

2015-11-16 Grieving For Paris

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SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

This monastery doing the Buddhist training. And when I finally left and returned to the city, I went to see the movie Gandhi that just come out. And during that movie I cried. And which was quite remarkable for me because I've never cried in a movie before, oddly enough. And as I was leaving the movie theater, the thought occurred to me, the three years of monastic training, three years of monastic practice, didn't work. And the next thought was three years of monastic practice and it did work. The fact that I cried and, in fact, the number of heartbreaks that I have had it since the time that I somehow came through. Certain maturity in the practice, we say far exceeds any heartbreaks I had before that maturity and, and I feel like my heart breaks a lot and I wouldn't want it to be any other way. Because I would like to feel the empathy, the care the concern, the connection to this world that we live in. And there's so much pain in our society in our world. And I encounter maybe more than the average person because I maybe because I meet with people one on one and I often hear their stories and I get to hear a lot of stories what goes on yesterday evening, I was with a group of People, and they are sitting in a circle introducing themselves and a little bit to say where they're from maybe a little bit about themselves. And early in the circle, this man said, I'm from Paris. And I just flew in on Saturday or Sunday, yesterday, yesterday. And then he wanted to tell us that all of his people, all the people he knows and friends and family, they're all safe. And as he was saying that he was beginning to cry. grieving. And there it was, Paris, in California, not not very far away. Right. And then, so the big events that happen on Friday, November 13, in Lebanon, some 40 people died. terrorist attack there and then hours later 130 or so people in Paris. And so my heart breaks, right. And that's the way it should be. I feel. I mean, not that should be that my heart breaks. I wouldn't want not, I wouldn't want that not to happen. I'd like to stay open and available. People tend to be a witness to what goes on in our world. I think that's part of what Buddhist practice has developed in me, is certainly a willingness but also a sense of the importance of being, being a witness to the suffering of our world. And but not just to see it, but also to feel it. So there can be empathy. And then not only to feel it, but to somehow be a be free in the midst of it. That's why the Broken Heart is okay. Because there's a kind of freedom or kind of, I don't know what this is, I don't know what the right words are to say in the context of this, but certainly, certainly willingness or ease or non resistance to it. Certainly understanding that it's wise thing, to keep your heart open, it's so wise for you, for all of us to keep it open.

And it's wise to live in a society where we're willing to be a witness to our friends and around the globe, the who go through these things. So to see and to feel, and then to understand, in some deep way, and like these two together to see and to feel and then to understand, because oftentimes, people rush to judgment and rush to all kinds of ideas and, and when it's all in the head. There's often not much empathy and care and concern and goodwill. As part of that, sort of feel, and then to understand, and then to act, and, and be changed by, by the world. And when we feel major events like this in our lives and they have, the bigger the impact they have on us as individuals, the more it's appropriate that we

be changed by them. And if we're not changed by them, I think we do a kind of disservice to ourselves. And all too often, it seems that people get all aroused, upset, concerned by something. And then a few days later, it's forgotten. It's no longer really part of their lives. But I think when it has a big impact, we should be changed by it to switch to become a different person because of it shall allow ourselves to change. And part of the one of the so one of the ways that I think Buddhist practice really helps in this kinds of regardless First, the recognition that I don't have to say this also, but we can kind of expect these things to happen. We expect Buddhism kind of expects that there's going to be all kinds of loss and tragedy and things. I mean, they've been expecting it for 2500 years. And there's a good track record of predicting predicting it, these things will happen, right. And I think they're going to continue for a long time. So it's not exactly a surprise, not like an offense to our sense of life that these things happen. I mean, it does happen, doesn't mean they're right, and they should happen. But there's not like, you know, a surprise. It's more like Buddhism. Oh, yes. Terrible. Yes. Here it is again. And so we don't close down or go numb out or the surprise and shock This shouldn't happen. Of course, it shouldn't happen, but we shouldn't And then and then the Buddhist practice has taught me to be how important it is not to close down, not to turn away, because the closed down, closes some part of ourselves, we shut down and we become numb. And I've seen people in these kinds of regards in these kinds of tragedies begin to shut down and not really be willing to kind of feel what's happening to them not really willing to let the heartbreaks and sometimes in Buddhist circles it takes the form of or many circles of the English word of railing against life railing against it. What is it railing railing railing it's probably my problem that with words, me in the English language the you know, and he's, you know, where's the justice in this society in the world and what You know, what good is karma? or What does it mean and something's wrong or Where's God in this picture and, and kind of, it's all kind of abstracted in a facade philosophical way and looking outside. And Buddhism tends not to want to philosophize about these things tends not to want to make the grand conclusions about the nature of life and, and justice, all these things, but rather to allow ourselves to feel these things. And to notice where we get hung up to notice where we get caught. And closed down and contracted. And then we Buddhism has a practices for releasing the contraction to open up the when the heart is all twisted up, and to release it. But not just so we can go and go whistling down the street happily is if you know, nothing to do with us. But so that our heartbreaks can Pure so are heartbreaks can be open and kind of have the kind of freedom in it or willingness to read or I don't know if I want to say a heartbreak seems feels satisfying that is an interesting idea satisfying heartbreak and enough is not quite the right word even no didn't feel work satisfying heartbreak.

