

2016-05-09 Arising And Passing And Freedom

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SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdaal

So many of you know that I've been giving a series of talks all winter long to the spring on the four foundations of mindfulness. And I think I'm still kind of in that mode of that series. So it goes on and on. And one of the purposes of mindfulness, it's given in this text is for the attainment of liberation of Nibbana, or Nirvana. And it said to be the direct road, direct path to this attainment of freedom. And the word Nibbana, or Nirvana in English. One of the primary ways in which is presented in the teachings of the Buddha is as a form of liberation, and liberation from greed, hate and delusion. So primary waste characterized, more than, you know, some kind of state that, you know, some kind of transcendent state or ultimate state was the experience, it's mostly described by the absence, what you're free from. And Buddhism, Buddhist practice can be seen as a journey to that kind of liberation. And it's, I think, some people it's very hopeful or encouraging to think of it as a journey. because it implies You don't have to be stuck where you're at. And if you are, you know, having a very difficult time in your life and difficult time with your own mind. You don't have to be stuck there. It's there's a path there's an unfolding, you can be involved in that you can engage in, that you can participate in, and that unfolding, that evolution is said to be as natural as water running down a mountain. So just as the or down across the plains of India, the one saying is that just as the Ganges rivers, inclines, slopes flows eastward. So this path of liberation, flows, inclines, moves towards liberation towards freedom. So, the idea of using rivers as a metaphor kind of suggests a natural movement, this is kind of a direction that flows if you go into this path of practice. So as a journey, and it has an interesting kind of waystation along the way, something that we're working towards, in order for some of the core elements of liberation to kind of unfold in our minds are in our hearts. And that is to have your mind settled and peaceful enough so that the mind can be impacted by the insights that mindfulness provide. And the particular insight that's most strongly emphasized, is that of impermanence, seeing the changing nature of phenomenon, seeing how things arise and pass. And it's amazing how much the teachings of the Buddha at that particular insight is emphasized over and over again. But in order for that insight, to have an impact, the mind has to be right has to be prepared. And elected. One of the ways that a right mind is described, is with his following words. Don't get discouraged if it sounds to grant. So it's mine that's pure, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wheel, wieldy, steady, and attained to imperturbability. Pretty nice. And so some of these, like the word malleable and wieldy means that the mind is can be worked, it's soft enough that it can be influenced by good things.

If the mind is hard and stiff and contracted, there can't be anything that impacts it. It can't do this and the movement of deep movement is deep movement of liberation. So part of the path of practice is to calm down brighten the mind. I love the word bright. Make it pure Pure from its imperfections from its ways in which we're caught up in unhelpful, unhealthy and unhelpful states of mind and activities. And you can actually feel a visceral direct way, the experience of the heart, the mind, feeling pure, feeling certain kind of cleanliness, sometimes the word cleanliness is used. So steady, calm, relaxed, clean,

steady, bright, are some of these words. So, with a mind like that, and then inside, the real impact of inside can happen. So, a journey one of the ways that this journey unfolded in the time of the Buddha was a number of cases, there's like 25 nominees, there's a number of cases in the suttas where the journey unfolds, while someone's listening to a Dharma talk. And they say that the journey to liberation could also happen while someone's giving a Dharma talk. So I'm always hoping so. So the Buddha sometimes would see, or somehow sense that a person was already close towards the possibility of a potential of being awakened, being liberated. And then he would give a particular kind of Dharma talk. And one of those cases was when there was a leper, who was looking for food or some kind of assistance, and he saw a crowd of people over there, I can get some help or some food. And so he wandered over there. And there was a crowd of people listening to the Buddha giving a talk. And so he stood on the edge listening to that, but the Buddha saw him there and said, Oh, that man, he is ready. He has the capability of liberation. So he directed his talk to him. And we don't know great details of what the Buddha taught. But he gave a fivefold a Dharma talk about five themes, which I see is kind of a journey. And in order to prepare this man to have the mind to hear the liberation teachings, and, and those five themes in the Dharma talk, or generosity, virtue, they heavens, heavenly realms, the danger of sensual pleasures, and the bliss of renunciation. And the Buddha, being a brilliant Dharma teacher, inspired the leper, in a profound way, really inspired him. And here's a description of what this inspired mind how the Buddha inspired this, so that the lepers mind was became ready, receptive, free from hindrances, elated, and confidence, and other great bunch of concepts for how you can be in your mind. So similar to the first description, the mind is kind of inspired and bright in a heightened state of beautiful equanimous qualities. So the Buddha brings this leper into this state by giving this Dharma talk. And so there's something about the journey of first learning about generosity. generosity is one of the beautiful qualities of heart that people some people live live by. The many years ago, there was a TV show in America called Mr. Rogers. And Mr. Rogers was probably one of the great American saints. And he was the only TV show that I allowed our young kid to watch

