

2011-06-12 Inquiry On Love

Tue, 8/18 11:12AM • 20:58

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, buddhism, questions, buddhist traditions, closed, neighbors, impulse, kindness, talk, love, windows, conference, happened, life, building, locked, doors, bit, open, separated

SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

So the theme today is loving kindness. I was wondering what I will talk about today, quite a bit the last few days because I went to a New York on Tuesday night for three, four day three day conference of some 223 220 or something. Buddhist teachers from across, mostly in North America, but some came from Europe and other places. of the different Buddhist traditions. Every five, six years or something. There's a kind of Maha Sangha meeting of some of the senior Buddhist teachers, the different Buddhist traditions to meet it's quite something and then I was kind of waiting and seeing what you know, something juicy to happen. That may be could be a subject for a talk you know, when you're a Dharma teacher like me you're kind of often looking for something. And then yesterday I thought one of the salient features of the conference was novel was talked about, but rather was the love that was there. And I thought I would talk about that a little bit. And then I remembered that I was supposed to talk about love anyway, because I'm supposed to do the finish up the series of talks on the 10 perfections. And it happens to be the ninth perfection, which was supposed to be today's loving kindness. So that was convenient. So I thought probably it'll be loving kindness over next this today and next week because what we're going to do here and So, what have you learned about love? So one of the things that I've learned is that, at least for me, that is a big difference between whether I think about someone in the abstract because they're far away, don't see them. And for when I'm actually in the presence and this is particularly significant for me, I, if I have some little irritation, or annoyance, or some little feeling of vague feeling, you know, kind of like, you know, sense of being separated for them or angry or something. And then when I'm in the presence of someone the concepts and ideas I'm operating with, seem to pale in significance. For the direct humanity of being in touch with someone in contact with someone, and I often find that some of the things ideas I'm holding or holding against people are very hard to sustain when I'm actually in contact with them. So I've made it a you know, a practice or a policy kind of that if I have some issue or some holding some feelings against someone anger, something that I always try to go find them so I can be in their presence be with them and see what happens in that, you know, rather than keeping in the abstract because in the abstract sometimes my thinking is not always so accurate. You know, I'm kind of get into my thoughts about to the person or the idea or the event rather than, you know, the, you know, something is much more immediate. So, this is one of the things that happened for me in this conference. It wasn't that I was angry or annoyed or irritated with anyone, but it was it Interesting that we had teachers from all the different Buddhist, major Buddhist traditions there. And, and I don't have much contact with some of the other Buddhist traditions. And so since I saw that, since the longer the longer that I'm kind of not in touch with them, the more I kind of have these little ideas about all those people, then there's us, whatever that is, and there's them whatever that is. And it became very clear that there's no in this conference, there was no them. We were all we're all in it together. And we did a beautiful exercise. Diversity exercise, kind of the kind of classic diverse exercise of you have people on the one side of the room and, and then it's when

categories are mentioned, if you fit that category, you go to the other side of the room, like if you all you know women,

