

2017-05-17 Dharmette Honesty As A Spiritual Practice

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SPEAKERS

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So, in growing up, I had no particularly interest in religion or spirituality. And in fact, I think I was a little bit allergic to it, especially religion. And then I in place where I encountered, first encountered spirituality that opened that door for me was I lived that was probably called a spiritual commune in the that came out of Haight Ashbury, I called the farm. And it was probably one of the largest hippie communes of its time. And but when I was there, there were I think, there about 800 people who live there, in Tennessee, rural Tennessee. And the teacher was kind of a hippie, English professor, ex, Marine, named Steven Gaskin. And he had it and what really surprised me about whether the right really grabbed me about this community and opened this door to what led me to Buddhism was, they had a practice of honesty, that was their primary spiritual practice was truth telling. And they, how they came to came to it was that their primary spiritual practice had been LSD. But when they moved to Tennessee, that they, that didn't quite work with the local laws. And in fact, Steven Gaskin was, I think that they were they were cut somehow busted for some kind of drug thing, I forget what it was. But so he spent a year and he and two or three other the most senior people in their community spending when I arrived with just ending up there a year in jail. And so they had to figure out some other alternative to LSD. And the alternative they came up with was, is truth, being truthful, is that pretty, pretty phenomenal. But truth can be as powerful as LSD. Maybe it isn't as fun. But that, so when I came there, this was impressed me, I was so impressed by this, that and watching it and practice, that people would, if there was any interpersonal tension in the community between people, their practice was to stop and talk about it. And when they first when first people showed up, or dealing with this, they'd have long conversations. And until they found common ground, found a way to work through it. But because they've been doing it for some time, by the time I got there, it was people who had done it for a while got really skilled at it, not only skilled at how to tell the truth, but also how to receive it and recognize it in themselves without being defensive. And to kind of end to kind of the word they used the farm was they would cop to it. So they kind of caught me and so I guess admitted. And what I saw was sometimes all people would have to do, occasionally some people, all they have to do is look at each other and make a certain look like you know, like, what's happening. And that was okay, you know, and they competent. Okay, you know, that was enough, because they got so good at this, it got so familiar with this, this kind of communication. And I was so inspired by this level of honesty and the work of communication, that this is why I was going to only gonna be there for three days. I was just taking through and it's gonna stop by Check, check out this place. But I was so inspired by this, I stayed for four months, which was kind of formative time in my life. And it really appreciated this practice of talking and finding our way through this. And it was a little bit of a challenge. And the other thing I discovered there was the Bible of this community was the Zen mind, beginner's mind, this book by a Zen teacher, Suzuki Roshi. And so I read this book, and the book was kind of not blown away is the right word. But I

was deeply impressed by this book. Because the experience I had a reading it was this person was writing about things I knew. But didn't know I knew. It was like, yeah, this I know this somehow it was like wow. And at so it made a big impression on me this book.