because I think everyone should watch it grown up said watch Mr. Rogers, very wholesome, very beautiful men. And so he got an award once khadem II wards are under where it was some great award and for his wonderful TV show for kids. And he got up on stage to receive his award and get physical speech. And he said to the all the movie stars, mostly, I guess, sitting there in their gowns and suits and you know, And he said something like, you know, all of us here today are here because someone believed in us and was generous. Let's take a minute to think about those people and remember them. And so then he was silent, which the people producing the TV show are probably horrified. You know, a minute of silence on TV is kind of like a long time. And so they didn't know what to do. So I guess they, they scanned the audience. And there were all these, not all but some of the people, they were crying. Thinking about, you know, who had supported them believe in them had been generous. And it's phenomenal how much generosity exists in this world that we live in. And it's sad when we don't realize it. sad when we're, it's too easy American culture, I think is often set up in such a way that we often don't appreciate or sense or feel, how much American culture is run by people who put in a tremendous amount of time to support and help others and be generous. And I was kind of really amazed when I watched, you know, my son went through the whole little league cycle here in Redwood City. And it was a great thing for these little boys to be involved in Little League. And, and, and, you know, there's hundreds of adults who volunteered tremendous amount of time freely, in order to have these kids to be able to have this experience growing up a little league. When he was about, I don't know how old these was maybe eight or nine, maybe eight. He was already in the little league cycle. But he showed up for the first day of spring practice. And one of those volunteer coaches, received them and had them all sit in the dug in the dugout, dugout. And he's space them. And the first thing he said to them, you're sitting in hollow ground. And I don't think I don't know if the kids heard it. But you know, he, he saw this is kind of sacred, what he was, you know, what he was offering kids with their for American culture, at least.

And, anyway, so this generosity thing, it's a beautiful thing. There's a lot of it. And I think too often in our culture, when people weigh the stresses that we people have in their lives, all too often make it difficult to appreciate and value and relax around the level of generosity we have. And then the Buddha talked about morality or virtue. And when I was younger, quite a bit younger, kind of a hippie and I had no interest in virtue, moral purity. Luckily, I didn't have enough imagination to be immoral. So that was good. But I didn't think highly of those kind, that kind of, kind of thing. So until I went to Thailand and practice the mindfulness to be personal in Thailand. And I, in that as long retreat, so first, that I experienced the degree of inner purity, cleanliness, that I'd never known before. And it brought me a lot of joy, said, Oh, that is interesting. That's possible. Then I said, Oh, those people. And then I started getting really inspired and happy and glad. But the people that I encountered who seem to be very virtuous, and especially people who seem virtuous, easily, without any expectation that I should be, other should be, you know, that through the, you know, the virtue of the police, you know, telling you what you should be the city of being virtuous. And so this idea inspired by that. So the Buddha talked about generosity imagine he was talking about in a way that inspired the audience. And then he talks about virtue, which I imagine, continue that inspiration.

