

# 2018-07-02 A Pause In Desire

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## SPEAKERS

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So I like sitting here with you meditating, I hope that you will like it, at least a teeny bit 10% as much as I like it. I think we're in good shape. It's a wonderful thing to sit and sit with other meditators. And so a little bit in appreciation of all that, that I would like to offer this talk. And I'll start with a Sufi story. And there's a character in the story named Mullah Nasreddin and he's kind of a wise person. Some people say he's a wise fool. And it seems that there was a time when Mullah Nasreddin was smuggling. He was smuggling thing across the border to another country. And, and border guards didn't want him to smuggle because he's To pay a toll tariff to bring us things across the country and but they could ever find anything. So he would come and he come with his donkey and he'd come up to the border and, and they knew that he was smuggling. So they would search him all over and you know, everything they could and look up and down his donkey and they couldn't, you know, they couldn't see anything. And every day he would do the same thing come with a donkey and come through and they knew and they could see is one of the border guards was live near where woodland desert lived. And so he could see it, that Mullah was getting richer and richer. He sees what's this guy smuggling. So we're not for years and years. And then one. And then Mullah Nasreddin and, you know, some point he retired, he didn't have to work anymore. And if we stopped doing that border crossing, and so the, his neighbor, the border guards had them, you know, we allow we know you were smuggling now that you're no longer doing it. What was it you're smuggling? The donkey donkeys.

So with these wisdom stories, you know, what's wise about this? What so we have to make it the wise man to interpret in ways and I'm kind of I love this story because as we go through life, we come across a lot of tollbooths. And, and the toll sometimes are really big and heavy of what we can counter in our life. And the toll the, you know, the people wanting the toll. They're there to, you know, get there do. But if you don't have anything, there's no tool. So the idea that you could go through life And get rich, maybe not because you have donkey, but because you have nothing that the border guards, customs cares about, or once you have nothing. It I think relates very much to some of the core principles of Buddhism. that a lot of suffering we experience comes from wanting things and comes from having things having in particular, the thing that we have the most that takes the most toll, the most expensive, is attachments, is things that we're holding on to and not just simply having desires, but holding on to the desires or having aversions and holding on to them, and the border guards will see them. You can't slip by carrying a big bag of desire, a big bag of attachment, a big bag of aversion, it those, those border guards are really good and it's gonna take a big toll for you. Go through carrying those as you go through life, lots of them. The more desires the more attachments you have turns out, the more borders you have to cross. And the more told you're going to have to pay, pay with stress, pay with disappointment, pay with frustration, pay with all kinds of thing, despair, all kinds of things that come along. So it turns out the way to fool the border guards is to go across with nothing. They'll look they'll check you out. But did nothing think nothing happened you and you can get through life a lot easier. So

one of the teachings in Buddhism is that if you have desires, even appropriate desires, it agitates the mind. And it isn't a teaching that you should have no desires. That's impossible. But it is a teaching that At least once in your lifetime, you should go to the Buddhist Mecca, just once. Go to the place where you stop having desires. Have a have a real experience of letting the desiring part of the mind, rest and stop. And one of the results of meditation for many people is to first to see how much their mind thinks. But if you look underneath what's driving the thinking, it's not too far away to analyze it as some kind of desire. We want something or the negative desire we want. We don't want something and we're looking for something we're trying to get something we're trying to prove something we're trying to. We want pleasure, we want comfort, we want all kinds of things. And, and some of the things we want, I said are quite appropriate. But in some of the desires we have are pleasant to have the hope that's in them the expectation in them that projections the future that goes with them. Some of the negative desires we have, maybe they're not pleasant, but some people get pleasure from them. Sometimes being very judgmental and critical of other people having hate. It kind of brings energy to people, they feel a sense of vitality and a lightness, they feel better than other people. And that's can bring pleasure or certain kind of satisfaction to people to have those things. However, it does keep the mind agitated, keeps the mind spinning. And so one thing in meditation, you start seeing how much this operates. And as the mind gets quieter, then only then do we start seeing the toll it takes. We often don't see the toll because we're so much in it. So for example, with design We can have all kinds of thoughts, desires, thoughts, and they might be pleasant. They did what we're hoping for the fantasies we have, there might be the pleasure or the satisfaction of hope that the Oh, this will happen, I'll get this it'll be so great.

