

2017-09-17 On The Way To Unshakeable Faith

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SPEAKERS

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So imagine that the in your heart, there's a seed. And that seed can sit there for a long time, maybe for a lifetime and never germinate. But if it's germinates, it's a seed, which brings a lot of goodness with it. Something that helps you to feel kind of confident, helps you to feel a sense of goodness and warmth inside it sense of certainty, a sense of purpose and direction in your life. And that, if you nourish that seed, it just kind of grows in the warmth than the value and the fullness within you. So this seed, in the teachings of the Buddha, is the note he referred to it this way, is faith. And their word for faith in the ancient language is saddha. And it's possible, it's not the state is not the best English translation of an ancient Indian word. But faith kind of gets to a little bit I like the word faith because for me, for me, it faith is a kind of an emotional quality to it.

And also the original meaning of faith in English, was not believing in something, unless the word believe at its original meaning in English, which was to, to hold something dear to love something. And, in originally when is first used in English, you know, set, you know, 1000 years ago or so, it didn't refer to a doctrine that one believes, and also doesn't refer to what has come to in the last decades. Sometimes when we say someone believes it's only what they believe, it's a little bit dismissal of them. You know, it's like that doesn't really count because just a belief or something. But it used to be that when in that to the word believe meant that this is what you hold ears where you put your heart, what was heartfelt for you, in relationship to something, some reality, some transcendent reality, perhaps in religion. And so the idea of faith is something in Buddhism also is in as it very intimately connected to the heart. And so it's where we put our heart, or what we welcome in our hearts, or what we do wholeheartedly. And it has less to do with the belief system, than it has to do with the purpose and direction that we're confident in going in. So, and in fact, this word saddha, the primary use of it in the ancient teachings of the Buddha, was to describe the confidence or the sense of inspiration that someone had, who began the practice, began the path of liberation. And for each of you, the fact that you're here today, and meditating, you must have something that you have faith in something, you trusted something you had competence enough in order to do this, because it's a strange thing to do, in relationship to what most people do. And if you come here regularly, it's not strange. But, you know, to be able to sit still, that was, you know, 35 minutes of sitting still and not talking. And it's an unusual thing for good people to do unusual, closed one eyes and just kind of be with one's breathing or be with us on their life and be mindful. And so you had to have enough faith, if I do use the word for you enough trust or confidence in something that you're willing to do, even if this is your very first time here to try it out. So what was that? I would like to say that it's something very precious and very valuable, even if it's just curiosity and that what you're here to do.

So we have the seed. And that seed can be discovered that seed can be watered, nourished, and that seed can grow and develop and become something that's very, very meaningful for people. And at