and then all the women look back at the men are all Many times, all men, they look back. And so a lot of the questions were tailor made for this group of Buddhist teachers. And, and so it's quite something, it took a while quite a while to have all these teachers, you know, stand there and they walked across, looked and there were a number of, you know, very touching things that happened that some have had to do with some of the big challenges that individuals teachers have had over the years or communities have had over the years and some of the difficulties between communities came, you know, clear. And there were tears and there were laughter and there's all kinds of things that happened that was very poignant moments. We got to see how common the commonality of all of us many ways we got to see what separates us as people and in the process of doing that exercise, they did they Do being separated by traditions, the idea that somehow the traditions were you know, that you're this kind of Buddhist and that kind of Buddhist, just dissolved. And feeling I had was, you know, all you could do is love everybody. When you have that kind of context, see people in that kind of way. So the idea of contact and seeing people and letting the concepts and some of those ideas fall away, is very important. And so the context, a little bit of today of the, of the talking about loving kindness is that of the parmitas, and probably meet those of these paramis of these 10 qualities, that virtues that Buddhism celebrates as being important for practice. And, and it's easy, I think, for some people to when you get a list of kind of virtues, to take them as obligations. You're supposed to be this way. And one of the I think one of the really great things about Buddhism, if you're really kind of delving into what the Buddha was teaching, there's no obligation here, whatsoever. Buddhism, it doesn't have an authoritative figure, like a creator god or some higher being or something that's telling you what you should do or supposed to do, I have to do or laying down the law for us. And Buddhism is completely a voluntary thing, non obligatory thing. But where the obligation comes from, if there is such a thing, it's not from Buddhism, but rather from the movements, the initiatives that come out of your own heart or come out from within. And sometimes we do a kind of violence to ourselves, if we don't allow what's within to come forth. Now if for example, if I could succeed here to tell a really A hilarious joke. I couldn't think of one so that, you know, I wish I could. And it was really, you know, over the top hilarious, and you refuse to let the anger out, you're not being nice, you're serious Buddhists. And there were a couple of those types of the conference with a serious Buddhist types, I could see them kind of, you know, to get their eyes closed, and, you know, and it wasn't sustainable by the end of the conference. They had these big open smiles and eyes, there was really something to see. And so you do kind of violence, you know, this is an impulse to laugh that inside, they wants to come out. And it isn't that every impulse inside them wants to come out, should be laid out, because that's kind of naive. I mean, you have the impulse to punch someone out. You know, or to sleep with your neighbor, spouse. You know, there's a lot of impulses in there, right? So it isn't to give freedom to all of it, but, but to really discover those impulses that arise in the context of freedom to arise in the context, where there's not the compulsion to act on greed or hate, delusion or fear, and, but rather to operate under kind of the absence of those things. And when those things, when there's the absence of those, what Buddhism often calls defilements, or limitations, we have the closed and the hardest closed in some way.

That what bubbles up inside if we don't act on it. There is a kind of violence kind of the way it takes a while or it kind of takes effort to clamp down or hold down what's flowing. And so the 10 power meters are these virtues that liberated free Heart Will, time time will come forth out of that. And to beautiful to make space for that to allow it to happen. The ninth of these qualities is loving kindness, which can be seen as flowing out of, or being supported out of the first eight. So degree to which we have generosity, generosity, you know, connects us to people in a way that allows our kindness and care for others to follow our integrity allow, which is you know, ethical integrity also help support love and a beautiful way.

And there's an impulse to rise inside it for integrity, and so forth, the other ones and so the assumption is that everyone has some capacity, sometimes long forgotten, sometimes very subtly, squashed or numbed out or made frightened. They're fearful for us. But everyone has a capacity for love. Some people have been burned by it, some people have been supported by it. And to some degree or other people don't get through life without some relationship to love. They've learned something about love. Sometimes they'll learn how difficult it is. Sometimes they've learned different lessons, I'll give you my one of my lessons today. But how you know, it's important to be in touch with in contact with people, and especially when they feel some difficulty with them. And to make an effort to do that. So what I'd like to do with all of you, if you're willing, is to a lot of people here but I would like you to for a few minutes, have some instructions to form little groups of four people and share that your thoughts around these questions that I offered you. And now I realize that some of you are new, don't if you're meditating, you're you could get into some very deep infinite Samadhi. And it's hard to come out or perhaps or perhaps by seriously you're here because this is a refuge some difficulty you're having your life and this was a refuge and, and you really wanted a place to be quiet and not have to engage. And so there's many reasons why you might feel like you don't want to do this. Of course you can leave can always leave IMC but what I like to recommend that you stay, and there's two ways if you don't want to do this, you two ways you can stay. One is you can stay quietly, just stay where you are not joining a group. But the other ways you can join a group, which is my preference, and if you really don't want to say anything. Just let people know there's introduce yourself so everyone knows each other. But say, you know, you don't say why but you know, this is actually an added time for you to want to want to share but you're going to be there as a witness and be parked that way. Then maybe something will inspire you to speak you hear so I'm hoping this is okay for all of you. The other request I have there's a lot of people here and so if when you do this if you could somehow huddle close and see if you can speak with as quiet as voice as you can get away with get away with me instead to speak to your your group can hear so that it keeps it a little bit otherwise it's you know, if everybody speaks at a normal voice, it's going to be like a cocktail party. So what I'd like to ask of you is to have you heard before, and that and to go, it's just decided one person to start and then go around the circle. And each person offer something relatively simple. So it shouldn't be a long story about something you've experienced, it could be a very brief story, but you know, maybe at the most, you know, a minute or something, where each of you answers to three questions, you know, your response to it in some way, maybe out of what happened in the meditation or, or now and, and then once you've gone around the three questions in a circle, you then you can have more of an open discussion about these questions or whatever came up out of it. And this is not the time to offer anybody any advice. You know, you know, I liked your what you learned about love, but I think you need to consider it consider this. And no, no rhetorical, you know, no, they'll kind of like imply, you know, you know, teaching like, I'm not going to give you advice, but you know, but so we'll do this for about, I don't know how long I'll kind of track with the energy in the room, but probably for about

