

2018-11-11 The Fire of Dharma

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SPEAKERS

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So some of you might have seen as you came in through the door that today all the dana, the donations that are being offered to IMC are offered here will go to the American Red Cross for disaster relief because of all the fires in California. It's a huge thing these fires and you know, it's just astounding the number of homes that had been burned, the number of people displaced and no whole town destroyed. And but not just up in Paradise, Northern California, but also in Southern California. coming on the heels of one of the biggest fires in the state just a few months ago, and bigger ones last year, two years ago. It's just quite astounding. And so here we sit in this world, the Buddha once said, The world is burning. And not only is California burning, but we're we're we're breathing in Smoke, and who knows what's in that smoke. It isn't just, you know, wood burning, it's plastic and chemicals of every kind. And in the ways in which, you know, our society has produced so much material that is polluting it and health hazards. It comes through the smoke for us now. And so it's kind of poignant, very poignant to have the smoke and be able to see it and smell it and breathe it. And what is this world we've created? And the fire that we seized in California, many people are saying is partly due to climate change, that the temperatures are higher and drier. And so it's they say some people say it's human caused the climate change likely. And then, you know, there's a so I thought I was kind of amazed by the news last week of of these and I guess a nanoplastics that are now spreading out throughout the waters and lands and everywhere. And, and something as innocent as washing your synthetic clothes, sheds a little bit of these nano plastics into the sewage and into the bay and to you know, and so it goes around and around and we're building you know, this wonderful reservoir, terrible reservoir of nano plastics. And they say that apparently it's very hard to get salt Now, table salt that doesn't have this nano plastic in it, because it's just everywhere going on. So what is this world we're living in? And then we have shootings in Thousand Oaks. And we have shootings in Pittsburgh and it Lewisville and seems like it just comes one after the other. I felt felt very kind of felt very deeply for people in Thousand Oaks. I lived there for a short while growing up, but it was some of the people who experienced the shooting, then experienced the fire that There. And you know, what's, what's it all coming to just, you know, just on and on. Some of the people were part of Las Vegas shooting some time ago. So it's astounding. Some of you probably know people who were from Pittsburgh or know people who were there, that area I do, people maybe you know, some people in Thousand Oaks, you know some people up in maybe up in the Chico area on Malibu area on different places where it's going on. So here we are in this world, and then we have our practice. And we have this wonderful practice that on the surface looks like it's about going inwards, and becoming quiet and still and calm. And it'd be very easy to assume, and perhaps actually experienced this as something that's removed from the world around us and has nothing to do with it and pull in escape and come here. discover some kind of enlightenment and it's not just listeners to dharma. Talks I hope to be enlightened speakers of them too. There's a story of people getting enlightened in their own Dharma talk so and, and so this, you know, the world of practice in the world of the world. There's, for me I kind of symbolically represented by two images, one

from Japanese, Japanese culture, Japanese Buddhism, the moon in the dewdrop. The dewdrop represents in Japanese culture, something very ephemeral, that you drop is just there very briefly until the sun comes out when it evaporates. And the moonlight the moon represents enlightenment, the enlightened mind if the perfection of this world in some way, and to see in the dewdrop a reflection of awakening and freedom is something that's very poignant in Japanese culture. And so you find lots of work. princesses in Japanese cultures to the moons they do drop.

