

# 2011-06-05 The Paramis Resolve

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## SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

Good morning, everyone. And one piece of, a kind of announcement that I have to make is that those of you don't know that. On this last week we took possession of this property in Scotts Valley, that will be our retreat center. And I think the Tuesday our President Kim Allen went and signed for it that that title company, and Wednesday we got the keys. And Thursday group of us went down there. For some of us the first time to see it since we owned it, I went down and I was one of the first people ever, we have Sangha members now who are caretaking it for a couple of months living there. This nursing home that we bought that will be a retreat center. And so they were there and so I was one of the first people to come there on Thursday morning. And I was so happy and delighted. It was so much better than I realized. We thought it was a good deal. We thought it was a good good property for retreats and the nice, nice feeling otherwise we wouldn't have bought it. But when I got there, I guess the all the all that was kind of retirement nursing home place. And so everything had been cleared out. And it was kind of empty and quiet and, and you got a sense much more strongly how it could be a Silent Retreat Center. And it was just such a wonderful place for it. And so we took care of some of the things we had take care of the first day and then came back off, Laughlin made lunch for us. And we had a long table in the dining room. We had our first meal there, and 14 of us, and it was such a pleasure to be there. So I want to share the good news here a little bit of my happiness and what a great thing we're doing down there. And so hopefully there'll be open house in July. Some of you might want to come down to see the photographs that we have here on the wall, you know are fine photographs, but it Don't really capture the how special the place feels. So go down there, you'll probably feel appeal that.

So I guess I haven't been here for a long time on a Sunday. So it's nice to be back. And it was kind of poor planning because I'd said in beginning of last year that I would give a series of talks on 10 perfections paramis. On the Sunday after I did the Friday, Dharma practice days on the particular quality. And so the on Fridays last Friday, we did equanimity, the last of the 10. But I haven't done on three behind on Sundays. So we're still back in the eighth eighth of this, which is resolve. So today I'm going to talk about resolve and probably for the next two Sundays. I'll catch up on these so I can finish the series of talks. So these are a series of talks on what's called the paramis or the perfections. And these are very useful, I think is very useful list for a number of reasons. One is that it's a useful list to try to understand what it looks like to mature in Buddhist practice and to mature spiritually, you know, if you ask someone what is spiritual maturity, ask yourself you know, you know, you get an interesting answer perhaps, you might even try that go around to different people, you know, who weren't here today and ask them what do you How would you know, if someone was spiritually mature and to see what they would say it'd be very good, very interesting answers and different perspectives on the topic. And but I like that I like the expressions of spiritual maturity because in it's a corrective to a common Buddhist tendency among Buddhist practitioners to focus on enlightenment or Awakening as the be all and end all kind of is this kind of kind of all or nothing kind of experience. Either you have it or you don't have it,

then it's all about getting to that one particular, you know, illumination, that particular transformation and then you're happy ever after. And light or you get the badge, you know, and, you know, you have the assurance that you're you and it makes some sense. I mean, there is there are very powerful experiences to be had in practice, and they're very meaningful for people to have them

And that they provide a certain assurance that you're on the path is good, the practice is true. And I think some of the assurance of knowing if people want to be assured people want to know the certainty about what they're doing. And so having a definitive experience and definitive status, I'm one of the enlightened ones, then you know, you're good right? Then, you know kind of gives you certain certainty. The word maturity is much more fuzzy Generally maturity is like a fruit that slowly matures. And something happens gradually, as opposed to something happens definitively, you know what, you know, one single experience. And I think that there's, there's people who have very strong kind of experiences transformative realization kind of experiences in Buddhism. Sometimes they think that they're, they qualify for enlightenment. And they're not very mature afterwards. They, they have some understanding and some change, but they don't, they're not to kind of broadly mature person. And there are people who have broad mature maturity, even spiritual maturity, who maybe haven't had some kind of clear, transformative experience. And there's people who've had both. But I think overall, I think I prefer to focus on or emphasize the idea of maturation slowly mature over time, and as you mature, there can be moments where there are very significant momentary experiences that are powerful. But the overall thrust is the maturation, the growth, the gradual development that is in line with the way human beings tend to develop over time. In childhood, you know, childhood development is a developmental process, we slowly mature over time. And the human development doesn't stop and we're 18 or 21. But the maturation of human beings continues throughout a lifetime and you can feel how someone in the 30s and 40s and 50s and 60s how they develop and become more mature, more developed, richer in some ways in their in their personality. So, these 10 perfections can be seen as aspects of Buddhist maturation process when you practice. So we mature in our capacity for generosity to one of the cornerstones of Buddhist spiritual development is to cultivate The generous spirit, the generous attitude to this world and to others. And so, one of the qualities of a mature Buddhist practitioner is that of being generous. The second quality of maturation is that of ethical integrity. There's no real maturation in Buddhism without steady growth in your ethical sensitivity and ethical behavior. The next is a maturation is the capacity to let go and it's something we all need to learn as we develop. It's rather unfortunate that my children haven't learned it yet. But they will.

