

2018-07-08 Forest Bathing

Tue, 9/1 1:26PM • 36:12

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, buddha, peace, mind, suffering, tree, dissolving, peaceful, verses, imc, happiness, peacefulness, solving, sage, life, atmosphere, forest, joy, protector, vigilance

SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdaal

It's been said that the Buddha was born under a tree and that he was enlightened under a tree that he often taught under trees and that he died under trees. One of the one story tells is told of when he recognized that this person was ripe for his deepest teachings. In order to give those teachings he took the person deep into the woods and to sit in a grove of sal trees and this.

So out there is not loud enough. So is the sound coming at all out there? So without louder now, it's better now. Isn't it? Oh, can't hear out there. You can hear now. Okay. Okay

So these sal trees are kind of like the redwood trees of India, they're very majestic and tall. And, and so we have here just a few miles from us, majestic redwood trees. And yesterday morning, I went for a walk in them. And it's quite spectacular and to do what's called in Japan, forest bathing to go in an environment where the atmosphere is such that it's so refreshing and healing and settling and quiet. That it feels like you're getting a bath of the and the atmosphere of goodness of peace or something. And it was lovely to go walking in these little groves and stand in the groves and field. So early in them was early in the morning. It was very quiet, very peaceful. Wonderful, cool. Now the days are warm and it was easy to see feel kind of like in meditation, the world around us the preoccupations of the mind, the engagement with the preoccupations of thoughts and ideas kind of recede as kind of an atmosphere of well being a piece of refreshment became more prominent, more predominant, then preoccupations, concerns of, of life and all that. And this reference point of the piece of being an unnatural setting, in my mind is in the background of the teachings of the Buddha, if you go back to read these ancient texts, some of them can seem fairly dry, but some of them seem to represent that atmosphere or the, the kind of the inner inner atmosphere of those people who are practicing and, and it's often associated with being in the woods or the kind Have a kind of state that's like being in peaceful woods. The Buddha would often encourage people who, when he encouraged them to meditate it probably just as often as he encouraged people to meditate. I think almost always he would add or introduction to that encouragement, he would say, Go sit at the foot of a tree to meditate. And there's something different that happens when you're meditating under a foot of a tree in a peaceful, safe environment. Then, you know, many other places and it isn't so much that that's the end result to always sit under a trees, but rather, there's something about certain settings that can resonate with our inner capacity to have the same refreshment the same peace and quiet inside. That is really the direction that the practice is going. Probably the most common description of emotional description of the goal of Buddhist prayer. Practice is peace. And, and so you know the emotion of peace more than, you know, a worldly state of peace, the inner state of peace. So, what I wanted to do was to today is to read some poems, verses from the Dhammapada. The Dhammapada is a collection of verses from the ancient tradition and being being poetry, sometimes it captures little bit the flavor or the taste or the atmosphere of the people who are practicing back then or the context for it all. And I delight in this

collection of verse verses, so much so that I translated it and, and after I was in the woods yesterday, I came home and picked it up, and I hadn't actually looked at my translation for many years. And it kind of just sat down and just said the line reading through it kind of somehow about being in the woods and reading it kind of went together.

So here are some verses. Delightful are forests where the masses do not the light there, that passion free, the light. So to go into the forest, to dim light, what a great thing. Delightful are the forests tasting the flavor of solitude and peace. When becomes free of this stress, drinking the flavor of Dharma joy. Great drinking the flavor of Dharma joy. Wow. And it a little different flavor. And then if you read first and foremost that the Buddha taught their suffering causes suffering In end of suffering and these eight things you have to do to get the end of suffering. You know, that's it those are good teachings but, but drinking the flavor of Dharma joy. You know this forest bathing or Dharma bathing. sitting alone, resting alone, walking alone, and untiring. Whoever has tamed oneself will enjoy being alone in the forest. peaceful and body peaceful in speech. The monastic peaceful and well concentrated has rejected the world's bait and is called the one at peace. rejected the world's bait. There's there's such a bait out there. In anybody be tempted, or noticed that there's lots of bait but peaceful embody peaceful and speech, the one who is at peace. So the contrast sometimes in these ancient texts between this peacefulness of kind of forest like peacefulness is fire. Sometimes they use the word fever a lot the mind is feverish fever, a fever of anger, the fever of lust or the fever, you know, break up being caught up in some way. So, here there's a poem. There is no fire, like lust, no misfortune, like anger and no happiness higher than peace. Well, health is the foremost possession, contentment, the foremost wealth. Trust, the four most kinship and Nirvana, the foremost happiness. So when you think of contentment as the foremost wealth your friends can ask you, what are you doing? I'm amassing lots of wealth. What do you mean? The wealth of contentment? What about that? Because if you get a lot of that kind of wealth, then you're really set for retirement.