A rightness to with maybe it's your first time it's happened to me was I was in college. I was walking down the college hallway. And it was some person who worked in an office there. I never found out what happened. But the person probably was on the phone got some news and went out of the out of her office screaming in an awful way like this terrible happened in distress not to not starting in riff kind of, and I was heartbroken by it. And given that to happen, the rightness of it was that I really felt it to really be there with it and feel it. That is right to feel it's right to be present for this. It doesn't. I'm not saying it should be that way or right. But so it's a willingness. And then we can meet each other, then we can see each other making care for each other. We can understand each other and meet each other in real ways. And then maybe we can then to act. And how do we want to act? How do we want to change when we want to do this difference? So here in the United States, we had a similar day like they hadn't Paris with 911. And that had a big impact on me. And I want you know, I felt like I can't go back to how things were anymore. I had to be changed by it. Do something different. And so what I did was I started a year long training program to train people to become Buddhist chaplains. And so that was my response to 911. And I've been teaching this now for about 13 years, 12 years to people took a while to kind of get organized and set up. And it's been very meaningful for me to train all these people who go out and they work in many different settings and hospitals where people learn in situations of

tragedy, crisis, personal crisis, you know, it's on hospitals, in prisons, and hospices to train people to be to homeless chaplaincy, variety of things. And so I don't know how some of you were impacted by what happened in Paris and in Lebanon on Friday. Do you allow yourself to be impacted by the fact that in Baltimore 300 people have been 300 homicides this year so far? That's a quite a number. That's more than the people that have died in these bombings on Friday. And you know, you're in our backyard. You're not in how do we let this stuff come in and take it in? How do we do it? So we don't get weighed down by it? How do we do this? We don't close down how do we do it so we don't get caught up in the sorrow, which a heartbreak is the sorrow of it. I mean, that's really the art and the essence of it and, and I really hope and pray that to the Buddhist practice that we do. mindfulness practice we do is preparing us to be ready for these things. Be prepared for it to be open to be, be and have witnesses be responders be compassionate presence for this world, because we've learned how to Take it in, we've learned not to let it get stuck not to close down not to, not to get angry, not to get hostile or something. And because it's going to keep happening, and as it gets closer to us, if it gets closer to us, we need people who are prepared and ready, you know, we're not going to put their head in the sand like an ostrich or not run away or freeze or, or also not quickly get into the fight the notices any type of quickly want to, you know, introduce these governors who are closing down their states to refugees. And to me, I find it astounding that, you know, that's the responses to shut, you know, there must be an alternative. I can understand that they're afraid now that they, you know, because of the circumstances, but to but to not consider alternatives and not to consider the people involved and i think it does it Is the service to those states that the states now are closing down? As opposed to like, here's an issue is a problem? How do we solve it? How do we look forward to way that protects the humanity of everyone supports everyone.

