

2017-02-10 Patience Part 1

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SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

As we continue this meditation I'd like to offer some words of guidance or reflection on the theme for today.

And the theme is patience. And I was hoping that the sounds would continue. So that we could practice patience.

Important part of patience as a part of practice is to learn to be patient with the conditions in which you practice. being patient means not to be adverse. Not to be impatient. Not to spend a lot of time agitated time thinking you wish it was different.

But to stay practicing in the midst of it, breathing attentive present

finding a certain strength or stability where the practices unswayed by the circumstances are by your even by your being aversive to it There's something inside of you is able to keep going and not be tripped up by your thoughts, your reactions. circumstances around you.

And perhaps it's going to stay quiet or from the machinery outside now. You might reflect that'll daters look inside of you. And consider what understandings what orientation, what practice do you have? That's true. support you in being patient, in your practice, with whatever challenges might come up in the moment, what understandings what inner capacities you call upon when things are challenging. That allows you to persevere keep going

So good morning and welcome to our Dharma practice day at IMC. And the topic today is patience. And it's a part of a 10 part series, having to do with the, what's often called the perfections in English, or the kind of a higher virtues that supports Buddhist practice, there are 10 of these virtues or 10 of these states, and beginning with generosity and ethics, and renunciation and wisdom, and then effort or energy, and then today, it's patience. And then there's resolve. And I think already right, truthfulness, resolve and loving kindness and equanimity. We're kind of in the number six now with patients. And make sense that patients would follow the power meter perfection on effort or energy, because once you apply effort and energy, and you're doing stuff, you better be patient. So there's this new kind of sequences, wisdom, has the role of telling us what to do, energy engages us in the practices that we do. And then patience allows us to do those practices in an effective way and without being interrupted or held back. So that's kind of the theme for today. For those of you who are new to Dharma practice day, it's a way of engaging in some Dharma topic in community, some meditation, some teaching, and also some exercises or ways of having discussions about it together in small groups or in pairs. And

part of the reason for having the small group or a pair discussions is that this is a way of making the topic personalized, kind of understand where you fit with it, if it with it, how you relate to it. And you engage in a process of active reflection and listening, that's a different way of learning than just listen to a talk or just reading. It's, I think, we engage more personally in the material. And so that's part of the value of this this day. And some people find it quite special to have some place in their life, where they can have focused or concentrated conversations about these kinds of important Dharma topics. Because you know, if you're out and about at a party and Friday night, you know, you're probably not going to get a lot of traction in the party. If you started let's talk about patience. So, you know, here we have this, here, we have a chance. If you're patient enough, we'll talk about patients. And I was kind of coincidence, and they're kind of, you know, that it was unfortunate that they stopped the machine, just when I was going to, you know, include the sounds of the machine as part of our practice of patience. Sometimes on these Fridays, we have the leaf blowers. But they didn't accommodate us either today, that they might soon. And I thought it would be nice to have that sound which is so some people's kind of grading to have. Use it as a backdrop for reflecting on you in a more in real time, your relationship to patients and being patient with under challenging circumstances. Remember, when I was practicing in Thailand, I was practicing at the end of the monastery at the edge of the monastery and the other side of the edge was a big field farmer's field. And I was given a small hut that was right up I don't know I don't know how far it was from the fence, a monastery but you know, two three feet or something. And one day I started hearing that kind of sound of kindness, credit, motor engine. working its way, coming closer and closer and took you know, and but halfway through the day, it was someone who has had some kind of tractor backhoe or something and they were digging a trench on the edge of the property on the farmer side. And so they're coming and coming in louder and louder. And he got so loud when he finally got to me that the floor Mitel cut was shaking. It was a hot season in Thailand and I was sweating, all the sound and I just kind of my job was just to sit there and practice without the floor shaking, or it's quite something.

