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SPEAKERS

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There's a set of inner qualities, capacities of character that are emphasized as being important to develop. And if you go to places like Burma to practice meditation, if a person runs into some difficulty with their meditation practice, it's fairly common for the teachers there to analyze the difficulty from the point of view that certain inner strengths haven't been developed strong enough. In their psychological West, difficulty arise in practice. And it there's a tendency to see the problem as being some personal failing, like something that happened in your childhood or some difficulty and you have to kind of go see a therapist. And sometimes that's true. I don't want to kind of make fun of that. But it's kind of very different approach to looking at things. And often in Burma, Thailand, they did developing strengths, interests. ranks to support the practice to allow the practice to go along is important. And if you have the requisite strength and force you know, that doesn't get any doesn't need to be emphasized. If you want to go hike the Pacific Coast Trail, the Crest Trail, you don't, you know, you better build up some strength first. And if you have the requisite strength and you don't have to do it, then you can go for a stroll. The so there are these, there's 10 strengths that are talked about in this call the 10 paramitas, 10 perfections and list them quickly.

You don't have to remember them but they are generosity, ethics, wisdom, renunciation, patience, truth, resolve or determination, loving kindness, equanimity and what can patients I says patients will be patients. So anyway, close enough number 10. Memory is not one of the strengths that so the one I want to talk about this evening is determination or resolve and sometimes in people's lives, this is a quality to be useful to develop and strengthen. It's a quality that should be called upon for support. And other times it's maybe not needed not So, what I'm saying today is not necessarily meant to be applicable in all areas. But it is very important and I some people have this quality more than others. Each of these strengths people Have these 10 strengths, some people have one more than the other and that one might be enough to carry them quite far. So in, in my mindset, my kind of situation, my life, my practice, I think I feel that the quality of resolve or determination was one of my strengths, one of my strengths. And it carried me in my practice. In years of intense practice I did or the daily meditation practice that I do, the idea of some kind of determination, resolve, dedication, aspiration, the I don't think of myself as having an innate capacity for concentration. So some people have that as a strength. It's not one of my strengths, I don't feel but it's, but comes along the idea of getting concentrated in practice, because a cut from me if I say say he comes in the wake of my ability to be determined, I'm going Do this. The, the word for its translated into English as resolve or as determination is adhiṭṭhāna in Pali and the adhi part means something like special or higher. And the ṭhāna part of the word means to stand. And I don't know if it's fair to call on the etymology of the word to to understand it, but I kind of fun to the fact that you could translate the roots of the word as meaning a mean meaning to take a special stand, to take a stand, and so to know what's important, and to take a stand there and be dedicated to it and be connected.

So you have a determination be determined, is an important quality. I like the word resolve, also as a translation of this adhiṭṭhāna because I just love the fact that solve part of resolve, to solve again, is connected to dissolve that go into solution. It may in Latin word for dissolve or to untie. And so rather than this kind of grim determination Are you bear down. I like the fact that in the word resolve is this idea of kind of dissolving or letting go or untying something becoming free. And that's one of the one of the central determinations in our tradition, is the determination for freedom not to be entangled or caught or tied up in our attachments and clinging. Sometimes, when Buddhist Buddhist practice is emphasized, or something of a Buddhist practice is taught, it's been very helpful for many people to hear lessons of acceptance of relax, don't do so much. And relax, relax, relax. Many people need that especially seemingly here and there.

