

# 2013-02-24 Please Call Me By My True Names

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

world, arrive, poem, deeply, encounter, practice, open, people, mayfly, uganda, heart, boat, compassion, philippines, han, clear, read, bird, meditation, surface

## SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdaal

I'd like to have the announcements at the end of the sitting today read at the talk rather than beginning. Because I would like to read a poem that maybe I thought might, you might listen to it more deeply or if you listen to it first coming out of the meditation it's a poem by the Vietnamese monk and Buddhist teacher Thích Nhất Hạnh, not Han, somewhat famous poem, okay, this number of times I've read it I've often touched by it. So the poem is called, call me by my true names. Do not say that I'll depart tomorrow because even today, I still arrive. Looking deeply, I arrive in every second to be a bud on a spring branch to be a tiny bird, with wings still fragile, learning to sing in my new nest, to be a caterpillar in the heart of the flower, to be a jewel hiding in a stone. I still arrive in order to laugh and to cry, in order to fear and to hope. The rhythm of my heart is the birth and death of all that are alive. I am the mayfly metamorphosing on the surface of the river and I have the bird which, When spring comes, arrives in time to eat the mayfly. I am the frog swimming happily in the clear pond, and I am also the grass snake, who approaching and silence feeds itself on the frog. I am the child and Uganda, all skin and bones, my legs as thin as bamboo sticks. And I am the arms merchant, selling deadly weapons to Uganda. I am the 12 year old girl refugee on a small boat who throws herself into the ocean after being raped by a sea pirate. And I am the pirate by heart not yet capable of seeing and loving. I am a member of the Politburo with plenty of power in my hands. And I am the man who has to pay his debt of blood to my people dying slowly in a forced labor camp. My joy is like spring. So warm, it makes flowers bloom in all walks of life. My pain is like a river of tears. So full it feels the four oceans. Please call me by my true names. So I can hear all my cries and laughs at once. So I can see that my joy and pain are one. Please call me by my true names. So I can wake up. And so the door of my heart can be left open the door of compassion.

So he wrote that in the 1980s when the boat people in Vietnam and Cambodia, we're quite a bit in the news. He's one of the Great Western Buddhist teachers of Buddhism in the world. And he chose to write this poem to talk about, you know, my true names. Nowhere in the poem does he say call me tick, not Han. But he does refer to himself a lot in the poem doesn't leave himself out. He just doesn't give himself a name. But rather, he sees himself in the name and the, the world that he encounters. He uses the language of looking deeply. So here's the practice of mindfulness, to somehow the ability to have insight or to consider deeply the world we live in, not to look at it on the surface. The question is, what does it mean to see deeply? What does it mean to look beyond the surface or maybe it's only to see it in the surface is to look deeply. Because one of the things that sometimes happens in meditation practice is that we clear the surface for all the dust and debris that prevents us from seeing in a clear way. So all the thoughts and distractions and self preoccupations we have all the ways in which we define ourselves and to present ourselves and caught up in self concepts, tends to calm down, if we meditate, might not go away forever, but it calms down. And then sometimes when you open your eyes at the end of the meditation session, it doesn't make so much sense. To have an idea of who you are, it's more

like who you are, if anything, is what arises in the field of awareness. The feet what arises in the field of open your eyes and what arises in the field of sight. Because that seems clear, that seems kind of alive in the greater likeness of an open awareness. And so here he's taken on says, I look deeply and he says, always arriving, the idea of always arriving each moment is a new arrival. And each, each moment is something new. And so his ability to look deeply, I believe, speaks to the ability to show up, fresh for everything that you encounter. So not carrying with us. The baggage of the past, even maybe the feelings of the past, but being somehow able to show up in Buddhist language empty, empty of ideas and feelings and situations of the past. And so, he arrives in every second he begins the poem with a spirit of pastoral, idyllic, romantic, you know, nice thing of a bud on a spring branch. A tiny bird with wings still fragile learning to sing and in my new nest myth kind of, you know, sweet and kind of softening us up for what's coming. throwing us off guard. Oh nice, nice world we live in flowers and birds. I just feel like going skipping in the meadow and then I arrive in order to laugh and to cry. That sounds nice laughing in order to fear and to hope. So I arrive I show up in order to allow his his full humanity of his emotions and feelings. They have arriving allowing being present for showing up for. For all of it, for the rhythm of my heart is the birth and death of all that are alive. The rhythm of his heart. So I guess he's talking about the metaphorical heart. And then he finds his heart not, you know, not in his thoughts ideas, but rather in the world he encounters the people that he encounters. All that is, is born and dies. And then he continues may be keeping us off guard and may fly metamorphosing on the surface of the river. But then the bird swoops down and arrives in time to eat the mayfly.