And so I just kept practicing, just sitting with it and practicing and sitting and certainly, I had a lot of reactions and irritations and impatience around it, then slowly, slowly, in the course, a day the sound got less and less as they kept going down the field down the fence line, eventually, you know, end of the day is stopped. And if you practice in Asia, that's one of the qualities that they're really important is patience. You might not know this, but here in America, generally we have good comparison, pristine conditions for practice. Even in this urban setting here, it's pretty good compared to how you have in Bangkok, where horns are blaring and says pretty noisy. And meditation monasteries in Asia, it's a little bit unusual to find them being quiet places, especially in places like Thailand, and Burma. And you can find them but it's not what they're known for being not because they're quiet the monastery, but the surrounding sounds can be quite a bit. And so when I was in Burma, and one of the more prestigious or biggest meditation monasteries in Burma was in the edges of Rangoon, Yangon and there were lots of other temples nearby. But and, you know, and so and homes and guitar towns and everything, and one of the things that people see back then 25 years ago, love to do in Thailand and Burma was to play music over the loudspeakers. And so I spent weeks weeks you know, sitting meditating with very scratchy speakers blaring, Burmese, pop music and rock and roll music out across the neighborhood. And in some of it was it was the songs I knew in the West who were that were, I guess were dubbed into or done into speak sung and Burmese but like Madonna was just like a virgin was. I heard that, you know, I don't know how many times I heard it. The only on the benefit was it wasn't Burmese. You know, and then the clinger was, there was a seven day kind of Buddhist holiday. In in Burma, I think it's celebrating the, the very important event when the Buddha supposedly went up into the heavens, this Buddhist mythology, and taught the Abbe Dhamma texts to his mother, mother died, but she didn't benefit from the teachings. So he went up there and taught her the seven books of the Abbe Dharma, which are really hard to understand even people who know a lot about Buddhism. And, but so anyway, his mother got these very arcane, you know, very technical teachings to read in Burma is very

important. These these texts are very important. And sort of commemorate this event. for seven days, they would blast on these scratchy speakers, the neighboring temples, day and night, 24 hours a day, people reading these texts, because they're supposed to have protective quality, someone to take care of protect the neighborhood, or something to do with. So you weren't going to spread this teachings all over. And again, I didn't know no idea what they were saying, luckily, but this, you know, for layering. So, Buddhism has come down to us, over the centuries in through trying conditions. war, famine, poverty, the conditions in which Buddhism has survived over the centuries of, you know, prosperity has come and gone. And some people have persevered, that has kept it going, kept showing up and kept practicing. When they didn't have enough food. They'd have shelter. They were had to force to move and go to new places. As they were put in prison, all kinds of all kinds of adverse situations that they have practiced in. And I can say confidently that Buddhism and Buddhist practice wouldn't have reached us today, if there hadn't been people who had a very strong sense of patience, perseverance, endurance, under tremendous challenges and distress. That's kind of the legacy. That's what we you know, that's what we've received. And partly what that means is that whoever those people were, who had to practice under very adverse situations, and somehow kept the teachings and the practices going and pass them on to the next generation.