And, and because there's some pleasure and hope and expectation, that's kind of momentum in it, it kind of is camouflaged from us. We don't really see its nature, we don't see the way in which the mind is being agitated and busy and spinning, because we're kind of blinded by the pleasure or the hope that's in them. But if we can kind of switch the perspective and not be mesmerized by the desires, but see what's going on more deeply. within us the process of thinking the process of desiring, you'll see that it's tiring, it's agitating keeps the mind busy and agitated. And maybe a few of you. I give you an analogy that I think is a modern analogy that certainly I have. And maybe some of you have as well. If you have had a nice relaxed day and you know maybe you've gone for a nice walk, you've had a nice nap, you've been with friends and had a nice conversations. And you feel pretty satisfied and settled and good and things are good. You can just you could if you wanted to look outside and look out the window and empty for a while and be perfectly content. But then your your device is next to you, your tablet. And so you pull it up, it's innocent enough to pull it up and look at it and you start looking and you start looking and start looking and one website goes to another website then you start checking things and then you remember you better check your email. And then you're back to the websites and I have to check the news too. And I wonder what this news Place into. And so after about an hour of kind of surfing the web, looking at all these things, you stop and you look out the window. Oh, you can feel it. So I do sometimes I can feel the mind spinning and agitated, energized in a way that doesn't actually feel very good. Though while I was doing it, there is a kind of extra hope, you know, this website will have something this will be good. You know, the hope August click on here and read that email because you hear the ping or the email and the serotonin buzzers go off and like you know, and it's just, you know, a bill coming in, but you didn't know that. You didn't know that when you heard the Ping. Right. So good. And, and so the idea the idea is you can start I think some of us can feel the cost the toll that it took in the mind being entered. dies then activated in a way that it wasn't before we were settled. But it was camouflage or wasn't seen in the process of being on the device. Afterwards, we can feel Wow, look at that my mind is very different. I sometimes joke that if you're kind of that if if most of us who were spent a lot of time in computers and devices could get go back and have or you have to be old enough, but go go back and get a 1960s mind the contrast be so great, you thought you would think you're enlightened. Because of the way the minds are sort of, you know, activated and busy you know

that. So desire does that to us, that we you know, it activates and it's it the cost of it a toll is hidden from us because we're so involved in it. Our thinking to the cost Natal of thinking incessantly and spinning and sometimes it's kind have like being on the computer sometimes, you know, going, going, going going. And those the toll is invisible because we're so caught up in the content and the ideas and the hope and the pleasures and the fears and all of it. meditation can teach us the toll. petition can teach us a wow, this is a lot of effort and work. It's exhausting for the mind to be desiring all the time. And then then you can ask the question. What would it be like to have a mind that doesn't want anything in this moment, but not a mind that checks out? Not a mind that goes numb or kind of blank. But a mind that's kind of luminous clear present here, but is here and you you would be nowhere else. If you when you have no desires. It's desires that take us away from the present moment. So if you're able to put your desires to rest, you will be here. And if you're awake and clear and your attention, you'll be here present with the experience. Is it worthwhile? Is it valuable? Is it valuable to get through to the next hour without having to pay all those tolls? The border guards won't notice you.

When there's no way the Buddha said basically, he said, he used a very different metaphor, he used the metaphor of like a kind of a kind of a trickster devil ish kind of person called Mara, that Mara, if you have no desires, Mara can't find you can see you and there's no tool. So to have the experience, of having no desires, having no attachments and having just being nice being here and a simple, open hearted, clear way, is difficult to do. And what will happen for some people in the process of kind of coming close to that there's a lot of protests the mind will do. One of the protest is that it's boring. You know, this is really boring, boring, it's just an other turns out that boredom is an other kind of tricky operation of desire. It's a desire that you know, that wants you to keep going to desire more. You know, you want to stop being bored. So you desire something and something promising and everything. But boredom is an activity of the mind. It's not inherent in the mind itself. It's added to the mind by how we think and how we evaluate and how we judge situations. Nothing is inherently boring, except what the mind makes of it. So if we can let that boredom if you have the courage to hang in there and let the boredom quiet. To then we don't have the board on problem. And then there can be the protests that, yes, but fill in the blank. But then I want, the important things won't happen in life, then I'll just be a couch potato, then no one will love me, then I won't get rich and famous, then I this and this. And this, I better think is important things to think about. Gil doesn't seem to understand. He's like, you know, living as a Buddhist teacher for too long, you know, and what does he know? You know, but it's important to, you know, we have to it's important to think and have desires, and it's necessary to have every single one of them all the time. You know, you know, they're important. My desires are important. And, and or my fears are important or what I'm trying to protect myself move is important or what I'm trying to prove about myself is important and it has to happen. I can't stop it. If I stop it, I won't exist if I stop it. I know be safe. Bye. Stop it. There's no hope. And I have I'm living on hope. Because it's so despairing not to have it. Or if I stopped desiring, then I have to sit with myself. And this I'm not good company. There's a lot of pain here. There's a lot of anger, hostility, there's a lot of fear. There's a lot of difficult stuff here. So in the Buddhist analysis, all those difficulty which we wouldn't have a lot of respect and care and compassion for, it's not like I don't want to just you know, make light of it, not easy. However, all of it in one form or the other. Represent represents having some kind of desire. Very subtle. Maybe desire is not quite the right word, something we want something we're hoping for. So this idea of quieting the desires, quieting them staying present for what's there. And it begins in this practice by allowing whatever is present without adding desires on top of it. So it comes to a point sometimes in practice, this gets a little funny, where you can't desire desirelessness.