One of the ones that's very poignant in the topic of today, there's a Japanese poet named Isa. He doesn't evoke the moon, but he evokes a dewdrop. It's a very simple, and it's the How to ends that's quite powerful. The world of do is the world of do And yet, and yet, and the world of do is this ephemeral world that we become enlightened in this age, each little dew drop is like a jewel in itself and everything is a jewel, everything is ephemeral. That is kind of one of the perspectives of Buddhism. But Isa lost his mother when he was two or three. lost his three wives lost four children through his lifetime and And so this idea of looking into the world, a dewdrop, the world as a dewdrop, moon and the moon and the dewdrop had some sense of that. But then, but, but this world of pain that he's experienced, he had another poem. Everything I touch with tenderness, it's a nice talk nice. Everything I touch with tenderness to do being tender in the world. But it goes this way, everything I touch with tenderness, alas, picks, like a Bramble. Everything that I love, has thorns in it somehow. And, you know, so many so many losses he's had. So what is this world we live in? And how do we live in this world of fires everywhere? And in how do we relate this practice to this world that we live in. That's kind of what I like to talk about today. So, this idea of the world burning I said the Buddha said this once and the Buddha said, All is burning, and what is the all that is burning, I is burning forms of burning, I consciousness is burning, eye contact is burning, and ever whatever feeling arises with eye contact as a condition, whether pleasant or painful. That too is burning, burning with what? burning with a fire of lust with a fire of hatred with a fire of delusion, burning with lust, hatred and delusion. I think the fire that burns inside of us, with the fires in California and the shootings and everything, maybe our fires of fear and dismay and discouragement and overwhelm, there's many huge impact for people that these things have. And then so how do we how do we meet that? How do we respond to that? How do we work with the impact these things have a hotter we respond to this world that we live in. And I want to read a little pseudo little discourse that I've been wanting to read for years, I couldn't quite figure out when to do it. So hopefully Today's a day. So the Buddha is visiting a king them by sanity, who they were friends the same age, they knew each other for decades. And so he was they were sitting together talking and or the king comes to him comes to the Buddha they sit down and they And the Buddha asks the king, where you're coming from now in the middle of the day, what do you been up to? And the king says this. Just now, I have been engaged in those affairs of kingship typical for kings, who are intoxicated with the intoxication of sovereignty, who are obsessed with greed for sensual pleasures, who have attained stable control of the country, and who rule having conquered a great sphere of terror of territory. It's a busy guy obsessed with this power, obsessed with essential pleasures, all that he gets. That's a kind of pretty upfront guy, but I think I love this little that he said to describe himself this way.

So the Buddha responds to him. What do you think great king? A person would come to you from the east. One who is trust trustworthy and reliable. Having approached the person will tell you for sure Great King, you should know this. I am coming from the east. And there I saw a great mountain highest the clouds coming this way, crushing everything in its way. Do whatever you think should be done great king. Then a second man, second person came from the west and said the same thing. So huge mountain coming this way crushing everything in its way. Someone came from the south, from the north. And they all said the same thing from all directions are coming towards towards you. huge mountains crushing everything and it's way it's coming here. Do what you want. Do what you think you should do. They say to him And so then the Buddha continues, if great King, such a great pair of peril

should arise such a terrible destruction of life what should be done? So that's the scenario, the thought experiment. If you know you're going to your everything's coming your way to crush you, there's nothing I know you can't get out of the way. What do you do? That's the one that's the question. And so the king answers. If such a great parent pearl peril, should arise such a terrible destruction, what else should be done, but to live by the Dharma? What else should be done, but live by the Dharma and then the Buddha goes on to say That that the mountains coming, inevitable to come is sickness, old age and death. They're coming in from all directions, you're not going to get away from them. And with that peril coming your way, what's the best thing to do? And he says, practice the Dharma. Why is it better to go out there and push the mountains back? Stop stop sickness, old age and death. What are we here in this world to do when we're up against we're facing at is such such great peril. Sooner or later Well, I'm going to face this. I spent a lot of my Dharma practice, especially when I was doing long retreats like in Asia as part of it, kind of looking death right in the eye. kind of looking at kind of how have imagined when I was sitting and meditating that I was sitting with death right in front of me to scrape. It was kind of like it for me a great black, endless expanse. And that was there informing me telling me here, this is something you have to deal with is something this is a context of your practice. What does it mean, to face that to be with it? What does it mean to practice a Dharma in that situation? What does it mean to rely on the Dharma? Not before the mountains come? Maybe we think they're coming there that there could be a long time before they come. But what does it mean to meet to, to practice the Dharma as a response to the fires in California and the shootings in the country and their racism in their country? And, you know, with the environmental challenge, greater and greater and Royal environmental challenges we think we can come? What does it mean to practice with that? For me, We practice in the domain of our consciousness of what we are aware of. And we have this amazing awareness consciousness is this amazing meeting place of the vast world outside of us, with a vast world inside inside of us. And there's a vast world outside of us that we know something about about, but not much. We know enough if we use our imagination to know that the fires in California the shootings in Thousand Oaks are just kind of a tip of an iceberg of people who are burning and suffering challenges all over the world to a huge degree. The scale of suffering is huge in this world. And the scale of beauty and scale of love is great.

