

# 2018-12-02 Buddhist Values

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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## SPEAKERS

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So, today I wanted to talk about some basic Buddhist values, as opposed to talking about mindfulness practice. And my desire to do so is stimulated by reflections about the second precept. Second precept is the precept not to take what is not given. And in a commercial economy, then buying things that are for sale is considered taking things that are being given, right. And so then, so there's taking what is not given. So, there are lots of things being given to us. I mean, there's no shortage in American IQ, if you go to stores. So rather than only taking what's given, there's also the value of taking less of what's given. There's, uh, you know, the idea of taking less and be content with less. And, you know, it's quite remarkable that we live in a consumer economy, that I remember when, right after 9-11, the President George Bush, one of the ways that he was, you know, encouraging the country right after that big tragedy was to go out and shop. He said, you know, we have to be good consumers. And that's the way to get the economy going and get the country strong again, and all that. And consumerism is such an integral part of our society, that that's what we're encouraged to participate in by our presidents. The, and you know, it's probably many of us don't realize that. Maybe you do that. Consumerism is an ism, in terms of promoting the consumption of goods that had a very clear beginning and the late 1800s when there's mass production and mass production of things. So things weren't being made by hand anymore. And there started to be a big surplus of goods. And so how do you ensure that surplus of goods get bought while you encourage people to buy? And so there became advertisement and all a lot of strategy went in some of the quite clever to convince people in the United States that it was important to buy more things. And so we do and so that's continuing, and that continues right up to today that we're being encouraged to buy buy, buy, buy, shop until you drop. And so, this is so consumerism is clearly not a Buddhist value. Contentment is contentment is a fundamental thing the Buddha emphasized over and over again. And the representative of a life of contentment are the Buddhist monastics. And here's a quote. How is a monastic contented? Here, monastics are content with a robe, protecting their bodies with alms to sustain their stomach haven't accepted enough, they go on their way going here and there, just as wing birds fly here and there with only the weight of their wings. So the image I had with someone you know, trying to travel carrying all their worldly possessions and everything you know, along versus someone who just like a bird is light and free and can fly. And the metaphor is quite nice, I think because if there's a freedom in flying through the air that can't be done after the bird is holding on to things, carrying things and the freedom of the Mind through the space of the mind through this, you know, is enabled by a moon rock weighed down by our attachment and concerned with things and getting more and more. So this idea of being content with the robes and the food that we have has, it goes a little bit further this idea of contentment.

Here, monastics are content with any kinds of robes on food, lodgings and medicine and provisions for the sick. So, there's four requisites that monastics are allowed to own. They're allowed to own their robes. They're allowed to own the food that they were given that day, up until noon, but they can't store

it, that they give it away. And then their own lodging Their own and not to have medicine called the four requisites. And, and for, you know, I think for kind of an affluent society like relatively we are in this compared to much of history much of the world, it can seem like the ascetic lifestyle is an aesthetic one one of denial, one of deprivation, one of you know, doing without the Buddha specifically designed the monastic life, to not be that there were lots of examples in ancient India, people being ascetics, and the Buddha tried to be an ascetic, and found that that didn't work. But he also didn't want people to be too busy and preoccupied with their material goods and their protection of it and all these things. And so, he tried to design a monastic life a life where people had just enough to be comfortable. But now Too much. And so because it's so it doesn't take actually that much for human beings to be comfortable, you know, you know, that, you know, you know, these monastics end up with very little, just a, you know, a sheet that they wrap wrap around them and bowl and lodging and then their medicine that they're allowed to have. And then it gives them lots of time for other things. And the ideal it gives them lots of time to practice. So the Buddha also said, the Dharma is for one who is content, not for one who is discontented. The I think it was Benjamin Franklin and I think you've said people who are something like people who are content are wealthy with me, if even if you're poor, if you're content, you can be wealthy. There are wealthy people who are discontented, who are poor. And I met once, many years ago, I met a man who was a specialized as a therapist to work with people who are very wealthy. That was a specialty. And a specialty was working with people who are very wealthy, who felt that they were poor. You know, that millions and millions of dollars and they felt that I don't have enough, I don't have enough. And they had enough sense to know that that was a bit of a problem. So they came to their therapists and that was his thing to help them with that. If you'd come to the Buddha, probably the task for therapeutic help, you probably would have told him just give it all away. start over again. So the idea of contentment to be content with what one has when one has enough is a very, very important Buddhist value, partly because it keeps the mind from being agitated. And I think many of us can recognize the agitation that comes from walking and shopping and acquiring and keeping and protecting, and so forth. There's a wonderful little story from the suttas. of, well, a very wealthy man who became a monastic. So he had lived a life of luxury and it was a big transition to go become a monastic. And so he was living in that kind of there. Back then mid Davy often lived in the woods since I was living in the woods with the monastics and the other monks were talking to each other and say, Well, you know, so and so. He's not going to last year. You know, this is too difficult for him having lived a life of luxury and so then one day they overheard him he was, you know, in the distance he was meditating. And they heard him exclaim, happy, happy, happy, I'm so happy.