So finally, then, the, the response and one of the things that I've benefited learned from Buddhist practice is that so much hinges and wise life, on how we respond. In many ways. I think that Buddhism is all is a forward looking religion. As opposed to looking into the past, the past isn't that important for Buddhism? Our past is not so important for Buddhist practice. It's only important to the degree to which we learn from the past, and learning from our mistakes, learning from what goes on, learning from what happens, but not to be weighed down by the past, but to learn from it. And then as we look forward into it, Future, to see how we can do better in the future, how we can act, and to have the freedom to respond, I think is and to respond with wisdom and compassion and love and friendship and goodwill. And to keep coming back from that, because, again to, you know, to call on, you know, what I've learned from Buddhism is Buddhism understands or teaches that the world begins with you. And the world begins a new each time you wake up, each time you blink your eyes each time you breathe in and you breathe out. There's a whole cycle of life and death arising and passing goes on. And there's really a fresh beginning that goes on every moment. And we don't have to be weighed down by what happened. We don't have to be troubled by it. We don't have to be or No troubles are great, but you have to be weighed down by utter contract because of it. But rather we can be motivated by it we can, it can fuel our freedom it can fuel us in our practice fuel us in our desire to create a better world. And then we'd be forward looking. And this the courage and inspiration and dedication, devotion, to create a better world for ourselves, that our world for our neighbors and people all over the world that didn't get the Yes. So this forward looking movement, because it really the importance of it starting with us, because we're also going to start for you got that person over there, supposed to start over there, you know, sort of start here. And so this is part of that part of the emphasis on being in the present moment in Buddhism is not just to be in the present moment, but to really see the beginning of the world here. Because that's where your world is and then what Difference Are you going to make? How are you going to be a better person? How are you going to make a difference in this world? How are you going to improve it for the people around you? So when things like the bombing in Paris and Lebanon happens, shootings there, that you know, to see it, to be willing to see it, to feel it, to understand it in

some way. And then and then to be you know, because of your freedom, because of your not being caught in the past, caught in concepts and caught himself to have the ability then in the motivation to act to respond, ha, you know, and let, let that let the hope let the goodness that exists in this world begin with you. And it doesn't mean you have to go to Paris to do something there. doesn't mean you have to go to Syria, but maybe it means that here in this life you live in such a way You make a difference for the people that around you that you wouldn't do, if you got weighed down by this if you close down because of it.

So to see, be willing to be a witness, not just to see but to feel it, and to feel it and that your heartbreak and these kinds of tragedies needs to be done with a lot of respect and care for yourself. It might take quite a while to process that and to be present for it and, and learn how to kind of feel in a clean way of without fear, anger, you know, just distress or dismay, but just to really feel it. And then to understand more deeply and figure out what kind of response is your response so you're not going back to just life as as usual and have forgotten about it, too. In a few weeks it's very important for all of us that we live live in a life where we try to improve the lives of others and support each other. And so in doing so, we become ready for the next time. And the next time, there will be a next time and we also become ready for those times when our hearts don't break. But when our hearts can sing, and they're very capacity to really have a heartbreak in a clean way, in a full way, is also the same capacity that allows our hearts to sing fully when glow fully when the circumstances call For that, and, and to be free, one of the meanings that I understand to be really free is to be able to respond fully to the circumstances of the time that you're in. So, one day talking to one friend, you're heartbreaks talking to the next friend, a few hours later, your heart sings, because of that freedom to go, move back and forth. Freedom does not mean that we in Buddhism that we end up sitting in a cloud of bliss. Are you concerned and connected to those to the dust of the world that happened somewhere else? You know, but really is to become fully human, fully human. So we can live in this world with all of what it is in a wise, wise and caring way. Those are my thoughts that I couldn't couldn't see if I could talk about anything else tonight. Anything that you'd like to add or comment on or ask questions about or sorry.

I'd like to know in your experience,

what is the best way to find where you are having that blockage

Where you are

contracting?

Oh, nice. So but you asked me personally for me. So but I motivated to ask you a little bit more about why you're asking. I'm curious in my life right now, it's your isn't your life absolutely happen. But what's the evidence that makes you curious? What's the circumstance?

I have a very strong sensation in my lower abdomen.

You call it pain, call it whatever we want.