But it's a lot and then within us, there's huge unseen dimensions within us, we can't know everything that goes on in our minds and hearts in our psyche. We're not constructed to know it all, to see it all and be aware of it. But we certainly can know that we're if we're in distress, we can know if there's sadness, if we're heavy, we can know for afraid, we can know. You know, if we're at peace or free, we can know something, something. But we I think it's useful to think we don't know everything is within us. We don't know everything's around us. But the meaning of these two large unknown worlds is the domain of consciousness. The place where we're aware. And we don't in mindfulness practice and Dharma practice, we bring a heightened attention or awareness to that meeting place. That place where these two worlds come together to a place of consciousness and we do it in such a way That we allow all these places the outer world and the inner world, to inform themselves to come together and coexist in such a way that this wonderful Dharma process that we are, has a chance to unfold and deepen. And a way to do this is to take everything that occurs to you everything that you're aware of in this little sliver of consciousness and fold it back into your body. Bring it in and feel it fully. We have the ability to be consciously aware of our physical life or about embodied life. The tensions in softness, the tenderness, the hardness, the movements, the energies, the feelings that exists in the body. The royal road to the unconscious, is through the body, to come back and feel the body and let the inner life process what goes on. If you can allow that if you compost everything back into the body, bring everything here. So whatever is happening in the world around you, the world inside of you, feel it in your body. Learn to be present in this sliver of consciousness that we have in this little layer of consciousness that we have learned to really be there for it. Don't slide off it. If you want to do Dharma practice, don't slide off it into

the thoughts, the stories you have, the imaginary concerns and fears you have. You'll have those. But learn the art of taking your reactions and responses and keep turning it back in to conscious awareness of how the body's feeling that so if you're feeling afraid, what does that feel like in your body and hang out there in your body who really feel it if you're feeling joyful? Feel it in the body? What's it like there in the body? If the world around you is impacting you in an important way, feel it in your body. Come here, feel it here. Because that allows some kind of inner movement, process healing, reconciliation, to occur. It's phenomenal to me how much we can trust, mindfulness, mindfulness to the body, that allows some deep inner process to unfold, that we could never engineer ourselves. And if we spend all our time thinking about solutions, thinking about how to react and how to respond to what has to happen, or we're going to miss the opportunity for this deeper Dharma body we have to unfold to resolve itself and find out what's here. Thinking is important, and thinking about things should be done, but the art of it is to allow yourself to think but fold it in As quickly as you can back into your body, what does it feel like what you're thinking, what's happening in your body, what's happening in your emotional body, what's really going on here, and making room in the body for what's here to show itself to unfold. The quiet part of the reason to be quiet and meditation to quiet the mind is to make lots of room in awareness for some deeper prod and body process to unfold. If we're our awareness is filled with our thoughts, there's no room for other things to happen in this sliver of attention that we have.