And the other monks looked at each other and said, You see, he's giving up the monastic life and going back, you see? And so they went and asked him and he said, No, no, I'm not giving up this. I'm just so happy. I don't have to have guards at my door and lock things and worried about everybody stealing my stuff. I can just sit here in the open and meditate and not worry about anything. And, and I'm so happy about this. So there's simplicity, that contentment can allow is a big boon for people who want to do something different in their life want to and that comes to the second principle or value that I wanted to convey here today. So the first value set of contentment. Second one is worded this way acquiring material goods is not a Buddhist value. Acquiring wholesome inspiring states of mind is so the switches from focusing on possessions to focusing on the quality of our mind and the only person who could be the caregiver caretaker, safe Garner of the quality of our own mind is ourselves. It's part of the most intimate and personal aspects of any anybody's life. The state of one's mind, Antoni inner happiness, well being and your purity and your sense of freedom. That mind states that person cultivates and develops, sustains, protects, that's really up to us as individuals to do that. And in Buddhism that is considered to be the true wealth, Buddha was expanded quite explicit, that if you really want to be wealthy, you want to have these beautiful inner qualities of mine that are cultivated and developed. And you don't want to just leave it to chance that you might someday just wake up and there's a nice state

of mind, you know, are you, you know, you know, maybe you're lucky, you go for a walk on a sunny day and, you know, maybe I'll put you in a good mood. You know, that's kind of, you know, doing it by chance. But what can we do to cultivate and develop to acquire these positive states of mind. And one of them that the Buddha emphasized was contentment. So cultivating contentment, in content with having the requisites and the basic needs it's not quite maybe, maybe a little bit of a non sequitur but I so delighted in this ancient story. So uh Ananda is the was one of the close disciples of the Buddha. And the women from the Kings harem came to see him and he taught them. And they were so delighted at the receiving teachings for him that they gave him five, a gift of 500 robes, monastics are allowed to accept things that are given, but 500 robes for the Nanda. So it was a lot so he accepted them. And the women then left, then they ran into the king. And these kings said, Where have you been? We've been listening to Ananda was so great. And How'd that go was so great. We gave him 500 robes. And the king said, What? That's a lot of robes that he said. How can this wreck loose Ananda, except so many robes? Willie set up trade and woven cloth or Willie Offer them for sale in a shop. You know he's certainly you know he's there for his own benefit that he's going to sell it and can wealthy. So then the king went to find a Nandan and he said to Amanda did the women from the harem come to see see you? Oh, yes, they did. He said and under said that they give you 500 inner robes, 500 robes and under said yes. But the king said, What can you honorable and under do with so many ropes? I will share them Your Majesty with those monks whose robes are worn thin. But what will you do good Ananda with those old robes that are worn thin. We will make them into bed coverings Your Majesty bed sheets. But what will you do good at Ananda when those sheets are old?

We will make them into mattress coverings, Your Majesty. But what will you do with those mattress coverings that are old? We will make them into ground coverings. What will you do good to Ananda when those ground coverings are old. We will make them into foot wipers. But what will you do in nundah? When those foot wipers are old? We will make them into dusters. But what will you do and Ananda when those dusters are old, having worn them into shreds Your Majesty having needed them into mud, we will smear a plaster flooring. And then the king says these monks of the Buddha use everything in an orderly way. In doing Not to let things go to waste. And He therefore bestowed on Ananda and other set of 500.

