

2018-02-18 The Ethical Path

Thu, 9/3 5:47PM • 42:54

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

ethical, people, unwholesome, buddha, person, unethical, called, abstentions, mindfulness, enlightenment, incapable, descriptions, greed, ethics, liberated, unethical behavior, states, buddhism, lie, ancient india

SPEAKERS

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So good morning everyone. Welcome to IMC.

One of the intriguing or interesting aspects of Buddhism is that Buddhism offers a path, the journey, a journey. For people who like quests, it could be a quest. And it's often described as a journey to liberation through a path of liberation. But it could equally be described as a path of ethics, a path to ethical maturation. And there's a way of reading what the Buddha taught to see it as a journey, an ethical journey and there's a number of reasons why we don't talk about it that way. One is that the concept, the concept of ethics is a kind of a Western concept that isn't really shared by Indian Buddhists or ancient Buddhists as a concept. From our point of view, the ancient Buddhists were very ethical, for sure. But they didn't kind of separate out ethics as something that was distinct by itself. It was just kind of integrated or part of everything else they taught. But we can if we take our Western view of ethics and see it as a path, an ethical path. And there's some benefits to doing that. One is that it highlights the value of becoming ethical or that being ethical is kind of part and parcel of the path that we're on. And that's not all that hasn't always been taught in Buddhism, and hasn't always been taught here in the West. And often the idea of enlightenment is presented in some non ethical terms. That makes it very special and lofty. Sometimes it's offered in very personal terms, that the individual becomes free of their suffering. And that's nice. But in talking about ethics, I think ethics is relational, has to do with how we live in the world, together with others and the world and beings all around. And by talking about enlightenment in personal terms, we miss that this whole path of Buddhism is deeply interrelation all its has to do with how we live our lives. The experience of enlightenment the experience of liberation is in fact, talked about in ethical terms in this way, that the Enlightenment or liberation is the destruction of greed, hate and delusion? Now it's not obvious to many people why that greed, hate and delusion are ethical. But in Buddhism, these three impulses forces inside of us of greed, hatred and delusion are called the three roots of all unwholesome or all unethical behavior. So if you're able to eliminate extinguish these three roots of greed, hate and delusion, then the roots, the conditions, the source for unethical behavior is not going to be there. Also, these three routes greed, hate and delusion are considered to be painful in and of themselves. The English translation of one word is their vexing so how many of you used the word to go around saying vexing a lot but but you know, they're they're painful or suffering. So by the distinguishing greed, hate and delusion, we remove these forces of our own vexation or own suffering, pain. And also we remove the impulses that lead to unethical behavior in the world. So this goal is seen in this way as an ethical goal. Those who become fully liberated, are said to be trustworthy. And I love this idea that they're trustworthy. So they have, they offer the gift of fearlessness that there's no occasion to be afraid of them because they're not going to kill or steal or engage in sexual misconduct or lie or help you get intoxicated. So what I'd like to do is to piece today's

two credit piece together, some of the different spread out teachings of the Buddha, that if you bring them together It describes how this is an ethical path kind of stages of growth developmentally.

