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SPEAKERS

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So, after last Monday's exclamation, I should be careful about not giving a Dharma talk. So what I'll do is, I'll say a few words. And then I'd like to have a lot of time today for questions and see if you have any questions. And I'm curious what's on your minds. And

I thought I would share to you is starts with an example. An example is that if you clench your fist really hard, you don't have to do it, unless you want to. But you'd like to grasp things clench your fists really hard, really hard for a long time. So it begins to hurt. At some point, you feel the dissatisfaction of that pain and that grasping and sort of curse to you to do something different occurs to you. But there could be, then desire their wish, to undress to let go. And desire to and grasp the process of releasing is a simple thing, in relatively. But on either side of the process, there's kind of like a state you can focus on. You can focus either on getting away from the pain of the grasping. So we'll say you're in the process of grasping, you can feel the pain of that and you want to get away from that or you could have some kind of clear sense, or not some clear sense have some idea or some memory that tells you how wonderful it is to have an clenched hand. So some people will focus on, I gotta stop having all this pain other people will focus on I want to have that wonderful open hand. Both people have to go through the same process of releasing their hand. When the hand is completely when their fist disappears and hand is open, one person might stay preoccupied or think about or relate to that, mostly from the point of view of what they were freed from. Someone else might feel wonderful, they just had the hand open. And how now with an open hand, you can do a lot thinks with your hand you couldn't do with your fist, or you can feel the breeze going across your palm. The same process of release or the desire for release can be done. Motivated from two perspectives, either from the perspective of what you were leaving behind or the perspective of what you're what you're going to gain where you're going. So in a spiritual life in Buddhist practice life, some people are looking backwards or looking at the, at the challenges they have the suffering they have. And other people are looking ahead and seeing what's possible seeing the possibilities. Some people notice where they've left some people notice where they've come. Which one is right

It which is which is which is right? Which is truer the religion of let's get away from the pain or the religion of let's go to the light religion let's get away from the darkness or the religion let's go towards the light is one truer than the other What about the religion of doing both doesn't have to be one or the other. So one of the things I find very interesting is how descriptions of the spiritual process can be or perspectives on the spirit and spirits process can be looked at from so many different angles. And so people can have very radically different descriptions of what they're involved in the process to spiritual so very different that you'd wonder if they're on the same path. Someone spends a lot of time talking about what they're getting away from. Someone else talks a lot about where they're coming, where they're going, where they're what they've attained. And they kind of miss each other. The people who

want to get away from the darkness, from the pain, suffering, they say the people going to the light are too optimistic, too idealistic. The people who are going towards the light, they're going to the freedom say, those people who are suffering all the time, they're too pessimistic. Which is true. They both are true. And he's actually just now I'm just using two examples, but I suspect that there are a lot of different angles can be used. And I think it's helpful so we don't get stuck in some idea that this is the only way to describe a spiritual path or anything to do. It happens at the Buddha 10 In his teachings to people tend to focus more on the suffering part. And getting away from the suffering and the process that gets your way. And in his descriptions and discussion, he talked less about where you're going. We did sometimes, but his emphasis was in that direction. Later in Buddhism, there are a couple other schools of Buddhism that put more emphasis in where you're going, and less than where you're going from. One of the arguments why it's important to talk about where you're going from is that it's really important to have a clear understanding of your condition. And so it's not too idealistic, where you're going, not just an ideal, but you really understand your condition so you can understand your condition really well. So that you know how realistically to work with it. If you only focus it with the light and where you're going, that might be fine, as well. As long as you have light, but find yourself in a darkness in your last play, if you understand the darkness, well, then you can kind of find your way off more easily. But the main thing I want to say here is it both can coexist. And you find us sometimes in the teachings of the Buddha or Buddhism, or wonderful coexistence of both perspectives, and there's two emotions or attitudes that are very central to Theravada Buddhism and to, to early Buddhism. And, and one of them is, don't give you the Pali words first. The first word is some Vega, some juega sa m v GA, and the second is pasada. And some Vega, is the isn't they say it's kind of an emotion. It's a reaction of the heart. respond to the heart that feels the unsatisfactoriness of life as we usually limit the pursuits that we're usually engaged in. So for example, if there's a lot of pursuits that can seem pretty meaningless after a while, or not important or even worse than that, what was I thinking was I doing? And some type some people spend a whole career engaged in an occupation, livelihood, for example, that at some point, they wake up and say, What was I doing? I've known people who've primary orientation towards work was money and making as much money as they could. And I remember meeting one stockbroker or nice stockbroker at a Buddhist monastery and he was so happy Being at the monastery

