

# 2013-09-08 Our Relationship To Views

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## SPEAKERS

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This morning I'd like to offer you the teachings from the, from a particular discourse of the Buddha, which is the way that the discourses of the Buddha are organized is the very first discourse. And it doesn't have the same kind of prominence as like Genesis in the Bible being in the beginning, but it has some meaning that way these the early discourses are organized, this is the first one. And it's, it has some prominence in terms of its importance. And as an introduction to it, as an introduction to it, I want to say that something about how the Buddha often switches or transforms the emphasis on or the framework the frame, with which To understand religious teachings of his time. And one example of this is that in the time of the Buddha, there were certain people who felt that religious, prominent religious figures, people who are fully realized enlightened or something should meet should be omniscient. And in some other religions it's you know, God who's omniscient and some people think the initial as soon as high powers are important. And so, there are people in time and the Buddha expected someone like the Buddha was really as prominent as important as, as people want him to be then certainly he must have been omniscient. So rather than saying, No, I'm not definition. The Buddha said yeah, I'm omniscient basically said Yeah. That's nice, isn't it? And I'll tell you how I missions and then being omniscient means to understand everything, right? So in his environment that meant to understand the past the future, whatever, whatever is going on over the world at the same time, right? So the Buddha said I, you know, I'm omniscient, and this is how I'm efficient. nothing whatsoever. There's nothing whatsoever in the world universe, past, present and future that is worth clinging to. Right? So he knows one thing about everything. And that makes it makes it omniscient. Isn't that quite something so? So now if you want to the Buddha, your Buddha to the admissions you can see Yeah, he's a great guy. He knew everything. He knew that. But what he knows about everything is nothing whatsoever about stuff this worth clinging to. So it's kind of reframes the situation and this discourse I'm going to talk to you about is there the one of the primary issues that are addressed here is how people relate to religious views, doctrines. And, and so here also, there's a kind of reframing of the issue. And one way that it kind of before I go into the discourse, I'll offer you something I've learned and being a teacher is that sometimes people will come here to IMC, or to me with very profound or very important religious questions or existential questions about life that makes sense sometimes to ask, especially in a Buddhist context, they might ask what, you know, what is the Buddha? What does Buddhism teach about rebirth?

And what I've learned is that if I more often than not, if I Give a detailed explanation about the Buddhist teach Buddhist teachings on rebirth that the person who asked begins to kind of look glazed and they begin kind of like I feel like I'm you know, they're kind of lost them. And so what I've discovered is that what's much more interesting to ask is to ask a question back. So why are you asking about rebirth? And then more often than not, what comes back is the person who will say, My dear uncle just died. Someone my family just died or, or I'm just got a diagnosis and I only have a few of them for a few more