So it begins by being an unethical person. And I think an ethical person is considered completely unethical, has no interest in their own welfare, or in the welfare of others. And that's kind of an interesting definition that some people go around and killing and stealing and hurting through their sexuality and so forth. That in some ways, they're not concerned with their own welfare. And they're not concerned with the welfare of others. Someone who is unethical in this in the traditional kind of definition in the time of the Buddha is in fact someone who kills, steals, engages in sexual misconduct lies and gets intoxicated. The In such a person and widow has an interesting name or designation for such a person. You know, here in the West, there's sometimes the idea of, you know, the fundamental kind of idea of a bad person is to be a sinner. And the opposite is to be a saint. And I think to see someone as a sinner is a very heavy condemnation, and, and they're kind of like, you can't really do anything on your own, to free yourself from your sin. You're kind of stuck there and the consequences are quite dire here, at least here in the West. The similar kind of word for someone who's unethical. For the Buddha is someone who's a fool. And the opposite is not a saint, but rather a wise person. And a fool is someone who doesn't understand but could understand why As someone who understands already. And so, the fool is not a condemnation, but in a sense, maybe it's a kind of a belittling of someone that is encouraging them, encouraging them to do something about their foolishness, get wise. So this ethic is the ethical category to be a fool, because it's a title that's given to people who go around, you know, doing these awful things, killing and stealing and such things. So in some ways, given how serious the crimes are, to call them a fool, it's actually in some ways, kind of, is it fair to say kind of gentle you know, it's kind of, you know, make some, you know, it's not like, you know, it's not condemning them or all sorts of ostracizing. Maybe someone is saying, look, you you were foolish and get wise. The So, the next level of an ethical journey is to for the Buddha In the teachings is to live by is to avoid these five behaviors. It's called the five abstentions when abstains from killing, from stealing, from sexual misconduct, from lying, and from intoxication. And it seems that the Buddha kind of kind of had an attitude that if you if ordinary person who wasn't a Buddhist, was a good person. That's what they would do. They would abstain from those five things. And those who did that, he sometimes called them a child of a good family. Kulaputta. And this is just a good family here means like, like, it's a little bit like an aristocratic family. It's kind of like a term of kind of hierarchy. But he's ready to apply that to anyone, even if there are literally part of the risk secrecy of the time. So if you live by these five abstentions, then you're a good person. However, if he said what he said, if you want to be a superior person, it's not good enough to be a good person, but you want to be a superior person. Then he said, not only do you live by these five abstentions, but you also encourage other people to do so. So there is a kind of little bit I don't know if it's missionary quality, but there is a kind of, you know, this relational aspect of Buddhism is important that we want to try to encourage others also, to not harm people around us. Then a person becomes a as this journey towards the Buddhist enlightenment, a person becomes, goes for what's called goes for refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. So they become kind of a follower of the Buddha. But many times in the suttas in the ancient literature, there are lots of people who are inspired by the Buddha and go To him for a refuge go for him kind of declare that they're kind of followers or, you know, they're they put themselves into the, under the Buddha's guidance.

And but occasionally, there are people who use so and commit themselves to these five abstentions. So by now you're getting sense, these five abstentions of not killing, not stealing, not engaging in sexual misconduct, not lying and not getting intoxicated are pretty important for this early tradition. It's like the standard, the ethical standard that somehow is being used repeatedly. And, and so, some people then do both. And it seems like the Buddha encouraged this. Nowhere in the in the ancient

literature does the Buddha actually said he expects or require someone to abide by these five abstentions. But I think my best guess is, that's because in the polite language of ancient India, you didn't tell people to do something. You just kind of said, Oh, you know, a wise person does the five abstentions, and he looks at you. You know, like, you know, get on with it, but, but you know, you wouldn't actually say that. So, so. But, you know, he did kind of say that he did say, you know, someone who's a follower of, you know, a lay follower becomes accomplished in virtue, if they abide by these five extensions. They don't cause harm to others. But then, as part of this kind of ethical training, lay people have an option to up their game a little bit in one way to up their ethical game back in ancient India, was to go to the, you know, to church on Sunday, which meant in ancient India, it was a church, but what they meant was every two weeks a new full moon and the new moon. That was the observance day. And that's when all the monastics would gather together in order to renew their precepts, their ethical training rules, and to if they had somehow violated them to do a little confession and then kind of started start fresh. And that became the custom for lay people to visit the monastic communities during those days. And it was kind of like a holiday day. It was kind of like a day off, I guess. And you'd go to the monastic community where the monks, monks and nuns were hanging out. And, and then if you had and you would spend the day there, apparently sometimes a day and the night it was like a whole day and night 24 hours of Religious for say differently ethical festivities and, and so what they would do is that they had the option during those 24 hours to commit themselves to eight precepts, so that you know, upping their game not justified abstentions. And these five are the five abstentions not killing, stealing sexual misconduct, lying or intoxication, but also not to engage in. Maybe we could call distracting entertainment. Don't go to shows, don't listen to music. And also don't adorn oneself don't put on a lot of makeup and jewelry and things like that, that apparently both men and women in ancient India did. There's a description of men who were completely made up in apparently heavy heavy makeup. So it was Apparently a popular thing to do. And so, but you wouldn't do that you'd live a life of simplicity during that 24 hours, you wouldn't. You would also not sleep or rest in luxurious beds or sofa or something. So, you know, posted nuts, indulgent luxury, and then also you're supposed to only eat one meal a day. And that meal had to be eaten before noon. So again, is it Here is a simple life of simplicity and that though, so that's kind of upping the game for for a while. But then a person can become a practitioner, you know, engage in the kind of what we call not just ethical abstentions, but also start doing practices. And the core practice that's emphasized over and over again in Buddhism are a set of eight practices called the Eightfold Path and they eightfold path is an interesting collection of, of practices that have the usually has a prefix to each one adjective that is usually translated into English as right.

