

# 2017-06-12 The Four Resolves

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

resolve, conceiving, welfare, peace, ideas, people, buddha, thoughts, world, life, relinquishment, conflict, means, longer, release, true, live, real, swirling, cigarettes

## SPEAKERS

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So as some of you can see, we have the LGBTQ flag up here and the altar next to the Buddha today. Today being the one year anniversary of the 49 people who were killed in the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, 53 people were wounded. It's been said, I think they've been the biggest mass killing by single person United States history. So, you know, I always believe that what we do here, you have trouble hearing it out there. It's not happening out there. I wonder if someone knows where the volume button is out there could check it. No one knows what the volume button is.

Good. So let's see is that happening now. So. So what I was saying is that it's my kind of one of my deepest wishes or hopes that the practice that we do here, the teachings we do here are for the welfare of our world. And part of that wish is that recognition is that there's a need to be a witness to what goes on in the world, and to really take it in and be affected by it. And to know, to those of us who were paying attention a year ago, it was quite painful to learn about what happened there in Orlando. So as I teach about what I talked about today, I might be dedicated to all the victims of Orlando and in some ways, we've all been victims of it, and especially LGBTQ community, who have had so much challenges over this last year, the amount of violence and hostility against the LGBTQ community has, seems to have gone up dramatically in the last year, at least from the reports of friends of mine who are LGBTQ and the experiences they're having, and places that I never would have thought here in the Bay area where I never thought there would have been problems. So what I'd like to talk about is that distinction, I think it's sometimes useful between what we do and how we do it. And that many people search for a life of what as if the thing that they're going to do. And some people find that what is not that important for them, but it's more important to how they do it. And I would like to propose that as people get more connected, more in touch with themselves and deep inner way is, what we do might still be important. But what grows and grows in importance, more and more is how we do it, how we go about our life, how we live, how we approach what we do. And that the means that the end does not justify the means for someone who is practicing mindfulness, that somehow the, you know, these have to be in harmony. And we don't do things which are harmful, in order to have positive results, good results. And so the idea of increasing sense, you know, as we come into the present moment, more and more and more sensitive and aware of what's going on for ourselves and the world immediately around us, the how becomes more and more important. And, as I said, it doesn't preclude having a what we do, that has a lot to do with how we do it. And the how we do it can be done with real intention that can really kind of, we can have really clear intention for why we do it. A clear motivation that's quite empowering quite something we can dedicate and devote her life to it in big ways. So much so that some people talk about being resolved, we can be resolved to do something. And some people have a very strong resolve. They don't just simply have an intention. They have their intention is behind them tremendous strength, that they're going to do it and Pam Cummins may be more important than almost anything else. This is what we're gonna do. Some people struggle with the idea of intention, they might

have all kinds of great things. They'd like to do. But then the follow through is hard. It's hard to get around to it or pick it up, or there's inhibition or there's fear. There's other things that are distracting. But to really kind of discover some strength behind what we want to do with our lives, is one of the tasks of a lot of people. And as part of this, how how we do it did you restraint, dedication, devotion.

In the teachings of the Buddha, there is this teaching about the four resolves. And these four resolves is how often translated into English, the word resolve, that could also be translated as determination.

But the Pali word means something like two, to take a stand, *adhiṭṭhāna*, to take a higher stand, that's understand that you know, to really, you know, take a stand where you stand what you're going to do. And the Buddha said, there are four resolves four step, places we can stand. And this is very interesting to hear talks about this, you know, this place to stand, when he also teaches that things are constantly changing and in flux. There's a kind of way in which we understand not to cling to anything, not to hold on to anything not to grasp, but not to crave. But if we don't quit clinging and don't crave, what do we base our life on? Where do we rest our life? Where do we dedicate ourselves to. And so these four resolves might not be the final goal of how we live our lives. But for the, they can be a lot to do with how we do whatever we do. But they can also be resolved that are reliable, you know, to know what is really important, what should I do in this life is a big question. And these four resolves with the Buddha, I think, are very significant, very powerful resolves, that have a kind of universality. I think they're probably relevant for almost everyone, and not just relevant as a minor thing to do. But there's something really to dedicate our life to. So these four resolves, or the resolve, for wisdom, the resolve for truth, the resolve for this wonderful word called *cāga*, which for now just saved means, relinquishment. And then there is a reason to be resolved on peace. So to have these four qualities as part of what we do, the how we do, to do whatever we do with wisdom, to do it with a devotion towards truth, to do it with, not with the idea of acquisition, but the idea of a certain kind of healthy and wise relinquishment as we do it. And then to do it with a sense of peace. And the last one in particular is very interesting, because often, the final goal of Buddhist practice is peace, to have deep abiding sense of inner peace, well, being within ourselves, the heart at peace with itself, in a way that is very refreshing, nourishing, satisfying, it feels like this, this is really kind of finally arrived in a place that feels kind of kind of like eternally satisfying, because there's no agitation, no discomforts, in which to try to get relief for. And if you don't need relief, it's pretty good. And so what's nice about peace is that the search for peace, the quest for peace, can be a peaceful quest. And so the how we are, can be reflected in the goal of peace, to be peaceful to the best of our ability as we go approach this, these four resolves, then are, so the first one is, you know, that seems like a big deal, wisdom, maybe have to write. Now, people think maybe they're supposed to read a lot of books, and try to get a lot of knowledge and understanding. But the wisdom of the Buddha is something that is much more immediate, and something that we can kind of use as a guide for our lives. And one of the definitions of wisdom of a wise person by the Buddha, a wise person is someone who intends for the welfare of themselves, for the welfare of others, and the welfare of self and others. And this idea of self and others is an interesting category. I think it to be the we, there's you there's me, there's you and there's a we as a community as a combination as a, you know, as a collective.