the fact that he lost his clients money maybe added to why he was running away. But you know that he looked back at his life, what he was the way of their life, the way he lived his life, chasing money and making deals and whatever he was doing, and felt that he had left in life that made him various kinds of feeling of dissatisfaction. This word some vague also can be associated with a weariness. Can I just lie that kind of life is tired of that it's tiring. It's exhausting. Feeling that, hey, this is meaningless, to be engaged in a certain kind of pursuits. Life as it's usually lived has certain kind of meaningless quality to it sometimes comes through in some vague equality. Now if only thing existed was the sun Vega, it would be kind of Can I you know, kind of depressing. But the other side is some Vega and what's the emotion is kind of supposed to go with it kind of is, is beautiful word called pasada in Pali and Masada seems that the primary meaning of pasado is clarity and serenity, clarity and purity and tranquility, something like that. But it also has the meaning of faith, faith or inspiration and, and so, on one hand we see that a whole bunch of pursuits are meaningless. On the other hand, we see the possibility of a heart or a mind which attains a degree of purity of light clarity of tranquility And there's a kind of inspiration for that possibility of faith in that as a possibility. And that's the kind of the good news that's focusing on the light. Whereas some Vega focuses on the darkness. And what happens if we hold both of them together and enhance hand and would like to suggest maybe you have changed my metaphors. It's kind of like the two legs that allow you to walk. And you can walk in a stable way. If you have two legs. If you have only one leg, you're kind of unstable. And so there's two legs for walking the Buddhist path. There's the path that understands what the challenges and difficulties are. Christians understand something about how the mind makes up meaning assigns meaning to things in a way that

perhaps is not accurately reliable, and frees itself from that kind of way of being feels discouraged or dissatisfied with that. Some kind of very profound dissatisfaction is involved in this some Vega. And the other involves kind of a profound satisfaction, a profound understanding of maybe what really has meaning what's really meaningful, what's really significant was worthwhile to do. And has a lot to do with qualities of heart. So a whole range of them, that's qualities of heart that sometimes may or may be subsumed under the qualities of heart that come with purity with light, if you use that kind of metaphor, with a certain kind of peace. So to walk the path with both and now one of the reasons it's important to have both is that to remember both or to cultivate both understand both sides, is it's sometimes people get lopsided by focusing more on one than the other. Sometimes people have very deep insights and practice that really can see That this the unsatisfactory nature of many of the ways they live their lives, their self, self identity, their self image, how they relate to other socially the pursuits they're doing. And, and it can be really a challenge, really discouraging, really challenged to only dwell on that. And so to realize is another side and to be inspired, but the other side is a lot of the function of this thing called Posada is very interesting that one of the primary words for faith in this tradition is this kind of synonym for these words, of tranquility, of light of purity. Here in the West, when we use the word faith, many people associate that very quickly with creed, with belief. And perhaps there's good historical reasons for that. And in Buddhism, when they when you hear the word faith, the tendency is to associate that with quality have heart like that two qualities of mind like peacefulness and serenity, light purity.

So when Buddhists use the word faith in the West, sometimes there's an inherent problem of using words and people different reference points for it. And so, if a Buddhist teacher says you gotta have faith, everybody's gonna run, flee. You know, no way. I'm not gonna believe anything I don't want to believe.

So those are my words. I've talked long enough.

So now it's your turn.

So what would you like to ask or bring up or discuss by by telling you ahead of time that you would have time for questions? You'd be preparing and be ready and

yes, when you talk about compassion and sympathetic joy, And equanimity now. Now, those are like dwelling places. Okay. And then you were talking last Sunday.