So this next two verses are the opening verses of the Dhammapada. And as such, they kind of set the stage for all these verses, there's something like 420 verses in this book. And so, it has, you know, pretty important kind of, kind of represents some real essence of these early teachings. And it goes like this. All experience is preceded by mind, led by mind, made by mind, speak or act with a corrupted mind. And suffering follows, as the wagon wheel follows the hoof of the ox. So all experience is preceded by mind. To understand this, we have to see that experience is always mediated, we know, the world and what events in the world are not necessarily mediated by the mind, but how we expect In the world, how we experience ourselves is always mediated by our minds acts of perception, our judgments or bias or assumptions that we bring to the situation. And so the mind is because of because it's so important the role of the mind and how we experience things, the Buddha puts tremendous emphasis Be careful with your mind. And then he gives the example if you speak or act with a corrupted mind. And suffering follows as the wagon wheel follows the hoof of the ox. Now, this is the image poetic image of a wagon being pulled by an ox. You can imagine in ancient India is one of the means of transporting goods around imagine out an old ox and a very heavily loaded And wagon. It's a lot of work to pull the wagon. And so the idea is heavy work the burden of suffering. If you speak and act in corrupted ways with then suffering will come and you'll fall it'll come along like a big burden that you have to the weight of it you carry along. So with that image, listen to the second verse. All experience is preceded by mind, led by mind, made by mind, Speaker act with a peaceful mind and happiness follows like a never departing shadow. much weight as a shadow, a burden to kind of take your shadow along wherever you go. It has no weight. It's easy. So there's contrast between the burden the weight of suffering, and the lightness. More than lightness, lightness more than lightness of a shadow of happiness. So because the mind your own mind has such a big role in our well being or happiness and the conditions we set up for ourselves in our lives, the Buddha has this to say oneself, indeed, is one

owns protector. What other protector could there be? with self control, one gains a protector, hard to obtain. So I think he recognized that it's hard to really have enough self control enough self monitoring enough self awareness, to be one's own protector, but this is They're real protector. You protect yourself from your own suffering. There's something very powerful about watching your own mind. And then you protect yourself and protect that which is most valuable here for you. And then kind of in the same vein, of whatever an enemy may do to an enemy or haters, one to another, far worse is the harm from one's own wrongly directed mind. That's quite something, no matter what an enemy can do to you, that your own wrongly directed mind can do greater harm.

And then sometimes it's pointed out that if you know if there's a ways in which we might have enemies or people hate us, and sometimes some people help them out. You know, do they hate us or they're angry with us are they You know, they're our enemy, and they do things and then we get feverish we get caught up in, anger ourselves and hate ourselves. And, and the reaction we have, you know, so it's, you know helps them out, it helps them helps us suffer, they want us to suffer and we'll give them a hand to do that. Not a mother, a father, nor any other relative can do as much good as one's own well directed mind. So no one can do as much good for yourself as you can do for yourself. If you're self aware and present and direct your mind rightly. And then the value of self is epitomized this little these two verses these two lines. If one knew oneself to be precious, one would guard oneself with care. Knew oneself be precious. So I'm hoping a little bit you get as some sense of the flavor or the atmosphere of this ancient tradition, the city of peace. Maybe it may be that if you have a reference point of the peace, peacefulness and nature and the freedom may be a being there and dropping a lot of the social conventions and a lot of the social preoccupations we have and being able to breathe really easily and likely and being refreshed. And then having a sense that in that state and that peacefulness, that will we have some responsibility for the state of our mind, the quality of our inner life. In fact, we have more role to play in the quality of our inner life than other people do. And so we can become our own protector of that we can cultivate this wealth of contentment within.

In the restless, agitated mind, hard to protect hard to control so that the Buddha said he saying it's not easy to do what he's encouraging people to do. The Restless agitated mind hard to protect hard to control. The sage makes straight as a Fletcher the shaft of an arrow. The mind hard to control, flighty a lighting whereas where it wishes, one does well to attain the discipline mind brings happiness. The mind hard to see subtle a lighting where it wishes. The sage protects the watched mind brings happiness.