And I'm quite confident life will kind of force it on them. And so then, but you know, we everyone it's mature, you know, human beings to mature and you kind of ordinary ideas and maturation has to learn have to learn how to let go of things. That, you know, are appropriately let go of the right time. And without that there's a lot of suffering. So the third quality is usually defined as renunciation. The fourth is, is what? renunciation and then after that is wisdom, so the maturation of wisdom, so a greater understanding, greater capacity to understand to see what's going on. And so that also tends to grow somewhat, you know, it says, wisdom does doesn't tend to come kind of in this reading a single book or a definitive experience, but it comes over time and maturation and experience. And then there's the maturation of our ability to make effort to apply energy to be engaged in our life. And some people I know are quite shy. And I know people who have been, you know, so shy in public speaking public areas, they can hardly speak they go silent, but as they grow and develop in their life, they mature, their fear their inhibitions, not so strong. And they can apply efforts and areas in their life before they were inhibited or closed down or something. And so the ability to make effort, and sometimes the ability to make effort and things which maybe are uncomfortable to do, is a sign of maturation, things unnecessary to do a bit uncomfortable. And then because effort is part of life, engagement and doing things, it's really important to develop patience. So patience is a quality of maturation. And very

important quality in Buddhism is the quality of truthfulness. And so it said that people mature and their capacity and the commitment to truthfulness, their understanding of how to see what's true, and live by it. Then there is the topic for today, which is resolve. It's a Pali word with a capacity to be resolved on something sometimes translated as determination. And this is a beautiful quality to have to. And it's partly beautiful because for many people, there's a gap between what they wish and what they do, a gap between their intention and between their aspiration and their follow through on that intention, the gap between intention and action and resolve is what bridges that gap. So, it translates intention into action into doing something into effort. And resolve is important because even when you when you act, when you engage in something, there can be a lot of forces that interfere that in our follow through, we can get discouraged. There can be obstacles to to succeeding, all kinds of things can happen, we get lazy, all kinds of things can happen and so we don't want to follow through. And answer resolve is what keeps us on the course keeps us steady through the challenges and through the easy times just keeps going. And for most people, I think there is no Buddhist practice without some resolve because Buddhist practice is not that easy to do with Nick admitted way. Many people probably many of you as well, who are living here as householders and lay lives, even even having the regular commitment to meditating every day can be a challenge to do. And so that takes commitment, resolve determination, that in all the ups and downs of daily life, all the demands, that you hold steady, and to their commitment to sit and meditate if that's your, your commitment and your intention. So it takes resolve, even fall, even when you can meditate, hanging in there and following through. With meditation practice itself takes steady sense of purpose holding the course. For example, in my life in my mind, I don't think think of myself as someone who has much innate capacity for concentration. It's not my strong suit, even though I've done this for enough for my adult life. But what I have, but I think what I'm strong in is like as capacity for resolve. And so I made up for it my lack of constant capacity for frustration by being resolved. And the resolve the steadiness keeping to it is, you know, carries along and the concentration then follows in the wake of that, and I have been quite concentrated at times, because of the resolve to kind of hold the course what I'm doing.