And then he talked to people about the heavens. And in ancient India, they believed in realms of heaven, Heaven, heavenly realms, where people can get reborn in and I'm not sure what that teaching was about. But one of the key one of the teachings we do know existed in the ancient world, is that if you are careful, and get and lived a virtuous life, a generous life, then the one of the results of that is to be reborn in your next lifetime in heavenly realms where there's lots of bliss, lots of happiness and joy, much more than here in this world we live in. So the idea that generosity and virtue is connected to this wonderful result, probably in ancient worlds greatly inspired people. For me, it's enough to be inspired by the great good that generosity and virtue does for the world around To us, and what it does to our own hearts, the way that nourishes and feeds ourselves, that inspires me. And then the Buddha talked about the dangers of sense desire, you know, the whole realm of all the different senses that's chasing after it. And we don't have to go too far in our society, to see the dangerous people pursuing sense desire, sometimes to their death. You know, that's a variety of different ways. And you see the danger of that. And so I don't know if that's inspiring in the same way, but it's certainly motivating to avoid some of those dangers. And then the Buddha talked about the bliss of renunciation, which I've been told in American society is not a very popular Dharma talk to give. But it should be because renunciation is not so much about depriving ourselves not at all about depriving ourselves or diminishing ourselves, the idea of renunciation and Buddhism is meant to be something that enhances us, we benefit from it, we let go of things which diminish us so that we can benefit expand the heart in beautiful ways. And it's perhaps unfortunate that word Pali word nekkhamma, was translated as renunciation into English because maybe renunciation has kind of heavy connotations for some people. But the word nekkhamma has more connotations of going forth. And I think of it as like going forth. If you have been holed up with all your relatives, you kind of like but all your relatives in a one room cabin all winter long snowed in, can't leave. You know, that's like quit trying, maybe. And then, and then finally, the spring comes and snow thaws, you can finally leave that cabin. And then it's, you go forth to come out of the cabin, and just the freshness, the open air, the expansiveness, the freedom, that that going forth provides is, you know, makes you're super happy for a while, you know, it's like, What a relief. So that's more of the connotations of this idea of renunciation in Buddhism, the bliss of renunciation, it's more like freeing ourselves from the contractions, and the heaviness and the way being weighed down by some of the pursuits and activities we do that, you know that they're not really for our betterment Not really, for opening us up, we think they're for our betterment, the pursuit of comfort, the pursuit of safety, the pursuit of status, the many things that we pursue, that sometimes just takes a lot of work to maintain, and keep going and searching and, you know, working for and all that. And so the idea is to kind of be enhanced by moving forth and out of the activities that keep us kind of limited. So I can imagine that the Buddha gave this talk, and that was inspiring for people to hear this possibility. So this

talk was a journey of sorts, that caught people's attention and focus and interest in and really interested in what was going to happen next. And so, the Buddha was this particular example is giving he was focusing on the leper, as man who was quite sick and probably a little bit of an outcast. And when he saw that the Viper was ready, that his mind was ready, receptive, free from hindrances elated and confident. Someone who's you know, Mike, my guess is being a leper is pretty uncomfortable. And to get his attention and focus can imagine you're sitting there the edge of the crowd is watching, wrapped and interested, really, where's this going? And his mind was changed materially in that being inspired by this Dharma talk.

