

# 2018-12-23 Light of Freedom

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

mindfulness, freedom, light, mind, awareness, world, strain, buddha, harm, fixated, king, discover, dear, preoccupied, notice, knowledge, people, life, practice, turned

## SPEAKERS

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So I'm very conscious that we've turned now the earth has turned now in such a way that its orbit, we're going to get more and more light. And it seems like an opportunity, opportune time to talk about important things and important directions that our life can take. So I'll talk a little bit about light. But first, I want to say, quote the Buddha. That's something that's very memorable. Maybe you won't remember anything else from the talk, but maybe you'll remember this. He said, Don't give yourself away. And don't give up on yourself. Like a magazine is a very powerful statement. Don't give yourself away and don't give up on yourself. So I'll pick that up again as we go through this talk. So in terms of life, The Buddha referred to wisdom as the greatest light, he said that there were four great lights back in his time. And there was the light of the sun, the light of the moon, and the light of fire. And I guess before electricity and technology, there wasn't the you know, but other things. And those, those three and then the fourth one was the light of wisdom. And of those four, the foremost is the light of wisdom. The word for wisdom paññā does not refer to knowledge in the sense of something you can learn and then No, because you've learned it's like information. It reverse refers to something that you know, experientially, through your perception. And it refers to knowledge, experiential knowledge that has to do with the liberation of the mind, with the mind becoming awake, to be in lightened, to be free. And, and it's remarkable to have that person knowledge for oneself, to have as a reference point to as a, as a home for oneself, the mind or the hearts ability to be free, and then to be able to kind of maneuver, navigate through our lives, developing that or applying that or living that, and all the complexities and difficulties of that life comes. And so to call this wisdom, this knowledge light, is quite, you know, a suggestive idea that, like we have this flashlight or spotlight we can with which we see the world see ourselves in a way that is freeing, or that is a manifestation of freedom. To get a sense of what this might mean, a few analogies might be useful. Remember, there have been times my life special Anyone else a kid, I was so involved in reading books that I didn't notice that the evening was coming on. And the light was getting darker and darker. And I would strain to try to read instead because I was so involved in the book and I would just be there reading but it was a strain. And then someone like my mother will come along and turn on a light. Oh, that's nice. Oh, he was like, you know, I hadn't noticed the strain of the that I was in because I was so involved in the book. But as soon as someone turned on the light, there was this relaxation that happened. And another analogy might be that if you are riding a bike, if you grip and hold tight, the brake, I think if you hold tight enough, nice, I'm not strong enough to get the bike to go. But if I behold the break, kind of half strong, I could make the bike go, but it's going to be real effort. And I might be so interested in where I'm going that I might not notice that I was straining and pushing on that pedal. until some accident happened. Some something got unusual. That got me to release my grip. As Ah, Wow, now it's like effortless to to bike and flat piece of ground. I didn't realize there was an awesome drag. And so we could be so preoccupied or fixated on what we're concerned with. We don't notice how the fixation of the mind on our concerns acts as a kind of brake on the freedom the ease of the mental life just kind of rolling along and moving along. The other his analogy might be that we're in

shoes which are a little bit too small, so they're tight. And if you know you that was an issue. You are given and