And, you know, right and wrong or kind of ethical, I suppose, though most teachers like me will bend over backwards and say it doesn't mean right and wrong. It means something else but maybe we're overdoing it. So, right and, and they're right view, right intention, right action, right speech, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. The middle three, right action, right speech, right action, right livelihood, are clearly ethical in nature and are treated that way by the tradition. And, and so right speech is not to lie, not to use divisive speech. Not to use harsh harsh street speech and not to use frivolous speech. Right action is not to kill, not to steal and not engage in sexual misconduct. And right livelihood the simplest definition of our livelihood is avoid run livelihood. So I don't want to get into it more than that for now. However, the second of the Eightfold Path factors is called right intention, usually in English and, and part of that is to have the intention of not what's called non ill will and non harming to have the intention not to harm is expected of people who are cultivating, developing the path to awakening it cultivating that non ill will is also kind of expected as part of the training. So these are also ethical in nature. In the ancient Pali language, when something when ethical quality is stated in the negative, it implies the positive. So non harming is said to imply compassion, and non ill will implies kindness. The seventh factor in the Eightfold Path is mindfulness. And now the ethical

cultivation development of the person gets more interesting because now it's not about abstentions what you don't do, and it's not about just the intention you have, but rather it's about we're now we're being to cultivate an ethical character of mind or a heart that is predisposed or has a character characteristic of being ethical in nature. And mindfulness itself is described by the Buddha as something that cultivates or develop An ethical quality a person who is mindful will tend to be more and more ethical. One description of this, he says that if there's a big mound of dirt, on the crossroads, so this place there were two roads cross, two big big mound of dirt. If a chariot comes along and goes back and forth and back and forth over it, eventually that mound is flattened out. In the same way, if you do, practice the four foundations of mindfulness, these four roads that meet in the crossroads, I guess, and your practice is mindful. Cultivate awareness of the body, awareness of feeling of mind states, and have what's called dharmas or intermittent, inner mental processes. If you really get to know yourself, well. Pay attention to your inner life really well. over and over and over. Again, you're mindful day after day or day you practice mindfulness. Then it's like going over this mound of dirt and flattening it. And what he says that the mound of your unwholesome mental qualities unhelpful, unwholesome unethical kind of tendencies will get flattened, nice. Can, I guess, kind of destroyed from the practice of mindfulness. The Buddha also put it talked about how you become more ethical. If you practice mindfulness of the body, there's something about paying careful attention to your body, the state of your body, that tensions in your body, their sense of freedom, that ease, pleasure that can come into body that lends itself to a person becoming ethical.

