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SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

Last week I gave a talk on one aspect of the Buddha as a teacher, and specifically talked about how the, what it said in the ancient texts about how the Buddha would give a Dharma talk to laypeople, people who are not his monastics and, and I'd like to follow that talk with another talk about the Buddha as a teacher. And hopefully it's interesting for you. The issue of teaching is a very important one in Buddhism, because it's a big degree Buddhism is not only is a is a practice tradition, we're practicing meditation or practice is a very important part of it. But it's also a teaching tradition, and where it's the teaching of the Dharma, the teaching of the practice, which is responsible for conveying it down through the ages down to us. And it's always been historically very important the idea of teaching so I want to talk a little bit about that. And since you're, we're all kind of participating and teaching events, we come here and IMC, perhaps stepping back these couple of talks and just kind of looking at teaching itself. Maybe we'll have some interest for you that one of the things I'd like to talk about today is motivation to teach. And, you know, what would motivate someone teach Of course, you can probably come up with many ideas. If we go back to a time of the Buddha, there is an ancient text who talks about, supposedly in first person when he talks about his own quest for awakening and his decision to teach after his awakening. In experiencing his awakening, one of the first kind of reflections that he had Was that this was really profound, what he'd come to realize. And it was so profound that it was difficult to teach. And so in thinking that was difficult to teach, this occurred to him enough with teaching the Dhamma that even I found hard to reach where, where it will never be perceived by those who live in lust and hate. Wrapped in darkness, those wrapped in darkness will never discern the deep Dharma, which goes against the worldly stream, subtle, deep and difficult to see. So it's kind of quite remarkable that on his awakening, the Buddha reflected somehow about teaching and the way he reflected but it was not let's go teach. But let's not it's gonna so considering does my mind and To inaction rather than to teaching the Dharma. So that's, you know, that's here, you know, there was this risk, some point of Buddhism never coming into existence because the Buddha was disinclined to teach at the inception of his kind of beginning of after his awakening. And so why is that? Why would someone be reluctant to teach he gives every answer and the answer is that it's difficult to understand was even difficult for him to understand the Dharma. And also people's minds are infused with lust and hate. That makes it impossible or very difficult for them, to see what he you know what he experienced the freedom that he experienced. And maybe that's understandable, you know, someone who's attained some degree of peace and well being and doesn't want to exhaust themselves teaching if teaching is not going to have any effect and not going to reach anybody. But then as the story is told in this ancient text, the brother Brahma Brahma, who was when the great gods in the Indian pantheon of gods pick this up and decided that this is not good. And so he came down to the Buddha. And he said to the Buddha, venerable Sir, please teach the Dhamma

there are beings with little dust in their eyes, who are wasting too are not hearing the Dharma. They will be those who will understand the Dharma. So that he says there are some people who would have the ability to see there, just a little bit of dust. They're not kind of in they're not deeply lost in the worlds of greeting Greed, hate lust, but perhaps little bit and if you teach them, you can make a difference for them. And so then the Buddha listened to Brahmas pleading, and that of compassion for beings. I surveyed the world with the eye of a Buddha. And I saw indeed says that there are beings people with just a little bit of dust in their eyes. And so then he decided to teach. And so then I replied to Brahma, open for them are the doors of the deathless. Let those with eyes now show their faith, thinking it would be troublesome, oh Brahma, I did not speak the Dharma subtle and sublime. And then Brahma thought, I have created the opportunity for the Buddha to teach the Dharma and after paying homage to to the Buddha He departed. He did what he had to do to stay to get the teachings. And but, you know, ensured that the teachings passed on. So you know what to make of the story. And it's a bit of a, I think it was a myth, the story of Brahma. And what do we make of this myth? And there's one is it's it's what it says that somehow, after his awakening, the Buddha just thought that wasn't possible. He couldn't be he wasn't going to be effective as a teacher. And was just troublesome to do. So to try to teach. And other way that this story has been interpreted is that it's unbecoming for someone to want to teach without being invited first. And I don't know if that's the right interpretation for this. But this is what I this is the way that I was raised in Buddhism in the Zen tradition, at least to my teachers. And I'm not saying this is necessarily wise, but it was the way that I was raised. Is that you're not not supposed to want to teach on your own. You're supposed to wait. Or at least you're not supposed to operate or the motivation to teach. You're supposed to wait until you get invited to teach. And, and then we were, I was told back in the Zen center times that there are two places play two ways in which the request to teach comes. It comes from your teacher, who knows you well enough to know that you're now ready to start teaching. But that's not enough to become a teacher. It also has to be an invitation from a community of people who want you to teach, because there are people who the teacher thinks they should teach. But there's no one wants to listen to them. And then there's people that people want to listen to, they have some charisma or something, but the teachers don't think they're ready. And so it has to be kind of a both in order for it to really to work, but the invitations there and so in Zen where they have a kind of ritual ritual. That's more People don't understand that know about Thompson's behind the scene. The idea being that if you don't teach the Dharma unless you've been requested three times, and the first time someone asks you screw you kind of go Hmm. I don't know what you're supposed to do, but just wait until the three times to know they're really serious. And only then do you really start to teach. So this reluctance to teach it has often been, in some some circles that Buddhism, especially some of the ones that I was familiar with. It's been part of the culture. Part of the lore is to as you speak, to be hesitant waiting to your invited wait until you're ready. You don't probably don't know when you're ready. So wait until you get invited and that's when it comes. So in the story of the of the Brahma coming, it provides Brahma provides the Buddha with the invitation so that he's not making it up on his own. So that proper decorum the proper approach is being demonstrated. Another interpretation people give for this story is that by having Brahma who's like the great God and the Pantheon coming, ask the Buddha to teach and pay respects. And Buddha must be pretty hot. You know, if the great God comes in, you know, basis respect. So then the Buddha decided to teach and he looked around and he remembered he had five companions who had left him somewhat in,

