

# 2018-05-27 Burdens of The Mind

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, beliefs, felt, mind, person, weight, burden, lightness, meditation, pleasure, comfort, obligations, happening, exams, world, duties, meditate, carry, heavy, pursuit

## SPEAKERS

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So I'd like to tell a Buddhist fable. And it's the story of a young person who decides to become free, free of all the burdens and weight challenges the person has had. And so the person packs a sack for the trip and fills it with all the things that are thought to be needed and throws a sack over the shoulders and begins walking out across the land to look for some ways to find some freedom. And the bag is heavy, and so it's slow going and it's a strain to carry. A lot of tiredness sets in tension in the body from carrying this heavy sack. But, you know, is determined and keeps walking because the goal is noble and great and at some point, meet Another traveler, a wise person who walks along for a while and finds out what this person is up to. And then says, Oh, well, there's an easy way to drop all the weight that you have in your life. Drop your drop your sack. And so the person puts it down. And lo and behold, it's finally feels a light and easy to walk and, and feels kind of liberated. And then this young person says to the wise person, is that all there is to put down the burden. No, now you have to pick up that which has no weight. And at that moment, the wise person vanishes. There's no explanation and what do you what do you pick up that has no weight. So the person kept walking now without this And after a while, I came across an old person who was struggling under the weight of bringing groceries home. And so this young person picked up the groceries for the old person and carried them home and to the person's home and, and was surprised by how light the mind felt, um, like this feeling of lightness. And but still didn't understand so kept walking and after a while came a place in the path where a big boulder had fallen below the track of the path so that certainly, people could walk around the boulder but the people who came with carts couldn't get by. So the person spent a few hours taking this heavy boulder and rolling and moving it out of the way, but was surprised by how light things were felt and moved along for a little while longer and came to A place where there was, you know, someone who was injured and couldn't walk. So the person picked the person up and carry them to a place to get medical care, and was surprised by some kind of a lightness that was there. And this is strange, why is all this lightness happening? And then discovered that the lightness was in the mind certainly had picked up kind of physically heavy things, but had not picked up any, any mental heaviness and the freedom that from the burdens this dropping of burdens that the young person that searched to do was not the burdens of the world, but the burdens that of the world carried in the mind how they're carried in the mind. That's where the weight is. And so in Buddhism, there's this idea That there are all these burdens that we carry, and unnecessarily putting unnecessarily weight on the mind. And those are the burdens we want to learn to put down. In fact, one of the descriptions of enlightenment is putting down the burdens. It's a nice description of enlightenment. Maybe it's not, you know, it's not like it doesn't have the promise of cosmic light or you know, cosmic joy or something that people who have great ideas of what enlightenment is, but just putting down the burden, and I think it's beautiful. So what are some of the mental burdens that people carry and there are five, four that can be talked about?

One is the burden of pleasure and comfort. The second is the burden of beliefs. The third is the burden of duties and obligations. And the fourth is the burden of self. So why are these burdens the idea of the burden of pleasure? And, and comfort is usually not a burden in and of itself, feeling pleasure and comfort. But some people pursue wanting pleasure wanting comfort, in a way that's exhausting. That takes a lot of effort and time. Some people are quite attached to these things. Some people feel that their life is only successful if they have pleasure and comfort. And it doesn't take a lot of analysis to consider how many people certainly in our society, who are have relative means compared to a lot of the else places in the world. How much time An effort is taken in the pursuit of pleasure and comfort. That's not recognized. It just kind of considered a normal part of life. So one way I think of thinking about it is that in our society here, not everyone for sure, but in this peninsula bay area where we live and I suspect that a good percentage of the people that come to IMC that they probably have cars that are cost more than absolutely necessary to for transportation to get around. They probably have homes that maybe doesn't look bigger than they absolutely need to have to live a comfortable life in a home. They probably buy new clothes a little bit more often that are needed. Then just to be a comfortable content life. They probably buy foods and morph that are a little bit of a luxury aren't really needed. But You know a little bit more pleasure and you know a little more for comfort and pleasure than just eating your basic necessities. And but it's sometimes not seen that these are extra, they're just like seen as requirements for our life and what's needed. And but if we see certainly some of the percentage of this as being extra in the pursuit of pleasure and comfort, aesthetic, nice pleasing situation. And then consider the time it takes to acquire the means to do that the work and the pursuit of work and maybe the education that's required. And if not a few people that I talked to are quite it was because I talked to people a wide range ranges ranges, not a few people are eagerly looking forward to retirement. And it seems like the idea of their work is not something that brings them a lightness. It's like they're ready for putting it down. But you know, they have, you know, some of their concern for working longer is to have a certain degree of well being or pleasure and comfort, so that they can, you know, have what they think they need. So, I don't know what you think of this analysis, but I hopefully points a little bit to the idea that pleasure and comfort is a bigger part of people's lives and most people recognize it's not just kind of, you know, eating a lot of chocolate all the time or getting a massage or you know, it's, it's kind of built into so much of the fabric of in our contemporary modern local society, people's lives. And so there's a you know, but you know, it doesn't have to be a mental burden these things, but it can be if there's strong attachment to it and feeling of need and requirement I need to have this. I need to have something the latest and greatest. I don't know if I did But my cell phone last month happened to end up in a river.