you think that that's the way they're supposed to be. And so you walk for a long time with issues and you think that's how it's supposed to be and, and you're much more interested in where you're going. Then your shoes and your quality of their, the sensations of your feet. And so you have to live contentedly with these shoes that are too small. Until someone says, Wait a minute, try these on, and you find a pair of shoes that fit perfectly. And then Wow, this is so good. Like they fit and ease I don't have to deal with this being contracted. So these analogies are ones where the idea being that a person is fixated or preoccupied with some focus of attention in such a way that they don't notice necessarily the strain they're under, in trying to pursue that concern. And the same way can be with us. We have a lot of you know, Thoughts ideas, preoccupations, things we're worried about things that we want things we're afraid of. And, and as long as it's very easy to be involved in those with our thoughts, or our mind, our emotions, and kind of get lost in them, preoccupied and concerned with them, that we don't get the bigger picture of the quality of the mind itself, or the awareness itself, or the heart itself, that's here. And so things narrow or things get tight, or there's a strain until something releases it. And I've certainly sat in meditation, and not really known the cost of the strain that I was under, because it was pretty mild and I get used to it. You know, you go through daily life, and don't really notice that I'm thinking about something concerned about something until I sit down to meditate. And then I might start noticing, but I've had times where I didn't really notice the strain even meditating until I got concentrated and then Something gave away in the mind and suddenly there was a space in the mind. There was openness, there was a wider field of awareness. Ah, like their refrigerator just went off. I didn't, I didn't know. Wow. And so that that ah okay, openness, relaxation, ease, the light goes on the brakes go off the, the shoe fits the refrigerator goes off all these things. That's a that's openness and spaciousness is that's related to the knowledge. That's the light, the wisdom light that the Buddha was focusing on. Another example for this that might help. Also interesting is I believe it works this way. Least I and that is that space, like the space in this room if you're looking at a big sea high ceiling, if you look around the space You can look and focus and fixate your attention on the objects in the room. And you really zero in and look at it, you know, make a mental impression of the object. But space doesn't lend itself for the eyes to kind of get fixated on or get the focus to kind of a central focus looks exactly at the center of the space, it just kind of really take it in, I think to take in space, perceive a space of the room, the mind doesn't fixate, it kind of opens up and gets more spacious itself and more wide angle, there's a more relaxed sense of paying attention to space, because space doesn't lend itself to having a central focus to it. Is that right enough? And that's how it is, I think it is for me. And, and so the same thing with the mind, we can have objects of the mind that we're concerned with. And we don't then notice the space. But if we notice the space, it's possible in the space To be aware of the objects, and they're held in this wider field in a sense. And so that the experiential insight or knowledge that was liberating in Buddhism has a lot to do with the awareness that he can set free from his preoccupation. It's not an easy thing to do. Because our preoccupations we don't even know were preoccupied. it's business as usual. It's like the shoe you've gotten used to, this is how it is. This is how we navigate the world, how we figure things out, how we get what we want, how we protect ourselves, it just that's kind of how things go. And to be able to step back from our preoccupations and see them and be free of them. It's kind of like the Buddha talked about it as, as if we're stepping pulling ourselves out of quicksand out of mud, up onto dry onto dry ground.

And so we use mindfulness for purpose, mindfulness practice awareness practice is partly a practice of freeing mindfulness, freeing awareness from what it knows what it's aware of. So if we know that we're thinking that's fine to know your thinking, but to know it in such a way that we're not fixated on what we're thinking, we don't have the brakes on. We're not there's not wind drag, there's not kind of a

strain or a tightening around what we're thinking about our concerns. That's the function of mindfulness is to really step back or relax or open up, release, the holding. And mindfulness becomes mature, when the awareness has become free. And some people will say it's not necessary to experience it this way. But some people will say it's like awareness has become like spacious, like space, very broad and expansive, but this quality of the mind That's not fixated, not caught, not stuck. So this is called This is the greatest light to have the light of the mind of the light of awareness that can be turned on. And, and some people will actually feel that the difference between when they get preoccupied in preoccupied thoughts, it's kind of like the mind goes dark. And when the mindfulness gets turned on, it's kind of like now there's more. It's translucent or radiant or there's light in there, openness. So the Buddha said, Don't give yourself away. And don't give up on yourself. So I want to read somewhat famous parts of this passage of a conversation that happened was we happen to time with the Buddha between a king and a queen, king the head and They're married. And so it seems at least a story to me, makes it a little bit more power to it or something. If you think of this king as being rather full of himself, you know, a king is, you know, has all this power and center of attention and can do whatever to get back in ancient world, you know, they were kind of, you know, totalitarian so they could do whatever they want. Everyone had to kind of, you know, you know, if you're already kind of an arrogant guy, you know, it's great to be a king. Because that really, you know, so that's kind of this is kind of sky right? I don't know if it's true, but this is. So the king says to the queen, is there anyone more dear to you than yourself? That Now what should the right answer being What should the next the expected answer be from the king? Who is more dear to you than yourself? Gonna imagine, you know? And so the Queen says, No, Your Majesty, there is no one more dear to me than myself. She then actually, she then asked him the same question. Is there anyone more dear to you than yourself? No. So the king, there's no one more dear to me than myself. So, this was a significant of exchange on the part of the for the king, maybe because he got the unexpected answer from the queen. He went to find the Buddha. And he told the Buddha of the exchange and, and then understanding the importance of this, the Buddha then said, and he said it in verse If you surveyed the entire world, you would find no one more dear than yourself. Since each person is most dear to him or herself, those who love themselves should not bring harm to anyone. So it's an interesting turn here. So first, he says, Yes, everyone is most dear to themselves. No one you can't find anyone. Now, I'm sure that some of you here even will think of other people in your lives that you know, maybe you have children, who you think is more dear than yourself more important for you and all that.