They say watch pot never boils better. Watch mind they Never boils, you know, boiling and fever of anger and things like that. But a watched mind brings happiness as a solid mass of rock is not moved by the wind. So a sage is not moved by praise or blame. So here the image of a sage is someone who's really solid, you know, so solid and so it's hard to kind of string that in that string. Praise and blame, it's not going to, you know, catch us and push us around. As a deep lake is clear and undisturbed. So a sage becomes clear upon hearing the Dharma. I love the I love the expression is a deeply is clear and undisturbed. I've been here to see lots of, you know, mountain lakes and clear and peaceful side of the edge of them and I was once in High Sierra lake with my young son when he was maybe five and we were sitting was so peaceful and I asked him to close his eyes and open his eyes and look at the lake, close his eyes and kind of see the lake isn't it? You know, in his mind's eye, so he, I guess he did the best he could. I asked him do it again. And he he just looked at me and said, leave me alone. idea is this idea of his imprint on him this depth of the piece. It's a deep lake is clear and undisturbed. So here's a kind of a very evocative finding a powerful Converse that points to The Buddha's kind of now, not just a sense of peacefulness, but the sense of, of real motivation, real importance, real dedication or, or a real kind of sense of like this is important to do. vigilance is the path

to the deathless negligence, the path to death. The vigilant, do not die. The negligent are as if already dead. What's that? So anyway to be negligent to be unmindful to be lost and thought. Many traditions not just the Buddha says it's kind of like already being dead. Some people are talking about being asleep. Many people walk around sleepwalking, the way we're caught up in our thoughts and preoccupations not really here in the world and This powerful language of negligence is the path to death. But vigilance, vigilance and here's another word for mindfulness or being clearly aware, sharply aware, is the path to the deathless.

Knowing this distinction to these two paths, vigilance, sages rejoice in vigilance, the lighting in the field of the noble ones. So decided the lighting keeps coming back over and over again this joy, delight, peace and hear and happiness. So these are kind of these are exclamations, so I'm going to read out exclamations of joy or delight that by the Buddha or by right people back at his time. Ah, great to have a poem that begins with If I told you it kind of gives you a little bit of flavor or some sense of it that's very different than kind of a dry scholastic presentation of Buddhist teaching. Ah. Ah, so happily we live without hate among those with hate, among people who hate, we live without hate. So happily, we live without ambition, among those with ambition, among people who are ambitious, we live without them vision. So happily, we live we have no attachments. We shall feast on joy, as do the radiant Gods feasting on joy.

So I don't know exactly how many Buddhist teachings are in these verses. But maybe there's something that's maybe as important or maybe more important. For some of us, at least for me when I kind of came back from being in the woods, and reading this and kind of feeling this connection to people quite a ton for 2000 years ago, who spent their time in natural settings much of their life of Buddhist monastics, you know, spent a lot of time walking, walking in the forests and farmlands of ancient India. sitting under trees in detail, I'm pretty confident that they were not on their smartphones, that they manage their lives just fine without all the things that require electricity. And perhaps because of that, even maybe there was easier access to a settled, quiet mind that didn't have the incessant preoccupation with thoughts, ideas, getting things, connecting to things, finding out things, doing things that sometimes is epidemic here in our society. But there were the concerns that were back then that are common today to the fever of lost the suffering of a lot of things that are just as true back then they are today. And so the people who touched alternatives to those things, people who touched the capacity for an inner life that had refreshment in it, inner life that was kind of like bathing in peace. Kind of an inner spring like have a nurse in her bath, there's a lake that can over there's a up swelling of nourishment of joy and peace and happiness, contentment, the light. Wow. To have all those together and to have this as a visceral experience, to know how to kind of relax, let go to know how to value this inner inner qualities, to see that they're important and useful that they're more useful, more valuable. Then greed and hate, fear all kinds of things that people are preoccupied with are caught in there is something when invest in us it's more valuable and to begin to add glimmer that then taste that and touch into that. And for the people who do there's an, I think, an amazing line in this text Dhammapada that says that people become disenchanted with suffering. Isn't that an amazing idea? I mean, who in the right mind would be enchanted with suffering? I mean, that doesn't kind of, you know, doesn't quite compute, but it is maybe a lot of people are, because a lot of people suffer. And so that's kind of a kind of a challenging idea. You know, I'm not enchanted with my suffering. Thank you. That's I hate by suffering, you know, but what you know, what, what could this be to be disenchanted with it? And I don't know exactly what it means to be, you know, for you or for everyone to be disenchanted with suffering and certainly have a lot of respect for the suffering people experience. But there is a red dragon Solving all our sufferings that we have, there is sometimes inappropriate, shifting the paradigm or shifting the orientation. By having access to a genuine sense of inner well being peace subtleness that can help some of our suffering dissolve, rather than having our suffering be solved. And perhaps some of the

greatest suffering that you experience, it's better off dissolving it than solving it. It's maybe more realistic. And so, where do you go to be forest babe? Where do you go to drink the Dharma joy? And the hope is the answer is in here in you. So

then if this talk has been nice, you can thank the redwoods here in California. So, you have any comments or any questions you'd like to ask or