I like the word resolve the English word resolve, because it comes from the Latin word, that same Latin root as to dissolve, or solution to solve. And it means to kind of means in Latin to dissolve something or make some soluble or like salt you would dissolve it into, or it also apparently means in life and to untie to untie something so to be resolved, that way, he has a feeling of kind of easing up on something or freeing of something, as opposed to determination, which is also a beautiful word perhaps, but determination in my mind. A, you know, I'm determined to do something, there's a kind of feeling of tightening up or began kind of solid or hard. Whereas resolved with a singlish, where there's Latin roots, maybe has a suggest, is freeing. Because in Buddhism, the goal of Buddhist practice is freedom is untiring our attachments and tying the way we're entangled with our world in ourselves. And there takes a lot of commitment and a lot of resolve to really look and face ourselves face to places where we're entangled and attached, and be want to end to want to untie the places we're all tied up. The contract word that's contracts to resolve is striving. And generally in our Buddhist circles, we don't like the word striving. And so I looked it up in the, because of this, you know, Latin roots of it. And it turns out the word striving is related to the word strife. And it means has the meaning of to quarrel or to contend with things. And so maybe that's why we don't like to strive in Buddhism, that no striving and Buddhism is just a lot of resolve.

And we are resolved and determined and committed we work really hard at being relaxed. that's a that's a worthwhile thing to be, to strive for, to strive for, to the worthwhile thing, though sometimes the word strive strive and 10 said, which means the struggle is appropriate, because sometimes, the maturation process sometimes the path to practice requires a lot of struggle. And if you shied away from struggle, You wouldn't really find your way through some of the deepest attachments and fears

that we're kind of contending with in this life of ours. Some people have tremendous challenges because they do things they live way they do things, they act in ways that cause a lot of harm to themselves and to their family and to other people. And it's not easy for them to, to let go of those strong forces within them. And it becomes a struggling match with themselves in order to find a way to move through it. So if Buddhist practice is only said to be about, you know, accepting things and relaxing and being present without how things are, you know, I'm, you know, let's be present for how thick Let's be be present or how things are and be present with my alcoholic addiction. Give me another bottle. And that's not what we're talking about. And sometimes with addiction and all kinds of things you need to know sometimes it's We'll struggle. And so much so that I think is appropriate to break out in a sweat when you engage in trying to be truthful and honest and present, and letting go. So the word resolve also has that quality and sometimes it takes a lot of effort and energy, a lot of admit commitment, but also has a side of always remembering in Buddhism, that the goal is to find our way to a life where we can be at ease, we can be free, where there can be, the heart can be at peace, the heart can be settled on itself, the heart can be at home in itself. And the heart can be settled in some deep way. And so sometimes that takes a lot of effort sometimes takes a lot of letting go. Sometimes takes a lot of truthfulness. And sometimes it you know, takes a lot of resolve this is this is important thing to do. And one of the, I think important pieces of wisdom that we could have Round resolve is that some things are really worthwhile being resolved to pursue. And some things are not resolved, worthwhile to pursue. I found that it was worthwhile for me to be very resolved to go off and sit long retreats, I was very resolved. I'm trying to live as ethically as I can. These things were worthwhile to do even when they were a struggle to do and, and so, you know, I've done all kinds of things in my life in Buddhist practice that required a lot of strong commitment, sometimes against the messages I got from my society and my family around me that you know, you were supposed to do certain things, you're supposed to pursue certain careers and certain options and certain things. And that wasn't what I was resolved on was worth there wasn't what I was gonna have my life based on. And so I made reasons And dedications, devotions in my life to pursue a different path that then was conventionally acceptable leaving. And, you know, when I was a, and now I find it kind of kind of a little bit bizarre that I should basically be the minister in a middle class, urban church. Because, you know, when I started Buddhist practice, there was this wasn't an option. There wasn't, this wasn't a career option. The career option was the option that I knew was basically be a monk and be a renunciant. And so here we are on ourselves here. So, some things are worth pursuing, some things are resolved for. And so the Buddha said that there were he listed four things that were particularly useful to be resolved about. So this is an issue list. It's particularly useful to be resolved, to be truthful. And I would say that there's no Buddhist practice without truthfulness. Because, you know, mindfulness is dependent on being truthful. Mindfulness is a kind of truth telling to yourself being present and truthful, what is here now? So there's no Buddhism's no match, I would say there's no human maturation without truthfulness. So it'd be resolved and being truthful.