He set us up for that because early on he talks about the bird to tiny bird with wings still fragile learning To sing and it's new nest. Oh nice. Now this wonderful sweet cuddle neighbor that's going to devour countless counseling insects. Great devastation on the river arrived in time to eat the mayfly and the frog swimming happily in the clear pond. And I'm also I'm also the grass snake who approaching and silence feeds itself on the frog. I've been with children delighted to see a frog nature and they've been with children delighted to see a snake slithering in the grass. What happens when the two meet and I am the child in Uganda, all skin and bones. I don't know where he wrote this, but he lit from that time many time for a long time. He lived in France. The sense of being his way of arriving. looking deeply is not just the moment he this moment here. But there's also an inclusion of a world of land that's far from him land that maybe he only is aware of, through the newspaper or the television or back then. And he identifies strongly with his wider world beyond his immediate world. And the child in Uganda or skin and bones, my legs as thin as bamboo sticks, and I am the arms merchant selling deadly weapons to Uganda. It's not an a pet store, or only a festival world that we live in. And I'm a 12 year old girl refugee and a small boat who throws herself into the ocean after being raped by a sea pirate and I am the pirate my heart not yet capable of Seeing and loving. I've read that, you know, take that Han the 1980s went to the Philippines, places like that to try to help the Vietnamese both people who were leaving very perilous journey on these boats leaving Vietnam trying to come to safety. Some of the boats didn't make it some people fell in jumped in pirates got them and I read that we started I think I remember I read that tick not Han said that it was hard for him to encounter you know, these things were happening to his fellow people and the Philippines receive and hear the stories and that he would spend days being angry, go off by himself and practice alone and just kind of work through his anger and his rate, you know, at what the world encountering. So this is a man who feels or felt very deeply what's going on. So the fact that he writes this poem about being open and being willing to see himself and the world around him, you know, didn't it wasn't like he was just calm and relaxed and open about it had a big impact on him. For him to write this he might very well have been there at the shores of the Philippines when the boat arrived, where it had it had this girl had once been on the boat, and people get off the boat tell the story of someone. My joy is like spring so warm and next flowers bloom and all walks of life. My pain is like a river of tears so full, it fills the four oceans. Please call me by my true names. So it can hear all My cries and laughs at once. So I can see that my joy and pain are one. Please call me by

my true names. So I can wake up into the door of my heart can be left open the door of compassion. So this is his wish. This is his intention, his aspiration is that is the door of his compassion stay open. And I, you know, I think that wasn't something that came automatically to him. But he dedicated himself to practice this is a man who practiced a lot. I don't know if it's his current lifestyle, but I know many years ago when he was when I was I knew him that he would spend something like half the year, the winter months, doing retreat on his own, and then the other half of the year out teaching and being out in the world doing all the things he did.

So he was dedicated to both meeting the world and a deep way, but also having a practice that kept him open towards a compassionate open. And that was his wish is to keep the doors of compassion open. I think it's a beautiful thing that that should be one's wish. Not to have a bigger monastery, not to have better robes, not to have more students not to have donors of all kinds. Not to have many things that people outside the monastic world might pursue. But this idea of in my heart, stay open, the door of compassion remain open.