Tycho, thank you for your talk. I'm curious about the difference between resolving and dissolving, the solving and

resolving and dissolving, dissolving, resolving and dissolving. And did you comment on that? Or was it just my hearing,

I didn't use the word resolving, I said, the difference between solving and dissolving. So solving problems means to, you know, figure out the details of the causes and conditions that come together and then rearranging the furniture or, you know, taking taking away the something that needs to be taken away to make it go away. And And sometimes that's all day often I think of it as something that involves a lot of thinking and sometimes engineering, planning and you know, it can be, some people get really busy solving the problems. And it's, of course, we have to sometimes and that's an important part of our life. But if we overemphasize that, then we don't allow for something different to happen. And that is the dissolving, dissolving that happens when we're no longer feeding. Or, or wrapping ourselves up in our difficult challenges we have. Sometimes the very attempt to solve is the very thing that keeps some things intact. It's kind of like having if you have a scab and you keep picking it, it doesn't heal. So sometimes our psychological suffering, there's a ways in which you sometimes you keep picking it And sometimes it's been one of the powerful thing, especially especially in something like meditation is to stop picking at it, but let it be and then allow some inner healing to happen. Allow the inner wisdom to unfold or dissolve or meet it in some way that there's Mike is here. I can go back up.

First, I'd like to give thanks to you, Gil, that you've spent most of your adult life and propagating the Buddhist teachings here in the western California. And for the wonderful IMC here in Redwood City. What a great gift. It is to my itself and all the people assembled here and all the thousands of people who have benefited from IMC and you and the other leaders leadership. A moment ago when you spoke about sitting at the base of a tree, I noticed outside the window to the east, just beyond us, there is a tree and I felt we were all sitting at the base of a tree as I looked up at it.

And if I may be so bold.

If we face that tree, we would feel more like we were in a grove. And if this wall here on my right, directly opposite you were taken out and you only had some vertical pillars to support it and everybody could face to the east under the ground. tree. And again, if I may be so bold. I've been coming off and on puppy for 20 years and almost every time you have to ask if the people outside in the other room can hear, but if we put speakers out there, it would be great for them. Great. So please forgive my boldness for making such suggestion. thank

thank you for the appreciation and thank you for evoking the wonderful tree we have there. It's only become visible in the last year or so. Because you know, we changed the Windows has been a delight to have that light the tree the green coming in. And yeah, it would be lovely to have more open here. When we first moved here before we do some remodeling. IMC had seven doors to the outside. And,

and seven somehow to me is kind of a symbolic number and I love that idea. That we had seven doors to the world around us because the idea for me was really fluid with the world around us coming and going and open and we're available to anybody to come and go and ease. So having an open that way is a great thing. And we're, you know, we're, we're still working on sound system and trying to improve it all the time. And there is a speaker out there actually, and, but some some of that has to do with my voice. And, and some things you can solve. But but having my voice dissolve too much, doesn't work so well. So I know I should probably speak up louder, but so that's a little bit hard for this. Figuring out the volume to adjust and so it's part of our

Part of our practice

you have to have something to practice with the when I was first introduced to this practice of Vipassana it was in Thailand. And it was in a monastery back then was in the edge of Bangkok. Probably now Bangkok has gone far out beyond it. But I was at Bangkok and it was a, you know, we're not a quiet monastery. And it's very hard to find quiet monasteries in Thailand and Burma and you think that they were really quiet, but so you learn to practice with the noise. But then I went in a couple of times into Bangkok to the headquarters of one of the big Thai sects of Thai Buddhism. monastic monastic orders and to visit someone and big complex of buildings, apartment buildings kind of thing. But there was a lobby of residence halls for monastics big lobby. And coming through the door, there's a big desk, and there's a phone or phones on the desk and there's a monk of sitting at the desk, who is taking phone calls and yelling to people here and there, you know, and people coming in and out and their steps going up to this difference, you know, floors, so a lot of traffic. And then, but then you can go in and the other end of it from the entryway, the steps going up, kind of on the right. And then on the left, kind of under kind of underneath the steps. That's where they had where they did the Vipassana meditation. And there was probably I don't remember how many but 10 1215 people there, whenever I came, who were sitting there meditating in that noisy busy lobby, doing the repossessor meditation, and I loved it, that this practice we do can be done anywhere. So here we are, this is under this is our spot under the tree. And we have our own issues with sound and lack of sound and, and we'll keep working on it. But what's really great about this practice is that the practice that's not dependent on the conditions around us is dependent on how we hold those conditions. And we could hold them better if we discovered a piece inside of ourselves. And that piece then can spread and hold the world. Discover the love inside of us, and then that love can spread and hold the world. Next log. May your peace and your love hold all beings. So, thank you. So there is today