Some of you might be thinking, of course, I'm all truthful all the time. But as people get more sensitive, in mindfulness practice, we realize that often there's subtle ways in which we're kind of not quite on the spot, but the truthfulness a little bit white lies or a little bit off, sometimes quite often these guys exaggeration of things. So to be committed to truthfulness is very important. The second resolve that is the resolve for wisdom I understand wisdom here not to be knowledge, but rather the resolve to investigate and, and study what's going on here in this life of ours to look more deeply, to try to understand more better what's happening. Sometimes reading can help studying can help, talking to friends can help. But to really kind of engage in this process of questioning what is really going on here, what's going on with me what's going on in this relationship? What's going on, when I engage in my work? What's really happening here? Not the surface, just making money, what's really going on what's really happening? What am I What am I living out? What am I trying to do? What's the wise thing to do



here, as opposed to the convenient thing. So the the, the resolve for wisdom. The third resolve is the resolve for generosity. As I said earlier, it's really the cornerstone of Buddhist spiritual maturation. So to have some resolve to become a more generous person. Doesn't mean that you have to give away your your all your wealth and your home and your spouse. But it means that you, that you you look upon others and look upon the world with a generous attitude. And maybe what you give is your smile, maybe you could give a little bit of time, maybe you stop and talk to someone on the street, who is a stranger rather than passing them by. And that's your expression of generosity, but to look for the result resolved on developing generosity is considered very important. And the fourth resolve is to be resolved on peace. To understand that liberation, freedom maturation piece, all come together, that kind of code join in to one thing, and that, to be peaceful is really helpful for the development of this maturation process, partly because as we become more peaceful, it makes space and room in the mind and the heart. For these other qualities to develop, it allows us to be more sensitive to see more clearly, to develop a sensitivity that can't be there, if we're not peaceful if we're busy and frantic and uptight, if we're greedy and hateful and spiteful or afraid. And so the cultivates peace allows the heart is kind of like killing or preparing the field. So something else beautiful can happen. And one of those beautiful things is further peace. And one of the most beautiful qualities to experience is the settled peaceful, calm heart. It's one of the most satisfying things that a human being can experience and so to have some resolve on peace, if the word peace is too big, then substitute word is ease to be resolved on ease. How can I be more at ease in this situation? It can be as simple as looking at your posture and your body. am I sitting or standing in a way that is useful or tight and tense right now standing in line in the supermarket? Am I at ease standing here? Or is my body expressing impatience? And then you know, come back to the place of ease, what happens? And what happens if you are easeful as an act of generosity to other people, if you if you're at ease, then you help other people become at ease. If you're at ease, it's easier to have wisdom and see what's going on. If you're at ease, it's easier to be truthful, to want to be truthful. So to cultivate ease, and one of the great ways of cultivating ease, one of the great ways of cultivating wisdom. One of the ways of cultivating truthfulness, and perhaps generosity is to be mindful of what takes you away from your ease. What is it that what causes you to lose your ease? So rather than being upset with yourself because you can't be peaceful enough the past As found, if you're not peaceful, look at what is it goes on for you that you're while you're not peaceful, what is the movements of your mind? What is the thoughts? What are the emotions? What's the beliefs behind the agitation, the drivenness the fragmentation that goes on in your mind that keeps you from being peaceful entities into study that to look at that, to become clear about what that is, to be patient with it, to be generous with yourself around

your lack, your inability to be peaceful, to be generous or kind to yourself and gracious to yourself, for the way in which you get caught up in the way that you get. You know, not the best qualities of human kind are being expressed in you at the current moment. Happens to some of us sometimes. So it'd be generous to that and to study it to be present. So the resolve is the eighth of these 10 parties. And what makes the resolve upon me a perfection is, is not just because you're resolving something, but because the resolve is clearly connected to cultivating greater liberation and greater compassion. There are expressions of the path of liberation and expressions of the path of liberation of compassion, that somehow, the parmie the perfection of resolve, is the resolve that's needed for us to become liberated to become free from the entanglements and being stuck and being afraid. And it's it's unresolved is connected to our resolve, to live a life that's of service that's caring for the others in the world around us. That expression of compassion. So in that sense, this quality resolved It's very beautiful. I think it's a beautiful thing. And so I hope that you will consider this coming week this quality of resolve, and how is it? What would what areas of your life? Would it be beneficial for you to be more resolved, more committed, to be more, to me more courageous, to be more to hold the course steady? To have the long term view, I probably when I think of resolve, I think of a long term view. You know, as I put us in