some point, that seed you know, seed germinates, you know, at some point it becomes a rooted and the plant grows, and it gets really securely, well rooted. And, you know, if that seed, you know, is very small, the seed of a redwood tree, and but you know that redwood tree is rooted It's probably going to be rooted for a few centuries. You know, there's some of the trees around here, you know, over 1000 years old. And so to some point, our faith becomes deeply rooted. And the Buddha then used a different word, than saddha, the word I mentioned before, for the rooted faith, and he used the word pasāda. And so there's a distinction made, there's a transition made from having this saddha faith to having this pasāda faith. So he used the metaphor of a seed, I would like to kind of change metaphors, as I tried to explain this, and use the metaphor of a stream or a river, that our lives involve being in a stream stream of our life, it just flows along, we, our bodies, you know, we can't, my bodies change, and they grow, and they do their things they do over a lifetime. And there's a stream of our physical body, there's a stream of our emotional life that changes and varies over time, but the impact and what happens around us, and it's a constant stream of change that goes on, there's a stream of our mental life and our thoughts or ideas, the things that influence it, our concerns or inspirations, there's all these streams, and our life is a stream of change a stream of unfolding, that keeps going. And so if we're going down this stream, and we're not paying attention, if we're in that can do, and maybe, you know, we've already been paddling, because there's enough current taking us downstream. And we're planning, you know, what we're going to do tomorrow, or we're rehearsing tomorrow, because we're afraid of tomorrow. Or if we're lingering too much in the past, and rehearsing our regrets, and our you know, and the conversations we've had the events we've had, if we're in fantasy world, caught up in that, or forced to kind of preoccupied with our emotional life, they're not really paying attention, then as we go down this stream in our canoe, that's an occurrence taking us down, we don't notice that the stream splits into. And since we're not paying attention, we're not we don't have anything to do with which of those forks we take. And perhaps the strong current is taking us down the, the fork on the right. And that's where all the rapids are. And the waterfalls. And it takes us to a whole different dose. Not only that, but there's kind of a divide in the in terrain. So that's a whole different watershed, you're going down, you know, and you take into the stream to the left, that's a different watershed. And there, it's mellow and peaceful and beautiful, serene, and it's just a nice place to go. So if you're not paying attention, there might be a strong current that takes you one way or the other. But you don't have any choice, because you're not there to even notice, you might not even notice the split. I've gone on the freeway sometimes and didn't notice the exit I was supposed to take what was that about? I was involved in some kind of thoughts. So I can imagine doing that in the stream going down. And, and, but if we're present, and paying attention to what we're doing in this river, really here, then when we come to that fork, we can kind of nudge the maybe nudge the canoe, one way or the other, we can pull out the paddle. Or if we have the paddle, you know, over the back kind of as the as a rudder, we can kind of just tip it one direction, it goes one way or the other, we have some choice in which direction it goes. And sometimes if it's strong currents, we might have to paddle hard to kind of get it into the, the fork that we want.

And, and it can make a world of difference which fork we take which watershed we go down. And but if a person doesn't know that there's going to be a difference. If ever occurred to person if person just feels like that, you know, life should be easy and you don't have to roll your boat just kind of like everything will be taken care of. And there you go down the waterfall because you're not you know, you're not paying attention or you feel resentful that you have to do any paddling whatsoever. You know, you know you're kind of angry that you weren't given a motorboat Or, you know, or you know, all kinds of reasons why person doesn't get involved, but make a choice. And so part of the function of mindfulness is to help us be in the present moment enough. So we can see that in the present moment, there's actually always a fork. And which fork Are you going to take? And are you going to take the fork that leads to greater harm, or suffering, or the fork of leads to harmlessness, to greater lack of harm, to

freedom from suffering. And in the Buddhist tradition, that little distinction, which may be as huge represents two different watersheds you can go down. And you know, with comes a very different terrain, very different world that we go into, perhaps, depending on which one we take. And we make this week and every junction we come we have that it can be as simple as going to the supermarket to buy groceries, and you feel a little bit like you're in a hurry. Or maybe annoyed you're there are I don't know what though, you're greedy to get the best tomatoes, something. And so you come to the door. And there's someone there who's may be an old person who's kind of hobbling little bit and struggling with their cart. And so you know, so you don't notice in that you're not present enough, you're concerned about your tomatoes. And so you kind of just cut the person off and person a little bit disoriented, and you get to go get your tomatoes, or you notice what's happening and you stop, and you support to help the person step back and let the person get through the door. A small little thing, teeny little difference. If you're present, which of those forks do you take? For some of us? I think it's not a choice. It was like, Oh, don't feel like a choice, you'd say, step back and let the old person get through and not kind of make it hard by forcing your way through first. But if you're not paying attention, you might not do that. It's happened to me in my life where I've gone through doors, and I didn't notice the other person that was there. Only when I went through that. Oh, no, what did I just do? I kind of cut someone off. And I felt that. So I'm capable of that kind of mindlessness. So I don't know. I mean, you know, maybe you're more mindful than I. So the so the suggestion is every, every moment, actually, there's a kind of a fork we can walk we can take. And then do we know what the choice is? Do we know what the useful choices? Were the supportive choices? And can we have faith or confidence and a choice that's nourishing, that's freeing that's meaningful, that's brings us more alive, that connects us, that brings us into the territory, the watershed of non harming where we don't harm others, and we don't harm ourselves. And this is kind of the crux of what at least, my understanding what the Buddha was teaching was how we can live a life without causing harm. And the primary thing that he kind of pointed to, for us to be able to do that was to take a good, careful look at ourselves, to discover how we bring harm to ourselves. And so it turns out that if we're greedy, not only do I harp and for those tomatoes, not only do I kind of make it harder than the day for the old person trying to get in. So it's a little bit harmful there, perhaps. But the very fact that I was greedy, if I'm sensitive, actually is a kind of an Ouch, is kind of that kind of you're really sensitive and aware, that kind of hurts to do that. But if you're not sensitive, if you're busy and engaged and you have more things to be greedy for then you have a whole list and you're busy doing them. You know, you kind of don't you don't have time to notice that the Ouch, of being greedy.