kind of rejected him because for many years the Buddha had been an ascetic, and then he'd given up his ascetic practices. And his ascetic companions thought that now he was getting soft, and so they left him. But the Buddha remember his companion, they said, they have just little dust in their eyes, and I'll go find them and teach them and it's always too long walk across India to find his companions. He came across a renunciant an aesthetic aesthetic, we don't seem to have a different order different tradition, and they and this name RGB, g bucha. And jeevika saw the Buddha and said to the Buddha,

friend, your faculties are clear. The color of your skin is pure and bright. Under Whom have you gone forth friend? Who is your teacher? Whose Dharma Do you profess? So here are something about the quality of the Buddha's personhood you a shiny, radiant you can imagine after coming out of being awakened, he was pretty happy, peaceful. And so this guy asks you What's your Dharma? Who's your teacher? So this is the reply. That's least this text gives. I am one who has transcended all a knower of all, unsullied among all things renouncing all By craving, seizing free, having known this all for myself, to whom should I point to as a teacher, I have no teacher, and one like me exists nowhere in all the world with all its gods, because I have no person for my counterpart. I am the accomplished one in the world. I am the supreme teacher, I alone am a fully enlightened one, whose fires are quenched and extinguished. I go now to the city of cahsee to set in motion the wheel of the Dharma and the world that has become blind. I go to beat the drum of the deathless. That's pretty so what's interesting is what happened next. jeevika