So, be careful, be careful, if you're too frugal. People just don't give you more. But this idea of, you know, not throwing things away casually discarding things, but to really use things. Well, it also goes against, you know, the principle of consumerism, it's better to have things you know, be obsolete quickly, so they, because then you can throw them away and then you can buy more, the more you can buy, the more someone will be happy. And it might not be you but so this idea of acquiring wholesome inspiring states of mind, and some of those will come in the wake of practicing mindfulness mind fullness has a remarkable ability to reveal ways in which we are. We're caught attached, constricted around certain mind states, and then to release those paths constriction. And when the mind gets less and less constricted, the constricted mind states, greed, hatred, delusion, can sustain themselves. So there's quite something to do mindfulness and then discover these beautiful states of mind that can arise. There's joy. There's mindfulness itself is a beautiful state of mind. There's equanimity. There's a concentrated mind. There's happiness. There's equanimity. There's all kinds of things that can arise. But these things can also be cultivated directly. And one of the ways to cultivate them is to the degree to which they're starts showing themselves in our lives there there is to recognize them quickly. If you start feeling a little little bit of joy as you practice as you kind of healthy joy as you go through life, that clear acknowledgment of that and recognition is a way in which makes space almost went to grow and develop it kind of recognition of these positive states is food for them to grow. The degree to which you have generosity state of generosity, that even if you have an inkling just like little hints, like maybe I should be generous. Just that is enough movement and really recognize that and don't overlook it.

Don't rush off to the next thing. But spend time really acknowledging and noticing the qualities of mine that come through with a pass through your mind that are really healthy and wholesome and good and inspiring even for you. Even if it's you know, just hints at first and they can grow and develop. One can take a particular quality of mine that one is inspired by and or once wants to have it be part of your life and focus on it as a specialty for some time, study it and other people. If you like the idea of joy, go look at people who have joy, and see what you know, just kind of be around them and maybe something will rub off. And then maybe it's a little bit of a non sequitur, but it has to do with this consumerism, thing, possessions. There's this wonderful, I guess, folk tale of a man who a wealthy man, I guess, who is really unhappy and goes to a wise person says, you know, how can I compete be happy? And, and so the wise person says, Go find a person. Find a person who is truly truly happy and bring me his shirt or her shirt. Wow, that's a good task. So the person goes across the land and asks for Are you happy? And people said well, you know, sometimes and Some people say we just ask that person over there that persons have been explained that Are you truly truly happiness? Well, I'm happy a good percentage of the time, but not all the time. Not really, truly. The person spends years looking for the person who's truly, truly, you know, happy. And then any. At some point he gets hearing from people, there is a person like that. Just over the next mountain, there is a person who is truly truly truly happy. And so he's so excited and he gets closer and closer. The people they're kind of they're kind of a bit shiny and smiling when they think about him and talk about in deals. There's so much confidence in the in people's eyes when I talk about this man. Certainly this who is coming to must be a happy man, everyone. He has this effect on people. And so they get he gets closer and closer and he's so excited. He's going to finding that truly, truly, truly happy person. And he finds him and he just looks so happy. It looks like divided but he doesn't have a shirt.

