

# 2015-04-05 Dwelling Independent Part 1

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## SPEAKERS

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There is a text that goes back to supposedly time of the Buddha. That is the foundational text for the whole practice of mindfulness. And it's called the for the text is really translated to English as the four foundations of mindfulness. And it gives a series of approaches of how to develop mindfulness. And there's actually 13 different kind of exercises for developing mindfulness. And after each exercise, there's a refrain. In the refrain talks a little bit about the purpose of practicing mindfulness we're supposed to lead you. And there's one line that talks about the purpose. There's number of things I've mentioned, but I want to mention one tonight today. And he says that, when practices mindfulness, to become independent, not clinging to anything in the world, to become independent, not clinging to anything. In the world, it said that someone who becomes spiritually mature in this Buddhist practice becomes independent in the Dharma, to independent in their practice independent in their spiritual life. This idea of being an independent is very important value in this ancient tradition. And to some degree, it's important in America to be idea of being independent. I don't know if it's the same meaning. The and what I'd like to do is to give two talks, today and next Sunday, have two different sides of this, approaching this idea of being independent, not clinging to anything in the world. And the refrain part of their trade talks about doing this internally and externally. So internally, how do we do it for ourselves how we do it with our inner life, focusing inward in a sense, becoming independent and not clinging to Anything. And that's often the direction that people think about meditation they think often has to do with our inner world to close our eyes. We're become internal when we negotiate our mind. But Buddhist practice has a lot to do with external world as well. And the social world, the world, we live with other people and how we live that word, that world, the social world wisely. And so there's the external side of mindfulness. And so I thought that next week I would talk about dwelling independent, not clinging to anything in the world, in this in our relationships in the world, wise relationships, compassionate relationships we can have with the people around us. So that's kind of the plan. And so today, this internal world of becoming independent. The word independent in Pali, could also be translated as attached or clinging to something so not dependent on not attached to not clinging on, not resting on resting solid, another word that's used translating this word, pacceka.

And so I want to tell you a story from the ancient world, which is, I think kind of a touching story is that ancient texts. And that is one of the as you do with the deathbed counseling instructions that one of the important supporters of the Buddha received, there was a man named Anāthapindika and that's it was his nickname. And because that's funny? A long name Anāthapindika, and now what it means what it means is feeder of the poor. And he was a wealthy man. Apparently he gave a lot of alms to the poor and people who are hungry. And he met the Buddha in the first year of the Buddha's teaching. And he was so impressed that he went and bought a large piece of property for the Buddha to become his the Buddha's grove of trees with become the Buddha's first monastery. And Buddha spent many, many

years in this particular often coming back to this particular forest or grove of trees to live in. And so he was important disciple of the Buddha, well, wealthy supporter, the Buddha, there's a lot of record of 910 teachings that Buddha gave to him most mostly ethical, how to live a good ethical life.

So at some point, Anāthapindika was dying. And the Buddha's main disciple, Śāriputra, went to see him. And Śāriputra, came to take with us bed side and said, I hope you're faring well and I hope your pain is subsiding. And Anāthapindika said, No, I'm not suffering well, and my pain is increasing. And it's and then he described in graphic detail, that tremendously the piercing pain he had in his head, his stomach and what was going on. Remember back then, just 2500 years ago and they did not they did not have palliative care. So you were kind of left with your pain, because you're dying. So he's not feeling well and piercing pain. And so then Śāriputra said in that case, and he started giving him what I think of as a guided meditation, because it was a systematic, very thorough, almost kind of little bit repetitive instructions about how not to cling or what not to cling to and And he went through, I don't know, something like I could easily be, I don't remember the count now, but to 40. 40 or so different areas of our life, that not to cling to. And the areas were kind of the domain of everything, it concludes everything. So the way you can approach everything very quickly, all the all this world of ours is to realize that the whole world we live in the way that we experience it is mediated through our senses. So if you, if there's an object of sight, there's, there's an infinite number of maybe objects of sight that you can be looking at. And to go through and enumerate all the ones not to cling to, you spent a long time. But if you say, objects that don't cling to any objects of sight, that kind of deals with Everything comes in through your eyes. And so you do the same thing with objects of hearing objects of tasting, of smelling of the tactile sense of the body, and then what's called the sense store and Buddhism of the mind.