And it seemed to me that the book had a lot to do with sitting in meditation sittings. But they didn't sit much meditation in the form. And so, so. So that's one of the reasons why I left to go find someplace where I can go meditate. So I went to Zen center, same sort of place where they produced the book in a kind of way. And so eventually, I came to Zen center. And I came to really love the practice of Zen meditation and find a really valuable doctor was there for a few years, I missed the truth telling, because then Santa didn't have the same culture of telling the truth, you know, people sitting down and talking and working things out. And there was a lot of things that were unstated are gonna, you know, kind of hidden, or, I don't know not. So that's something that as much honesty that's practice of honesty wasn't the spiritual practice there. And so I was kind of disappointed, I kind of missed it. But I found the practice to be so powerful and so valuable, and the community life was very helpful to be there, and there was a lot of goodness in the community. And, but the role of honesty, that it can be so powerful, it can be a whole practice in itself. And I wouldn't, you know, rather than likening it to taking LSD, which maybe I should stop doing. But maybe it's the idea is that it's extremely powerful. To first to learn how to be honest, too, I think I think of mindfulness practice, as a mindfulness meditation, as a practice of honesty, or to say it in reverse way, that honesty is mindfulness out loud, if you talk honestly. And, but it goes both directions. So we sit, to be honest, we sit to be with what's most true for ourselves, and to learn how to recognize that. And I like the word honesty rather than truth. Because truth kind of has a feeling of singularity, like, the truth is like, like, real or like absolute, or this is, you know, true somehow. But the honesty for me is more of a process of recognition of us honest about what's happening now. And it's more of process, it's more like how we are in the world, or its honesty is more about ourselves. I think, my vocabulary then, whereas, you know, truth is more, you know, it can be quite abstract, and some people hide behind the truth. So they don't have to look at themselves, they don't have to be honest. So I like the idea that mindfulness a lot about being honest and learning how to be honest learning to recognize all the aspects of ourselves or our foibles or shortcomings, our resistance or fears or conceits, or, you know, all the things that go on, but especially honest about the things we try to avoid, what are we not looking at? What are we not willing to recognize in ourselves? What are we avoiding, and so and living in community, or being in community and live in just thinking back to living on the farm, but being in some kind of community where we're called upon or are challenged, whether it's explicit, or just in the nature of implicit community life, to be more honest about ourselves to see what's going on here. And then we'll get wise about how we don't do it, because of a way in which we objectify. You know, we have opinions and views about this, and that, and the currency for many people's lives, how they live their lives, and how they live in their social life is to have opinions and views and understandings. And in what way it is having opinions and views. get in the way of this radical honesty, turning inwards towards self and knowing oneself and seeing what's going on, and allows us to be honest. So you know, for example, if we're angry with someone, we can have a strong opinion about them, and what's supposed to happen. But are we willing to look and see, you know, the underlying causes of the anger, the underlying feelings, the underlying ways in which we're projecting outwards, the underlying ways in which we may be or not, we're kind of severing a connectivity with someone else where we're kind of feel connected heart to heart, which anger can do, it can kind of sever kick, you know, objectified, keep it a distance, and to really feel and sense that and be honest about that. And sometimes it requires a lot of willingness to be vulnerable. be known because it's easier sometimes to be less vulnerable if you're projecting and objectifying and seeing a problem. out there, but, but to look in, to be honest.

And so I think partly because of the experience I had in the farm, this commune, and also over there was more than 40 years ago. So you know, I've had a little bit of life experiences then, of being in conflict being in challenging situations. And with people and I kind of have a tremendous trust in this process of honesty, trying to put everything out in the table, tried to talk about things and being truthful, as best we can. It's not always easy. But it can be practice in its own right. And you might see if you go through your life, if you can find situations where the honesty is the door, to greater mindfulness, the door to door to areas where it's really helpful to be mindful. Some people go through mindfulness practice, and they somehow think that mindfulness means you know, you walk outside, you're aware of the when you're wherever the sun, you're where the feet touching the ground, and, you know, your sense, sense world. And that's the end of it. What's nice to do that it's kind of nice. And there's something ultimately wonderful about doing the simplicity of that, that's great. But, you know, sometimes you may have deeper needs. And we do that kind of simple, entering the moment and being able to be present for the sun, the wind, the asphalt as we walk, so that we can do it for ourselves. So we can have the same kind of simple presence for what's really making us tick, what's really going on inside what's really the feelings, emotions, or thoughts, the beliefs it's really operating in here. And to be honest with that, to see that, not to avoid that by being in the present moment with his son in the trees, but to put to really show up here for ourselves. So to develop, to to see truth telling to see the kind of version of truth telling with this, which is honesty about what's going on. It doesn't mean that we have to be right doesn't have to mean that we're, we're perfect or we even know what's going on. But what I saw on the farm was that it was a collective process, that people didn't have to have it be accurate, didn't have to be all skillful and appropriate. They just had to stay in the hand continue talking about what was going on. And then and then they would work it out together, they'd find a way together. So it wasn't like one person was right and one person is wrong. It's probably better to assume that both people are wrong. Both of you are wrong. You know, both of You're right. And then you find your way kind of in learning go back and forth. And slowly we find our way. And that dialogue and that discussion of and now. So truth telling and honesty as a spiritual practice. That's probably just as good as mindfulness.

So that's my thoughts for today. Thank you