They managed with it, they, they, they thrived in it, they discovered something to pass on. What we received here is, you know, it can be offered as stress reduction in clinical settings in America. And, you know, it's nice to have stress reduction if people have stressful jobs. But that's not what it was designed to do. It was designed to do something much more powerful. And something is applicable in all kinds of circumstances. In whatever circumstance you find yourself in. And so to have patience, is one of the keys to develop patience. And some of you probably know that, you know, maybe yours, you realized pretty quickly if you started meditating, that one of the first lessons that most people need to learn if they have a meditation practice or a mindfulness practice, Buddhist practice, is patience. People who want to do it efficiently and fast, which is you sometimes we'll kind of run into a brick wall. This doesn't work to have, you know, be in a hurry. You know, let's get, you get enlightened Hurry, to get enlightened in it quickly. So we can get on to other things. There's all kinds of wonderful things to do in this world. You have to go through your, you know, your list of things that you want to accomplish in this lifetime. And enlightenment is only one of them. So you want to get on with it. So you can take your vacation to Fiji and do the other great things right. But patience is really crucial and so headstrong. And so exactly what patience is, is and whether the English word patience is the right translation for the Pali, the Buddhist word is khanti. And it's a very rich word Shanti in Sanskrit. And whether the connotations that that word in Pali had for the people in ancient India, are the same as the connotations we have word patience is an open question. So, let's be a little bit careful when you hear the word patience in English, that we don't automatically or quickly kind of see it through the lens of our usual associations with the word, but rather be willing to kind of please today, consider what out what else might this word mean? Or what are the different approaches? or How can I how can you understand this word, where it becomes an asset and not a liability, it becomes a something that you love, as opposed to something that you feel is a drag. Unfortunately, you have to practice patience. It just seems like it weighs you down. I I think the purpose what you know, the purpose of patience, ultimately, is not to persevere, not to injure, but to help you feel joy, feel lighter and happier. And one of the ways that that could have come comes to people traditionally, is there is a kind of happiness that can come from knowing that you do not give in, you do not give into your anger. You're not give into your impatience, you're not get into it, give into your agitation. You didn't give into your doubt. But you kind of were able to kind of stay on course, stay present, and not let this stuff interfere with the direction you're going direction going was important. And you stay with it. And there's a cut rather than feeling like you're, it's unfortunate you couldn't give into your anger, the traditional ideas, just like celebrate, Be glad. That's great. And so part of the function of patience is to be able to keep on track without getting pulled into the reactivities and

then judgments and impatience for and for courses and patients that we have that come up for us. It's not a statement that you're not supposed to have those reactions come up. It's rather a very generous understanding. They will come up Then how do you relate to it in such a way? That it's for your betterment? How do you relate to it in such a way that you're, you become better because of it? It'd be very unfortunate if you practice patience and just ground you're down. That doesn't really, you know, make sense in terms of Buddhist practice. That is what how can patients be a, be a welcome, practice something that feels desirable, we, this is great, I want to do this, this is for my betterment. What kind of understanding is needed for that what kind of approach is needed for that?

So patience. So I thought that a way to begin to kind of do a foundation for exploration today is without the saying anything more, is to have you turn to someone next to you. And just whatever comes up for you, whatever, it's, you know, whatever, associations or thoughts that just arise, don't spend a lot of time trying to get a good answer the right answer is currently Up to now, or before you came to the class, some new your life, what is your, in your relationship with patients? Right? That's a very open ended question. You know, and so, different people. And so the question in very different ways. And that's meant to be that way, just to kind of see what comes out of you, what has been your relationship to patients. And they will do this with this approach is, each person will talk for five minutes, and the other person will just listen. And as you just just see what comes out of your five minutes, maybe it's longer than you have ever talked about patients before. Maybe you run out of the obvious things to say, that's great, because it's still your turn to speak into five minutes. So see what else comes out. Maybe there's some other angles, other perspectives, see what comes with comes along from it for five minutes, and then I'll ring the bell. And when you hear the bell will stop, be quiet for a minute just to kind of regroup, regroup, and then we'll switch roles, and the other person speaks and the other person, first person listens. When we do these kinds of this kind of contemplative conversation or, or talking, it's very different than ordinary conversations we have with people. And one of the big differences is that we're not trying to inform the other person. And that's usually we kind of like to try to tell them something, the other person is a witness for you, as you explore for yourself. If anybody's you're talking to, you're talking to yourself, you know about that? What is my relationship with with, with patients? And how does that work for me? And what did I learn growing up? And what did I, you know, whenever I had to do it, or where, you know, you know, just kind of a you're exploring on your own. Not that I recommended necessarily, but some people would do this kind of conversation will actually close their eyes when they're speaking. So they're kind of freed themselves up for this social interaction of speaking. You know, as you wish, but the idea, the idea is, is not informing the person, don't worry about getting something across to the person. It also means that if you have a story to tell about that's related to all this, you know the story already. And since you're not telling the story, for the sake, you're telling the story for you to help you understand something, you might get to the point quickly, or you might kind of avoid spending a long time telling a story, you know, all too well, because it's not you're not informing the other person. It makes sense. Okay, great. So if you don't mind if you want to pair up with someone, and I don't know for auto even here, but if you don't find a partner, come towards the front tiptoes. Of course. Me