So there's a way I guess Buddhist psychology has this assumption almost like there's a particular sense apparatus in the mind, through which you become aware of your thinking or feeling or you know, of intentions or at all in our world, just like you would through your eyes, you would see sights. In this inner eye, you see what goes on in the mind. So if you don't cling to any of the things at the six sense doors, then you're really not clinging to anything in the world. So you cover everything just by saying that, but then people will say, well, that's, that's fine. This is very important in the real world. That Well, the it's fine Not to cling to the sense object things you see, but who we really are, is the perceiver. The one who perceives. And so then he went through and all the different ways that we can know that there's a sense of being the one that we that which perceives and said, don't cling to that. And then we're not the perceiver I'm not quite seen, but I'm not gonna, you know, it's not that I'm not what's seen through my eyes. I'm not the seer who sees through the eyes, but I must be my eye. You know, I'll click and hold on to my eyes. So then he goes through and says, Don't, all that eye, ear, nose tongue, don't click to that as well. So when you read this as a text, it gets boring really quickly. Because, you know, it goes through this, you know, so he says. So, I'll give you a little very short taste of it.

Śāriputra speaking to Anāthapindika who's dying. And again, kind of give you a little to make a little bit more poignant what's going on here soon after Śāriputra, finishes this Anāthapindika dies. So this is pretty, you know, significant perhaps. So, Anāthapindika says my painful feelings are increasing, not not subsiding. some insight witness says then you should train yourself thus I will not cling to the eye and my consciousness will not be dependent on the eye. You should train yourself with us. I will not cling to the ear and my consciousness will not be dependent on the ear. I will not think To the nose, and my consciousness will not be dependent on the nose, I will not cling to the tongue and my consciousness will not cling to my conscious will will be, will, will not be dependent on the tongue, I will not cling to the body and my consciousness will not be dependent on the body, I will not cling to the mind and my consciousness will not be dependent on the mind. And then he goes, and then he does things that you know, through your eyes, the sight objects and all that thing goes to the same thing. And the refrain that

goes over and over again kind of a rhythm kind of a, you know, is I will not be dependent on my consciousness and will not be dependent on these things. And so, if you imagine this not as a kind of a treatise, you know, just somebody kind of writing a, you know, philosophical documents and you're supposed to read it and be interested, but it's a kind of a guide Meditation, imagine that he's dying, and his respected teacher comes to him. And he kind of says, well here and he puts in the first person, you know, first person to statements as if an independent guy is gonna follow, it's gonna say the same thing for himself. This is how you train yourself, you say this to yourself, you do this for yourself, my mind my consciousness will not be dependent on these things. And so he goes through all these lists over and over again, different ways, different ways of covering everything. And I can imagine that listening to someone like this, that you get kind of concentrated your world kind of, you know, you don't think about probably wasn't thinking about as well anymore, all the money in his treasury, and probably wasn't thinking about his taxes. Or, you know, he probably wasn't thinking about what he was gonna have for dinner. There's all kinds of things that just kind of fell away. And as often does when people are dying and also paper by people who are in the presence of someone who's dying, that's so much that seems important and relevant kind of falls away and in the, in the very kind of strong sense of presence or stillness or here and now that happens when someone's dying. And so in that context, he's saying don't don't let your consciousness be dependent on anything these things over and over again. And I could imagine that Anāthapindika, then as he heard this, took it in as a guided meditation and kind of in a subtle way maybe or small way began to let go, the Enter let go, let go of the I let go of the years, let go of what you see. Get love let go of what you think. Let go and you kind of each time kind of like oh, okay, okay. And there's something really wonderful that can happen if you get it. sense little sense of what it's like to let go. Which means to release the contractions in the mind in the heart, the ways that were held or contracted or tight, and let go of it, there's a little feeling of ease a little feeling of relaxation of openness that goes on. And that little piece of openness, if you tune into it can feel very satisfying, and can be a little bit of a guy to do more of it. Oh, this is good. This is good. And so for, in the case of an independent guy, imagine that he was also in then not focusing his mind on his pain.