That doesn't work either. Exactly. But that's, you know, it only happens at some point. If you're like, you know, 10,000 desires a minute. Wanting to be desireless is a fine thing to do. And you can get down to 1000 a minute, just by wanting to have less desires. So you can go in that direction. But as sooner or

later, you have to kind of even give up the desire to have no desires. You have to be willing to kind of say With what's there. And what's if what's here inside is difficult. The reason you do a lot of thinking and desiring and wanting and not wanting is to protect yourself from feeling discomfort in here. Sooner or later, if you really want to kind of drop into this good heart you have, you have to be willing to quiet the desires become quiet, and be willing to feel it, feel what's there. Without the operator, the constant operation of desires around it. There can be a method desire that's got you going, which is to heal and resolve some of the sinner difficulty and that's what gets you to do it. But then as you do it, you have to know yet now's now that I'm doing it. That time you just sit here with it with it. And here's a little bit of a tool to pay. But this is a good tool. Because there's if you don't do this, in a process of dropping down and working with some of the inner challenges The border guards will take a much bigger toll. Other times, this is actually a minor cost to go through it, even though it can be quite difficult within the big picture. So to let the mind become quieter and quieter. Now, one of the important guides in all this, if we're missing Buddhist terms, is that as we move this direction to having less, temporarily, don't worry, you don't have to argue with me saying, well, Gail, you have to have desires. All that yes, I want you to have desires, the right desires. But it's there's a time and the place to allow them all come to rest. And then if they really come to rest, if you get to that Buddhist Mecca, of really having no desires, you you'll have a completely different relationship, a healthier relationship with the desires you have. After that no one's going to take away Your capacity and value of having certain kinds of desires and living based on desires that can't be taken away from you. So this is not so threatening what I'm asking to do asking you to do, I'm suggesting, I'm asking, I'm suggesting that it's valuable to do it temporarily, briefly. To touch that place where there's no desires, and see who you are, see what it's like, see what life is like. It's a radical different perspective. Because the normal way of the motivates desires, is often a feeling of being inadequate, not having enough, being wrong, wanting something, wanting to be better want to be better than others, wanting to prove oneself, want you know, all these things. That there's an underlying desire is painful. But if we can just go to that place was no desire with that people. That pain that drive that feeling of, there's no inadequacy there. There's no feeling worthless there. There's no feeling like you're not enough there is the opposite, we feel very much enough very adequate, very present, very kind of things are, you feel kind of you become a, you become a wonderful person, by not wanting to be Isn't that great? Or is that too is that like, you know, cost too much. So the guide in Buddhism so as we can let go of our incessant desires in wanting and attachment, what we're looking for in Buddhism is that our suffering, the stress level that we live by, begins to decrease, decrease, even just a little bit. And then what we're what we're asked to do, what's helpful to do in this practice is to begin to appreciate The decreased level of stress of suffering of despair of sadness of anger and hostility. So to recognize the decrease of suffering of stress that we have, and in Buddhism that decrease is the North Star is the guide forward, go forward to anywhere in the practice, oh, this is a direction to go. And, and we're looking for the place where there's less and less suffering.

And that becomes, and it might sound like not a very great religious ideal to end up in a place where there's no suffering. Maybe it's not a very great religious ideal. But to do this first. Don't suffer for the better ideals. Don't put up with your suffering for the better ideals. Maybe it's more like based. It's just a basic good human thing to do, to learn to come to a place where you no longer feel suffering and stress and despair and anger and hostility and all these things. Wow, that's pretty amazing. And once you've done that, if you're still interested in other ideals, please, it could be great to do those things. In Buddhism, that is the highest ideal to come to a place where there's no desire to come to a place where there's no suffering. And the experience is one of the most satisfying, most rewarding experiences anybody could have. It's quite luminous. And it's an experience which turns us inside out. Because one of the protests that people have about this going in this direction of not suffering, going, the direction of having no desires, even just temporarily, is that it's very personal, and it's internal. So, you know, I suppose to help the world, you know, I don't want to do self absorbed kind of practice here. In Defense