In no one place the Buddha says this last category, instead of saying intensive welfare for self and other he says in the same place, he says that for the win intends the welfare for the whole world. It's pretty cool, right to touch up in your heart, so to be resolved to be wise, is to be interested in concerned with what brings welfare well being to oneself and to others and to everyone else. And what's nice about this is not singling out one of those categories, that it's all about my welfare, forget everyone else. Or it's all about someone else's welfare and I don't count, or it's not a sacrifice, not about sacrificing everything for the whole world better than social welfare. But there's somehow those three are held kind of an equal equal status. And maybe that maybe by taking care of all three, we take care of each

one, or it is together, it's kind of the healthiest kind of way. So that to have this be the definition of being wise is kind of a, you know, how do you how are you wise then starts by having that intention to care for the welfare of others. And it comes within pursuing after being interested in finding out what what is welfare. And it can be said that all the Buddhism is dedicated to the welfare and well being of human beings, and all forms form itself for the other and for society as a whole. And the, the reason, the resolve on truth is interesting. Because, you know, certainly it's good to be resolved and speaking the truth. But there should be no buts. I mean, that's a great thing. And the addition is also being resolved to be connected to what is true. What can we rely on really, what is really true here? And there's a variety of things that Buddha points to as being true. The word that's translated as true, such can also mean real, what is real? So what is real in our world? Is, is the pursuit of money and wealth and status are a real thing? Is, is having, you know, lots of recreational opportunities, is that somehow the truth? Or is that a real in some solid way? Our fantasies and pleasure, sensual pleasures? Are they true? Are they real in some way that's really reliable, like something you can rely on? Can you rely on sensual pleasure? Can you rely on comfort? What can you rely on? And so the Buddha points to a few different things. But I want to point to the one he said when m&e gives us specific teachings about these four results, I want to mention the one that he highlights. And he highlights something that I like to translate as release, sometimes called liberation, it's to be much. And we muddy, this to release to, to liberation. And he takes liberation as being the highest truth, the highest thing that is real, that is really says, and so what is it about liberation, that makes it true? And you know, the highest truth is an interesting topic. Interesting question. And what I like to propose as an answer to that question, is that that what the release or the freedom that Buddhism points to, is only relevant if we're not free. And if we release whatever keeps us unfree, that experience of release is not a thing. It's not something that comes and goes in the same way as clouds come and go, or people come and go, or thoughts and emotions come and go. It's, it might experience a bit might come and go in a certain way, but it's not a thing. And to take the highest truth to the highest thing that's real, something which is not kind of not real. But maybe more important than anything that's real, kind of so no, this is confusing, probably what I'm saying. So take if you spent your lifetime with your fist held tight, you can do a lot of things with if you always keep your hand in a fist, you can do some things but most people will step away. If you go around this way. You know, it's not really a friendly thing to do.