And this expression to consciousness not dependent on is an important concept in this ancient tradition. Because the idea is that it would be kind of like, I think maybe the best way saying, in our world don't have your mind preoccupied with anything. So don't have to be fixated or obsessed by anything. Don't let your mind Be the, the conditioned by the circumstances don't have your consciousness hijacked or held hostage by the situation you're in. So if you have some trouble in your life that seems reasonable to address, you sit down to meditate, you find it hard to let go of, and when you can't let go of it, then in some ways your consciousness is held hostage by your concern. And you're not free of your concern. You haven't been in it, you know, independent, your consciousness is not independent. And so this ability to have consciousness kind of like an overarching possibility of observation, maybe that is not pulled around, or pulled into or pulled down or weighed down by anything that you can think of or see or hear or be concerned with what's going on in the world. And so the mind let's go, let's go Let's go this kind of observing or conscious perception that consciousness begins to open up, open up, and be freer and freer. And so it becomes not dependent on anything. Such a consciousness still can be very aware of the world. sights sounds smells very aware of people and conversations and what's going on, very aware of yourself. But there's a kind of sense of freedom in the midst of it, sense of ease or peace in the midst of it, because a sound arises and it's just a sound and not something like oh, I have to get rid of that. Or I want that that's a nice sound I want it or what is that then you know, we start to all kind of be concerned. It was just very interesting sound just outside the window this morning, as most of you ever did. I couldn't figure out what it was. sound very close and so You know, partly because I'm the teacher and all the responsible and, you know, my, you know, wasn't really completely independent that that sound for a few moments I wasn't really pulled too far into it, but, you know, I felt like it's my responsibility to be a little bit aware what's going on and take care

of the building, whatever. So some of the some of it was out of choice, which meant that was independent, it was free, but some of it also was like, we feel a little concerned, you know, I was concerned about the people sitting over there, you know, what are they going to think and, and, and so I was a little bit my mind wasn't so completely free, right? I could still take care of it and have a free mind, but I was pulled into those thoughts. And so probably some of you also meditating this morning, probably noticed that your mind got pulled into certain thoughts and concerns that it wasn't very easy to be to pull yourself out of. You weren't independent of your concerns. You were kind of stuck in them in a sense.

So Anāthapindika gets this instructions. I will and so I'll read you another little piece of it. So in this way, if you think of it as a guided meditation, you know when you're closing your eyes just following along, then the repeat the repetition of it all. It doesn't seem so boring anymore. Then it becomes like, Oh yes, oh yes this, this too this too this too.