Just the word if that's overdone that message, then there's no space or no understanding appreciation that there are times when having a strong real resolve or determination to stick to itiveness is very important. And one of the very important ways and this worked in my own practice was being in the practice for the long term. Not looking for a quick fix, but rather just day in, day out practicing and, and just kind of letting something happen slowly, mellow open up, resolve gets stronger, a whole series of different strengths. Areas of freedom could happen in the slow day in and day out practicing of meditation for example, they're practicing Buddhist practices and values. And, and this a day and is slow kind of steady holding the course kind of approach. It can be difficult if People think that what's supposed to happen in Buddhist practice is have peak experiences. He's supposed to have a great, wonderful experience was to float on a cloud, you're supposed to have deep experiences of concentration. And there's a lot of peak experiences and some people become addicted to experiences. I don't want to say that experiences are unimportant. But in the long term, the idea of the steady resolve holding the course, is very powerful. The so take for example, sitting upright in meditation, taking a simple upright, relatively straight posture, and then holding the course. So say for the, for the length of your meditation every day, you're not basically not going to change your posture. You now hold it up, right. And if you hold the course over the weeks and months and years that way, you probably have to contend with a lot of different things that come along. The days when you feel just kind of blue or discouraged or lazy. You are tired. You have this desire, the body has a desire to collapse. But the result is termination is no, I'm going to sit up, right. And so you sit there. And so you have to develop maybe some inner strength or determination to hold that place. Or the days that you feel overwhelmed by emotions and you feel he was going to collapse and your grief. Maybe it's okay to do that. But in meditation that determine the end meditation, that termination has been, my dedication is to sit upright, the midst of whatever goes on in my life. And if I'm full of grief, this is a place not to collapse. This is a place to sit up right in the midst of it, and experience that. And in that process, rather than learning strength, maybe or become stronger, what you'll learn is you'll learn to stay open, and not to be pushed around not to collapse not to give in to a strong emotion that might be there. Or it might be that there's a tremendous amount of restlessness and So, there's all these messages that you should look at your clock and see, you know, it's time to stop meditating soon, or is it time to check for an email? You know, these emails are very important, right? And so you gotta be in here the ping maybe from you know, so you better you can always meditate later you can't do that for an email. So let's check the email and maybe we'll get back to meditation. There's all kinds of inner voices that go on right? And so or restless and you feel like you want to get up and scream or run away or do something. And sometimes it's quite powerful. I've known people who've actually gotten up running away screaming it's gonna happen in on retreat, I've seen that. And so do we give in to these impulses do we give in to the impulse to move or to change or check our clock? It's okay to do some of them to frighten people by screaming around you. But, but if the dedication is to sit upright and sit still and not get into the imposter look at the watch not to get into the imposter go check an email, not an impulse to get into

the idea is yet to move within reason. Then we learn patience, we let go of desire impulses, we learn to have some control over the desires that arise in us that in daily life, we don't even notice how often we give in to them. And you know how much we're kind of a slave to them.

Perhaps one of the exercises that when I was in Thailand, that teachers there sometimes gave was to assign someone to go sit in the most comfortable chair they could find in the monastery and then not move and it was comfortable for a while, but after a while, the net thing is to move and shift and get to the, you know, the pressure on your butt switch which just shift the middle better, you know, and, and be told in this nice easy chair not to move, start seeing how often we move, and it's innocent to move is make ourselves you know, slightly more comfortable. But we don't see how often that desire is there and how easily we get into it. Again, that's maybe a minor point. But how is it with what we say? Our speech? How often have we said things that later we regret it because we just, we're not in charge of our speech, something you know, we're just kind of going along for the ride. And then later we discover what we said. The and so by learning and meditation not to give into these impulses, we learn to notice the desire and learn the art, the ability not to give in to them. Or maybe we need to, maybe we don't have strong determination or life strong desire. If we don't know how to get behind a desire, and really get emphasis and strengthen it. And so rather than learning to let go of desire, they're sitting upright in meditation enough moving, does require desire does require determination. I'm going to get behind this and actually do it and follow through for these ever long I'm going to sit, I'm going to follow through no matter what. So what I'm trying to convey to you, is a simple act of sitting upright, can have so many different functions, depending on what's happening for us that particular day or month in our lives. And, and opposite, opposites can come into balance, we can kind of kind of come to a balance place with it. If we're weak, we build up strength. If we're too tense, sitting upright like this for a while, we've learned to relax. And so can we find the balance? So the determination to stay the course in this kind of example, is very powerful and There's two ways this lesson can go. One is we also start noticing that we want to also metaphorically sit up right in our mind to hold the course there. So for example, I be determined, I'm going to stay with my breathing, and not let the whims of our mind carried me left and right and to here and there, wherever the mind wants to go. And, as I'm sure all of you know, meditate, how difficult it is to sometimes hold the course in the mind stay focused or concentrated and not get into the whims of the mind and suddenly be lost. And other worlds other times other places, your thoughts and fantasies, but it can take determination to hold the course. I'm gonna stay there and if I come back, I'm coming back, termination to stay, to stay to stay. And then doing that. All the kind of things I was talking about earlier about doing that was sitting physically upright also happen. Depending on the weaknesses and the tendencies of the mind. They also come into balance, we find a healthy way of being that way. And in that process, building the strength, that determination brings balance. It supports a lot, the Buddhist path of coming to freedom. We also learn it in our daily life. We learn how to have determination in daily life resolve, stick to itiveness. Not to give give up too easily, not to get distracted too easily to do things with, develop the right strengths that are needed, support us to kind of hold the course and do what we want to do. And so it's a very important quality in Buddhist practice. For me, I learned a lot of it in doing Zen practice. my early years of practice was in zen, and it was kind of a paradox in a way because their rhetoric the teachings that I was heard back then about what you do in Zen practice, was to sit basically sit in a Just accept whatever was there stay in the present moment and have a radical acceptance of the present moment. That sounds great, whatever is there just accepted that that was kind of that was kind of the kind of kind of mind instruction. And then they would say kind of like I'm, by the way, when you do that sit upright and don't move for 40 minutes, okay, and so and so there was a determination of strength that happened, all this kind of inner development and change happened from sitting upright.