So we let the mind thinking mind become quiet. So we can see or feel more space for what's happening deeper inside of us. What's happening emotionally, what's happening deeper in the structures of the mind, what the impulses are, what's it, what's the what propels the mind to think? What's the attachments and clinging and worries and concerns Nothing in Dharma practice can be done. It needs to be seen as wrong. If it just keeps getting composted back in. I find it phenomenal this meditation posture, anybody's meditation posture, if you really trust it and learn to feel some degree of at home in it, and then to fold everything into it, let it hold everything. As if everything has permission to be there, nothing is wrong. And then, but then allow the inner process to unfold. They don't have to be worried or alarm that what goes on there. Just have to feel it. digest it in the body, compost it in the body. Let it evolve in the body here to sit. If it takes, it takes time. It's a beautiful thing. To have a meditation practice like this is a profound thing and to rely on it by going into it often. To frequently kind of trust it and come in, and let it be the place where life is processed, or something evolves and develops. So there's a number of things that can happen when this happens when this goes on. One is the system that we have the psychophysical system, wants to release, wants to let go of the places of contraction. And it's when when contractions and tightness attachments begin to soften and release, it begins to change the whole inner landscape, and begins to change the eyes through which we see the world. But if we don't do go through the transformation process, then we'll see the world through our usual eyes. And if our eyes to see the world of peril, will see the world as dangerous. If we see the world through, through our hate, we'll see hate. If we see the world through our greed. We'll see a place so greed, if we can let go of that, and release that will have different eyes. And what eyes you'll have, when you let go of your holding, I don't want to tell you what I'm what if I want to, I'd like to know what happens to you. But to open up something deeper and deeper, what's here. And there's two things I'd like to emphasize that can be important. Sometimes what we discover is a strong sense of inner power, of strength. Rather than kind of this self becoming self effacing. In the deeper piece, there's a kind of almost like, we become bigger, because there's nothing in the way nothing holding the energies back and the inner strength, and this is represented in the Buddhist tradition, by a wonderful series of three likes, images that the Buddha gives talks about where keeps talking about letting go. Letting Go. Everything that comes up you let go, let go he says but when you get to the end of letting go The final thing you come to he says you don't let go and deep inside you let go enough. He says what you find in this current symbolic language he was using this this teaching is you find a Naga and a Naga in your smiling a cobra for you. A Cobra and his Cobra kind of sweet and weak why purges all the unwanted

stuff. So the this thing of a cobra very powerful serpent they've been so variety of things in India sometimes in the Buddhist texts and Naga also means a big elephant and a quite nice Alright. So I think a very powerful and dig in someone who becomes fully enlightened, is set to become a Naga so that's nice. You know, watch out that, you know, it's any kind of power that's there. And why not? So this idea. So there's a lot of emphasis in Buddhism and becoming peaceful, letting go of being kind of loving and all these things which are very profound, I don't want to dismiss the importance. But that can come come along with a real sense of personal power. strength.

So, that's one thing that can happen. If we kind of fold everything back in the body, feel in the body, be here, trust it, let it emerge. Make room for what wants to emerge to show itself and be there. sitting meditation like this. It's a such a good place to let that happen. Because you're not going to make any mistakes sitting still. You're not gonna you're committed to being silent and meditation, you're not going to say something and you're not going to move You're not gonna hit something. So this idea of exploring and discovering and letting what's there unfold to discover freedom and see what emerges in that is a great thing. And then there's something else that can happen. And, and for this, I'd like to read you a Facebook post that item that I came across in the news so we had the shooting of some 11 people died at the synagogue in Pittsburgh. And the shooter survived, but was wounded and he was taken to the hospital. He went to the emergency room or the trauma center there, and he was treated by a nurse who happened to be Jewish. And at first he was clear they knew the news. kept the all the different news stations apparently called them. The Jewish nurse And after a while, he saw that he's been referred to us all over without a name and he didn't feel good about that. He felt he had to speak up and for himself as his own voice be spoken, so that he made this Facebook post. And that's the title of it is, I am the Jewish nurse. Yes, that Jewish nurse, the same one that people are talking about in the Pittsburgh shooting that left 11 dead. The trauma nurse in the ER, that cared for Robert Bowers, who yelled death to all Jews. As he was wheeled into the hospital. The Jewish nurse ran into a room to save his life. To be honest, I'm nervous about sharing this. I just know I feel alone right now. And the irony of the world talking about me doesn't seem fair, without the chance to speak for myself. To be honest, I didn't see evil. When I looked into Robert Bowers eyes, I saw something else. I can't go into details of our interactions because of HIPAA. I can tell you the rule, the law, the rules for non disclosure that medical people have to do confidentiality. I can tell you that as his nurse, or anyone's nurse, my care is given through kindness. My actions are measured with empathy. And regardless of the person you may be, when you're not in my care, each breath you take is more beautiful than the last when you're lying on my stretcher. This was the same Robert Bowers that just committed mass homicide. The Robert Bowers who instilled panic in my heart, worrying my parents were two of his 11 victims, less than an hour before he's arrived. I'm sure he had no idea I was Jewish. Why thank a Jewish nurse. When 15 minutes beforehand, you'd shoot me in the head with no remorse. I didn't say a word to him about my religion. I chose not to say anything to him the entire time. I wanted him to feel compassion. I chose to show my empathy. I felt that the best way to honor his victims was for a Jew to prove him wrong. Besides, if he finds out I'm Jewish, does it really matter? The better question is, what does it mean to you? Love, love. That's what I did it. That's why I did it. Love as an action is more powerful than words and love in the face of evil gives others hope. It demonstrates humanity. it reaffirms why we're all Hear the meaning of life is to give meaning to life. And love is the ultimate force that connects all living beings. I could care less about Robert Bowers, I could care less what Robert Bowers thinks. But you the person reading this love is the only message I wish to instill in you. If my actions mean anything, love means everything by re Mahler.