months or something. And in the context of that kind of existential life issue, they don't want a detailed Dissertation with footnotes for me about what Buddhism has to say about rebirth. Right? That's not what the issue is. The issue is they're grappling with these personal issues. And so then once we find out that their favorite uncle has just died, or they're dying, then there's a whole other way of meeting that person and having a conversation. So what's motivating them is more interesting. And as you think we know, it's sometimes, you know, they it's almost sometimes it's so common in therapy that sometimes, you know, people will joke on it is that it's very common to come to a therapist with a great important story of their life and tell the story and tell the story and tell the story and tell the story. It goes on. And at some point, that therapist might ask, Well, how do you feel about that? Or how do you feel about so telling me the story and they're really framing it and refocusing the attention to something other than who's to blame or what happened to something which is maybe can be discovered here and now in their own experience, how they feel what the emotions, what's motivating to tell the story, what's happening. And then we have a whole different conversation, it opens up in a different way. And this happens in meditation almost naturally, that if the focus of meditation is to keep coming back here, to yourself to your own personal experience, it's hard to sustain the rumination of telling stories past the future. And so, but rather because you keep coming back here, you start discovering what's here, the feelings, the motivations, the ideas, or all this and, and the dedication just to sit and be present. With that immediate stuff. Something begin slowly to shift there's a letting go or relaxing, settling, settling into it unwinding. Have some of the tension and agitation connected to the stories and ideas and all this we're having. And it's quite powerful to sit regularly sit and meditate in a consistent, regular, ongoing way. Because the benefits from that are sometimes not seen or known if all you do is sit meditate at once in a great while. The consistency and the regularity of sitting allows us to kind of begin tapping into touching into the deeper structures of our thinking, or our emotional life, the way breathing, held hold on to things and as we tap into it, and we meditate and beings to relax into soften the dissolving of what's happening. And so for example, the criticism sometimes it's very occasionally people might make a meditator is that it's just another self help project. More conceit, more building up and strengthening. Self. Occasionally That's true. It's hard in these Buddhist circles to distinguish narcissism from health. You know, mindfulness and, but conceit arrogance, self important self focus in the kind of the wrong way, comes with tension and agitation. And if we're sitting upright and still, and as the tension and agitation falls away, the conceit falls away as well. You don't have to solve the conceit. You sit with it. And as it dissolves, it relaxes. That makes sense, I'm saying. So here we're seeing a shift right from so rather than focusing on the story, we can focus on something that's more primary and immediate, and as a whole becomes a different event, different kind of unfolding that goes on.

So in this discourse, it's called the Brahmajāla discourse is Brahma means kind of like the divine, for now, time being. Divine net discourse on the divine net. And partly why it's called the net is that you'll see it says it all views, all religious doctrines, all existential doctrines that people have can fit into 62 different views. I'm not going to list them off to you just stay relaxed and open with 60. And I don't know if it's true where they all can fit into them, maybe has to have time with the Buddha. But it's, it's possible to kind of go into these slowly these 62 views and discover that there's a strong connection to these, to the stories of many of us, tell us tell ourselves about ourselves in our life. You don't have to have religious doctrines to have deep, deeper assumptions that you're operating on. But what it means to be a person what it means to the person in relationship to other people in relationship to the future, the past and that these views expressed in kind of religious ways. You know, or just, you know, touch on too deep, underlying identity issues that may be an ideas about the world that many of us operate on anyway, even if we're not religious.

So, the discourse begins with the Buddha is out, wandering around on tour, wandering around northern India, and travels with a few other monks. And there was a time in India where there were many

ascetics, apparently many wonder seekers, who would wander around, seeking and practicing and as probably half an hour happen often enough. Some of them were walking on the same road and kind of, you know, walk side by side or, and there was a aesthetic of seeker but different sec different religion. A teacher and his disciple who ended up walking With or behind eight behind the Buddha and his monks for a number of days. And as they were walking to kind of together, the teacher and his disciple were having a disagreement, an argument and one of the ways to be one of the ways to be just very disrespectful of your teacher in India generally, I don't know about ancient India or probably then is to argue with your teacher. It's okay to argue here with me. America doesn't hold you know, some of you are too eager. But it's okay here, but in the different cultures is yet this is it so it's a big deal. So and what they were arguing was, doesn't say the details, but the teacher, this other teacher is disparaging the Buddha and the disciple is praising the Buddha. So this goes on for a number of days and, and the Buddhist monks hear all this. And so they're in camp one day, you know at night and they're discussing this. And in the in their discussion, the monks offer their own praise of the Buddha. So and they offer you know, read the end they specify what they praise him for. And this is where the text begins to do the switch into you know away from where we usually would think is that what's important to a whole different orientation or look at what may be important. And so here the monks are praising the Buddha for is the Buddha understands or sees what's actually sees and clearly distinct between the different mental tendencies of people, the different inclinations different dispositions to different resolves the kind of assumptions that the minds operate on. So rather than praising the Buddha that he understands the fundamental truths of reality, he understands the highest reaches of cosmic consciousness or something grand and ultimate, that his monks praise him for understanding how the human people in their minds operate in terms of their inclinations or dispositions. I think this is very significant, right? It's the beginning of they go to the Buddha, or there's him the Buddha ends up in conversation with his monks.