I don't know what the moral of the story is. But I take it to be that. I take the moral today that, you know, as long as you're concerned with possessions, you're not going to really be happy. If your happiness is to possessions not yet it's some kind of relinquishment at least have attachments to possessions. That is important. So then we come to the last of the three Buddhist values that I wanted to convey today. And that is to fulfill all desires is impossible. To be free of all desires is possible. To fulfill all your desires, it's not possible to discover how to be free of your business. Tires is possible. It's a quite a, quite a difference between that. And so here's a another quote from the Buddha. Again explaining some of their ideal ways of being in the world. So it's always in reference to monastics these ideas. So and ideally a monastic has few wishes. contentment, simplicity, is easy to support an energetic. So these are some of the values that are champion this ancient tradition, but fewness fewness of wishes. And I remember when I was, you know, in my 20s or so, that I used to get exhausted sometimes by my desires, literally, when I go into bookstores, they used to have bookstores, then And I would go in, and I was surprised I would leave bookstores, I was always happy to go in, kind of happy to be there. And I would always leave, tired, exhausted. And it took me a while to understand why it was because I didn't have any money. But I basically wanted all the titles that I saw like that, I want that. And that kind of non stop wanting and wanting machine inside of me, was exhausting to do. I'd been an hour at the bookstore and by time I left, it was the movement of wanting that was exhausting. And I don't know if any of you've ever had so much ongoing wanting and wanting, wanting that it's tiring. It can certainly be quite limiting in our for our minds for our hearts to be caught up in desires and desires for all kinds of things. Because the desire to have a desire for something is to not be present for what is To have a desire for something is to be future thinking out there thinking over there thinking, the desire object of desire is there, maybe in the future, maybe in the present. And there's a kind of too easy to lose contact with oneself in that process. In the extreme form, we talked about objectification of people, you know, we desire people in certain way, and there's objectifying the people. But there's also doing that for all kinds of objects that we want as well. We objectify them, because they can fulfill all kinds of needs. We think we have all kinds of desires, we have all kinds of projections, all kinds of, you know, kind of crazy



ideas we have about what that's gonna do for us. And so we're not really in touch with ourselves if we're living in the world of desire. And so to be able to have fewness of wishes, there's a number of things It allows us to reconnect with ourselves in a deeper way. be here for ourselves, it allows us to kind of turn the attention around. So we become the caretakers of our inner life in a useful productive way. It also is really frees up a lot of energy. To spend a lot of time concerned with wanting, wanting, wanting is tiring. Then there's also having fewer desires does something very, very important. And especially in meditation, if you can manage in meditation, to really put down your desires, really thoroughly, maybe completely and experience the quality of the heart quality of your inner life. That is desire free. Even you've experienced a diamond you experience a treasure you experienced something pristinely beautiful some People would say, Why don't some of the most beautiful things you can possibly experience in this universe.

And there are beautiful things to see, you know, out there, the night sky or all kinds of things. But one of the most beautiful things you'll ever encounter is a mind or heart that has no desire. It has no agitation. It has like, like, it's like looking into clear water where it's unruffled surface and quickly clear. It's a beautiful thing to have that an agitated mind settled mind. So to move towards at least in the meditation, to be mindful of our desires and what we're all wanting. So we have to understand that maybe there's not in our best interest to pursue them, to step back for them to see them to see the contraction around that around them, to allow the contraction to relax and settle and to be able to discover how to breathe easily and be at ease some deep way without the grip of desires, but Wanting is one of the great things to do. So it's so to tie this together with the beginning about contentment. If contentment is an important Buddhist value, you can desire contentment. Or you can find contentment in a different way than desiring it. And in fact, it might be that it's the absence of desire that leads to contentment rather than desiring contentment. Because if we desire contentment, and we work towards contentment, and we set our will towards contentment, I'm going to be content. And I'm the agent who's going to make myself content. It's actually not a lot of freedom in that it's actually reinforcing often reinforce the conceit of me myself in mind. could actually be reinforcing the movement of desire. Not a few meditators have let go of worldly desires and substituted substituted spiritual desires in its place, and tie themselves in knots sometimes. But I've been busy spent years kind of busy at least, pursuing his desire for spiritual states and wonderful things. It's a kind of a radical thing to do. But to begin appreciating in some way, that the absence of desire to settle back and begin getting a feel or a taste, to savor what it's like to us to be present in a very simple, ordinary way. To be aware, to breathe and to be here without having a desire. Can we do it looking out the window sipping a cup of tea. Can we do it for a simple walk around the block? Can we do where in our life? Can we allow ourselves the gift of that simplicity of just being aware and not needing anything to happen? not have anything at stake, not pursue anything. Just be. And that's where real contentment is found. That's where the kind of mindfulness that we're ultimately trying to develop in this practice arises out of. It isn't that much mindfulness also, if there's a lot of desire behind your mindfulness, like I'm going to do this so I can get something and, you know, I need to get these special spiritual states or I need to be developed. I want to really good mindfulness. You can have some success with that. I mean desires you know, you can it can work To some degree, there's a place for a wise desire for sure. But there's a different kind of mindfulness that can bubble up or surface or blossom. When blossoms in the space of being, having no desires, the contentment of few or no desires, the natural awareness that comes when we settle back, we're relaxed. We're here in that open awareness, relaxed awareness, awareness that's not being pushed around by desires. It's almost like it makes space for mindfulness to bubble up and become strong. And it's not so much something we do, but something that we enable. It's not something that we make happen, but rather, it's something that we support to happen. And that's a very different feeling to do it that way.