of this is direction in life, most of the desires we have are self absorbed, you know, so that the defending, you know, coming to, you know, I didn't go desires when most of desires are self absorbed is kind of funny. But as we get into this place where we drop our desire attachments, then we get turned inside out. And the inside out means that our hearts our capacity to be sensitive to be have empathy and compassion is no longer kind of inside the rib cage, but is, you know, on the surface of our skin, and we're connected to the world in a very different way than if we're connected to the world, through desires connect you to the world through all the thoughts and projections and And, you know, judgments and commentary we have about what's out there said to be turned inside out. So there was something that came to me on Sunday and said, I wanted to ask you a question, but I didn't. There wasn't time and said, when I meditate, I talked to myself about the meditation. I talked about myself and explain to myself as I meditate, this is what's happening now. This is the in breath. This is the out breath. And I said, Yeah, sometimes I do that, too. I said, I give myself instructions when I meditate. I said, Okay, Gil, sit up straight. Okay, now tune into your breathing. What's that breath like? Oh, look at that. That's nice. And now can I just feel that breath? You know, where does where does it How does it move? And where's that tension in Brazil looseness and, and so there's little bit of talking. So the guy said, it's okay to do that. And I said to him, Well, is it better than the alternative? He said, Yes, if the alternative is worse, so if the mind is just thinking incessantly what not business as usual, it might actually be worth better to, not not, you know, try to Don't try to stop your thinking, just thinking better ways, thinking Kinder ways, supportive ways. Think about the practice. And you know, it's not you know, the pristine silent mind that something people think you're going to have. But if it's better than alternative, if it moves you in the direction of less suffering moves you in the direction of still more stillness, that's the guide. And then as you do it, and the mind steals and becomes quieter, then at some point, you say, I don't need to do this anymore. Or at some point, maybe I'm not getting any return anymore. So now maybe I should stop giving myself instruction. And now I'm now I just kind of stay with the breathing and try to stay with it. Breathing in a calm way. And now now just staying with the breathing is what helps them Because still there to have less desires less thinking that we're caught in. So the principle I'm trying to say here is there's a Northstar. There's a guide that we can use in this practice. And we're it's a guide that leads us not towards an all or nothing result. But we're moving in a good direction.

And the direction is a quieting of the mind stilling of the mind, slowly, it is that direction is to not be so involved in our thoughts. The direction is to not be caught up in desires direction is to be able to identify and recognize when we have desires when we're caught in them, and realize there is an alternative and move towards the alternative. And one of the alternatives is to be clearly aware to recognize what's happening. Oh, here's a desire. And you might you can experiment and find how is it that I can Be mindful of having thoughts mindful of having a desire. And in the very act of awareness, the energy begins to quiet the energy seems begins to decrease that goes into the desiring into the thoughts. What is it? So what moved me in that direction with you? And maybe it just means that I talk to myself a little more kindly. Or maybe I just the volume of the thinking, or maybe I say they're there, it's okay. It's okay to be thinking so much and just that helps. Or maybe it's a very simple, clear, nothing extra recognition. Oh, I'm thinking, with no judgment, no snow for against just this earth and that moves the mind to a quieter place. And so slowly over time, and sometimes it takes a while if you keep meditating regularly, someday, you might start getting close. You might move towards them closer and closer to the place where there's no desire. And if you follow this in a healthy way, you'll be so nourished by this. You'll be fed you'll be, you'll be open, you'll be you'll be, you'll touch, a tremendous beauty that lives in us. That's obscured by all the thoughts and all the desires and all the fears that we have. And so this settling the settling coming to the place of no desire. There's no toll there. But you get to be rich. Just like Melendez or Dean, and it's donkeys. And one of the reasons I like the story of the donkey is a donkey is I don't know exactly when I'm gonna be careful not to insult the donkeys. But donkeys are so ordinary and

nothing special and kind of, they're kind of like almost like, they're, you know, they're like, you know, they're not the stallion, you know, and they're like the, like, poor like they're the poor person's animal and you know, nothing much. And so, you know, and that way, maybe you'll get rich. Allowing your inner life to be happy Dunkey nothing special. Nothing to prove nothing to be just happy to go. And the border guards will let you just record right through No tool. And bit by bit, you'll get rich, this inner Inner Wealth that comes with this practice. So those are my thoughts this evening. So now if you want to now you can protest about this thing about desire. Yes, please, if you can use the mic please. Is it possible to have desire without any craving or any attachment? And if so, do you consider that class of craving list desires, classes of desires you would recommend us to drop in the same way you'd recommend us to drop the other ones? Okay, good, good question. So, desires can be very, like, you know, easy a dime a dozen. They just arise and they go and it's like, you know, they just drift through and there's no power to them. Just loving. It'd be nice to. I'd like to I'd like to have something you know. Okay, and then we wait and then they can come with greater compulsion to a craving or attachment or wanting or insistence. Yes, it is possible desires without any compulsion, any assistance, any attachment and that can be pretty good.