You should train yourself thus. I will not cling to feelings, born from eye contact from sight. My consciousness will dwell in it. My consciousness will not to be dependent on feeling I will not cling to feeling born of a Contact, my consciousness will do will be independent of icon of feeling, I will not cling to feeling born of nose contact, my consciousness will be independent of feeling, I will not cling to feeling born of body contact, my consciousness will be independent of body contact. I will not cling to feeling born of tongue contact, my consciousness will be independent of tongue contact. I will not cling to feeling born of mind contact, my conscious will not be dependent on feeling. And then the last one I'll read here, I will not cling to this world, in my consciousness will not be dependent on this world. I will not claim to the world beyond and my consciousness will not be dependent on the world beyond. Remember, he's dying, right? So don't cling to this world, but also don't cling to some possible world in the future. And so, when this instructions was given, then, when I was finished, Anāthapindika wept and shed tears. And one of the monks who was there said, Are you floundering? Are you sinking? Is it getting worse for you? And he said, No, I am not floundering. I am not sinking. But I've never heard such profound teaching before. So then they, they said their greetings and departed. And then, soon thereafter it says, an independent guy died. And I'd imagine that was, hopefully a nice death. I know people who have been able to let go as they died, like to let go let go and can be sometimes quite peaceful. This seems particularly poignant because of an underpinning of being in so much pain. And sometimes there's maybe some biological mechanism that goes on very close to death where the pain doesn't seem to grab one, or maybe the strength or the power of, you know, being up against the edge of death. mind because more and more likely to become independent of its concerns. And so there's no longer even though it could be a lot of pain, the mindsets not going to go there, because there's more important things going on. So this idea of becoming independent and not clinging to it anything in the world is one of the big challenges of this tradition, that mindfulness tradition. Mindfulness is not in Buddhist terms is not about stress reduction. It's not about coping better and getting along in our life. It those things are part of it for sure and very important part of the path of practice. But to take this mindfulness to its full potential, it's pointing to a very radical capacity of mind of consciousness, where our ability to be conscious that we let the lady for the mind to function, to be aware. It's really feels like it becomes free of anything that it can know. The wareness is free of anything we are aware of. The mind is free of anything you can think about. The mind is free of anything that we can feel, meaning we don't get ruffled. We don't get troubled. We don't get contracted We don't get somehow we don't recoil. There's an ability for awareness, mind, heart, to stay open, receptive, free, relaxed, and no matter what circumstances we're in. And this is a beautiful capacity. And one of the ways that we cultivate this capacity in mindfulness practice is to start becoming aware of how we're not independent, start becoming aware of how we get caught. And it's not a mistake. And if you're not like a failed human being, because your mind has gotten caught up in its concerns, it's kind of like probably were designed

that way. You know, to to have, you know, spurred powerful forces within our mind to want to hold on and be concerned, be safe and get what we need or something. But it's not necessary and it's possible to develop the mind to Have a certain kind of strength and a certain kind of wisdom and compassion, so that we learn how to be in the world taking care of ourselves and be safe without having the mind caught up or preoccupied. But the way to do one of the ways to do that is to really start becoming aware, including your mindfulness, the nature of your dependencies to wait for nature of how you get caught, how you react, what what is it you can't put down easily? In your mind? What are the preoccupations that pull your consciousness this way in that way, and become become kind of like a connoisseur of how your mind works that way. Do it in a way that you kind of take the light and getting to know your whole foibles kind of open to it then some people would be forgiving or be compassionate or be spacious or allowing. There's no need to you know, if you want to become independent, In this way, conscience is independent. You want to become independent of your foibles, too. Right? It doesn't you know, if you don't want to get caught up and feel bad about yourself and feel terrible, I'm, you know, I was problems and all that, you know, it just okay I have these foibles in my mind works that works this way, and then see that clearly. And there's two things that can do.

One is that you start to understanding yourself better you could walk, you get wiser about what goes on in your mind, the operating systems, and the wiser and clearer, you understand what's going on in there. The better you can negotiate and find your way and not get caught. And the second is that the more you focus on, develop your strength of studying of investigation of seeing clearly what's there. The very act of seeing clearly starts feeling like you're finding your freedom. You don't have to be you don't have something that you have to get rid of your boy To be free, you have to kind of step back and see it clearly for what it is and not identify with it. So the idea is to get rid of something, it's just one more way to be dependent on more way to be attached or be caught up in something. We don't have to get rid of something, necessarily. But we had to step back so we can see it clearly. So as we practice more and more mindfulness, we start moving in that direction. And just maybe as an underpinning go slowly, with each step of the instructions. He got his mind released a little bit reduced a little bit. So every time we have our mindfulness, see clearly what's there without being for or against what's there without making a story of what's there. And just maybe, just tell yourself, I see clearly I have a foible today. Imagine that. And maybe if you use the word foible, you probably haven't used that for a long time. It'll help you kind of not be so They're all just affordable. So every time you see it a little bit of you kind of releases a little bit of your steps back a little bit could hold a little bit more spaciously and then try to tune into how that feels good. Might be 99% It feels kind of, you know, yucky to have affordable. But the 1% that feels like Ah, it's good to step back. That'll be your little smile because you call it affordable. You know? So, then in tune into that, appreciate that. The appreciation, the tuning into what it feels like to let go, what it feels like to be uncontracted to expand is a nourishing supportive, guiding feeling. It's something I can show us the way help us find our way. It's the only thing we tune into is the 99% that feels terrible. would probably just make it hundred percent. 99.9% then we don't want to ignore the foibles. But we also don't want to ignore what how it feels good to let go and relax. So don't let go, let go. And then I'll tell you a story that I told me maybe maybe enough times but thinking of it again. Many years ago I did a weekend I taught a weekend workshop on death and dying and was kind of off in a retreat center someplace kind of off the beaten path, I guess. And I did a guided meditation with people were asked them to imagine that they had 24 hours left to live, or maybe was seven days the first time, then I reduced it. Of course of the 40 minutes, we meditated. So now imagine that you have, you know, 24 hours. Now imagine it's 12 hours. Now imagine that it's six hours. And each time like, what would you do? Imagine that's what you have left, what that'd be like for you. What are your reactions? Were your responses? How would that be for you? in one hour? And then 10 minutes? And then one minute. And then what if it's now. And it can be a very powerful exercise to do this as guided meditation. Because if you can kind of imagine it's kind of more or less real. It could you kind of get, you