simply said, Hey, this be so friend taking his head took a bypass and departed. I love the story. So one of the things is the Buddha's first attempt, I don't know if he was to try to present to this question presenting himself as a teacher, he kind of failed. It didn't work. Like I said, maybe so I'd left him alone. So I think this was kind of like a little bit of a wake up call, maybe had take a different approach. So when he finally found his companions, he taught them the Four Noble Truths, as opposed to go and claim that he was you know, the all conquering great Victor and all these things. So we don't know whether this is really, you know, this kind of text with the mythology and all that, you know, there's a really date back to the time of the Buddha or is this part of the hagiography kind of the ways in which the founder of religion is elevated over the centuries. But there was interest what's interesting for this purpose today is that what it says about teaching that the Buddha's reticence to teach having someone invite him to teach and then setting off to teach and then maybe not being so effective its first attempt. And you know, I don't know what to really what to make of it all except it's feels very, some ways very human to me. There's a strong tendency to maybe over idealize the Buddha and, and make him almost like some perfect being who can't make any mistakes. But here it seems very kind of humans reluctance to teach, being invited to teach looking around, trying not succeeding so well, and then going off and trying some more with his companions. So about this motivation to teach there's an expression in this Text. After the Brahma asks the Buddha to teach, it says, out of compassion for beings, I surveyed the world. So out of compassion, he then looked around. The idea that you teach out of compassion is really a central one in this tradition, that compassion is the primary motivation that's referred to over and over again, is the reason to the primary motivation to teach. It's not to get rich, it's not to get status. It's not to make a lot of friends. It's not to impress your family and friends. It's not just to be able to talk philosophy or something. But out of compassion means that being sensitive to the suffering that exists in the world, that to out of care and concern for that suffering that into care for others, People, that the person decides to go out and try to make a difference to the world. So the idea of being motivated by compassion is central. There is a list of things that the Buddha said, five qualities that should be established and a person who's going to be teaching. So the fastest goes like this. It is not easy to teach the Dharma to others. As the Buddha said, That's not easy. The Dharma should be taught to others only when five qualities are established, within the person teaching, which five, the Dharma should be thought, to be taught with a thought, I will give a discourse step by step. I will give a well arrange discourse I will speak out of compassion. I will not speak, for material reward, I will speak without harming myself for others. So this is an interesting list. So first of all mentioned, being motivated by compassion as being important, and then not speaking for material reward. And this is something that also I felt like when I in my kind of growing up in Buddhism in Zen that was really deeply kind of inculcated into that the right word are taught to me, because the people who were who taught there when it was time for you to TSR teaching there, it was clearly, clearly

set up the system that you would not receive any kind of material reward for that teaching, you would just teach and people weren't listening. They'd listen if they didn't, they didn't. And one of the nice things about Zen center was that the teaching there is kind of like it Think of as little as a monastery. So all these people are living together a little bit. And when it was your turn to teach, you'd be invited to teach, and you teach. And then you go back and you continue with your practicing, but your job that you had whatever you're doing, and there was something about very freeing for me in that environment where it was very Matter of fact, it there wasn't a lot, there wasn't a lot at stake. I wasn't like your status, you know, or your job or things were at risk. It's just just a matter of fact thing when you were invited, you go and teach. And there was, you know, and you didn't give much thought about that you were going to get anything in return. And when I was over, I just went back to your regular job at Zen center, whatever you happen to do be doing. This idea of not receiving material reward is an important one in in our tradition of Buddhism. And this is one of the reasons why in our tradition, we don't charge for the Dharma we offered freely and we you know, We believe that it's one of the best ways to learn hear the Dharma learn the Dharma practice of Dharma is in a in a field of generosity and freely given this. But it's also we don't say very often, it's also consider that it's best for the Dharma teacher, to give in that spirit, and to try to give without expectation of material reward. Now, like, for example, in our scene like here at IMC, the people who do teach here receive often receive dāna people's donations. And that's part of the reason why we can be here because people are supported this way. But with this kind of instruction, then part of part of how I understand that is that anybody who is teaching has to be practicing this instruction, practicing practicing with the instructions, not for material reward, which means you have to watch your mind I have to watch my mind And be careful that not to physically mentally notice and then not buy into any kind of thoughts about, you know, let me see if I can teach really well today. So that gives a lot of money in that dotted box. You know, I'm certainly you know, teaching about the teaching is boring for people and I should think of something exciting, you know, talk about something it's, and some people actually feel it. I don't think I don't know how true it is. But I feel that some Dharma teachers in the West choose the topics that they talk about, based on, you know, things that think they think will be popular. Anyway, so for me, and I think what I hope for our tradition is that this kind of teaching not to teach for material rewards means that we have to be very careful. Teachers have to be careful to look at their own minds and motivations. And to be able to root out when the motivation becomes from material reward or for status or for other kinds of things that are not just simply out of compassion. And the hope is to be always come at the teaching out of compassion, out of concern for someone else, and not for concern for oneself exactly, in certain way. So I mentioned four of them now. So first step by step, so when gives a discourse step by step, and the second one is well arranged discourse. So a well reasoned discourse, sometimes it's translated as, step by step means that you It's, it's, it's developmental, it's gradual. It's like we talked about last week, the Buddha started with talking about virtue, generosity, and then virtue and then the heavens and then overcoming the hindrances. So you kind of build over time, what you know, so also understanding and Buddhism that the Dharma is very deep. And you can't necessarily expect people to understand the full depth of it by just telling them so. And so you have to prepare people and set the stage with a context for understanding what's being taught. So the first is a step by step teaching. The second is to teach in a way that's well arranged, well reasoned well thought out. The third is to speak out of compassion. The fourth is not to speak from material reward. Now, the fifth one is one I want to get some emphasis on. I will not speak, I will speak without harming myself or others.