That allowed I think, in more very meaningful for me very meaningful and profound movement of freedom from doing this radical acceptance of the present moment. So if I just practice rattling radical acceptance to every whim and idea that I have, it's not really freedom, but to be able to sit still Not be pushed around and not be follow every whim and everything that comes along. But to be stronger than that, or have a freedom that's bigger than than acceptance that big and wide naked, hold it all, whatever arises can be held in this. In zen, they talked about the sky like mind, a mind is like a sky that could hold whatever comes up. But it needs support to do that. And so in Zen practice, a lot of that came from what you do with your body so sitting upright, but also came in Zen from the regularity of practice, and it was great, you know, you know, the rhetoric back in the early 70s. When I got interested in zen, it was still kind of the Alan Watts kind of, kind of big beatnik Zen was still in the air. And it was kind of like freedom, you know, just like spontaneity and just, you know, whatever. And was there in the background of the red or the kind of like, you know, the popular idea of Zen and so all these hippies like me, you know which show up to be free at Zen center, and then sit still show up for meditation at five o'clock in the morning, sit still at 5:40 there's a bell, get up and walk only for nine minutes. There's a bell, sit down, there's a bell Get up, you have to walk upstairs to the chanting Hall. And you have to stand there in straight lines, and you chant in unison with everybody else, until there's a bell and then you go do it, clean the temple for 15 minutes until there's a bell and then you go to breakfast and you don't talk at breakfast until there's a bell and you know, the freedom that I was expecting as a hippie you know, where was it but what it taught what it brought with it is determinations hold the course. And I found in that process there, that certain had to let go a lot. I think it's stronger in ways. There's all kinds of things that development happened within me. And then at some point, I felt that I could carry with me a sense of inner discipline, determination. And, and freedom. I didn't need any more of those forms in that discipline of, you know, the formal discipline of Zen, but I could carry with me and, and be freer as a result. The teaching of determination, this resolve and lend itself to overdetermination to get kind of tight and, you know, determined in a stern way or tideway. And, and I've known a fair number of meditators who have been overly grim and ambitious in their meditation, I'm going to do this I'm gonna be determined, I'm going to push ahead and barrel through and bust through, you know, enlightenment or bust and generally with that attitude, and by Is what comes. And so and so it's important to balance the termination with or include in determination, determination to be relaxed. And this is one of the great paradoxes of determination is that if being relaxed as part of the determination, you can't really go wrong, we determined to not get tense. And you're watching the tickets by yourself, get 10 speed, nope, not gonna do that. Not gonna do that. And then you get tense because you're trying to do it. So then you make a course correction and relax. But, and this is a little bit kind of, I think, inherent in classic Buddhist teachings. There is, in the Buddha talked about four important resolves or determinations that support a person's life. And these four resolves could continue to be teachings that are taught in Thailand, and Theravada in countries that are useful for almost any endeavor that you're going to engage in. So they Apply in all kinds of places. And maybe you want to consider how they apply in different areas of life.

But here Here are the four. The determination for truth, to be determined, to be connected to truth, to be true yourself, to discover the truth, to be determined to be a lover of truth, to have a focus on truth. And that's valuable on many different levels. It's valuable on the ethical level, not to lie to be focused on being truthful and honest, truthful and honest, to be honest, and truthful to others. But in Buddhism, the most important person to be honest to is yourself. And it's remarkable, you know, how much maneuvering can be around truth to ourselves sometimes. The Dharma is said to be the truth. And so this idea of sitting upright and being open to your experience means to be open to the truth of the moment. And to connect to the truth of the moment in certain kind of devotion to the truth of the moment, here, I'm going to be here with it. And what I found is that the truth will unfold, the truth will change you. If you sit upright and are open and present for the truth of the moment. You don't have to