But you know, you can you can do some things with it and if you if you really clench it for a long time, then you know, you're all you do that begins hurting, you know, and tight and restricted. If at some point someone tells you, you know, you don't have to be this way, you can open your hand, nice Oh, really. So you open your hand. And lo and behold, it's a relief. Lo and behold, now your hands are open. So you you've released the grip of the hand. And what's what's what you have now is an open hand. The openness is not a thing that exists as an existent thing. It's you can't touch the openness. But the openness is very meaningful for someone who had their hand closed all the time. If you're indoors all the time. And you're never, you know, maybe in you know, in jail. And finally, the doors are open. That openness is really meaningful, and you can walk out. But the openness doesn't exist as a thing that exists as an absence. But that absence is quite significant. So the experience of release of freedom involves a radical, dramatic absence of clinging, of craving, of hate of delusion. And it doesn't really leave you something that exists. But you can't say it doesn't exist. You can't quite say that they open this open door, their openness, open space in the door doesn't exist in the conventional way of how things exist, but you can say it doesn't exist. And the Buddha said, so in Buddha says the highest truth is release. Could he be saying that, you know, that's reliable, because that's always there, in a way that everything else that kind of is a thing comes and goes and you can't quite rely on. So I hope you follow that. And part of the movement in Buddhism is to move towards greater and greater release. And that, in turn, informs us guides us for how to be wise. Because as we were there, as people get, let go more and more of how they cling, then they understand what it feels like to suffer less, and feel happier, more peaceful. And then we understand what benefits how to what welfare is for people. And so that guides

us to understand how to live for the welfare of self and others. The third resolve is to resolve on relinquishment. And it's a wonderful word because the word Chaga also means generosity. And it's kind of shows the richness of the word relinquishment, when it's also used to describe Genet, to be generous, generous, is a nice thing. Perhaps relinquishment is as warm hearted as movement, as generosity. Because it makes sense. You know, if you relinquish if you give something to someone, you're kind of relinquishing it for the benefit of someone else. So this idea of not just letting go, but kind of handing it up or giving it up in some nice way. But so as we have a sense, greater and greater sense of, of real release of freedom, then it makes sense to appreciate how valuable it is to continue that process of release or relinquishment. And what we link how I understand the word relinquishment here, is not just letting go. But it comes from a clear decision, a resolve, that there's something that you no longer want to be holding on to and clinging to. So it's a decisive, letting go. It's, it's letting go with wisdom with understanding. I'm no longer interested in this. I'm no longer going to be popular, but do this anymore. And I wonder if all of you have maybe have some reference points like this in the course of your lifetime, where there was something that you did over and over again, repeatedly. And at some point, you say, I think I'm done with this. This is to run its course, this is no longer serving me. This is harmful for me. And I'm not only am I gonna let it go, but I'm clearly making a decision. No more of this. I'm going to stop this.

Someone I met I knew a long time ago, who was smoking cigarettes a lot. He went, he ran out of cigarettes, that 11 or 12 o'clock at night. So he had to go to the store to get cigarettes because he had to smoke. And on his way there in the dark, he said, What am I doing? This is crazy to have to feel feel it that appealed the I have to have this cigarette this time of night. And he made a decision there and then to stop smoking cigarettes. He relinquished cigarettes. He thought it was a new for his own welfare. So this idea of relinquishment, is something decisive, that there's some kind of powerful statement or powerful act we can do. The English word renunciation also speaks to this idea of doing something letting go with decision didn't go with kind of in a clear, declared way. Because it means literally, the renunciation, as I understand it, the Latin means to announce again, to state again. And so, you know, you're kind of like, I'm clearly going to do this, this is I'm not I don't stand behind this anymore. I'm not interested in this anymore. And how can that can we do this in a way that's generous for ourselves, generous for others, generous, generous for the world. And then the last resolve is their resolve on peace. And peace might seem kind of boring. might seem, you know, kind of dull or, you know, kind of not so interesting, when there's so many exciting things to do, and big things to accomplish and all that. But I think that if we could discover how to be peaceful, we discover real peace, where meaning we're no longer in conflict with ourselves. We're no longer arguing with ourselves in the world. We're no longer in conflict with ourselves and conflict with others, and in conflict with the world react with or with reality. That's pretty wonderful, to not be in conflict, then people will protest when they hear this, but people are in conflict with me that can't avoid conflict. The Buddha once said, others are in conflict with me. I'm not in conflict with them. That's an interesting statement. How can that be true? I think we often identify so strongly with someone's angry with us. That means that now we're involved in the anger, we're in conflict. But, you know, do we have to participate in a way where we feel like we're in conflict. I think it's possible to participate and resolve challenges we have when other people are in conflict with us, without us feeling that we are in conflict in return. Meaning that we're not contracted, we're not asserting ourselves, we're not fighting, we're not hitting conflict means literally Latin means to strike out. So too. So this idea, this idea of not being to being at peace, I think, is a profound thing. One of the formative experiences in my life, for starting a spiritual practice was walking into and when I was 18, I walked into a small thousand year old chapel in France, stone, kind of big stone blocks. And the chapel was probably about a b 10, by 10, the size of it 10 by 12. So it was pretty small. And I stepped into it. And immediately there was peace, there was this amazing

experience of peace that seemed to descend and move through my body. And I lingered there as long as I could, before I was ushered out to experience that.