get to look at your priorities. And you get to realize what is not so important. And maybe he gets more and more what you can let go of the things that maybe are not so you know, needed with one hour left. And some people find that really changes our priorities, how they want to live their life by doing this.

So there were two people that I came up to me afterwards and explained to me what happened One was actually came up some months later. And she said, After that I decided to give up my job. And inside I kind of gulped, I said, Oh, no. What have I done? And she said, I'm so happy. This was the right thing for me the job I had done it long enough and, and, you know, so I, you know, there was my spiritual life to develop, there was practices, a whole lot of things to do. And I realized at that moment, that exercise that I was ready for the next step. And then by so in the in the workshop itself, this woman raised her hand said, Well, when I had, you know, a day left 12 hours left, six hours left. What I wanted to do was to go home and clean my apartment. Wow, I guess you know, different people. Different priorities. And but then when it got down to like one hour, she says, I'm like, you see, I live three hours away. So when it got down to one hour, then I realized I couldn't go home to clean my apartment. And so then I let go. So then and then, and that, then then the following, you know, time that exercise was very meaningful for her to go and experience what that's like and deeply. So to dwell, independence, not clinging to anything in the world. So this is my attempt to try to do it more internally next week. I'll try to do it a little more externally. So we have about 10 minutes. Do you have any comments or questions?

So if you can wait for the mic so that other people can hear

This may be silly, but what popped into my mind when you said clean the apartment? I would want to get rid of my journals. When I said, You know, I hate my husband when I

go to personal Yeah, and maybe maybe it could make sense I could I don't know about you but like that you don't want to leave some behind that's gonna hurt people. No,

I think about that and I throw journals away because of it. Seriously, when it seems silly to throw journals away, but it seems

a reasonable way of way of cleaning up beforehand.

I am I I always feel confused about the

kind of the way to let go.

Like, I feel like we live in this world nowadays. Where It's so much about, like, like, the word I heard the other day was on traceability. And like, there's so much of the world that seems like people are just like, oh, that's not my problem. Or it's not like oh, that's, you know, your problem, or I created a problem and now belongs to you. I. So I always feel like, like, I guess I feel conflicted as a Buddhist because, you know, I want to let go, but I see so many a forms of letting go where it's really like, actually just oppression in some way or other. Yeah,

absolutely. It can be. That's why I wanted to give two talks. So next week is addressing that issue more so please come back. The Letting Go does not mean indifference but in go, does that mean that we're no longer involved with what needs to happen? The interest that means that when we are involved with what needs to be taken care of, we do it with more ease. We do it with more less less violence and force towards ourselves or other people. You know, yes, there is problems with being too detached with