that maturation process is not about instant gratification. It's about having a long term view about how you're going to be in 10 years or 20 years, five years, not how you're going to, you know, go to the next retreat and come back and have all your problems solved and, and have the Enlightenment badge. But you know, hold the course steady, you're in it for the long term, and how you going to now engage The process of steady, ongoing maturation and when the maturation is strong enough, when the maturation is mature enough, you'll experience the fruits of that. And that's what in the traditionally Buddhism, the experience of awakening or enlightenment is often called the fruit.

So may you

right? So we have about 15 minutes if any of you have any comments or questions about this or anything else you'd like to ask. Yes author.

So lots of times

back, I looked at this sense of ease at home for ease in my life. And what I find is this he was dead. When I look at what what the question is I find I'm confused. It's not one course or it's any things mixed together? Yes. And I guess the resolve is to figure out how to unwind them.

That sounds good, though you might start by being at ease about being confused. I'm serious about that. So sometimes, we start probing too quickly thinking that there's some solution. If I dig into it, I'll find that you know, what's going on. And it's sometimes it's better to kind of start at the widest possible picture, step back from your whole life and your everything going on. And what's the widest kind of way in which you can hold it and see it? And then so that you can hold it with ease? And so if you know if you have all these threads, they're combined to form this big ball of confusion. You know, if you're upset about that, and you go in there and try to unravel the ball use probably get more and more upset. But if you step back and just see the ball and and take a deep breath and there it is, look at that. Here's confusion. And then then we get a little curious what is confusion feel like and how am I relating to confusion? Can I? am I afraid of confusion? I'm upset with it. Am I judging myself for being confused? Am I comparing myself with my neighbor who's never confused? You know, well, how do I relate to confusion and, and then and then relax and just just see if you can be relaxed by being a confused person. That's the first step. And then once you have that, then you can maybe go look more closely and see some of the different threads and find a way to work with those.

Make sense?

Yes, Helen

Well, sometimes English translations use the word strive. Because you know, we're so quick to use words like that. I had to go back and look at the Pali he didn't speak English.

Yeah. Yeah, I don't remember I should know that such an important sentence. But I don't remember offhand I don't remember. But there are there there. You know, lots of words in Buddhism for being resolved, make strong effort. The Buddha said it was very clear, he said you should make strong effort for your liberation and at various places. And, you know, Buddhist pride for the Buddha Buddhist practice was not for the lazy. It was you know, it requires engagement, you know, it's not a Buddhist Buddhist practice is not wishful thinking. Say that little differently, kind of a little thing I'd like to say is that, you know, mindfulness practice doesn't work at all unless you do it.

So, you know, so making strong effort

I struggle with, like

growing awareness of truthfulness.

And that

where's the balance between truthfulness and privacy to me? privacy privacy, how much do I need to how transparent Do I need to be in what cases and that sort of thing? I that do not lie.

Not as simple as it sounds, but beyond that, but it's very

main point for choiceless

Yeah, yes, someone's wearing a beautiful purple dress. They put up there's been a lot of effort making or buying and using, you know, I'm gonna be truthful with you. I don't like purple dresses. I think they're ugly. You know, it's truthful, but you have to really feel but what's the purpose of that truthfulness? The usually for speech, the Buddha gave four different criteria for deciding what to say, truthfulness is one of them. The other is, is it kind, what you're going to say? And really important, what is it beneficial? does it benefit anyone to say does it so it's not necessarily to say it's beneficial. And the fourth is a timely and sometimes it can be beneficial to say it could be kind and it can be truthful. It's not the right time.

So my question is about self that reveal, you know, people will make assumptions about me and let them just have those assumptions and say nothing. Or I can reveal more. And I am very mixed about that whole thing.

