then they're crying. And so what I've learned to do now is to listen to the quality of the crying Oh, crying is that a cry that needs me or not? So you listen to me and I don't think that needs me. It's actually better to leave it alone. And I didn't know you could do that. You know, I thought come across you ego right away and help right? Bad idea. You got to listen to the cry and hear what kind of cry it is. So why am I talking about this examples of equanimity I needed I needed now. So sorry I guess I guess I was trying to say that it's a video grandmotherly Love is a is to idea that is equanimity that's championed are held up in Buddhism is not indifferent or cold or dull. There's something there's something very it's kind of like a love. There's something very warm, warm or beautiful coursing through us. I think of it almost as if, when it's really strong is something it's almost physical, not just mental. And if you have a beautiful view, a beautiful view Quality. It's beautiful. It's very, very pleasant. There. There's a strong sense of well being that comes with that equanimity. So the seven factors of awakening. So this concludes the talk on the seven factors of awakening series. And one of the reasons to give a series of talks like this is that this, the good qualities, good factors of our mind, like seven factors of awakening. Get strengthened and fed by our appreciation of them. So if you

can recognize them, as they occur in your life, no matter how small it might be, if you can recognize its presence, and appreciate its value, that actually reinforces and strengthens the capacity for those within you. If you didn't To feel feel there was any value in them and ignored them, then they don't get fed. So I hope that you have some sense now of what these seven are those of you've been coming these weeks, and that you will learn to appreciate the presence when they are present and where they're not present. I hope you're economists. Thank you.