So this process, when peril comes in all directions, what do we do? For Buddhists, I practice the Dharma with the practice of Dharma and bring everything in and compost it and digest it and unfold it and mature it is the touch of place of power of strength and a place of love, compassion and To have

those things to come together is a wonderful thing. Because it means that then we will do something, we will act. It's very hard to deal with all this difficult things happening in the world. If we feel helpless, if we feel it's chaos, and when I have no control and we're being overwhelmed by it. It's very hard to manage with that. But to compost it all inside have some you have something to do with it, you have a practice that's so powerful. Really, this is a time to rely on practice when the peril is greatest. That's when the practice has the most value. And then do something. however small, even the smallest thing you do, will help be an antidote to feeling helpless. exercise your capacity, of compassion, of love of care of support of your neighbors, your friends, your family, wherever you can. The world around you. Love grows, compassion grows, freedom grows, by exercising it by doing it and living it. If the world you want to live in, or say differently, you know, if you don't like the world you're living in, make it different. Make it different starting from you. Let it radiate out from you. to not do that, to be overwhelmed and reactive and think it's treated out there that's so terrible and it's too much for me, is to forfeit this beautiful capacity we have of practice of consciousness of digesting of compost to evolving and growing We have an amazing ability here to create a new world that radiates from us. It's a waste of time, to be reactive to a world out there as if it is overwhelming you if it's it's doing, you're the victim of it. It not really helpful. So for whatever degree you do feel like a victim. Great. Compost it, feel it in your bodies, turn it back in, it won't survive. Sometimes it'll feel like when you bring everything back into the body, you'll feel like everything's burning, a different fire, the Dharma fire, put everything in the Dharma fire, but everything burned in the practice of attention of mind from the fire of mindfulness. Let it transform in the fire because in in our hearts as all the kind of Everything burns off. What is left will be profound capacity for peace, profound capacity for tenderness, profound strength and compassion. Exercise it, give it voice, put it in action. Even if you feel just a smidgen of it Don't let it go to waste. Because then the alchemy, the growth and develop of it expression of it is what lets something deeper, keep unfolding keep growing. So, we have fires in California, the world's on fire. And we could go about our life and breathe this air and just feel dismayed and discouraged and all that or we can do something To make a difference, and here at IMC today, we have the donation box available for the American Red Cross is not everyone's favorite place to donate. But in investigating and looking around at the options, I decided it was the best option.

They do fantastic work. And they're right there, meeting these kinds of crisis's and supporting people. And this is a time we want to support and help the people who are so distressed. So people who, you know, 5000 homes have been burnt up there in Paradise, how many people live in those homes and how much has been lost in that process. So this is a time for us as a community to really, you know, let the Naga in us come forth to support this world.

The world so this is playing off this idea of when to drop the world in a teardrop moistens the heart, quenching the fire Don't be afraid of your tears. Fold it back in. It'll moisten your heart and quench your fires. Okay, so thank you