So it's a good thing to look out for my job's easy mindfulness teacher it is your job to go look. Do the work. The it's a good question. I mean, it's not it's not an easy answer for this because there's so many different circumstances so complex, the entire dynamics of what's going on. So you have to really look at it every situation and see what's the wise thing to do. Sometimes you're better off just not saying anything, and sometimes you're better off correcting them and say, It's not what you think. And sometimes it's better to wait for the right time to do that. Maybe this is not the right time. It's never okay to lie to oneself. Once you'd always Be truthful to oneself. But when we share that truthfulness to others, you know has to do with those four criteria. So when is it benefit? Is it beneficial to someone has the wrong impression of you? Is it benefit? does it benefit the situation? Are you or the other person to correct them say I'm actually this is actually not the case. And if it doesn't benefit anyone to do it, then perhaps it's not necessary. Just let it be maybe here in the front there Mike.

Why don't they say some putting more effort in my practice is generosity in the areas where I feel my body clean clenching or being stressed. And I have identified two areas where when I think about interval SEO, when I think about giving I just to these One is giving anonymously. And that the reason why is I think it's, it's been hard sometimes to give an honest analysis anonymously you know, looking for the time where no one is looking or, or, you know, no one will nowadays or just how can I maybe, you know, in terms of giving, giving gifts or more, advocating anonymously, but how can I advocate it anonymously? Or

so you see so when you're looking when you're looking at opportunities to give anonymously you cringe you cling you tighten up?

Yeah, well, like for example, giving giving a donation or you know, if I send it by the mail, my name is there. Yeah. Or you Family Tree. Okay, let me just wait for now one two, Luke and so to see what is the effect of giving without not caring about

what people think, but you do cares. So you're saying that if you do it that way, it's something dissatisfying inside of you, you kind of it's hard for you to do you prefer to be seen

is hard. It's hard not to be nice.

It's hard not to be for you when you're not noticed. It's hard for you, you'd rather be noticed.

No, no,

it's hard. It's hard to find the opportunity to do it without being noticed. Because always people around Yeah, and if you send in a donation, your name is there.

Yeah. Or you know, just kind of send cash or, or maybe I just can put a fruit At the desk of someone at the point where they're not normally seen or so.

I just found it funny and at the same time, this is more difficult than what I think so I was like, Okay, how can I be at ease? And do I really care that much about not being not a store not receive credit. So I thought, Well, okay, forget this. If they notice me, that's fine, just put

it there.

Because the end result is not as

well, I don't, I don't feel peaceful doing it that way for maybe other reasons of you know, not gratification. And the other one is advocating or for which I think that is so loyal. I sit like a way of generosity like by you know, referring in a positive way about something or someone or,

but,

and not receiving the credit for that if something happens.

So, I Just

just acknowledging that, you know, there's like all that rambling,

beautiful, it's great. It's great that you're practicing generosity and seeing these things come up. And these challenges come up. Part of the function of the practice of generosity is to discover the challenges discover the places we hold and the complications that come up. You know, it is, it's one, it's one thing to be spontaneously generous and just give and all looks very nice, and you're happy to be generous, and everyone's happy, and everyone was happily ever after. That'd be good. But it's another



thing to take on generosity as a practice, to understand oneself better understand our relationship with other people better, and to see what gets stirred up in the process. And I think that's one of the great great values of the practice of generosity to see what gets stirred up, see where we're afraid to see what self image we're operating under what goes on with self image and stuff around giving and do we give just really freely or do we really expect to be seen To be kind of, you know, be approved by other people or have our status go up a little bit. Or we're afraid, you know what it means to be generous that people will somehow look upon us unfavorably for being generous or think of us being selfish. One of the interesting aspects of generosity in Burma when I was there, that for many of the Westerners, and kind of felt uncomfortable was many of the Westerners would often you know, cotton the custom in monasteries in meditation centers in Burma was people would make donations for the meals or give money so the monastery can go out buy food, to buy the meals for the day. And but the customer in the monastery was in a big Blackboard and dining room, they would put it right who had donated the money that day for the meal. And the Westerners found this really strange they felt like the somehow that it's solely their generosity or it's kind of their own generosity was somehow implied maybe they were looking for credit or looking for that was kind of egotistical to go donate and then have your your name up there in the Blackboard. So somehow something about the western conditioning, maybe it's hard for some people, the Westerners to where's the Burmese seemed to that was just part of the custom and I think it allowed everyone else to celebrate and feel joy in the act generosity that someone had made. Okay,

so

may you dissolve appropriately with your resolve. Thank you.