And here's they they're concerned about these others who are criticizing him or praising Him and you gave us Buddha gives us first teaching and the degree to which we're familiar with a blasphemy being an issue in religious circles, that you know people get angry if your religion is criticized. It's very interesting the first teachings, very first teachings in the, in the discourses of the Buddha first one in the vise organized the Buddha's offering teachings that relate to the issue of least the modern issue of blasphemy. He says, Don't be upset, don't be angry if people criticize the Dharma, or the Buddha. Because if you get angry, you won't be able to see the truth. It will obscure your ability to understand deeply, but rather stay relaxed and calm. And if it's a matter of fact, thing you can point out how someone who doesn't understand and explain to to them what the truth is or how it is here. And if someone prays, you see you don't get elated. But if it's not true, what they're saying, point out how it's not true. And if it is true, then I forget what it says just if that's, that's okay. So I find that it's kind of nice that, you know, here, you know, Buddhist offerings first teachings, don't get cut off, cut up, get caught up if people criticize, disparage or even praise the Dharma. That's not the point of all this, you're not supposed to be connected to this great, important thing being connected to the great and true teachings, you know, you know, it's not worth getting too excited about. So that's interesting to me. most religions don't begin that way. So again, it says something a little different is going on here in this text, and what Sometimes we expect. So then the Buddha says, Well, most people, ordinary people will praise the Buddha. Praise me for my ethics. And they'll praise me for these kinds of things that I do. I don't kill, I don't steal, I don't lie. I don't involve in slander and gossip. I don't. I'm not covetousness and agreed, I don't have anger. And he lists a variety of things which can be seen as kind of basic moral morality. They praise me for that. And the Buddha says, Well, these when do people praise me for thee for being this way, and he is this way, he's a very moral person. The Buddha says, These are trifling things to praise me for Don't you know really minor things. And then, and some people will praise me because I Also follow the ethical standards for how the renunciant of his time would live. renunciant he

received food from the faithful food because they're, they go for arms, they only eat what people give them. So they have a different standard of behavior expected professional standards of being an aesthetic that they're supposed to kind of live by. A little bit more renunciant and three, right. And he says I also live this way. But these are minor things trifling. And then he goes finally says there's other ethical ways in which people can be praised for in terms of making my livelihood how I, you know, receive arms and a way of living. There's a number of things other ascetics do, which are, he calls them kind of bass arts so like predicting the future, predicting lottery numbers, things in that category of things. And the and I don't do those things and not doing those things, this minor price is nothing. So what he does here, the Buddhist that establishes, first of all, that his ethical life is a very ethical and you know, it's kind of goes on and on page after page of all the ethics is quite a long and boring but it's establishing that he has a very, he lives by a very high ethical standard. So it's very important. It's no doubt about that, no doubt about his purity of his ethics. But it's a mere trifling thing is not what you should praise the Buddha for. So what is what should a Buddha be praised for? Buddha say goes on.