But to be mindful, not only of the present moment, be mindful enough to really feel the impact of the choices we make the thoughts we have the feelings we have, the things we say things we do. We'll get plenty of feedback about what the choices we have, we know the forks that we can go. And if if I'm sensitive enough to you know, the impact I'm having on the old person at the supermarket, and the impact on myself. Again, it's becomes crystal clear that I would step back and let the person go through the door first. If I if there's No old person going into the supermarket door. And I'm sensitive and aware. And I'm feel like greed for the tomatoes, I would probably say, this is harmful to feel this greed, it hurts. It's subtle, but it kind of hurts. And I would not do this, maybe maybe I let go of it. And the fork that I took is to go into the supermarket. Without the greed, I might still want to get tomatoes for my family. But I wouldn't be greedy for wouldn't act on that greed. Now this can seem like, you know, pretty simplistic stuff, it can seem like it's not very much where they have a great road world religion, that tracking the present moment and choosing to what you do at a supermarket door. And paying attention to things like greed, or hatred, or fear, or, you know, just a whole range of things like that, jealousy. The, but it turns out, that if we can begin taking a fork, where we, if we have enough sense, sense enough, trust enough confidence, that it's valuable to go down the harm, list way, enough trust to realize it's worthwhile or it's I'm going to try out, going down the door of paying attention becoming sensitive, down

the stream of being sensitive, and choosing not to be greedy for long enough to see what happens to be long enough not to be caught up in hostility and hate not to be caught in the fear anxiety that I have. And for some people, where they discover that where they can kind of explore and going on that stream is not to the supermarket door. But in their meditation practice or something like that. Because as we meditate and sit, it becomes, you know, we're really trying to be in the present moment. And as are more and more in the present moment, we've become more sensitive to what we're doing. We noticed if the directions of the mind the thought patterns of the mind the motivations that drive us the things we're caught up in. And we see the consequences of those, we see which ones of those harm or harmful hurt, oh, when it's and which enemy see there's a little fork, I can maybe let go of that I can change what I'm thinking about, I can have a different attitude to what's happening here, I could try to focus on just the breathing and keep it really simple. So all these other curtain concerns fall away. And slowly, as people do something like meditation, they're met, they're actually choosing to go down a different stream. And at some point, we go down that stream far enough. And a warm seed of faith begins to germinate. Where we have a sense of Oh, wait a minute, this is valuable. This is a potential This is a possibility, to feel the kind of integrity to feel the kind of wholeness to feel the kind of maybe peacefulness, this is a valuable state to be in. To be in this kind of more settled peaceful state than it is to be caught up in my anxiety caught up in my hostility, my concerns for revenge, my jealousy, my fantasies and my grades and my desires and my lusts, this is actually meaningful. And then that sense of meaning that sense of purpose, that sense of value of this way of being a person starts having something like a greater trust in it a greater confidence in it, a greater, you know, faith in this possibility.