You were talking about how

the things that we know the four foundations and you say that we know our body like the heaviness and the gravity and how the body feels. And then you said that we know, we know that we are present. So that's the second Foundation. The third Foundation was we know what what our state of mind is. And the fourth was that we know freedom. Now, I'm wondering when we're talking about the debt, dwelling places, the compassion and sympathetic joy and so on. Now, is that is that like the third thing?

qualities of mind, states of mind?

And what are those things called? And what's the fourth one

You know, the others compassion

are the four the four divine abodes,

the four divine abodes. Yeah. And the

fourth one, which in the Theravada tradition is the foundation, or the, the source for the other three. It's loving kindness.

Okay, thank you

and the basic disposition of kindness of loving kindness or friendliness. When that disposition encounters someone who's suffering, it morphs into compassion. When they encounter someone who's having wonderful things happening in their life, it morphs into sympathetic joy. And then when somebody when you encounter someone who is suffering, but for whom you cannot do anything for, you can't help and can you then then it can morph into a certain kind of love, which we call equanimity. So, and so those are those four would be considered states of hearts or states of mind. So that would be the third or this third of these four things, I think it can be experienced directly. so deeply contented audience. Here we go.

Yes. So I want to go

I want to go back to the clenched fist that you were talking about

is that where we're trying to control

our thoughts and the things that are going on in our reality and then we learn to let go of them and then that's where we find the peace or is there

that could could be one version can mean different things. So if there's one version of grasping Yeah, one description, recorded regressed on to our ideas or thoughts or concepts. We try to control the controller our life, and we can control it by preventing it from changing, controlling it by forcing it to change you know many, many things that Yeah, grasping has to display via being this compulsion, where there's, you know, it hurts to grasp and grasping has this quality that usually you can't let go of it easily. And so that's why we have a practice to help us learn how to let go. And, and, you know, there's many motivations to let reason let go one is to avoid the pain as I said, and the other is to let go so that the things that we can we can receive the benefits that come when we let go. So like, you know, you have a clenched fist, there's a lot you can't do with your hand. You can't be you know, you, you couldn't be a surgeon. And there's a lot of people who need help. So you know, someone has to unclick unclench to really be able to tell many things. You can't, you can't caress the head of a child. You know, you could I guess, but this

Well, I just want to mention about Christmas decorations. I've been looking at them at night, the inflatable ones. And I think, Oh, you know, the true reality is when you're sleeping, everything is luminous. And then when I see the Christmas decorations on the lawn in daytime, there's nothing there. It's all empty.

Beautiful. And the Buddha made this analogy said that, you know, life is like a bubble like a dream. Like a shooting star. If you lived in modern America, he would have added to that. It's like a Christmas ornament.

blows up

all that promise and

what are some of the tests for things that you know? It's such people to know you can't do anything about

where some of the tests, think about or think, you know,

go through a litany of what are some of the things.

Questions, how would you decide whether you can make a difference or not?

Wow, things you can't do anything about us kind of said that?

Yeah, yeah. Yeah. So how would you? How would you decide how do you know that you can't do anything to help? Good question. That's a great question. I never never thought about it exactly that way, you know, what are they? How would you know? How do you really know? But you know, because if you tried and didn't help, you know, you tried and they wouldn't listen. That's one way. And sometimes you can feel how shut down they're close they are and they're not. You can't even approach them again and get a good beginning a close or bring up certain topics without them pushing your way. Sometimes you can make a difference for someone you can help them and lasts for an hour a day and then they you know, you managed to get them to stop drinking alcohol. But then the next day they're back and you realize you can't just go be with them side by side all the time. And if you try it enough at some point, you have to realize that, you know, you've done what you could but they make choices for themselves. And sometimes I you know, I see it with my, my children. I don't know, I don't know what the test is. But, you know, sometimes it seems that my kids that they have to make their own poor choices so they can learn. And so sometimes there has to be the wisdom to know Okay, let's leave that let's Okay, leave them alone. You know, I know better. I could change them and not admit that my kids won't suffer here. But I don't think it's the job of parents to prevent the kids from suffering every possible suffering. I think the kids would not grow very well. So sometimes we have to know when it's good to leave people alone so they could struggle on their own. You know, when you Buddhist teachers are strange locked, because, you know, you could come to a Buddhist teacher and say you're struggling about something, and I get happy. Great. So I don't know if that's a good question. So someone else want to share some ideas about how would you know when you cannot help someone