be so much in charge of your practice, as you are if you stay present and open to this moment, attentive to this moment as it is, that the truth will practice you rather than rather than you doing the practice. You get to be practiced on it's great. The second determination is the determination for wisdom to be wise and before I tell you that one I want to tell you your story around the first one, I forgot moments, only a couple of seconds behind. This is a story from my book monastery within two young men happened to enter the monastery on the same day. One was an aristocrat who had a sense of entitlement. The other was a son of local farmers, who had spent his life working on the family farm. During their entrance interview, the abbot asked them why they were becoming monks. The aristocrat said they had come to climb to the highest achievement of human life, to experience the bliss, the glory and the brilliant light of liberation. The peasant said, I am poor and unschooled. And I have no hope for in life. However, I hope to find the path and every day, I hope to find the path of practice in the everyday activities of my life. May I see the truth in the food I eat in the work I do in the people I encounter. Within six months, the peasant was graced with liberation. There is their craft is still striving on courageously. So dedication to the truth to find the truth and the ordinary aspects of our life. Suppose to this in a big bang theories of spirituality. So then, the second one is determination on wisdom and wisdom and the earth in the early Buddhist tradition is not very complicated. And I'll offer you one kind of spirit hopefully a sense of how simple it can be, and how profound it can be. It involves being able to make a distinction. And the distinction is to be a distinction making distinctions is important part of this wisdom aspect. So this is a very important distinction, the distinction between being at ease and being tense. Hopefully, hopefully you know something about that distinction in order to, you know, imagine reading, you know, relate to him saying, if you can make a distinction between having some modicum of ease in your life versus having some tension or strain in your life. Notice when you have ease, some modicum of ease. And notice when you lose it, and notice how and why you lost it. What happened that you lost it. If you do that, you'll become a wise person. determination on wisdom to see how this operates now might seem kind of, you know, simplistic and minor. It seems like it's, you know, it's, you know, certainly you probably come much wiser person if you've got a PhD in philosophy.

But Buddhism is not meant to be a complicated philosophical thing. It's meant to be practical and beneficial in this moment. And if you follow the path of being at ease and noticing what takes your way, and you keep doing that, with determination, you'll begin kind of rooting down into the very roots of your psyche are the places that keep you caught, and you'll find greater and greater ease. And the greater the ease you have, the greater that peace you have. greater peace of have, the greater the happiness you'll have. It's a fantastic route to take. It doesn't so it doesn't save you now from having to go to school for a philosophy degree. Follow the ease so that's a wisdom, determination. That's one example of determination on wisdom. So other ways of talking about it or seeing it. The third determination is determination on this. It's a very interesting term *chogha* in Pali, which means has a kind of dual meaning. Sometimes it's translated as generosity. Which is nice. It's nice, right? The be determined on generosity. And the Buddhist tradition puts a tremendous emphasis on the personal benefits that practitioners get from becoming generous, being generous, independent of any benefit you give anybody else. Buddhist spiritual life, the inner development of life develops a lot through the act of being generous being partly because generosity, genuine generosity involves letting go of our clinging to let something go. And so let me explore this area of holding on and opening up letting go so why meaning of this word is generosity. And the other word of they mean we're a meaning of this word is *chogha* is relinquishment to let go. So you can kind of see they're kind of two sides of the same coin right? If you give something you let go. But if we only translate it as letting go or relinquishment, relinquishment, it's too easy for people to understand to think that if I have to let go, I'm diminished. And losing something, these Buddhists, they're always talking about letting go and you know, and you know, and it's, you know, because you're supposed to become a monk or a nun and just have nothing and give away my money and my food and my everything, my house and these Buddhists are unrealistic.

But if the emphasis is not, but if they're letting go, is seeing it in the light of how we benefit from it. We see it as an act of generosity. That I think is a whole different equation, whole different way of looking at it. So there's something about the process of letting go something by The process of generosity, that's so important that's considered one of the four healthy or appropriate determinations for a Buddhist practitioner. So that's the third one. And the fourth determination, and this is also the protection for all the determinations is the is the determination for peace. To be relaxed to be at ease. So to have that as a goal, like have that as a kind of like, your, your beacon that you're working towards, that have that as the orientation around which we can orient our life, the value of what's important. Now, you might think that you have you have things going on in your life that are more important than becoming peaceful of peace. But I suspect that a lot of the goals and many people in our life have in their life are either not as beneficial as becoming peaceful, or they're indirect and may be misguided. ways of trying to cultivate the sense of wholeness and completeness that the deep abiding peace is all about. And so at least in the Buddhist spiritual world, peace is often presented as kind of the one one description of the goal of practice. And if we can discover a deep abiding sense of peace, what it means is our heart has learned to be at home and itself. If your heart is not at home in itself, if you sit down and are quiet and own solitude of your life or in your meditation, and you feel that your heart Your mind is agitated, wanting, afraid, agitated, and not really settled on itself, then there's no peace. But for your heart to be at home in itself, is a description of this peace. And then from that can come, you know, living a life of, you know, would be wonderful life, life, if you like life in general. rasa tea, a life of compassion, that things can be done from that.