But you might want to hold that kind of lightly that idea. And maybe consider there's another possibility. The Buddha seems to be championing the idea that it's appropriate for each person to hold themselves as most dear, most important, most most to you most kind of love in a sense Is that selfishness? Is he reinforcing the selfishness of the king? Probably not. But then the Buddha has this interesting interesting twist in the conversation, which, again is you know, kind of powerful thing to say to the king has, you know, a big army and can chop anybody's head off and back, you know, to do has power over other people's lives. Since each since each person is most dear to oneself, those who love themselves should not bring harm to anyone. So there's something about if everyone holds himself dear everyone treasures themselves or loves themselves. You don't want to harm what people love. You don't want to since that says you love yourself, like you love yourself. Other people love themselves and that makes them somehow you know, you don't want to destroy what's more valuable for each person with the most gives the most meaning and life or purpose or something. So as a champion, it's a champion of not harming this, the Buddha's response, not necessarily only seeing yourself as being dear, but to not harm anyone. I like to think of it as being not harming oneself and not harming others. We are so since we hold ourselves, dear, you wouldn't want to harm yourself. And this is one of the functions of mindfulness practice is to learn how to pay attention carefully enough in oneself, that one learns how not to harm oneself. For some people, what, who start mindfulness meditation, it's a shock to discover

how much they do harm themselves. They had no idea that how to self talk and the attachments and the clinging and the aversion and even the hostility that can self criticism They can live in here, how strong it can be. And then the practice of mindfulness hopefully, there's a practice of healing that and learning how to no longer do that. And to see oneself as one's own best friend, to see oneself kindly, with love with care, and to have a certain kind of self love or self treasuring that goes on here. What's going on here is important, partly because the alternative for most people is to cause harm. And so we're gonna step back from the ways in which we strain, cling, hold on, resist, criticize, attack, blame, the whole list of things that were greedy, ambitious in ways that caused harm to ourselves. And, and so in doing this, we learn about how we do these things. As we learn these things, that kind of the common denominator of all of it is a mind that's fixated A mind that's preoccupied and caught, caught, he knows all those concerns, to learn to relax the mind and to trust just being present without preoccupation, without trying to fix anything, get away from anything, destroy anything, but just to really see and to see. And to use the proper ability to be mindful, or ability of attention to really see clearly enough really clearly. In the clarity, we find the freedom, not the freedom that requires many go away, but the freedom from not being fixated on it. So the bicycle can roll freely, to nothing. There's no resistance to it, at least from the break. And so this idea of caring for oneself so that we can not harm ourselves as an important part of this light that we're developing. Is that selfish to do that, to have that kind of concern? My argument is that self to be selfish is to harm oneself. Self preoccupation, is self harm. It's not always easy to see.

Occasionally I meet people where I think that because they're there sometimes they're sound like very good practitioners. And they can they can talk well about mindfulness. But I listened to them in a very occasionally, I meet some people and I bet that person is actually narcissistic, which is a powerful, you know, term, right? It's all about themselves here. And the doing the practice, but they're really building us kind of supporting this narcissistic self. It's quite, and it's, I find it very hard to be in communication with people because they're saying Oh, have the right things that are practice. But in my mind, it's like this, but this is not. This is not, this is not freedom. It's not moving towards it, it's going in the opposite direction. But generally when there's a lot of mindfulness, it tends to highlight the selfishness because self selflessness hurts. It's a kind of a tightening or resistance or narrowing or darkening it's not doesn't feel good. So this movement is inner focus, of caring for oneself caring for the quality of one's inner life. Can't be selfish, if the or what you mean can be selfish, but his selfishness is not sustainable. If we're paying very, very careful attention and really looking at it. And so then, so as we do that, there's this light that is discovered, we discover We have knowledge of this freedom, freedom of awareness. And that's the first of the great three tasks. First is to discover the light, the inner light, the inner light of awareness, it's free. The second big task is to become the light to so could be centered in it, that it's almost as if we become the light, though you wouldn't necessarily use that language. I'm not the light because that's just extra. But it's, you know, it's the home is a place we trust. It's kind of like, yes here. The third task is to take that light of freedom and shine it on to the world. And that goes in two directions to the world. As you know. from the vantage point of our awareness, the world has lived in two directions. One Direction is inward and one is outward. And this is where I think the path of freedom, the mindfulness, that when the mindfulness is discovered some degree of freedom. This is when the practice gets really rich, and more challenging. And that is, how do we take this freedom, the sense of free awareness wareness of spacious and open and not caught by anything? And how do we use it now to look within us in the places we're caught, still caught? The places we are preoccupied. The places where there's difficult emotions, places where we can, you know, it's easy to be caught because what we're thinking about or trying to figure out is actually important to deal with. We can't just kind of blissfully ignore everything. And life is complicated. So how, how do we turn this light inward? To see how we're caught, how we're preoccupied how things are a struggle for us and to meet that it has The meaning of freedom and the inner difficulties we have.