When the boat the raft it was in tipped over in that river, I was not in the raft on a different raft, but my cell phone was in that raft. So that was kind of the end of my cell phone. So I came back and you know, kind of wanted to get a new phone. And so boy, so I looked around and you know, there was the advertisements and what was in the news was like, the latest and the greatest there was like wow. And they were expensive and I thought it Do I need these expensive phones for the phone I had, I think I probably used, I don't know, .5% of its capacity for the little things I use it for. So I went to the store and bought a brand new phone that was a model from three or four years ago. It was still newer than the phone I had, but I saved so much money. And I still feel delighted at the pleasure of this thing. But I don't have the pleasure of that greatest and then the latest, you know, and I certainly have very little very little pleasure for my teenage sons who are more focused on the latest and the greatest. But I'm very content so you know, so save a lot of money and I'm content with what I have. There's a story from the suttas have a very wealthy man who decided to leave it all behind and become a monk. And, and when he was in staying in the monastery, it was not in the monastery. I think it was in a wooded area where they went monastics lived at that time. And the other monks would look at him and regularly and say, oh, and say to them says, Oh, you know, this guy is not going to stay. He's used to a lot of comfort

and wealth and pleasure and all kinds of things. Luxury, and he's not gonna stay in the mind. He's gonna go back to his life. It was kind of like that was the so one day he was off by in the woods a little bit deeper and he was meditating. And the other monks called him, heard him calling out. Be Happy, happy, I'm so happy. And so they said to each other, see, he's decided to go back so he came out of the woods and say, well, what's up, bro? And he said, Oh, I'm sitting there meditating, I was so happy that I didn't have to live under lock and key and up guards for all my possessions. Here. I can live out in the woods. I can meditate, I feel so safe. This is happy. So he wasn't going back to the life he had. So this idea of putting down the burden, comfort, pleasure. So a lot of people associate comfort with safety. And the pursuit of security is certainly important to feel safe. It shouldn't be underestimated how important it is. But it can be a little bit excessive, the pursuit of safety and so that's all kind of it can be burden that people live under a way in the mind, that preoccupation and concern. So the other one next one is beliefs, the weight of beliefs that people have. I don't know what is heavier, but maybe beliefs are heavier than comfort and pleasure. Most people appreciate that pleasures and comforts come and go and have to be renewed. But beliefs, they can be stuck. They can carry us for a long time. And the opinions we live under the expectations, the norms we've learned from our family, from our culture or society, that this is how things should be that I have to be this way I have to be a person who is discussable in this particular way. I have to I believe that I'm responsible for the welfare of all be everyone. My achilles heel, especially when I was younger was a sense of responsibility. I was just felt like I was you know, it's up to me, you know, to make everyone happy and that's, you know, is really heavy. Nuts, you know that weight of that of that, or the belief that that you know that I have to be liked or the belief that I have to have a certain degree of financial success or the weight the belief that I need to hold on to my resentments forever. Otherwise, I don't know what's going to happen with some belief, the resentments.

Some people believe that they have to hold on to their suffering. Some people believe that they have to hold on to the hurt. Some people believe that they have to that it's useful to spend a lot of time planning anticipating worrying about the future. I used to do a lot of that, think ahead and worry about the future. And in my case, one of the things that helped certainly meditation helped a lot because through meditation I learned a sense of well being and stability here. That was really a good place to be. But I also learned not to plan and be so concerned worry so much about the future, when I discovered slowly that my track record for predicting the future was was abysmal that I would kind of have this worry and concern about what's going to happen. And I can't, you know, over and over again with again, it didn't happen the way that was, you know, I thought it was going to happen. A common sense scenario was that sometimes I don't how common it was, but one of the got my attention was the whole thing I was worried about and planning about concerned with simply didn't happen. The day would come and would be canceled or didn't unfold that way and I was left there. My hands filled with a weight of plans and weapons and shields and tanks and whatever I needed. I thought I needed metaphorically. And if I could just hold in, you know, like, there's no one there to, you know, engage with. And, and then so anyway so this idea of you know, believing I have to plan and there's a line every all different thing up to be safe is another belief there's their beliefs about other people about other people, other people should be a certain way other people should treat me a certain way. And you know and sometimes those beliefs are a burden and a weight, people should take care of me some peano you know, I need to be taken care of, I believe I can't, I need I need other people to take care of me and I have to find the people who will take care of me. So these are some of the things that come to my mind sitting here. I mean, there's an infinite number of beliefs people live under and under the weight of One of the things that's interesting about meditation practice, if the meditation practice can get quiet enough, the mind can get quiet. And still, we can see a place in the mind where there are no beliefs, in the sense that beliefs are not operating. And you can feel the lightness of the mind, the ease of the mind, to the spaciousness of the mind, the health of the mind, when it's not caught in the grip and caught in the