And then, then this text goes on and says, The Buddha then expounded to him, the teaching special to the Buddha's. So this is where they kind of the insight teachings, teachings about insight are being offered. But remember, it's a receptive, quiet, steady, still mind that you have kind of on the edge of its seat kind of ready to listen, and not just ready to listen. But to go along, almost like a guided meditation, almost through an active imagination to go along follow along with this simple teaching is going to be offered and so special teachings of the Buddhists, which is suffering, it's arising, it's cessation and the path. Now, most likely he gave longer teachings and just those lists of those four words. But they're not didn't have to be too much longer. Because what he was teaching here was this core insight into impermanence, that things arise and they pass. And our suffering has a certain kind of impermanence to it. Where it's in constant, it comes and goes. And, you know, we can talk about we use the word impermanence repeatedly and talking about essential Buddhist insight. It's already been talked about too many times. And I probably use the word too much this evening. But I think it after a while, people will listen to Buddhism and Buddhist teachings a lot. The word impermanence is kind of, you know, goes right by without really going very deep. The, the word that's translated is impermanence is a nature. And nature means constant and our means not. So not constant, in constant. So it's a little bit different connotations than the English word impermanence, in impermanence as a suggestion for many people, that it's not going to last some point is going to end. So most will enjoy it now because it's impermanent, in constant as a different meaning. And that means that it's, it's, it might last, but it comes and goes, like, the daylight daytime, is not impermanent in the sense that once a guess sooner or later in some few billion years, it'll stop for us. But But you know, ordinarily, it doesn't disappear once and for all, it only disappears in the evening, at dusk, and then it'd be appears the next morning. And so, the days are in constant, they come they go, the weather is in constant more than impermanent. If impermanent means like it's comes to its end. And so what the Buddha was pointing to, was how things are in constant. And the and the more quiet you can be in the mind, and more clear the mind can be, the more you experience that the Hulk, inconstant, our experience of the world is what we sense and see the inconstancy of it all. And things are constantly changing. And one of the things that makes them constantly changing is that our minds ordinarily is not very steady, it kind of jumps around. You know, if you're, you know, if you look at your mind, when you're driving on the freeway, at your attention, what your attention is doing. If you pay careful attention, you'll see that your Attention, attention is moving constantly around good driving you moving constantly or attention around, you're looking in front, you're looking the rearview mirror, the side your mirror, you're looking left and right, you're kind of tracking the all the information in between that you're thinking about the taxes you didn't pay. And you might be thinking about that a lot. And it might look like you're only thinking about your taxes. But in fact, you're thinking you're thinking about an intermittent fashion. It's in constant because you're also constantly jumping around other things. And you're probably thinking about other things and focusing on other things. And then you notice you're uncomfortable in your seat and you sit up straighter or you readjust. And there's a constant movement of the mind around and around and around. And this constant movement of the mind is invisible sometimes, or if we're kind of too preoccupied with certain themes. Certain things were kind of like, like, taxes i didn't pay, right.

So like I keep thinking coming back to that coming back to that. So it looks like that's all we think about. Or if we have certain strong moods, depressions or sadness or other things, it might seem like it's constant. But if you start really tuning in slowly, you see that actually, the mind is not constantly there. They're not they're not there. And you might feel like you really blue and upset or angry about something and think I'm just so angry and pissed off. And that's the way it is. You're driving along your car or steaming and you're like this is like, you know, this is never gonna go away. And then a police car comes up right behind you. And their siren is non or anything but they're just like tailgating right behind you. Right. And probably for a few moments, you don't think about anything about your mood. You're like thinking about police car. You know, what does that mean? And then they sit by you and go away and, and, and then you feel maybe a momentary relief and, and then there's ample time to go back to your mood. But that the mood wasn't you know, wasn't you wasn't so constant it was the little bit broken up you know changing just in constant nature. So this is the what the Buddha was pointing to was the inconstant nature of suffering, suffering is there at arises and it ceases. And, and, and as seeing this arising and ceasing is, is a powerful insight, which I'll just try to describe a little bit why it is, as a result of this, inside the Buddha pointing to this, and this leper in a really kind of being right there, and perhaps applying it to himself at that moment, seeing it in himself as in that moment. And the tech says, just as a clean cloth, with all marks removed, all spots removed, we take die evenly. So to or the leper sat there, the Spotless, immaculate vision of the Dharma arose in him in him. So some kind of something awoke in him some clear vision, it's can be here in English, at least, spotless, immaculate vision. So it's a mind that can be receptive, like a cloth receives a die. And again, it's talking about how the mind is prepared. If, you know you just don't, you know, you don't just walk off the street to have a mind like that. This is one of the reasons we meditate is to soften and open and prepare the mind. So that's ready to take the die the teachings and or have insight. In this case, the insight comes from the Buddha. And then this leper exclaimed, he got something, he understood something. And this is what he understood. So he explained this. All that is subject to arising is subject to cessation. So we're back to this in constant nature, everything that arises, everything has a nature to arise, as a nature to cease, to arise and pass to rise and pass, some things pass once and for all, something's come back, but they have the nature arise and pass. If things arise and pass, what happens in between the passing of the next arising? Who are you, in between your thoughts? the arising of a thought, the passing of it as a means with the passing of one thought and the rising of the next, who are you? Who are you? If you're in that moment, you're not using thoughts to tell yourself? Mostly we tell ourselves stories about ourselves through our thoughts. But the thoughts are in constant. And who are we in the gap between thoughts? You know, most people ignore the gap because the thoughts are so you know, so mesmerizing. But if the mind quiets down, slows down, and gets calmer, then we start seeing that thoughts don't happen so rapidly. And we start seeing there's more going on here than just thinking. There's space between the thoughts around the thoughts, and what's going on there. Who is that? Who are you? What, you know, what's, what's, what's bright? Is there some freedom what's what's there, and that gap. So this man was quite elated, and he said, all that is subject to arising a subject Association. And he saw the Dharma, attain the Dharma, understood the Dharma, fathom the Dharma, went beyond doubt, did away with perplexity and became independent in the Dharma. I think love this expression, independent Dharma because now you know yourself what the Dharma is. So there's something about seeing impermanence, seeing the arising and passing of things. You have insight into it, and I really see it in a powerful way. helps you become independent in your life, certain kind of independence and freedom. So why is that? What is it about this experience of seeing arising and passing?