It feels contract.

And what happens if you rest your attention they're

different things.

Something happens. So one of the things to do is to, that's one of the primary things that I like to do is to feel what's going on in my body. The body is not just a hunk of flesh, the body is really alive with our inner life inner experience. And so, to go find where there's tension, tightness, energy, activation, and then rest, rest the attention there as long as we can. And make sense maybe in short, short periods, minute or two and then pull back and then different things happens. It begins to shift and change and reveal itself and move and you know what needs to happen begins to unfold. That's what I've learned. ask you one more question, please.

When you're resting your attention on something

that

our mind Might typically label as negative or bad.

How do you embrace it with love and allow it to be

where you accept it?

Just the language you're using is kind of interesting it out there like this This thing is what happens if you say it's yours? You got yours but it's you.

Okay? It's okay to cry. In here, this is a crying place.

is me

Is it easier now? Easier to be with advice.

So one of the things I've learned about the so called negative things is they're not negative. That everything that's embedded within us is there for causes and conditions. And there's and that if we can learn to trust to be present for it and open for it, that it's really connected to the depth within us and, and to the depth of what needs to unfold and happen for us. And so to bring attention to it and not to keep it a distance, not close down from it. But I've learned that we really trust it, and it unfolds. And the and if we learn how to get out of the way, at the same time be very present in a simple way. Ideally kind way. There's something in the psychophysical system that brings you to healing to help to freedom. And it's very similar way kind of in a, in a mundane example. You know, if you cut your finger maybe cutting vegetables, you can't orchestrate in your little mind how to heal it. But your body knows how to heal it's very complicated physiological event to heal a cut, but it happens. All you have to do is keep it clean. So if same thing is true for our hearts, you have to kind of keep it clean, from your from being urinate from your negativity, seeing it as negative and just be present for it and And not not succumb to it not have self pity not have resistance. And meditation is a great place for that to safe place, man. Just sit there and feel it all and see it through. See it through. Thank you. You're welcome. If someone behind you wants to speak.

I appreciate

your share on

what happened in Paris, I found myself

reacting almost cynically.

I can be very empathetic when a friend loses their little puppy or whatever happens to them, you know? But I think over the years, so many awful things have happened. That I've seen and experienced that I just it's hard for me to be right really sensitive to that stuff without going overboard and wanting to use drugs and alcohol, or just, whatever, shoot myself. And I'm not prone to that. But I'm, I'm saying that world is can be really sucky. And if I somehow I protected myself over the way where I now I'm at a point where sometimes I'm not. I'm not not really nice about it at all. And I'm afraid if I were if I really were to experience that completely as you're suggesting, I can see that that would be a valuable experience that would probably tear me up. And how would how would one prevent that to experience it without having to go all the way over

the edge? Good question. It's, I take it very, very important question. Sometimes it's really makes it so much really Big difference. If you can do the inner work that needs to be done to come to a place of really good place where you're not, you don't succumb, you don't drown. Don't kind of go over the edge with these tragedies, if you do that inner work in community with others, so you're not alone doing it. So there's support, there's feedback, there's, you know, learning from others, there's a lot of support. And so then there's practices like what we do here, meditation practices, mindfulness, practice, compassion, practices, that help us find our way through it. And others, there's other spiritual practices, other practices that do this as well. But it takes it takes time. It takes courage, it takes persistence, it really takes really kind of following through. It's not it's not a simple fix, like you know, someone waves a wand and, but it's it can be done, but it takes real dedication. And I know some people in response to these kinds of tragedies The first response is not to go and save the world not to go to do something for the world. But rather it's to go to the monastery for three years to do that kind of inner work, that that overcomes any tendencies for cynicism or shutting down or all the things you described, because it's a it's not necessarily so easy to do it, but it's really some people that they do that kind of extreme, but some people stay in the world and do it here. But do it in the community. Do it other people get support.

I was just watching Ken Burns movie on the Roosevelts and Franklin

didn't want to show his pain and he kept on a Brave, optimistic front.