In this teaching, the Buddha gave about the four resolves. He said that if someone has these four resolves, and somehow matures into them, they become a sage at peace, the sage at peace. And then he went on to say a sage at peace is no longer swept away by the tides of conceiving and kind of evocative, where the tides of conceiving the current floods of conceiving. And this word conceiving is very interesting. In English, because conceiving the way it's being used here, it's used as a way of thinking about things. And the Pali word means to imagine. But conceiving in English means also means to give birth to something, to conceive something, you know, a child. And so this idea of giving birth to all kinds of things through our thoughts, we live in our thoughts we can see we live in our imagination. And to really experience the peace the Buddha's teaching about means that we no longer living in our imagination. We're no longer imagining. Living in the imaginary futures, imaginary pasts, we're no longer living in the imaginations of who we think we need to be who we are. The conceiving, through which we end up in conflict with ourselves, to conceive things in which we are critical of ourselves, the ideas that we live by the comparison of thinking we have the world of conceived conceiving the world of our, of our imaginary thoughts, our creative kind of thinking we live in under is too often not a kind world, not a place that's conducive to living in a harmonious way in this world. So the Buddha talked about a sage at peace, who stopped all conceiving. And in particular, he pointed to conceiving all kinds of identities that we live under a couple of ideas of who we are, me myself in mind, I am this I am that I will be shall be I was all this idea of swirling currents and rivers and tides of self conception and self concern and being apologetic or being defensive or building ourselves up, or, you know, all this complicated world is not a world of peace. And what does it take to stop all the agitation, all the preoccupation with self, so that that agitation settles, we experienced peace? The Buddha then went on, and said something that I guess a little bit provocative and mystical, sounds mystical, perhaps. And he said, For Sage at peace, who has no conceiving? No, then it doesn't live in the imagination of the mind. for that person. There is no birth, no aging, and no death. That's the kind of interesting statement. I can't imagine that Buddha meant that Sage is never going to get old and ever going to die. I can't mean that. So it must mean something else must be something peculiar. What does it mean to say that someone no longer is born, no longer ages, and no longer dies? For people who are worried about dying, people are worried about getting old. This is kind of like, you know, should be a very curious thing. The you know, here, the Buddha perhaps has finally figured out the formula for immortality. So I don't know, I'll try to explain to me better, but I think he means by this. And that is that, to live in the world of ideas of birth, and aging and death. We're living in the world of our thoughts in our ideas. And the question is, are we going to allow our thoughts and the ideas of our mind be the source of our happiness or unhappiness? Are we gonna let the swirling conceptions their imaginations? abstractions, ideas, we have be what kind of really that we are we going to rely on that those for our welfare, or for the solution for our life.

And there's something unreliable, about about a high percentage of what people think. So I don't know any of you well enough to know, you know, if it's true for you, but I think that you know, like for me, I if I was going to kind of put a statistical number on the number of seriously reliable thoughts that I have thoughts that I should base my life on, and this is this is a truth and everyone else should obey and you know, just go along. I think that you know, I think my success rate for that is probably pretty low. You know, if I'm generous to myself, maybe 2% of my thoughts are really kind of jet, you know, something worthwhile. But if but if people look at their own thoughts in their minds, and look at what percent of a thoughts do they say to themselves, so think about that causes harm, that hurts, oh, I'm no good, I'm lousy, I'm not up to it. You know, that person must hate me or, you know, or I'm, you know, just, you know, all kinds of ideas, that hurt that could have been ouch in them. I suspect that it's a lot more than