have a slightly different take on the question and the answer, unfortunately, and that's, if it's an individual, then it's difficult, but it's somewhat clearer that okay, I can't or I can't help, but where I'm finding a hard time staying in Quantum is, is, you know, I read the economist. And you know, okay, there's the Middle East and there's North Korea and Iran and it's hard or even just our own economy or the state of California's economics. It's hard to say, you know, okay, I can't do anything with that. I'm just going to go on with my little world and, you know, help where I can where I'm teaching and that just seems so inadequate. It's hard to stay of balanced mind knowing that the world's going to hell in a handbasket.

I don't know if we're supposed to keep it bad. it's wise to keep it balanced mind letting things fall apart. I think if you really feel something is off something is there suffering in a strong way. I would hope that you'd be motivated to do something about it. You can't, you can't do something about all the difficulties

in the world. Because then you're spread too thin. You're just kind of crazy, crazy making. But what I do is I take the things that I see that concern me that worry me, that motivate me. And I try to channel that motivation into doing a better job with a few things I've chosen to do. I try to stay informed, I try to take care of the bigger things to some degree. But I allow these things to motivate me. So rather than making me feel helpless, I feel like they they they incense they inspire me, they give me more juice. This is important this world we live in, it's important to respond and do something and the small things you do. I don't know what small things you do. But small things can go a really long way. And probably it's still all the small things that will add up to prevent the next war.

My answer would be

to pay attention to what the energy that you feel around it. And I think if you feel like off balance or like you're being drained, then then that's not something that you can actually be doing something about from a good place. If you're feeling positive energy about doing something where you're giving and helping a situation, then that feels good that that's an energy that feels loving. That's how I would tell.

Right, thank you.

I would look at the ones intention to see what one's intention as to want to help. What's the intention behind intention to help and your capability your wisdom behind? Is this possible? Is this parameters.

Make sense?

Yeah. Is it possible you're capable of doing it? I knew a woman whose best friend when she was 14, her best friend committed suicide. And she'd spent the day with her friend. And she thought for a long time, she had this idea that she could have done something to make a difference. And all the adults told her No, you couldn't do anything. And then she encountered a Buddhist teacher who said, Oh, yeah, you probably could have done something that would have made a difference. But you weren't old enough, old enough to know what that was. And that freed her.

For me, I think it's a has to do a lot with the balance of how much I

do and how much I listen.

Probably with

more emphasis listening.

And I think

in a way the doing is a sort of a function of the listening.

So if there's only doing Watch out, it might be a problem. But if you've listened really well, then doing maybe as well informed and maybe more productive. Thank you.

Just to add to the energy, you know, you can also sometimes you don't have the energy to help someone, but you can delegate maybe you know, someone that has knowledge and the energy and so

you just kind of show another path help that person by showing something else because you feel like you don't have enough knowledge to help them.

You point them in a direction. Yeah, yeah. Yes, please marry. You can

Yeah, I just wanted to relate a personal experience. And I guess it's a, I have a deep philosophical question behind it.

I just spent four months

up near the Oregon border in the wilderness area, and I had a lot of time to reflect. And I was thinking about some of my defects. And I decided one of my personality defects is I give out too much advice to people. And I then I began thinking, Well, you know, how often has someone taken my advice.

And I've given it in all kinds of different nice ways and very gentle ways and forceful ways. And I've been into holistic health for about 40 years and oftentimes people have conditions that can be cleared. Pick it up very easily just by some of my wonderful advice.