That faith when that begins to be awakened, that is a motivating force, for beginning to follow them with work wholeheartedly a life to do more of this to live that way, and not just do this in meditation, but start paying attention daily life as well. Isn't, you know, it's not that you know, it's okay. It's nice to have a peaceful, settled, whole sense of peace for oneself and meditation. But why leave it there? Why not start living that life for finding how to live that in rest of our life as well. So that not only do we live a life of harmlessness towards ourselves in our lives, but we also live a life that's harmless towards others. In our lives, we don't cause harm to other people. and meditate meditation, we've learned how to not to harm ourselves. And there's a lot of self harm that goes on. There's a hard way people are self critical people are having have all kinds of negative ideations and thoughts and attitude towards themselves. But even if they have, even if they don't have negative attitudes themselves, to be caught up, as I said, with greed or hostility towards the world around us, that also is a kind of harm that we do to ourselves, and to start to learn how to let go of that, and then learn to do that are dipping interest into the rest of our life. How can I do it there too, not because it's an obligation, not because the Buddha said you should, but rather because the seed has been sprouted inside of you germinated inside the seed of goodness of wholesomeness of something that feels wholehearted, of rightness, rightness, the sense of things feels deeply satisfying, a sense of maybe a feel, this feels more true. This is a true way of being that feels more true, more integrity, integrity, than the streams of greed or their streams of hostility or other kinds of streams. So when that faith has been born, then germinated, that is a motivator to, okay, this is what I want to do. And for some people, it's a little bit of faith, which is great. And they do a little bit of it. For some people, it's a medium degree of faith, and they do a medium, or they will apply themselves this path of practice in their life. And for some people, the faith is huge. For some people it becomes their life is not the same afterwards, they decide this is what I'm going to commit my life to, this is what I want to do. And some of that, to really see it in the big way, the faith and the value of it is, is not only to understand the full impact it has in ourselves, and the potential and how it's so much better than what we had been doing. The other is to understand its tremendous value for our society around us. That it's not just, it's not just a self help program, or we're involved in to make ourselves feel better, you know, to be have privileged roles in our society and just be able to enjoy it better. But rather, it's often the opposite. It's to sometimes, you know, people who really take this Buddhist path seriously, and this is kind of some of us can be bad news. It's fairly common for people to be downwardly mobile.

So now you're ready to go find something, you know, find a religion that's more about, you know, prosperity. And so the idea that, that there's something more valuable, then, you know, different kind of well, than money and houses and cars and all kinds of things. And that's in the Buddha talked about faith, this faith in this path to this possibility to life of harmlessness, he talked about it as a treasure inside are a form of wealth. So some people understand that wealth so strongly in the value of it, that this seems like the that for some people is the only thing they want to dedicate their life to. This is what they want to do. And so it's a wonderful expression that one of my Zen teachers said, I thought about it, I was inspired by this. He said, it's nice when people come to me and say, you know, it's Buddhism is Buddhist practices good. But I really want to bring it into my life. That's a nice thing. But he said, you know, is there's another possibility, and that is your primary dedication primary. When people say that means their primary home is their life out there. And they bring Buddhism into it, for as possible, make your practice your life. And then the task is how did you bring your life into it? It's a different, you know, different way of looking at it. Because of sense of importance. There's a whole range of how strong that faith is, and they're all good. I have tremendous faith myself, or trust in any degree of faith that the person had is right for them. And it puts them down a little different stream. And it turns out, we come to these streams all the time throughout the day. And we have a little choice to make this way and this way. Do I get do I, you know, snap at someone here? Do I buy kind to this person here? Do I hold my tongue right here? Do I look inside of myself here and see what's going on right now? Or do I lash out? You know, all kinds of things we do. I suspect that if you just watch yourself, those of you who might be on the computer a fair amount watching the web or something doing something there I'd be interesting to consider what streams you're choosing to go down when you do that. And there's probably a different stream every time you click a different choice, are you choosing a stream? That's for your own good? are you choosing a stream that allows that seed of goodness that's inside to grow and nourish you? Or is it just see that kind of close it down. And I see that in myself that if I'm on the computer on the web too much, it's actually something feels deadening inside. I think I kind of, you know, it's like, it's like maybe more like, forgetting to water, the seed, the plant and kind of begins to shrivel up. And so, you know, so what are we doing with our lives? And how do we take care of it and responsibility for it? And there's a lot of, and what do we have? What is our primary thing we have faith in and purpose and if someone came from Mars, anthropologist from Mars, and it was curious about you. And but didn't really understand how your language couldn't read your thoughts. But they followed around, and just kind of kept track of the log of all the things you do. And or maybe they can see your thoughts, even imagine that. And all the kind of thought have a log of all the different thoughts you have. And then they went back to headquarters at Mars. And they had this wonderful report to make. And they noticed that, yeah, that this down there in the planet earth. A lot of people, you know, this word faith is really important for people and some people, you know, they have, it's really interesting, what they have faith. And there's some people have a lot of how they behave, when they have really faith in his anxiety. Boy, you can't believe how many people trust and value anxiety, the amount of time they spend on it, the devotion to it. I mean, it must be high devotion to church have anxiety, like this is like there's so important for them. Or there's the there's also the faith that people have in greed, we can't leave them there and planet Earth. They'd like it's like, like, you know, there's not only do they have, do they, you know, have tremendous confidence and belief in the value of greed, because they're so focused on it. They have high priests and priestesses Who, who, who, you know, extol the virtues and celebrate the value of greed and get everyone along and inspired to go out and be consumers. It's really, there's a lot of faith there.