weight or being driven by some of the beliefs. And some of the beliefs that we carry are probably subconscious, that they're hard to see them. And so that's part of the function of meditation is to get the mind quiet enough to start seeing the more subtle underlying beliefs that are often operating. But the mind is involved in a different layer, a coarser layer of thought to see the deeper kind of beliefs that are underneath that. And, and this happens certainly for me in meditation, and one of the one of the things I discovered was, I had this belief, I saw it on a retreat. And I think it had something to do with kind of how I was thinking about the other people on the retreat. And it was a subtle, underlying kind of belief that the grass was greener over there. Like, whatever was happening to me and meditation, the people next to me or near me, they were having it better. That was one another one that I may be deeper than that was the idea that if it was happening to me, it was not the real thing. So whatever, you know, we can meditation experience I have, it didn't really count. It wasn't a real thing, because it was happening to me. And you know, I hadn't even investigated or considered it was just kind of like, it was just like, you know, the operating principle of the universe, that this was happening to me. It wasn't real.

It didn't count. It wasn't important. It wasn't something. So it was great to see these things because when you see them then there's putting him down. So, meditation has the function of revealing some of the beliefs that we operate under, and then showing us how much nicer it is to have the mind operating without it the lightness that comes to clear that comes. But not only that, but also the creativity that can come. Meaning we can attend to be able to respond to the world more creatively more wiser, if we're not carrying the burden of a lot of beliefs, ship secure what's going on. And then there's the weight of obligations and duties.

And the one of the ways of talking about this and, you know, understanding this in the language of ancient Buddhism, what I'm translating is obligations and duties is also could be understood as morality and And religious observances. I'd like it to be doing more broadly, you know, obligations and duties. But, you know, people sometimes have the sense of either religious obligations and duties, sometimes ethical obligations and duties, sometimes familial obligation duties, sometimes social obligations and duties, whatever all kinds of things, they we weigh us down that we have to do this, we can't do something else. I have to be this way. And certainly, we should be ethical. And certainly it's good to do Rufino spirit, you know, some spiritual practices, like meditation or mindfulness or something. There are good things to do. But I've seen among Buddhists, that Buddhist practitioners that even the idea of being ethical and being and being a practicing mindfulness or meditation is taken on as a big weight, big burden. And I have to do this I'm only a good person, if I do this and some people come to me very apologetic. You Well, I guess what I represent as a Buddhist teacher, you know, they kind of Whisper you know, I don't meditate every day. I don't meditate every day and like, as if they're required to, you know, or like, that's how they're gonna be a good person or something. And, and so, this way, you know, obligations and duties is another place that people get worn down strained by and then the fourth of these weights in the mind is the weight of self, self identity, self preoccupation, conceit, all these kinds of ways in which we orient ourselves in a self centered way or self obsessed way. I have to be this I have to be that I am this I am that and they're a little bit belong to the world of belief as well. I, you know, I am this, you know, I'm a lousy person. That's a belief I don't think the universe was created inherently that anybody was ever lousy. It's just kind of a funny belief of the mind. That somehow is, they're planted there, and, or beliefs that I have needs, that I who I have has needs. beliefs that in itself is beliefs in comparative, thinking I'm better than others. I'm worse than others, believes that I'm the center of the universe like that I'm supposed to get what I want or beliefs that I don't count. There's all this kind of swirl of ideas around self that are a big weight, and also about others, self and others.

When I was 19, I went traveling in Morocco with a couple of her friends. And it was the first time I traveled in a non western country. You If 19 is an adult as an adult, with without my parents and so, you

know, I paid attention to the world in a different way. And, and after a while, being in Morocco for a few weeks, I noticed that there was a lightness in my mind that was unfamiliar to me. That's curious, what's that about? And it took me a while to understand what was happening. And what was happening was that the people in Morocco or back then mostly wore non Western clothes. The men wore robes for example, you love us. And, and so, the usual categories that my mind would operate under but who people were, couldn't operate. I couldn't put them into my, my categories that were a burden to carry or kind of a strain or tension the mind carried. So but here in America, you know, people that person's a jock You know that person's square, back then people are square back when I was young. Now there's people who work for square. But and then and what else? You know, there was you know, so I had all you know, that's a conservative person that's this kind of person that's, you know, hippie and all these things. And those those judgments were more judgments and ideas create a certain tension in the mind. And because the Moroccans didn't fit into these categories that I used to put people into, you know, judge people basically, I wasn't going around judging anyone. And so my mind was lighter, was easier. Wasn't that nice? It took point in Morocco to discover what I was doing in America.