I will speak without harming myself or others. So you want to speak out of compassion. But at the same time, you don't want to have compassion fatigue. At the same time, you don't want to stretch yourself so thin teaching, that it harms yourself. And there's many ways in which a person can get harmed by teaching too much You're teaching in certain kinds of ways. And so the responsibility of a Dharma teacher is to teach in such a way that no one gets harmed, both oneself and others. And, and this is a

key aspect of the early Buddhist tradition, this idea of living a life that has benefits both self and others. The definition of a wise person that the Buddha gave is a wise person is a person who is wise if they benefit others. And they'd benefit themselves. And then they'll say the benefits self and others. So the idea is not just about benefiting oneself, there'll be selfish, it's not just about benefiting others, then you might harm yourself and exhaust yourself. And sometimes you hear and people this kind of emphasis on or the importance of being altruistic. And so there are no people I know dharma students who have teachers who have exhausted themselves because they think they're supposed to only be altruistic only kind of give themselves up, let go abandon their self concern, because they're supposed to be helping people. And wherever their people need to be helped. And the issue with that is, it isn't just a couple of people here and there need help. There's no end to helping people. There's just, you know, it's, you know, just if you once you start looking around, there's, you know, the need that we have in our society for supporting each other is phenomenal. And so once you start picking that up, it's it's, you know, and feel responsible for all of it, then it's exhausting. So, let alone society is large. I saw this, at some of the Buddhist communities that I've been part of was the Buddhist communities have unending needs and so the People have this kind of over over over emphasis on altruism will tell I should give myself up, I just have to kind of give myself over take care of those needs. And I've seen people burn and crash. So this is where you're teaching in a way that harms oneself. So the idea is not to harm oneself, and when when teachers but also not to harm someone, other people, and that's a hard one, not to harm others. You know, it's as a teacher myself, I try, I don't think I have motivations to harm anyone. But when you teach a large group of people, it's very hard to notice it what to say, in such a way that someone doesn't take it up in a way that they feel hurt by it or feel like that didn't work for me or feel left out or feel I can't do that and therefore I'm not really good enough for something and how to teach in such a way that everyone finds themselves in it. And finds it useful and beneficial. without feeling discouraged or without feeling somehow judged or something, you know, something I consider a lot. And the fact that some of you keep coming back means that probably it's, you know, it works for you. But there are people who don't come back. And people who may come once or come a few times and I say something, maybe they feel it didn't connect to them or didn't work for them or they felt left out or something from the talk. So it's something I think about, and I certainly welcome feedback. And actually, I'm actually very, very eager to hear from people if what I say doesn't work, or if I've heard someone or offended someone or because I'd like to learn from that and change. So the idea of teaching how to compassion without harming oneself and others. There's a

long discourses of the Buddha there's, there's a lot of discussion in the early Buddhist texts about teaching. Because it's such an important part of how this whole thing gets, you know, conveyed. And so important part of what the Buddha did was as a teacher, there's actually a lot of discussion about teaching teachers nature of teaching and stuff like that. And there was a man named Jeta, who wanted to cheat was going to challenge the Buddha. And he had this challenge to him. He said, You know, if, if you'd be If a person's become liberated and they want to teach then they're just finding themselves again, they're kind of like tying themselves up getting knotted up again, they're losing the freedom. Because teaching the desire to teach the motivation to teach is a desire and the desire kind of keeps you attached. And so, if you're really free and liberated, you have no attachments, you'll have no desire to teach. So he came to the Buddha and challenged him with that way. And so the Buddha then countered that with a series of questions for him, and I'll give you one of the questions that he kind of, or one of the statements if anyone were to say, King pasenadi, who reigns over the reins over this country, that he alone should consume the fruits and revenues of the country and not share them with others. He speaking in this way, would be a creator of obstacles for the king. For the Kings subjects, you and others, being a creator of obstacles, he would not be sympathetic for their welfare. In one not sympathetic for their welfare, the mind would be established in animosity for them. When the mind is established animosity, there is a wrong view. So here what if you only got a snippet of it but King in the