And that, and then there's the and then there's a whole category of particular species of faith down there on the planet Earth, which has to do with anger and hostility, by they people really believe in the value of that, because boy, they really hang on to that at all costs. And they're not going to give that up

for anything. That's what they believe in. So what do you have faith in? What report this, the Martian anthropologists write up about you, they really got to follow it. We don't think this way, it's kind of odd to look at, you know, something like anxiety or fear or hostility or greed as being something of faith and, but you know, there's a kind of devotion and dedication to it, we have to switch what we have faith and to have faith in the opposite of those two faith in generosity, love being peaceful. So to so there's always these forks, and mindfulness puts us in those forks. Fortunately, if we go down the wrong fork or the stream, a few seconds later, there's another fork. It's a very forgiving, you know, flow of water. Because at any moment, you come to another fork, and you can choose the one that's harmless. timelessness. So you don't have to get too caught up. In you know that, oh, I blew it. You can actually always make a change, always ever changing. It doesn't really not so helpful to spend a lot of time caught up in, I made the wrong choice. Because if you're caught up back there, the last juncture, or the juncture you made a year ago, the work you did. You might be so involved, you don't see the next fork you come to if you don't see the next fork there, you know you're not then currents which are not your own are going to carry you maybe down the wrong fork again. Every moment, you can redo it. It's very forgiving. It's it can be very inspiring to realize I can I can make a difference here. And so the value of faith in Buddhism is a faith and the confidence, yes, I can make a difference, I can gently move in a different direction. What's important about this idea of a stream. And why I chose it today is that a stream has currents. They're not necessarily your choosing, or not necessarily, you're making me that's better expression, not you're making, we're being carried by so much more in our lives, than our own choices our own thoughts are on. There's a huge currents and streams that represent our lives, many of them which are, maybe subconscious, unconscious, they're bigger than us all kinds of things. And it's not just about us. making choices, we don't want to put too much responsibility on our shoulders. There are conditions, but what we're doing and the choices we can make is we're choosing which currents are going to support our canoe, which which streams which conditions are going to help us. And so you want to so we're trying to choose conditions which are supportive, not the waterfall. As we go down these streams, and we see them more and more and better and better than at some point, that confidence we have in this demotivating confidence that caught in this word sod as a motivating confidence to test I should do this, I have confidence into making these choices have confidence in this path. This is valuable. At some point, that becomes faith that's called pasāda. And pasāda is has a double meaning of being both means faith or confidence, but also means bright, and peaceful. And so some people will translate it as serene faith. It's not the Zealot faith, you know, it's our fiery faith. there's a there's a peacefulness in having it. But it's, it's it becomes at some point, it becomes unshakable faith.