And this clear identification with the world around you. I mean, it's kind of powerful to, to not refer to your own name as who you are, but to say my name is those who The world around who I encounter who I see, it's kind of an identity, a kind of intimacy, a strong connection. And then this ability to keep flowing with it, to stay open with it, not too close to any any of it. But already, this idea of always arriving, always showing up ready to show up for the next thing ready to show up for the next thing. So in our practice of mindfulness and meditation, we learn to watch and see how our mind can show up and be fresh to the next moment and how it doesn't do that. And learning and seeing how we don't do that. We have retroactive thinking, we get caught up in sidetracked by our thoughts and our feelings. We get locked in on what's going on. Really important lessons of this meditation practice we do. In fact, sometimes the biggest lessons of this practice that we do, are learn the best when you can't do the practice. Isn't that interesting? Rather than thinking that when you can't do the practice, that's unfortunate. When you can't do it, that's where you really maybe that's where the practice begins. And it's not that you go out and invent not making it work. But, but, you know, take encouragement to the fact that when you have challenge and difficulty to be present, that that's where really the practice works, because that's where you bring your attention, your mindfulness, what's going on here. What's happening here. Why is my heart closed? Why is my mind caught? And then to see Do you want is your wish, is that you're really your wish to stay open. So you're really your wish to be able to show up and arrive fresh for the next moment. And that's not always obvious. I think that's what our hearts or minds are about and what he really wants, might be inspiring and a poem to her hear that but in the detail have our own mind and how it actually operates. You know, it's, we might think we want that, then the mind has some other ideas, the mind has all its concerns and fears and desires sometimes gets locked on, locked into. And so one of the, I think, really important aspects of, for someone who was interested in this practice, Buddhism of freedom of keeping the doors of the mind and heart open, is having the desire to do so. Having the intention, the aspiration, that this is an important part of life, to do this, to keep open to keep the compassion to keep the freedom to keep the practice going in the forefront. And what is where does that leave us? Where does that bring us? And I think that this poem by tick, not Han is one example of where this showing up the Showing up clearly showing up freshly, where it can lead us. And to me, this kind of poem offers me lots of hope for this world we live in, rather than despairing by the images that he uses. The stories he gives here is tragic and horrible as they are some of them. They're in the context of a poem context of a person's practice that offers a lot of hope for what's possible in this world, that it's possible for each of us to become, in a sense, connected responsive to the world, in all aspects of the world with an open heart and so doing become brothers and sisters to everyone so doing become caretakers of each other. So I'm doing really see and understand deeply who we are And who we are maybe is not different that distinct from separate from

others and the world around us. Do not say that I'll depart tomorrow because even today I still arrive. Book deeply. I arrive in every second to be a bird on a spring branch to be a tiny bird with wings still fragile learning to sing in my new nest. To be a caterpillar in the heart of the thought of a flower. To be a jewel hiding itself in a stone.

So what tools are waiting for you to see what yours are waiting for you. In Tibetan Buddhism they have famous mantra om mani padme hum and the translation of it is the is the jewel in the Lotus And some people will say that the Lotus as it opens reveals a jewel, the Lotus is The Awakened mind the mind that opens up and the jewel in it is compassion, the compassion for the world. So, that's what I have for today. So now the question for you all is, what's your name? What's your name? You know what your name is. So we're gonna, you're gonna find out in a moment now. So if you could just very simply turn to a non moment, turn to some of the people around you and tell them what your name is. And when you hear each other's names, Guess whose name it is. So please, take take a few moments.

That's that seems to be more than a name. Or some of you have very long names, which I think everyone does. Everyone has a very, very, very long name. In fact, the kind of given name that's usually relatively short it's just a tip of the iceberg of who a person is and the history of a person what the person's gone through in their lives. And I've learned over my adult life not when I was a child growing up as an adult. How much is invisible when we see someone and the history of that person history of their joys and sorrows and background and you don't really know who you encounter. You don't really know when you simply hear a name, what's all what's behind that and who that person is. And I've come to feel tremendous respect the kind of reverence for the depth or the fullness of the people that I encounter the people who have like all of you, everyone. No one, no one should be taken for granted. And so then name is just the tip of the iceberg. And so tell me my true name. Tell me who you are. Let me really get to know you. Because as I get to know you, I get to know myself