2% that people have. I the way I talked to a lot of people about their lives. And I would guess that for some of the people I talked to, a majority of their thoughts are hurt, in some way or other. And those thoughts are conceived things and ideas. And it is possible to, to stop relying on those thoughts, to talk to stop it basing one's life in those conceiving, and to rely on something else. And so the Buddha offered four things that you can rely on. You can maybe switch your allegiance. From these painful self inflicting thoughts, ideas, to beginning to focus on the resolve on wisdom, the resolve on truth, what's really true here, resolve on relinquishment, or maybe generosity, and the resolve on peace. And if there's peace in the mind, and the mind is not caught up, and it's contractions and tightness, and agitation. It's not going to base its our welfare, on these thoughts. And if our welfare and well being and understanding of the world is not rooted or dependent on the world of concepts, ideas and conceived things, then some of our conceding things will begin to recede, and maybe not be there. And at some point, we realize that the ideas of aging and death that we live with, are mostly just ideas, they might have some relationship to what's happening over time in our lives. We don't deny that there's aging and death. But it's not necessary to live with those ideas. In fact, many of these ideas that we live in, are belong to a virtual reality that we give more substance and weight to than reality itself. And sometimes these conceiving that we think are so important that we, we it's kind of like taking a paintbrush, and watercolors and trying to paint a picture on running water. That's how successful these thoughts are sometimes. As soon as they're said that they really kind of fade away. Or I think actually a better metaphor would be analogy would be taking the paintbrush in the watercolors, and trying to paint in the space of the open door that you know won't even doesn't even take there's something about the nature of these thoughts and ideas that we grasp on to where their grab hold of us that when we release their grip. And we can see to see directly field be directly. We experience ourselves independent of our thoughts, independent ideas and judgments and criticisms and conflicts that we might swirl around in our thoughts.

Who are you? When you don't use thoughts to tell you? Who are you we don't you don't use thoughts to answer the question. Are you then just just in trying to feel your way into that? Does that kind of push aside or drop away some of that usual ideations that you live in and swirling and concerned with? Who are you and you're not use thoughts to tell you? I knew a man and who in the 1980s was dying of AIDS. He was a Zen priest. He's on Dorsey. And he was dying of dying. And he would tell people with great enthusiasm, to, to have AIDS has to be alive. And for him as I understood it, he was not focusing on dying. For him dying was an obstruction, he knew he was going to die. But that's not where he lived in those ideas and thoughts. He lived in being alive here and have known people as they die. So many of the ideas and concepts that they live in over the course of their life, no longer seem to hold them and grab them. Their fears and concerns and projections and remembrances, and deception begins to fall away. Maybe they're relinquished. And they're left with the simplicity, the pristine simplicity of this moment here. And if you've ever visited someone as they're dying, or visit someone, right after death, they're dead. And maybe if you had the occasion not to be grieving at that moment, I think there's something about the simplicity of those moments that are can be quite powerful. Because they're kind of like that, suddenly, all these concepts and ideas that we live in, have been stilled and quieted. And it can be pristine. This moment, the purity of the moment, the emptiness of the clarity of the moment, just just just by itself has it almost as if this is enough, here is a real piece, here is the clearing of the clouds, clearing the fog, of ideas and thoughts and preoccupations, here things are simple. So for a sage at peace, to have no birth, aging and death means that that person has a sense of a lightness, of connectedness of freedom, here and now. That is on filtered or uncovered on there's not the kind of covered over by the projections, or the ideas and concepts that we often live in our life by. And what does it take to discover that piece? What does it take to discover that experience of being alive, where our preoccupations have been put to rest. And so we have these four results. And I think these four

results are great results for how to live a life and almost any healthy endeavor that you want to do in your life.

Bring along these four results and how you do it. But also resolved on these four things. Those are also a path to genuine freedom. So to be resolved on wisdom, which I think is where I talked about it is almost synonymous to being resolved on compassion or living it's living a life making decisions of how to live a life that are compassionate, concerned for the welfare of self and other and the whole world. To be resolved on truth, to be truthful, to be a true person to know who you are honestly and fully enough that you can be true to who you are. To be resolved on relinquishment, perhaps generosity and to be resolved on peace, the kind of peace that for me, is associated with the early dawn, the lightest coming up, and then sitting on the edge of a pass body of water lake or Bay. And the water is completely still and flat and spreads out. And the light is there and no one's up yet. Maybe the animals and birds Have you gotten up yet and it's just this wonderful stillness and quiet tranquility, looking out across the lake, and all things are good. All things are fine. There's no dearth, no aging and no depth for those few minutes before everyone else gets up. So for resolves, so I offer them to you this evening, as something you can reflect on. Maybe there's something that one of them or two or three year old for them might be something to consider. Not only are they useful to maybe live a little bit with those resolves those intentions, but also use them as a way of questioning in a healthy, kind way, compassionate way, questioning and looking at, what are some of the other things that you're resolved on, that you had never really realized or resolved on? That maybe you don't want to be resolved on. And maybe you'd like to substitute one of these for great results of the Buddha. Thank you.