So he has it there's one teaching of the Buddha called the discourse on mindfulness directed to the body. And there it gives a series of practices to do it. In terms of paying attention to the body, and then he describes how you do this practice of mindfulness, up through the through developing the jhanas. The jhanas are deep meditative states that are characterized by pervasive, pervasive feelings of joy, of happiness, equanimity, and peace. And so what happens when your your whole experience is characterized your sense of being is characterized by joy, happiness and equanimity is that there's very little room for unethical behavior. In fact, the Buddha was explicit that all unwholesome thoughts and all unwholesome intentions have to be stilled have to be settled and quieted down in order to get into these deep states of concentration. And so you're all the unwholesome agitation or the unwholesome kind of feelings of anger. In hostility and maybe on our ethical kind of greed, lust has been quieted down. And it's been replaced by a feeling of a sense of inner ethical purity. And, and it's quite a contrast between feeling no kind of knowing kind of the unethical lust and hate and forces inside of us. And then feeling an alternative to that, to really know that palpably viscerally inside a feeling of ethical cleanse cleansiness or wholeness or, you know, goodness that might be here. And to have that as a reference point to know that that's possible. is a kind of game changer for many people. Because Wow, why would I go back to get all you know, maybe if that's the best language but to get all dirty, once I got clean, you know, you took a lot of work to get Get yourself your hair all clean and then you don't go out and your garden and just find good mud and kind of, you know, smear it in that would you know, wouldn't you? You know, that doesn't feel good. So you know. So the idea is once you manage to do the work of getting yourself internally clean, then you know something you don't have done before. And for me when I experienced this, it was only then that I understood something about how my inner life had been unwholesome. It was so kind of, it wasn't like I was terribly unwholesome person, but I had my tendencies and but I kind of did never I kind of thought it was just part of life. I was kind of naive, and in a sense, maybe and whatever and I just they were just there and I didn't even think they were wrong to have or, you know, undesirable to have. But once through meditation, I tasted this inner freed freedom cleanse cleansiness purity ethical wholeness, something like that. One of the words I liked for myself was integrity, this inner integrity. Then I understood what these other things were in me. And so this is not interesting. Why would I get involved in do this? So this is part of this movement towards becoming ethical. And then Buddha said that if you do this well, then Mara Mara is kinda like the

Buddhist bad guy that Buddhists devil, usually seen as a personification of the inner unwholesome forces that we could have, that those unhealthy unwholesome forces Mara cannot get access to you and will not have a foothold in you. So there's no foothold me and there's no place to stand. They don't have any place to stand and do anything. Mara can't get access to you and you can't force you to do things you don't want to do. It's kind of a nice thing. to kind of have this you have a kind of a I don't have a shield but it's good. Wait, the language is used in these texting analogy. It's just like, like a jug of water or a pond, which is full to the brim. And so you Nothing can get poured in there because it's full. So if you're filled with inner goodness, unwholesome, things can't get into you. That's pretty good, but not good enough.

And because here the ethical nature of a person is there, because the person has developed a strong states of concentration, strong enough states of concentration to have this and so it can disappear when the concentration states decreases. And so there's so one of the functions of liberation, enlightenment, is to make the ethical state more permanent. So that's something that comes and goes, it's not dependent on your medical condition. One level, and it's not dependent on the effort you make the diligent effort you might make to abide by the abstentions do not to try to be ethical. Pay attention, watch yourself and keep yourself in check. Part of the function of liberation is to turn yourself into such an ethical person that being ethical becomes a natural aspect of who you are you become ethical rather than you act ethically. So the first stage of doing so is becoming what's called a stream, enter when enters the stream. So ones in the current that will take one all the way to full liberation to the full ethical maturation. And so what does it mean to enter that stream? How does one enter the string? The there's many descriptions in the sutta, one of the ones that my favorite is as an ethical component to it. So there are within us all right, I shouldn't use sometimes I shouldn't use the word as they don't assume. There are in some people, occasionally, maybe in one or two of you. Such forces psychological tendencies towards lust, greed covetousness. ill will. Anger, conceit, arrogance, desire to dominate over other people, envy, and so forth. And there's a list 16 of these things. So if you if your mindfulness if you're mindful as your ability, ability to pay careful attention, notices that when these things arise in you, that you're actually doesn't feel good to have them there. He uses language of Defilement impurity, maybe here in some people here in the West, but for more polite categories and defilements maybe, you know, maybe you need to really want to be careful and polite, these are just unnecessary states of mind. Maybe now you can notice these 16 defilements of the mind. And the reason why the word defilements sometimes use it synonymous with afflictive states. These are states that hurt. If I say just unnecessary or something very too polite and nice, it loses the flavor This is actually harmful for to have these dates. So first person knows recognize these as being defilements being afflictive. And then the person is able to abandon them, these states and abandoned is not simply suppressing them, or holding them in check is it Temporarily letting them go long enough and fully enough that a person has the experience of the mind or the heart without any of these presence. This is part of the education of our potential. Wow, this is cool, this is wonderful, this feels so much better. This is refreshing, this feels clean. This feels really great not to have these forces presence and to be able to experience for oneself, that difference, if I may use the word ethical, that ethical difference between having inner psychological tendencies that are unethical and have them disappear. That is to become a stream, that becomes the first level of awakening. That is to know what the Buddha with the Dharma, some kind of essence of what the Dharma is about. It's a psychological understand It's not something mystical. It's not something kind of supernatural. But rather it's understanding your own mind in an ethical way, and to experience for yourself in a direct way. The possibility of having what in the modern West we can call an ethical mind, a wholesome mind, the mind of integrity, a mind that's, that's free.