ancient world, if he takes all the revenue and all the fruit from the countryside and just keeps it for himself, people would starve. The part of the job of the king is to ensure that everyone gets an adequate amount of, of the fruits of the land and the wealth and part of the universe is redistribution of wealth as part of the role in the ancient world to the king. And so it becomes, when Buddha asked this law, HCA what if, what if the king decided not to share anything without work and like, no, it wouldn't. It was interesting. In this passage, the Buddha goes on to say, Not only that, but not sharing. For the Buddha here, not sharing is a kind of, for the king would be a kind of animosity. So I think it's I don't know if that's true, but I thought was a very interesting statement that just simply being holding everything to yourself is kind of, you know, there's some kind of animosity there. In the same way the passage goes on. If anyone were to say, suppose that a religious practitioner, were to arrive at a skillful doctrine, having arrived at a skillful doctrine, that he or she should not declare it to anyone else, for what can one person do for another. It would be just the same as if having cut through an old bond when were to take work to make another new bond. I say that's such a thought such an idea is an evil greedy deed. evals maybe not the best translation of the Pali for what can one person do for another. So a person who has a thought, you know, if having come to some teaching some understanding and brings me peace, freedom attachments, if I were to teach that just creates another attachment. If a person has that thought that person would be a creative obstacles for others who come into the doctrine and discipline revealed by the Buddha, though but there's another one, it's a little hard to read it all kind of kind of language but so just in the way the king if the king keeps everything for themselves, it creates obstacles or problems for those subjects. So when someone comes to a good, useful, helpful doctrine in practice, if they keep it to themselves Here a claim you create obstacles for other people. It's not simply that, you know, you're, you're innocent because you don't do it, you know, you're just gonna sit in your enlightened retirement.

But here there's some idea that actually by not teaching, you create an obstacle and by not teaching, it's there's some animosity in the person who's not teaching. Why, why do they Why does this tradition say this? You know, what's this? What's going on? So, one way that I interpreted for myself or understand this, and often these ancient teachings of Buddha need some kind of interpretation. There wasn't really stand by themselves. But the interpretation I have is that when a person is liberated or has some degree of liberation, it means that their attachments their way in which the heart is closed, or their card is afraid Or agitated or lost in itself, as dissipated. And the heart in a sense is open. And when the heart is open, when when our empathy is available to be sensitive to what goes on the world around us. It's a natural thing to want to step forward to support and help others. And it takes an act, an intentional act of holding back to not allow that natural thing to move forward. And so that's why they can say that there's animosity in this in this in this passage in the person who set decides not to teach, because they're in urge not to teach you have to hold yourself back. If you have, if you understand something that is useful for other people, because of this, the idea of empathy of compassion to open hearts so the compassion that motivates teaching is not necessarily it's not something you have to kind of invent or make yourself feel. But rather, it's something that's a byproduct of doing the path of liberation path of freedom. That as your empathy develops as your resistance as you're closing this, as you become more open, that the natural response to the suffering natural response to this world, is to step forward to try to make a difference. Here the emphasis is to is about teaching. And I think as people who are practitioners practicing this path, if the path is this path, this practice does its work on you. And each person's gonna have to decide for themselves, what the right way to step forward into the world is. And for some people, It's taking care of their family, what's close by, or taking care of their employees or their colleagues at work. It doesn't have to be like you have to go off and be a teacher, maybe it's being a better neighbor for people nearby. It's But somehow, you know, the given the causes and conditions of your life, given the circumstances of who you are and your personality and many things. As the heart becomes open, and you feel a call or feel moved to respond to the world, what's the right response,

given your circumstance and for the Buddha, he decided to be a teacher. And so that was useful for us, important for us, set something in motion. And, and he had a lot to say about teaching. And I hope that those of us who are teaching in With under the name or support of the Buddha, adequately follow these instructions of how to teach, especially the part about teaching out of compassion and teaching in such a way that we teach without harming ourselves or others. And then we teach without concern for material reward. I hope that was okay. If it was not, and you guys are sitting there thinking what a lousy talk then then it becomes then it becomes you know, if that's an issue for me. Then it becomes my practice to look at that. Work with that. But I offered the best I could do what I have today.