So imagine a person who imagined you maybe Who has all kinds of interests, all kinds of things you'd like to have and want to say things that you want all the people, all the things you ever wanted in your life, gather them all together, the whole shebang, all the things and say that you got them. But once you

got them, somehow magically, some string, attached them to your body, never to be let go of me without the scissors to cut the string. And, you know, the first thing you got was great. But after the hundred thousands, like you can hardly move anymore your way down. And then someone comes along and says, you know, you don't have to go around carrying all those things all the time, you could, you know, take some of those off, some of them on tie, or here's some scissors and you can cut them off. And so you do and more and more. And finally, you kind of like, wow, this is pretty cool, pretty wonderful. I feel so free. So light. So, you know, liberated from all that, wait, this is great. So it's little bit like that with our mind, or awareness that our awareness generally is tied to what we're aware of, is tied and focused on what we're engaged in. Awareness arises in relationship. This is kind of a Buddhist psychology thing. Mind, consciousness arises with what we're aware of. So my, my awareness of this glass only happens because I can see this glass, it's here, the glass is here. And awareness of the glass occurs. awareness of, of a thought happens because a thought happened. So that kind of awareness where the awareness arises, a particular thing can arise innocently can arise where it just it arises, and it goes, nothing, no, it doesn't stick. But often, it sticks. We have desires aversions, judgments, delusions, in relationship to those things. And they are things like we get weighed down by them, we're stuck by them, we're caught in them. And a lot of the stress that we have, is not because of the things we do, but really has to do with how we're been tied up in the thoughts that desires, the wishes, the fears, and the constancy of it. We're kind of like tied to it or weighed down by it. So it's possible to have, you know, it's possible to have this big Buddhist book of scriptures in here in front of me. And I can see this book as just a book, the awareness of the book arises the book. But I'm a Dharma teacher of some renown, we known in Redwood City bridge on birch Street. So I have a reputation to keep. And so now I'm concerned that maybe I brought the wrong book, to demonstrate my worth as a Dharma teacher. And so and I want to make sure you realize, but you know, that, you know, this is a good book to judge me by. And I can get all wrapped up about you know, how important you know, it is for you to judge me appropriately, by having the right book. So you recognize me as you know, the great teacher and went to eight birch Street. And so it isn't just seeing the book and letting go through, you know, just there. I've gotten wrapped up in the book, and what it means for me wrapped up in my all kinds of things, you know, complicated there. If it's possible, I can just see this as a book. And it doesn't stick, nothing happens. It just goes right through just a book, put it down. Or it could be that I'm thinking about the book for the next week. Now, I might be thinking about why don't use that as an example. What a foolish example, and I'll spend the next week thinking about this foolish example and, you know, just you know, caught up in that tied up in that.