If a person has this experience stream, enter, then it said that it's impossible for a person to do anything that's so unethical, that they'll get reborn in hell. So that's kind of convenient. And in Buddhism, Hell is

not so bad to be rewarded. Hell. It mean the descriptions that some of these ancient texts give or what it's like there are pretty bad and There's a TV show called The Good Place anybody watched it. They have wonderful descriptions of the bad place. And it was just kind of like the health I guess. And it's a kind of it has a lot of ethics in it, this TV show called The Good Place. But anyway, that Buddhism has great, great their own descriptions, they're not going to be outdone by anybody else's descriptions. So they're gonna really do well. And, but what's, you know why it's kind of, you know, better to be born in Buddhist hell than some other people's house. It's because it's always temporary. You know, it's only going to last you a few 10s of millions of years. But it's not for eternity. So it's a relatively short time. You'll get over it. The excuse me four minutes while I find the quote I want to read.

So someone who has this first stage of awakening Code Stream mentor is described as possessing the virtuous behavior of noble ones, unbroken, and torn, unblemished, unmodeled, free, praised by the wise unground ungraspable, leading to concentration. So, if you've experienced this, there's something something by this very strong experience of stream entry, where something's abandoned thoroughly enough that the person now starts behaving virtuously. Also they have certain virtues. They if they're a lay person, they dwell at home with a mind devoid of the stain of stinginess, freely generous, open handed, the lighting and relinquishment devoted to charity, the lighting and giving and sharing. And then there's a very interesting description of what happens to somebody becomes a stream, Enter. And that is, they no longer have attachments. They're no longer attached to ethical behavior, ethical rules, and to religious observations, the religious kind of rituals and stuff like that. So, no longer attached to religious behavior. I mean, now we're getting into dangerous territory, where what you're liberated you can do whatever you want. Know, what it means is that Before this transformation of this change interchange that happens, these unhealthy tendencies and impulses might exist in people they might get angry, they might lie, they might do all kinds of things, under a term under enough stress, good people sometimes will kill and do terrible things. And so, up until this point, a person has to hold on to be committed to kind of through an act of kind of will, to restrain themselves to avoid doing what unethical things. And so the precepts. The commitment to not kill in line so forth steel is something one does. So one has to adhere to it. After stream entry, when no longer needs to adhere to it, when no longer needs to be attached to it, because now it's become internal The state of one's mind the character of the person, one's inner nature is starting to become ethical. They're not 100% ethical, but they're ethical enough not to get reborn in hell. And they're very unlikely to violate the five, the five precepts. So they won't kill, they won't steal, they won't lie, they won't engage in sexual misconduct, or in intoxication. But they still have what's called the three routes, they still have forests of greed, hate and delusion, these ethical sources of the source of unethical behavior. The next stage of awakening there's four stages. The second stage is diminishing, reducing the strength of greed, hatred, delusion inside of a person. So that's nice. And so they're not so strong anymore. The third stage is to eliminate the attachment to sensual desire. And any kind of attachment to ill will or not even attachment to the impulse to a will is eradicated. And I think it's fair to say that drive for sensual for lust, lust for sensual players, pleasure and the drive for that brings ill will and hostility, that those are kind of ethical, unethical kind of drives, and to have them eliminated from the mind is an is an ethical movement is makes the person more ethical.