And

what I concluded was then it was probably less than 1%. And so I really wonder, you know, if everything we just all want to track and we just want to go, it's sort of things are sort of predetermined. And I don't think there's a person in this room that is here because someone came up to them and said, You know, I get some really good advice, dump your religious tradition and come to IMC.

So I'm, I, I just

it's kind of put me in a space of letting go. And that's been helpful. And I thought I could do something to change the But I'm just, I just think of myself now it's just a peasant sloshing my way through the swamp of life and things are just gonna turn out the way they're gonna turn out. And I just want to get any comments.

I'm happy for you. And, you know, one of the interesting things it raises is, uh, what what can we do for someone else? What's most useful? So, you know, the old kind of cliché, is it better to feed someone or teach them how to grow their own food? You can feed them for the day, but if you teach them how to grow their food, then they can, you know, feed themselves for a lifetime. So is it better? Is it better to teach someone how to overcome an illness, you know, with your kind of holistic health advice? Or is it better to teach people the skills that allow them to get sick and old and die with peacefulness because your holistic health advice is always going to be of limited value. Because sooner or later there, it's sick, old and die. And how do you hide it? So how do you hold that? So what's most useful? And you know, so who knows different times different things, maybe both can both advices can be done. But I was struck by you know, you're learning to let go. And that's letting go is a is a wonderful quality ability that is useful in so many different settings. And not only that, but you how you are as human being in letting go and being open and relaxed that way might convey something more profound to your friends. than what you can convey by giving them advice on what to do. It might show them a whole different way to hold their life that you wouldn't convey to them if it was you riding them riding riding hard on top of them saying, you know, you got to do wheatgrass. So I'm happy for you. And I think that as you let go and deep way that you'll probably then find that you're a better friend for your

friends or Moore's, you know, we're useful and we're, you become the model example of what's possible.

You inspired me already.

Yes, I was gonna say I'm connecting with what this gentleman was saying and also the ladies and who you are speaks louder than, you know, your advice. You know, so I think then it everything boils back to just practice and working on our own liberation. And also, like, you know, just when I run into different people in different situations, I ran to somebody was helping me with my computer. And this person had very severe obvious physical problems. And it seemed to me, he was really suffering, to be able to give that appearance physically, I could tell that there was something wrong. And I just felt it was not it was not morally correct for me to leave that situation with him helping me without him without him knowing about mentioning this place, which he already knew about, and also and he's not coming and also also told him about the specific technique that I use to release the blockages that are causing his illnesses and I showed him How to do it and everything. And then one time, when he came back another time, he said, I don't want to do it. He's and he, he's, he's had lost members in his family to horrible things. And, and he does. He specifically verbally told me, I don't want to do it, I don't think so I think we're at ends is that if I see a need, and I have the tools like you said to help relieve suffering, I tell the person and that's it that's I can't you can lead a horse to water you can't make them drink. So as far as when to know to help, you know, you make the initial offering and then you have to let it go.

Good. Sometimes you can offer a second time. But, you know, you also matter of you know, seeing what, you know, listening is a good thing or paying careful attention. You know, some people need friendship, or compassion or listening more than they need our help. That's the help they most need. And so, you know, so to listen well enough to be present well enough just to just be present. So people need to have someone present for them, but then to be present well enough to see what is really needed here. And even someone who is in dire straits might have a greater need for human connection than they have for, you know, to, to get them out of those dire straits. So So, you know, we have a lot to offer each other. I think we live in a world where, where there is a lot of suffering. And we live in a world of suffering, as a community as people sharing this planet together. And it's very, I think, we're very lucky that we can actually do a lot for each other. And we support each other we benefit each other we can offer kindness or compassion or friendship. We can help at times. I think it's very important to, to do what we can. And I've been very inspired by have from a purity of heart to from an emptiness of hearts from a freedom of hearts from a non grasping heart. How much can flow outwards in order to be of support and help to others, and certainly my hope that people who do Buddhist practice that that Buddhist practice transforms and changes them into people who can offer help and support to this world of ours. And so, I hope that's the case. And I hope that during this holiday time, that you remember that probably the best thing that you can give is not things pieces of your heart so thank you so much.