So, he says, these are all ethical things or minor trifocal ethical behavior for which worldlings ordinary people would praise the Buddha. And he goes on there are other matters, profound, hard to see, hard to understand, peaceful, beyond mere reasoning, subtle to be experienced by the wise, which I have realized by my direct knowledge and which I teach, about which it will be one could truthfully praise me. So, there are things that the Buddha says you it's worthwhile praising me for And he's not going to say what they are yet but he says, but this is kind of characterizes them. They're certainly profound, the hard to see this. Ordinary people can't see this very well. But they're connected to peacefulness and they're not connected to reasoning. It's not something you think about and it's something to be experienced by the wise. So make it make it so experience something you do in the present moment. And something involves direct knowledge, direct penetration. So what is this? So, then he goes on, and he describes 62 common views that existed I guess, in his time, religious views, doctrines, positions that people held. that had to do with things like the nature of the self of consciousness, what happens after death Is there some kind of continuity? The nature of the universe, the world? Is it permanent? Is it infinite? Is it does it impermanent? Is it bounded? Is it kind of finite? Or is it infinite and measureless and boundless to universe that we live in? Was there a creator of this universe? And then he gives a fascinating story about how there was a mistake, made a mis understanding how the misunderstanding arose, that the great Indian God Brahma came to think that he was the creator of the universe of the world. So that's kind of an interesting story. You know, I grew up you know, it's like, I mean, it is It's not like the, you know, the western god of the Western world. So we don't know how he came to his understanding that he was creator of the world universe. You know, maybe he maybe some misunderstanding maybe not a misunderstanding who knows how he came to that understanding if that but anyway Buddha said the Brahma, the Creator God are that ancient Indian world that is misunderstood it you want to hear them in how there's misunderstanding arose? This is good for meditators to hear, because it was partly these things arose as a as a mis interpretation of a certain kind of meditative experiences someone had. So in this ancient cosmology of India, they kind of had the yo yo theory of the universe. The Oh, do you hear the big bang theory? We know these days that there was a teeny little dot couldn't see you need the magnifying glasses. And, you know, it exploded and we're part of this explosion, right? We're just was hurtling through space that hundreds of thousand miles an hour was still kind of like, you know, part of this big bang and it's like put on your helmet and seatbelt because it still kind of works still. And we're not coming back. That's the latest theory we're not going back, you know, it's like we're going out to nothin amazing speed that wish there was a speed limit, but it's going fast, you know, hundreds of hundred, how many hundreds of thousand miles an hour with traveling. But one theory for a while and cosmology was that this at some point, the gravitational force of all the stars and all the matter would would pull everything back in together again. And everything would collapse back into this singularity, this thought and then it would explode again. And

so there's a yo yo theory. Well, this was kind of the theory of ancient India, that there was expansion and contraction expansion in production. And when every thing gets totally contracted. For our whole one of those extremes I forget which one.

There's no more physical beings. There's just this kind of like floating up at a very high serial, heavenly realm beyond the world somehow consciousness just kind of like hangs out in a disembodied way. And at some point the world begins to come back into formation. And before the physical world comes back, the lower heavenly realms come into being. And when the when and one of the things that's apparently just happens, the way this universe is created, is that Brahmas palace gets created. And then at some point, in this heavenly disembodied consciousness, kind of ethereal realm. Sup one of the beings there runs out of his lifetime supply times are always finite, dies up there and happens to get reborn and Brahmas palace, this palace that just appeared. He looks around. There's no one there. And after a while he says, you know, it's kind of lonely here. It would be nice if there were other people here too. Coincidentally when he had that thought someone else died in the ethereal realms and got reborn there also. And he's Oh look, wow, I just had the thought I must have created that person. And that person who got peered after Brahma Oh, he's always been there. And he thinks I'm, he's responsible for me. He's the Creator. And at some point, Brahma has a really long lifetime as Brahma has a longer lifetime to that second person who came simple so a second person some point died in this Brahma heavens and was born as a Human and then meditated. And in meditation remembered his past life in the realms of Brahma. And remember, oh yeah, he was there first. He said that he created me. Yes, it must be that Brahma is ultimate as permanent as eternal created the universe. And then he went around, I guess and started teaching other people, Brahma created the universe. So that's quite an interesting interpretation or of the Creator God thing was all a misunderstanding. And so those kinds of issues so here is an issue about the Creator God about rebirth, the nature of the universe, of self very important. A lot of different things and including the ends with five different theories or views about the nature of Nirvana of liberation youth That Nirvana is like the goal of the early Buddhist right? And so there's a number of apparently it was something that other people at the time were searching for, and they had ideas of what Nirvana is. So he lays the Buddha doesn't criticize any of these views Exactly. Except maybe the Brahma thing is maybe seems like it's gets criticized, mostly. So he mostly describes how these things are. These appear. And then you think that maybe then he would offer his views have told you all these views. Now I'm going to tell you my doctrine, that real truth, the 63rd view but he doesn't do that through you know, doesn't do it in the normal way. Again, here we have the switch that I talked about earlier that reframing it and looking at the whole thing in a different way.