And then, the fourth stage of awakening is that open our heart and this is the person who becomes trustworthy and, and it's a little quote that the Buddha Head where he said, our heart becomes trustworthy as they walk, trustworthy as they stand trustworthy as they let us sit down, and trust are trustworthy, lying down, no matter whatever posture, whatever situation they're in, they're trustworthy. There's someone that we can put our trust in and we can trust they're not going to harm us. So here's a, an our heart, it's a fully line person has banished all evil states. So there's no more unwholesome there's no more evil, no more just defined persons defined by being ethically pure. If there's no unwholesome roots, no unwholesome kind of thoughts and feelings inside, then there's no cause to

intentionally be unethical, consciously be unethical. So it's not a matter of choosing to be a net. Just a person is ethical by nature. And so what is a description? Those are hearts with taints destroyed, who are completely liberated. They are incapable of transgressions and nine cases. They're incapable of deliberately depriving a living being of life. And here it's not just people any living being. They are incapable of taking what is not given. They're incapable of stealing. It's interesting that they distinguish between these two usually stealing is considered the same as taking words not giving given in here. They treat them as two separate categories. They are incapable indulging in sexual intercourse. So now some of you are not going to want to be interested in becoming fully liberated. You know, I'll take part of it. It's like St. Augustine who said, he said, Give me chastity but later something like that. I guess the Buddhist version would be, give me enlightenment, but only partially because they say that somehow there's something about this full enlightenment full liberation, that a person then apparently has no more sexual urge at all, no more intercourse. We're not going to advertise that too broadly.

The person who is fully liberated is incapable of knowingly speaking falsehoods. They're incapable of enjoying sensual pleasures by stirring them up. So you can have sensual pleasure, you know, we often feel a nice sunny day or something. But you can't store up your sensual pleasures, store them up, you can't save them and gather them all together to be able to kind of enjoy them tomorrow, they wouldn't do that they wouldn't kind of go through the trouble. They would just kind of be content with the pleasures that come their way as they live their life, but they're not going to do anything in order to optimize them. They're incapable of entering upon a wrong path, on account of desire, wrong ethical path, and they're incapable of entering upon a wrong path, on account of delusion. And then the last one is kind of interesting, incapable of entering upon a wrong path, on account of fear. How often are people unethical because they're afraid kind of very touching and very important to consider the role of fear, and maybe more unethical things happened in our life because of fear maybe then because of any other thing.

So and I'll end with a poem. And then and then a little statement that is a describes an our heart. And the Buddha had a wonderful tendency of appropriating certain words that were popular in the culture and redefining them. And one of those words is Brahman. Brahman was kind of a social status of people who were the high social status. And they weren't. You know, it was a, as a class of people who are born into being Brahmins, the highest class. The Buddha redefined what it meant to be Brahman. So it wasn't a social class, but it was anyone who was living an art was in our hearts someone who's living ethically fully ethically. So, here this is a definition of the fully enlightened person. Having given up violence toward beings both timid and strong, whoever neither kills nor causes others to kill, I call the Brahmin. So, they said you know, here we have the ethical and ethical definition of awakening. So, in summary, to make an ethical summary of the Buddhist teachings, avoiding behavior that harms lies at the heart of the Buddhist ethical teaching, letting go of mental states that harm lies at the heart of the Buddhist meditation, teaching in Eliminating the underlying roots of all harming tendencies lies at the heart of the Buddha's wisdom teaching. So for those of you who are inclined, you might want to engage in the Buddhist path journey as a journey of ethical maturation. For those of you who get turned on by discussion turned off, some people hopefully get turned on by this ethics. But those of you who get turned off by this discussion about ethics, then just go for enlightenment all the way to be like a really fantastic, wonderful person. And in the process of doing that, you'll become ethical anyway. Thank you.