And one of the reasons why it's useful, is it that's point Towards a real freedom, which is the direction this path is taking us to freedom, deep inner freedom. It doesn't leave us with nothing. Having no desires doesn't leave us with nothing. But it does make us content to have nothing. What do you think of that? It doesn't leave us with nothing. But it does leave us content to have nothing. And but then what comes out of that if mindfulness can comes out of that, if these beautiful qualities can come out of that, maybe everything we do need, will, will blossom out of us. Rather than us being anxious, that if I don't do something, I won't take care of the world. I won't take care of myself. I won't you know, I won't be a responsible person or this and that. What if being a responsible person in this world, responsible for ourselves responsible For our society around us, what if that also is something that can bubble up in this place? Where there's no desires? And maybe motivation then is not desire based? What do you think of that? motivation that's not desire based? So what is the that's a strange thing for guilt to say? What What is even what could he mean that what's the alternative to desire and what what is what is desire that we want to put to rest and what motivation is left and it will keep me from just being a couch potato. So, consumerism is not a Buddhist value. contentment is acquiring material possessions, is not a Buddhist is not a Buddhist goal. Acquiring wholesome inspiring states. You is fulfilling all our desires is not possible to be free from all desires is possible. Three Buddhist values may you reflect on these and think about them and, and yet somehow allow something to blossom from the inside out. May you be the caretaker of your own inner life. Thank you. And we have a couple of minutes. If you want to if we could have one or two if you want to ask one or two questions or if you want to protest. You're what you're welcome to.

So with that motivation be replaced with what inspiration

that's a great idea. You come back and tell us what you discover.

This is an impertinent question, but um, where were you at?

When when a white birch street

look satisfied. You want something?

As you were talking, I was wondering in, you know, obviously I'm putting you on the spot but where you're at in terms of dealing with once

once. It's a fair question. So, I have this, I have a reference point for the mind that desires, that reference point of having really experienced a complete freedom from desires, it's kind of that it was very powerful and very important for me. So it made me very sensitive to the movements of desires and the contraction and all that. And there are certain kinds of desires that I simply don't follow. Don't not interested in doing anymore, because it just doesn't doesn't just not interesting anymore. I have other desires that maybe I shouldn't be interested in that maybe I still kind of pursue. And so I practice with those and look at them and work with them. I also have discovered that there's other sources of motivation that exists inside of me that I don't associate with, attached attached desire, craving or compulsive desire, and it comes from something deeper. And what as a deeper motivation that arises up that puts me in the world and motivates me to do things and, you know, I do a lot of things is something that I trust, but it's still something that's being refined and purified and understood. And so where I'm at with this, I'm still still very personal study of all this, exploring this, understanding this, and trying to be very respectful of this inner life that I have. So the problem with the kind of talk I gave today about having few wishes, or being free of all desires, it's too easy then to kind of think that all desires are bad and to push them aside and, and not really listen. There's a wide range of different kinds of

desires and, and some of them are neurotic. Some of them are clearly you know, filled with attachments. And some of them come arise out of deeper places. And, but when they arise out of a place that seems to have very little self or no self, for example, compassionate desires can arise. It's a you know, it's, we do ourselves a disservice, we do the world a disservice if we squash it. So maybe we don't call that a desire in the Buddhist sense of it. And so I sometimes like the word aspiration as an alternative. And I like the word aspiration because it's connected to the word breath in Latin, so that when our breath is easy at ease, and what comes out what comes out of us when we have an easy breath. So, thank you all. And now you discover the great joy and delight and peace of contentment. Thank you.