However, it still involves mental work and it's not the place of no desire. And, and, and so it's meditation allows you to go deeper and deeper and deeper. So at least in meditation or you know, in a few other situations in life, you can go maybe you have deep, deep place with even those desires, even the innocent desires are no longer operating. But in ordinary life. It's quite nice to to is very rare. It can be very relieving or really not relaxing exactly, but satisfying to be able to see desires go through Without any ripple in the mind, without any agitation in the mind, just kind of an ordinary agitation You know, I think I'd like an ice cream but you know that was it. It makes sense that answer your question or you want to ask again or clarify. That's good enough. Yes.

So, desires are of two kinds. There's craving and there's aspiration. And every desire I've seen, it's a mix of these two phenomena. There's no perfect craving, desire and perfect aspirational desire. And I've noticed this for example, when I'm looking for a job, I tend to make a spreadsheet like work life balance, salary and all this and after this, it I feel nervous, drained of energy. And sometimes when you talk to somebody about aspect of problems that they need to be solved in this job that you're looking for you, suddenly you lighten up because you see through the entire thing and irrespective of the company culture or whatever, it is just the joy of the problem and everything else falls away. So that seems to be more aspirational and independent of the salary and everything. What I've seen happen is I tend to get concentrated. So at the end of this, a lot of joy comes. And just the thought that there is such a problem, and if you join the place, you can solve this problem. Just that everything else drops off. The I seen that the sense of ego goes away, and it's just fun for the sake of it. And at the end of it, the joy comes and I tend to get concentrated, and I sleep well that night, too. So that doesn't seem to be a bad thing.

So aspirational desires are not bad.

No, no, I don't want to say that automatically. desires are bad hope that's not what you got across today. There are appropriate desires as great desires as noble desires. There's ignoble desires, there's terrible desires. There's desires I want, hope you never have. And now there's a whole range and some desires to act on them and live with them. There's appropriate some their noble desires are acted on and in unskillful ways in unhealthy ways. A lot of attachment clinging self involved. There are noble desires, that wonderful desires that are a joy to do and easy to do, and there's no attachment involved, but there can be a lot of energy behind them and a lot of engagement. So whole range desires a whole range but What you said in the beginning I found most interesting, and that is that they're mixed. And so

sometimes there's more what you're calling aspirational desire, which is maybe the more healthy ones. And then the unhealthy desires, they're mixed. And that's often the case that you know, we're mixed bags we have we have really good motivations at the same time. You know, I want to you know, I want to help my neighbor who's sick and but I hope all the other native neighbors notice how good I am. So you look at yourself and you have to see what I'm it's mixed. There's mixed motivations here. So what do I do? One decision is to say, Well, I'm such a terrible person to want everyone to think I'm great. So I'm just going to go and hide in my room until that passes away. And hopefully my neighbor gets well before I come out. You know, just I'm not gonna act on it. And then your neighbor, stay sick and no one no one's No, bring some food or helps. So a principle that I use is I look at kind of the percentage. So if it's 80%, healthy aspiration, and 10% or 20%, you know, like ego driven or something else. I think it's unfortunate to sacrifice the 80% good for the 20% if you if you allow me to say this look quite bad. I mean, that's kind of like a terror that's tragic. So sometimes I'll recognize if I have some some unhealthy desires as part of it, and say, I recognize you're there. But in spite of that, I'm going to go along because there's 80% is really good and when I help someone, and then I'll deal with the 20%. In other time, I'll look at it or try to reflect on it. So but if it's 20% aspiration or good, a nice desire and 80% not then maybe I should not tacked on it because then I'll probably make mistake or you know that the benefits for the world probably are not going to be so great. So there is, you know, evaluate and it doesn't have to be all or nothing and, and it's better not to be so heavy handed and judging yourself because you have to have a little bit of ego at a crime not a crime to have an attachment generally. So, you know, I don't have to even say in Buddhism not to have any attachments, but it's not a crime to have it. So it's okay. As long as you don't act on the wrong ones, so that makes some sense. Okay. So some of you want to go home it's probably a good idea. This is not the time to ask you to sit here and have no desires. Now my my wish for you. desire I have is you drive home safely, carefully. And my wishes you have a good Wonderful, safe, contented, satisfying sleep through the night. Thank you