15 or 20 minutes. And then we'll come back and for a little bit more, I'll say a little bit more. And so if you could, Yes, please. Oh, the quick questions. Okay. So the three questions are over your lifetime. What have you learned about love? It could be a really simple thing, like, you know, or it doesn't have to be like the greatest philosophical lesson in love you've ever had. But it could be some simple lesson that you've had about love. So it's the first what lessons have you have you learned from your life about love? The second is, what are the benefits of love? And the third, what are the problems or the challenges are the difficulties, the difficulties of love? And these are meant to be, you know, somewhat vague questions. So each of you could you know, write it right or wrong answers in a Sarah there's no wrong answers. It's just interesting to see what bubbles up in each of you. And they're meant to be a bit vague. So there's a wide range of possibilities of what might come out soon, okay. So why don't you as quietly as you can form your group. So thank you all very much for participating in that. I hope it was

nice for you. The certainly was nice for me to see to feel the room and, and also just to I didn't hear any of the conversations, but just to know There were over 100 people focused on talking about love. I mean, how often does that happen? And that's pretty, pretty cool. If one of the important emphasis is of Buddhism is to take our capacity for love, our ability to love, and both develop it and to purify it and not to deny it. And so to take the beautiful kind of sense of caring or kindness or friendliness that we might have for some people, and not to let go of it, but universalize it to take an expanded outwards so that it's not partial is not limited, but take what's possible in the few easy domains of our life, perhaps, and expand it so it includes everyone. If human being it's like a building some buildings, the windows are locked. The shades are drawn and the doors are locked. Some buildings only have windows. We drove by a big department store in New York. Huge, just struck by how there were no windows in the outside. Like Macy's right. And so some buildings have no windows. Some are locked. Some the windows are closed, the blinds are are drawn, but maybe the front doors unlocked and open was very controlled who comes in and out. Some have opened windows to neighbors on one side but there's no windows neighbors the other side of the windows are locked to the way things are closed in the other direction. Somebody the back door and the front door wide open now was many years ago I was in Amazon. And remember this beautiful building that was kind of a community building for the community there. And it had no walls at all. It had, you know, posts and big posts in the outside and then it had a roof was used to keep the rain off, I guess it was completely open. And people could come in and out freely and openly. I've had people tell me, they grew up in a household where the doors were always open. And all the neighborhood kids came in and out of quite freely without you know, and you know, just that they that they felt was their home almost they just would come and go and parents always had snacks there and, and, and neighbor kids would be there for hours and you know, so it's quite open, and I've you know, and then people who keep everything closed. So human beings like that to wear like a building. So what kind of building are you today or tomorrow? Are you more like the Macy's you know, no windows

Macy's on a you know, a closed lock there you have some doors open towards certain neighbors do you control carefully who comes into your heart and who comes out? Or is your heart or your life open with no loss at all. So things could come and go freely and openly and I think the idea of loving kindness and developing in Buddhism purifying It is to be like that beautiful community building and the Amazon was has no walls at all to say everything he could come and go freely and be part of our life. And so it's important part of Buddhism. So it's good to consider. I'll very likely that I'll, you know, haven't covered this topic well yet. So next week, I'll do the talk on the perfection of loving kindness as part of me and nobody To end the week this week coming up between now and then I would encourage you to take those three questions and consider them further. Because they're, you know, there's a lot locked and locked to be unpacked or discovered through those, those three questions about love. And you might actually go and ask some of your friends or family members or neighbors are total strangers. Yeah. And, you know, ask them what they think about those questions. And, and you can get away with a little bit if you say that, you know, your spiritual teacher or your mother gave you this homework, then you'd be able to do a little bit more you can get away. So I want to thank you all for participating that and listening and thank you for coming into our home open doors here.