And this is where the plant has germinated, the seed has germinated and grown. And the roots are so deep, that it's maybe impossible to now destroy the plant. So unshakable faith at some point, and so the Buddha talked about at some point to come to a juncture where one's faith and confidence in the practice and making these choices being present in this path of harmlessness, is so strong, that it's unshakable at this point where the unshakable faith that he talks about comes with a certain consequence. And this is a consequence, maybe some of you're not going to want one just like the downwardly mobile thing is bad news. One of the consequences is, you're no longer going to believe in the value of complaining. You might still complain, or you might, you might still have the impulse to complain, but you're no longer going to invest anything to it. You no longer have faith in the value of complaining. You're confident that this is not where you want to live your life. No question, unshakable complaining is not supportive. Maybe even more dramatic, is that you no longer believe in the value of anxiety. You might still become anxious, but you no longer identified you no longer kind of wedded to it. You no longer kind of there's a little bit like a step back say, Well, I'm anxious, but I'm not gonna This is not worth investing in. I don't really believe in the value of it anymore. That's a pretty powerful thing. And what would motivate you if you're not anxious? And then, when you have unshakable faith, this unfixed shakable peaceful confidence, you will no longer believe in the value of hostility. Even the most

mild form of hostility. You might still feel that sometimes. But that's no, no, no. I don't believe in it. This is not valuable. It's not where I live. It's not what I faith in anymore. I think this is these are powerful terms. And how do we get to this place of unshakeable faith that the Buddha talked about? He talked about that when you see that there is greed in your mind. And then you see after a while, that there's no greed. And you see it clearly not that it's disappeared forever. But you have a palpable visceral clear sense of the peace, the openness, the clarity, the goodness, the value of mind that has no has no greed, to really see that and know it in a clear, clear way. And to see that this is valuable, this is important. That gives birth to unshakable faith, to do the same for hostility, to how to do the same for jealousy, to the same for anxiety. There's all these mental forces inside of us, it's mental kind of motivations that we can have that are, that are harmful, that that have the ouch factor built into them. And it isn't just simply they go away, because we've been distracted. We, you know, found a good TV program. But there's a feeling of the clarity and the peacefulness, the openness, the safety, of not having a hero, to see that contrast, see that as a potential. And to know clearly and well enough, this is my potential. Some people will say this is my true nature. Though the Buddha in ancient ancient Buddhism, they never would have used that kind of language. It's more like this is the potential This is a possibility. This is something that's worth knowing, this is something to have confidence in. This is turning down the diff, not just a different stream. This is the different river that I'm going to go on. This is the ecosystem I'm going to invest myself in.

And, and so have that unshakable confidence. What I think is quite significant about this, for people you know, who are familiar with different religious traditions, I find it significant is that we're not talking about a creed, we're not talking about a belief system. We're not talking about something that you can point to as being, you know, a unique Buddhist belief as opposed to beliefs or other religions. We're talking about something that you can discover in yourself. By this heightened mindfulness, attention and clarity, we're talking about qualities of your own emotional and motivational life, where you see it and know it and see what's valuable. What the Buddha was pointing to, is how thoroughly it's possible to take this other fork in the river. And how thoroughly it's possible to experience the heart, the mind, the goodness, the value, the satisfaction, the liberation of the heart and mind have from these forces of greed, hate and delusion, that we know something that feels really, really valuable. And if we understand how much greed, hate and delusion permeates our world, and how painful it is, for everyone to have this so much going on, then we maybe have a sense of how valuable it is for some people to really get to the, to the bottom of these forces and really of greed, hate and delusion and find a real alternative to them. That is, that's a life that's well worth living. That's something that's this gives a lot of purpose and value. And it can be done. It can be done in small ways, in the ways that work for your life. It can be done in medium ways. And it can be done in big ways. And, but there's ways whichever way you do it without much faith or faith you have, whether you know it or not. Every moment you come to a fork. Two roads diverged, two streams diverged in a in a world. And unfortunately, if you take the lesser traveled one, it'll make all the difference. Unfortunately, because not so many people take the path of harmlessness. So faith, confidence, trust, whichever word you're like. May the seed of some faith germinate in you and grow and become equally nourishing and satisfying for you in your life. Thank you.