And I think that there's a, there are degrees of choice we have to make about how much we're willing to share our feelings depending on if it feels safe or appropriate. That's always a question I deal with because I'm so sensitive and I feel very open but sometimes that's it's not appropriate to express tears in a particular situation. It's true. Sometimes it's not appropriate. It's true. But it becomes easier to share it with others. If we've learned if there's no self involved. There's no identification with it. No attachments and claims into it, no fear connected to it, were these these tears and these feelings that we have are come through us in a clean way. And that takes a while to come to that place. And it's a beautiful and noble endeavor to do the slow work to kind of clear out the what's extra around our feelings so that when we do cry and have tears and have emotions, we're quite open. That openness, everything that comes through comes through cleanly. So that's good to let it come through. It's very good once it can be completed. Unless you're Franklin Roosevelt. Speaking to the world. Yeah, yeah, yeah, maybe. I don't know. I don't know that start part of Franklin Roosevelt. But I do know that the more famous a person becomes, the more people see them as a caricature. So that what they represent becomes more important than who they are. And so and that's probably a choice. That's partly part of the responsibility even of people who have those kinds of roles in society that they're not really themselves

for the world anymore. So maybe there's a requirement then in that role decision not to share yourself publicly. Because that's not who you are. You're not a public person you're not you're not a private you know, I don't want to say but your character your you represent something. So can we Yes, LD.

So I'd like to have some women speak viaggiare Silvia, we have another woman to speak to.

So I'm French. And I was very affected with the tragedy and my first reaction was to shut down be completely numb, I couldn't even open my mouth yesterday.

And then in the evening, I

I did scan of what you described, I really try to feel what were the emotion and locate them in my body and, and Sue's them and I cried. It was actually quite beautiful because then I was disassociating myself from being French

I missed I was I kind

of dissociated my reaction from being French and I spent the whole day reading on the internet, all the French newspapers and Twitter and all of those things and, and I was able to kind of like feel that, you know, it was really a tragedy for humanity and realize that you know, this happened in Jerusalem in in many cities and, and even can Like feel, you know, for the, actually the attackers, the young man who killed themselves, you know and, and feel like you really compassion for them and feeling how how do you you know, how do you come to not value your life to actually go do something like this 28 you know, it's, it's, it's it's very sad, like how were they raised and you know, you know so i mean even even though they did something tragic and horrifying, you know what they did to themselves is,

is I think also tragic and so

I felt I was kind of overwhelmed by all of this but

interestingly today

I got inspired to do something for the world and I happen to be advising at A company who has a music platform that enables people to sing and

really spent

spend the day trying to convince everybody to launch an initiative to sing for Paris and should go live tomorrow.

And,

you know, the, the arguments that I had to go against like how people were didn't want to do something and, and it was very healing for me because the only way to really kind of, you know, convinced people is I think it's because I cried and I touched the pain and I could really talk about compassion and suffering and how, you know, artists healing singing is healing when, when things like this happen, you know, art can do something

You know, not

kind of, you know, try to overcome all the arguments and I cannot believe that people will against the idea of doing something when you have a product that can actually do good and you're just sitting on the sidelines doing nothing. There was kind of revolting to me. You know, it's kind of like you have your usual like little like, happy songs that are like flying around all day and it's just like ridiculous

that

I was comforted, comforted to

you know, to hear about the process that you were talking about in in your talk tonight and, and shield the release. Like, I don't know, you say a satisfying heartbreak.

You didn't like that.

Not quite happy with the world. I had a very useful I think

I have to I don't know if there is a good attitude, I don't

know. But yeah, kind of doing something feels fear relieving and, and kind of this, this identifying with what is happening and, and you know, I mean, I really hope that there isn't going to be a war I don't think that killing more people is really the answer.

So, okay, thank you very much. So let's end Republic how to end we're going to end but I'd like to end with a minute or so of silence to sit and get back into quiet at the end then we breathe in the world. And as we breathe out, if you so choose, you can breathe out. Your compassion, your love your care, and your goodwill for the whole world. The whole world passes through you with every breath and may every exhale. Be a time where your generosity of spirit spreads out into this world. With the wish that all beings be happy that all beings be safe and May all beings learn to see each other as brothers and sisters. All beings be happy.