letting go that's, it can be oppressive to others. If someone tells you I'll just let go. You know, you know, if your husband's beating you and, and you complain, he says, I just like, Oh, you know, it's sometimes people oppressors do that. They tell people right, so they can be done the wrong way. But on the other hand, it can also people who want to help others do it with a lot of attachment. That also can be had its problems, probably, you know, just as much problems there as well. As if you know, we know In the, you know, like in the 1960s, a long time ago, there were people who were advocating for non violence for ending war. And, but they found that they were they were arguing and yelling at each other and they didn't know how to cooperate with each other. And it was quite painful because they didn't have this they were so attached to what they were doing. So both both both sides of this, there's weak points as problems that can arise. But the art of this is to learn how to let go in a healthy way which they connected. Let go and be response responsive to what's there and a helpful way and so like so when if I let go, if I let go of this striker mean I could let go of it and just falls on top of the glass and the glass breaks, right? It's not wise, but I cannot I can let go of it. Release it with just opening my hand like this and I'm still holding it. Just It's not being held in open hand. So it's more like that's the movement of letting go like this. It's not kind of discarding things. Makes sense. And then I'm moved to say, one of the really important things I learned in my graduate studies at Stanford was, I took a history class of Japanese and Japanese history. And it might have been Buddhist history. I forget Japanese Buddhist history. And I guess we were, I don't know if it was midterms or some finals, or I don't know what their circumstances was. But I was talking with a professor, and there was some little detail of Japanese history. And I said to him, Well, this well, this isn't so important. So this is not so important. So we don't have to study that right. We don't have to memorize that. And he looked at me kindly and he said, everything is important and And it's it's struck me part of the partly the authority. Yeah, I think he'd done some Zen practice and I've done a lot of Zen practice. And that's one of the teachings of Zen that I got is everything's important. So how do you let go? And but everything is important to you don't you don't become then aloof and indifferent.

Anyone more? Or have you all let go? Very little pass you the mic.

Um, ah, I know living in a shelter kind of brings up every Zen thing possible, you know, because it's being mindful and living in a cooperative type environment. It just brings up every I could I could probably share in every talk. I give Last night, I'm living in a new section of the shelter and it's near the door or my beds near the door, and I can hear everything in the hallway, everything in the front office, I can hear the person talking in the payphone outside. As my new roommate across for me, has some kind of mental illness that makes her like moan and move around at night and like all night and so definitely last night, I was practicing the feeling okay, what should I be doing right now? Um, what do I do about this? Um, how do I feel about this? And um, and because in the past, I would just blow up, but instead, I kind of, I did it little bit of both. I went to the front and I told the staff that it Loud and I can't sleep and they kind of looked at me like and Nick tears that you can do about it. Um, and then they tried to go back to sleep been a, you know, thought that I should tell try figure out who did who else to tell or to get help and eventually ended up just doing laundry and taking a shower around 5am in the morning.

So

I was able to leave the shelter on good terms with the staff,

you found some independence for what was going on around you.

Yeah, I got Um, and then I also have been able to let go the future because usually I would start catastrophizing and being like, oh, tomorrow, I'm not gonna get sleep the next day, I'm not gonna get sleep. And so, um, I've been really grateful for that this morning. It's really wise. You're finding your way.

Great to hear that.

Thanks to you, guys.

Thank you. Thank you.

Last summer I just for a couple of weeks, I slept in places that there were, I think the minimum number of people in this was eight and the maximum was 200. And the different places I stayed and, and I was amazing the amount of snoring like, some of the snoring was just like the next morning people say, Did you hear that one person was like he geese. And so but it was, you know, it was just part of the deal. There was no ring, you know, that was part of the thing. And so I want to think to do is to accept it, and so I kind of treated it. So I started to notice that the snoring rose and fell, got stronger. And so I kind of kind of just kind of tuned into not to snoring per se but to how rose and passed and changed over time, it became more like that. In are more like a natural thing except for like East one. And then I thought, you know, spirit rock they have. Sometimes they'll have roommates. And we have these roommate issues and especially when they snore, and I say well before anybody comes to retreat at spirit rock, they should go stay where I stayed last summer and learn what it's like to kind of accept such these difficulties. Thank you for telling us. Okay, so thank you all very much, and may your mindfulness help you be independent.