And ideally, these two will meet, I kind of like to think of it as meat so they can fit like a glove and a hand that they just there's a there's a perfect fit between our freedom and what's going on inside of us. And what I mean by perfect fit is there's complete honesty about ourselves, and we're willing to be completely present for whatever is challenging within us. As if it's okay. As if you're your best friend, and you're there to listen and non judgmentally as if your care for what's there in a supportive way. So that your awareness kind of fits the challenges you have, you're there willing to meet it. can be with it. But you're not using awareness and freedom to ignore what's going on inside. You're using it to meet. There it is. To take that light of freedom and shine it outwards is to attempt to do the same thing in the world around us to really be present for the world, to meet it, to live in the world as if it were a perfect fit with the hand and the glove. That is a perfect fit to be in this world as we are and in awareness, and so there's all these difficulties in the world, plenty of difficulties to encounter and challenges. And mindfulness doesn't fix the challenges. The liberated mind doesn't fix challenges. But ideally, it can meet the challenges or try to meet the challenges and stay free once we know something about the light Then we try to use a light and keep the light on. In the challenges we discover, once we know something about inner freedom of mind, it's not preoccupied, not caught, then we try to shine it. On the places we're caught on the on the difficulties in the world, try to look at the different challenges in all directions. And now what does it mean not to be caught in this? What does it mean to be present to fit like a glove and a hand to really be there for it? But what does it means to be free here? And if I can find my freedom here, can I then find how how best to engage or know what to do or if nothing else, how not to make the situation worse. So to not give yourself away is to not lose what's most precious inside, to not to lose the capacity for freedom. And this love and care that can exist in here. Each person is most dear to themselves. Each person is valuable and important. Don't give yourself away for any cause. Rather, engage in all kinds of causes if you're inspired, but do it with your freedom, not by giving away what's most precious inside. It's so easy to kind of lean forward or closed down. And what we're doing is we're we're losing touch with this inner life, this inner freedom. It's so easy. And that's why with with parents and children I've discovered and I have two kids, how easy it is for it was for me and the kids. are small especially to kind of lean towards them and watch so much for them and want to care for them or every little drama was the most important one in the world. And, and, and they had to I had to kind of keep working and exploring where's my freedom here? How do I be here with us. And it was a tough, tough ride for a little while being a parent. I'm not saying it was easy. But that was the task was how to be do this without giving myself away to my children. And that don't give up on oneself. Never give up on oneself. There's this beautiful path of practice, that we can walk in gauging of mindfulness and concentration and compassion and care that we can discover what's beautiful inside we can discover that it's okay or appropriate to To love oneself to care for oneself to hold myself dear.

There is something incredibly beautiful inside. Just like the Buddha said, the foremost light in the world is a light of wisdom or this inner knowledge of freedom. The most beautiful thing that I know in the you and the universe and I haven't been many places in the universe but but in the places that I've seen so far, the most beautiful thing that I know that exists, is a liberated mind. Nothing is as exquisitely beautiful and, and to discover that inner beauty and that inner capacity for love and compassion and wonderful qualities. Don't give up on yourself. It's worthwhile to be on the path to find That, find that light. Once you find the light, become the light. Once you become the light, Please shine that light on the world. And then because the world needs lots of light, and one of the beautiful, beautiful things is when two people who have this really good light shine on each other, that to have to a meeting of free minds or minds that are practicing freedom. It's a beautiful thing. So thank you for practicing here. Those of you have been practicing here over these last year are starting to come here this year. Thank you for sharing that and hopefully there's we can you find the meeting here a little bit of fellow practitioners and their interest and as we begin now this A new whole moving towards the light. Each day you might notice that it's getting light earlier and dark later. You might use if you notice that you might use that as a reminder that maybe just maybe, maybe a slowly is a changing lights of each day.



Maybe your own inner light can grow, so becomes bigger and stronger. May the lighter freedom and compassion live in you. Thank you