And so that put a big question mark when I came back to this country, and you know what I was doing and maybe I didn't need to do this so much. lighten up. So what's the burdens that the weights that you carry in your mind? Can you put down your burdens and pick up what is light? And what is it that's light to pick up? And the story that fable, it was helping people. And certainly helping people can be done with a sense of duty. Helping people can be done with a big sense of self. You know, look, I hope everyone notices how helpful I am. Helping people can be done. I don't know if it can be done with a sense of pleasure, attachment or pleasure. But it could certainly be done this obligation and duty and all these things, the weight of it, but how to help people how to walk through the world, and be involved in things which may be are physically heavy or take time and effort. But so there's a feeling of lightness. The mind This light, the heart is light, how to do something without a sense of obligation, how to do something without maybe automatically connecting it to my self image and what people will think of me how to go through the world and do things without needing it to always be pleasant and enjoyable and comfortable. What we do is their likeness and doing things which are unpleasant. But the joy is the light mine that does it, as opposed to that physically pleasant or unpleasant. And so, what are the motivations? What are the activities that we do with lightness? One place that some people can feel some of this is in the privacy of their own homes. Some people when no one else is watching, can do some things which they do likely doesn't carry a burden. But hard but how to do things When we're together with others, one of the really turning points in my own life was spending a week for the first I was 20 or 21. And it was the first time I spent a week alone on a small farm. And I didn't see anyone except for once I saw the mail carrier down the road in the distance. Instead, besides I didn't see anyone taking care of the farm and the cows. And, and I felt so light and so clear. And my mind felt kind of crystalline and its purity or something and, and the world that my vision was really remarkable. I never had experience with my vision, feeling everything was sparkling. And, and it was also sparkled with my thoughts. So acutely aware of my thoughts and the same sparkly way. And then my friends, the farmers came home, and then that's all disappeared and And what I realized was that the, the couple of complications of my mind that set set in, in the social interactions have it made my mind heavier, tighter, more constricted, more agitated, and I lost some of that clarity and some of that peacefulness that I discovered by myself. And that was without meditating. I just kind of lived the life alone. And, and so my task then that I set myself to because I wasn't planning to be a hermit was, how can I be alone with others? How could I have, you know, how could I not to be aloof and with others, but how could I have that kind of kind of way which my mind is open and clear. uncontracted and not made heavy by the social interactions, but have this lightness in it. So I learned some of that, that being alone, at least the possibility of it and, and how to engage in activity the physical, physical act activity with a mind being light. I certainly noticed there are times when the exhaustion that I felt from some of



the physical things I've done has come from my resistance to it, and my judgments of it and my sense of heaviness and fear connected to it. And, and I've done things with a lot physical work, mental work wholeheartedly a lot, sometimes without a break, and just felt like I was flying just felt so wonderful and delighted. And it felt like, you know, play almost just kind of engaged or I was absorbed in such a nice way that so much happiness arose in the activity. In my mind when I finished, I felt light and open.

But I don't know if people like this story. My kids didn't like it when I tried telling them but when I was in college, I would study you know hard in the last minute or something last day for these exams. So I was kind of, you know, pouring and getting all this remembering everything that was only had to be remembered for 24 hours. And this expensive education and, and then I would go take my written exams and I would just pour myself into the exams just like you could really that's 100% focus, I guess on the exam, more or less. And, but what what I discovered was surprised the first times when I left the exams, I felt so empty in a beautiful, empty, like just my mind had been emptied out and clear and open, I'd come out to the classroom look outside, like marvel at the trees and the environment around me. And so I was I was a strange person who enjoyed taking those exams because of the absorption of engagement in it. So I guess that didn't work. The story didn't work with my kids. So what brings you like this? What keeps your mind light? What are the burdens and the weights that you carry? What are the weights that you burdens you can put down. And one of the things you can pick up things you can do because we're not supposed to just put everything down and just do nothing. But what can you pick up? or How can you pick up things that it's light and easy in the mind, and if it's light in the mind, then it's also going to be pretty easy to put it down, easy to pick up and easy to put down for the mind. So that's the fable and fables are only become true if you apply it to yourself. So maybe or consider it, how it works for you.