Remember early on monster Praising the Buddha, that he could see the dispositions the mental tendencies of people.

So, the Buddha says, now, this is what I understand. So he said all these things now this is what my understanding is. So you're poised ready for his doctrine, but this is what he says. These 62 doctrines, 62 points of view. If they're grasped and attached to it lead to bad results if they're attached to meter bad results. The point is not are they True or false? But rather, are we attached to them? Do we cling to them? That's his emphasis. This is the reframing, rather than engaging them at their own kind of doctrinal level on what's true and false. He's focusing on what is the attachment is their attachment. This is what I know. And even more so I am not attached to knowing that even and being unattached, I experience peace.

So there's something about it. So the reframing has to do with the attachment and clinging to us. So this anchors is a great challenge to many of us. But many of us have stories that we live our lives by. Some of them are philosophic Religious, some of them are personal, very, you know, just kind of store



ordinary, you know, stories that are things happen to us or interpretations that would happen to us. And the reframing is not to engage in the story by itself, the truth and falsity of it. But what is our relationship to the story to the doctrine? Are we attached or not? And again, in the world of people world, we're blasphemy and world where religious views carry tremendous currency and what's true and false. And it's a radical thing to suggest, let's look at the attachments we have to them. That clinging we have as opposed to the views themselves. And one of the reasons for that I think it's a very significant is that it's the attach just like the Buddha said earlier, if you if you get angry at people criticizing the Dharma, you won't see clearly. If you're attached to your stories and views, chances are to that attachment You won't see clearly. So, look at the attachment. And this is again something in meditation can help a lot with because something about the experiential, visceral experience of it clinging and attachment, they can stand out in meditation, better than almost any other place, and we can take some responsibility for it and deal with it.

And then the Buddha goes on to say, that he also understands, see sees, the arising and passing of feelings. The arising and passing of in feelings here probably means, the, the, the basic sense data from which we build our universe. So yeah, it has to start somewhere, right? Before we have abstract ideas, we have to have some immediate contact with the world. And if we can, if we build our world, we go back to the basic raw experience. We build abstractions and abstract ideas from what do we see? What's the very foundational basis the building blocks that we build abstracts theories. And here is basic building block of feeling or the basic immediate present moment experience. Having truly under I fully understand the arising and passing of these feelings, these basic raw building blocks, I understand this, the attraction, the benefit, what's good about them, and understand the danger that's there as well. And understand how to be free of those things. So if for example, I find ice cream tasty. Nice, right? And I have a philosophy about ice cream, that my life would be a lot happier if I could have ice cream, breakfast, lunch and dinner. And because the danger of getting tired is should be different with one flavor, I should have changed the flavor. And that the end that's really the solution for happiness. That's one that's you know, that's, you know, but if I go back and look at the sense data that I'm building this philosophy of ice cream on and realize it's built on the pleasure that arises from having ice cream. But then I asked myself the question, what's the what's the what's the attraction and what's the benefits and what's the danger of this ice cream thing? Well, the benefit, it's pleasant, it's refreshing. It's joyful. Whatever. Many things that can be good for it's meaningful I go with my kid little kid sometimes we used to go weekly to get ice cream was like a family rituals benefit to kind of bond the family went to once a week we get ice cream. So it has its benefits. So ice cream thing. What's the danger? And I suspect that more than just a few of you have discovered in your own direct experience, the danger of ice cream. I would be hard pressed if discovered it believe that there's a lot of you here who somehow in the course of your lifetime having run into problems. You know, we're privileged here, it's relatively easy to get ice cream for most of us but like for me, you know when I was one of the dangers I had of I decided that I should try to get an ice cream that had five scoops of ice cream on one cone. I was 14. And the danger of that was that just as I left the ice, they didn't want it. They wanted, they didn't want to give it to me. But they did. And as I was leaving storage just outside on the sidewalk, the cone broke. Or we get sick or something, right, we get sick, nauseous. So there are dangers, right? And then I and then we can understand how to be free of those days I've free not get caught and attached in the sense pleasure and all that issues that can arise, right. So this is a silly, maybe trifling example. But in many ways, this builds into even the most profound issues in our lives. So this, the Buddha understands, and this is how the Buddha is liberated. So he's not offering a different view. He's offering an understanding about attachments. But what about the world that we live in how we relate to it, and how to relate it to it in such a way that we don't suffer. And the key of this has to do with attachment.