So, you know, that's an example of being tied and caught in something. It my I'm attached to it. I'm involved in it long after the book is gone. Long after you've gotten this evening, I'm still tied up in it and involved. So much of the activity of the mind what we know and we're involved in, we're tied up in the wreck attached to we're carrying it with us. And a lot of the stress we have a lot of suffering comes from those knots that were caught up in it. As the mind gets calmer and quieter Stillier like through meditation, and more receptive, then it begins to put down some of these things we've been carrying in our mind. That's why the mind tends to get calmer, because we're putting things down, least temporarily. And as you start putting things down, putting things down, then we end we start seeing the how the nature of awareness of what we are, the mind operates, is constantly arising and passing. Our thoughts arise in pass our feelings arise in pass, our perceptions arise in pass, our moods arise and pass. And to really get to the place we can watch this arising and passing is in constant nature of it all. We see it arise. And we see that momentarily, it might cease not there, only to arise again. When it ceases, in that season. There are no more strings. We're not attached to it anymore, even though it might come up. And there's this going forth into the open spring, you know, from mountains, there's a feeling of freedom, of ease, of being not bounded, being Unlimited, being relieved. From all the strings and attachments, we have to see that it's possible. And so to see Yes, all things that arise, will cease. And in that ceasing, the heart has been set free. The heart as the mind has been, is no more

contracted or bound or tied in, by what is. And in that freedom. To really have a visceral direct insight into that freedom that arises when we're no longer tied to anything is and to know that that's possible, can give a person so much confidence and understand something so important. That spiritually, the Buddhist tradition says, you become independent in the Dharma, you would no longer have any doubt, no longer confused about things. Because then you understand that freedom, your sense of what's the real freedom is that the real spiritual freedom comes when there's no nothing that we're tied and tied up in. You don't have to understand a lot of complicated teachings, you don't have to have some very complicated, great attainment. It's just simply in that space, where things cease. We understand. Now we understand, oh, that's freedom. It's available right here. It's not far away. And that becomes the work then, of practice. of continuing to His work of being able to settle in quiet enough to have the insight, a clear seeing into the arising and passing a phenomena. Not all the time. But you know and you know meditation in certain times, so that we can use that the message of arising and ceasing to help us to put down more and more strings to let untie more and more knots. And the word that the Buddha used for the movement of liberation is the abandoning or doing away with the knots the Pali word for not some some Yo, yo Jenna and in putting on tying unraveling this stuff.

So this is my understanding of why this seeing impermanence seeing arising and passing is so important. It's not giving validation to the world of impermanence. It's not saying you know that it's not a judgment or an idea about how the world is, but rather it's the ability to see the inconstant nature of our experience. shows the mind teaches the mind the heart, something about a profound level of liberation of being unbounded, becoming Unlimited, becoming no longer a way down, no longer contracted. So that the mind has a kind of, you know, moves out into a great space of freedom. So, to take that journey, to a wonderful journey, and it's to know there is a journey that you can take is the journey that this is one description of the Buddhist journey is to go take this, do those things, the generosity, the ethics, acts of letting go of acts of developing a calm and clear steady mind. So that we can find ourselves inspired and settled and happy and engaged, elated enough, so that this insight into arising and passing can be liberating.

So maybe this week, you can pay a little bit more extra attention to your daily ordinary experience. And watch how your mind how much how quickly your mind moves between things, moves between what it's paying attention to when taking up and you might see that it moves around much more quickly than you probably have realized before jumps around. And in doing that, maybe you can see is there freedom to be found in between, on the other side of and what are you tied up in? And what can you untie? Right. Thank you.