So it's life determined on peace means that you're not going to give up your peace. You're not going to sacrifice your peace because you think something else is better. And that's part of the wisdom piece is to look at this distinction between Why do you want to give up your peace? For what for what are your ease if you're like, what is worth giving up your use for what's worth giving up your peace for and then that protection from becoming a peaceful couch potato. It finally I discovered a religion that, you know, gives me permission to just be a couch potato is the sense of determination so sitting upright, I think that if you dedicate yourself to sitting upright in meditation everyday Day for 45 minutes. And then in the context of sitting upright and strong, dignified, discovered how to be a piece, I would venture to guess that you will not become a couch potato. I would venture to guess that a certain kind of vitality and, and inspiration for living your life and freedom from living a life. Well, when time will flow out of that. It's a powerful thing to do. So holding the course being determined having a resolve, but having resolved that unties all the knots of your life. Isn't that great? So we have a couple of minutes before the end. So I'd like to hear if you have any comments about this talk. What I said or any questions about it are any protests

Yes, please, if you could use the mic then other people can hear. And also be nice if you said your name first.

Hi, I'm Susan evening. And that question I have I just noticed that my ego seems to have a heck of a time letting go. And I'm just wondering, it just feels like acquisition kind of fuels it or modifies it and then just went on how that works to get

a lot of things fortify the ego. So I don't know how it works. And I don't know if I don't know how important it is to understand how it works like an answer like that. From my point of view, the practice we do here. I have a question for you. What does it feel like for you when your ego is operating?

All right, when you ask that I realize I have to go to my head and then I make something up about ready.

There's a great story, make something up. There's a great story. This is a great story. Chinese story, but Bodhidharma was the person who brought Zen to China, they say it'll and, and at some point, he came to China and he went and meditating in a cave by himself for nine years. And but then he was became famous for this great meditator. And so this person who became his successor, was unhappy and miserable. And he was looking for some practice some solutions. He heard about this guy in the cave. And so he hiked through the snow. It was wintertime to find the cave and stood outside the cave waiting for Bodhidharma to come out. And, and, and very Dharma finally came out here. What are you doing? The I'm here to teach me how to put bring light to pacify my mind to bring peace to my mind or something. And Bodhidharma said, Bring me your mind. And I can't find it Bodhidharma said Your mind is pacified. So, don't so. So don't imagine so much. And see what's there when you're not imagining. And if you find something, if you don't imagine, but if you find something that connected to this working of the ego that you talked about, get really interested in what that feels like. Read the whys of it. Where Where does it Where does it feeling tone Where is it? That whatever is activated in the mind and body when this thing you call the ego is operating, where they're being what happens if you're open to that if you present for it if you feel it, if you make space for it, if you allow it to exist in that kind of skylight mind, what happens? Is it as opposed to solving it? If you do that it might dissolve rather than be soft to make some sense. Yeah.

Hi LMT.

So I have a question. Yes. Um, I don't know if it's from my

Western culture, upbringing, or just part of who I am are part of the strive to be professional or prestigious, but I feel like sometimes I'm To determined and to the point where I like I will drive myself crazy or bury myself into the ground because I feel like I'm so determined to get everything done. And so yeah, like there's it's almost too much. Absolutely. And the comments for where's the balance again?

So I'll tell you another story of a friend of mine who came to her Zen teacher with a statement like that. And she was like, is looking for some help or some advice or something? And so she told a story of how busy she was determined to how much he was doing and all that. And the teacher looked at her and said, That's because you're lazy. And she thought that was bizarre answer, because she was certainly not lazy. She was doing all this stuff. And then she put she thought it because her teacher said this to her. She thought about it and afterwards Yes, turns out she was lazy. She was doing all that to avoid the work of looking at herself. That's where the real work was. I'm not saying that you're doing that.

But you might consider it.

And then the other thing is that, you know, a couple of things I said in this talk, one was the wisdom piece, and the thing about termination for peace and the wisdom of focusing on the ease. So you might want to kind of have a heightened sense of heightened, heightened determination on being relaxed. And so as you go about your determined life doing all these other things, be determined to do it in a relaxed way. And if you can't do it in a relaxed way, that's interesting. Then turn around and look at what is it that's propelling you. what's what's the beliefs, what are the emotions or the feelings that propel you to override being relaxed, what are the messages you have? I can't.

Okay, thank you.

Well, so I hope that all of you if you take one thing from this talk, you know, it's probably the safest thing to take is be determined to be relaxed. And so, I wish you all well and may the quality of determination, be something that nourishes you as you go about Thank you