And then he makes a radical statement he says, These ascetics and Brahmins who have all these 62 ultimate views about reality those views are merely the feelings of those who did not see it no and see. They're just feelings is just kind of based on on their own direct kind of feeling of how things should be. And they connected to the to the agitation and vacillation to the worry and escalation of those immersed in craving. So that's a little bit critical of them, because I don't know if that's really true that people have the 62 views are involved in creating But that's the emphasis of the Buddha here is not whether the views are true or false, but what's the relationship we have to them? And he's saying these people are have craving attached to them. So what happens if you overcome the craving as opposed to you know, what happens to the views your relationship to them?

And then he ends by saying, whatever ascetics and Brahmins who are speculators about the past or the future, because the 62 view is organized by whether they have used about the past of us but the future having fixed views on these matters, and having put forth speculations about these matters, they They are all trapped in the net of these 62 divisions, kind of lays it up like a net, like a grid net, imagine a table maybe. And wherever they emerge and tried to get out, they are caught and helped and held in the net cost and Health Net. So here he's talking about the danger of certain views, that it's dangerous to be involved in stories and views. It's possible to have stories in us that we can try to get out of, but they somehow have the tentacles that keep us caught in their net. And, and just as a skilled fisherman or his apprentice might cover a small piece of water with fine mesh net thinking, whatever larger creatures there may be in this water, they are all trapped in the net caught and held in the net. So it is with all these they are all trapped in cotton, the net of these views so I don't know if you know, I don't know if it's a Ferris that Buddha gives a fair assessment of these other people. I think that this, this ancient discourse has a certain kind of mythic quality to it. So created for polemic purposes. I don't know that those people couldn't respond and say, wait a minute, we're being mischaracterized. But independent of that, I think what's the important lesson here? Is this reframing of the focus away from the views and the stories, the doctrines to how they're being held. And if they're held with attachment, there's danger involved in those attachments then we're then maybe we're caught in the net of them. And it's possible I know if I've seen people who have realized the falsehood of one set of beliefs and then simply read placed it with attachment to another set of beliefs. Because the momentum of attachment is so strong, and they haven't understood what motivates the attachment, the fear, the insecurity, the something. And so again, we sit quietly. It's such a simple thing. You sit, meditate, sit quietly, sit, try to sit peacefully, sit patiently. And as we do that, slowly, it's a powerful, powerful thing to sit on goingly meditate, sit, sit with yourself. And what will happen through this process of really being mindful and present, is that what is becomes important is not the views and teachings that you live by, per se, but rather what's important is the attachment that clinging the agitation that underlies those and that becomes clear as you meditate. And as you meditate, those begin to relax Or at least at least the direction the meditation is meant to take you relax and settle. And when you're relaxed and open and unattached, and you're able to see out into the world, through the eyes of being peaceful, it's a different world than if you look out through the lens of teachings out through the lens of you know, metaphysical doctrines and stories and everything. So that's the first discourse in the beginning. In the beginning, there was no attachment.

So, I hope that was okay. Long story. Don't get attached to it.