

# 2019-01-12 Choosing The Long Path of Practice

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

steadiness, terrain, practice, steady, slow, next step, experience, people, fast, greed, wonderful, mindfulness, important, caught, walking, moment, difficult, step, easy, clinging

## SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

Was at the event and I was very touched by the story, share it with you. And many years ago now that he was teaching at some large auditorium, I think in Arizona and there were maybe a couple of thousand people there. And he was giving some kind of multi day teaching. And there was a time for questions and answers. And man stood up and took the microphone and wanted to know the question something like is there a fast way to enlightenment? And, and so what happened next is what's so touching. For me? Is it though I was silent for a long time and then He started crying, or these tear tears went down his cheek. And then I spoke at some point any spokes can't represent well what he said, and I wasn't there and what I was told. But it was something to the effect that he was saddened by this idea that someone who would be interested in a fast way to enlightenment, it's somehow that maybe I don't know what he thought, but that this represented a whole orientation towards the path of practice. That's maybe not very helpful or very saying even that it's very easy for that approach to be one that's egotistical, that's motivated by greed. That has a whole different understanding of what the how the inner life is unfolding. We do this practice the purposes of it all. And there's something very, I think mature maturing about seeing the past. As a slow path it might be very bad news for you to hear this from me. Because you have important things you have to get over get over this endgame get, you know, do this enlightenment thing quickly because it's important. You know, it's important things to do and startups to start you know, recreational opportunities to pursue all these important things right. But I think there's something very maturing very important that idea of of viewing it as a as a slow path and it certainly can go times when it seems to kind of speed up perhaps but but part of this slow is that to be in it for the long term, and be in it to this steady, ongoing way of letting it unfold and develop as it goes. And to do it slow. implies that are my daughter said, it's too it's very important for it to be slow because If it was fast, it might be a disservice to you. If it was fast, it's too easy for the speed of it. For it to be conceited I've had seen plenty of practitioners become arrogant from their practice, it's possible to get develop states of concentration. And people get all puffed up about Look at me I'm special and the ones really wonderful and, and then they go around kind of kind of flaunting their concentration level or their this or that or their experience of emptiness that they've had. And sometimes it's a bit of a headache for teachers too. To have people come in and tell me their experiences when when the very motivation to tell me is to show off and look at me and you know, the tents in school and wonderful and they're expecting me I know, a medal or they're expecting, you know, something, you know, like, you know, you're like the best. You're like fantastic. You're looking really wonderful. You're like superduper Yes. And but you know, to take it slow and not be in a hurry and not have it connected to our conceit not connected to our arrogance not connected to our greed.

And it just kind of take it slow, steady, ongoing, as a way of just being somewhat humble or if humble is too heavy of a word, not conceited, not caught up in oneself and not having these delusions of grander delusions of with anything, but just being a willingness to be an ordinary practitioner, who's just in it for the long term and steadily engaged and doing it over and over again, and letting it deepen. And I think a lot there's many that layers, many dimensions have our minds that get developed as we practice. And if we identify with only one area, then we don't you know, I think we shortchange ourselves. Some some areas can develop quickly, and some areas develop slowly. But the sum total of it, I think as a human being, is to do and engage in a path that has certain humility to it certain lack of conceit, lack of pride and lack of hubris about it, and a lack of greed about it. And part of the art is to be dedicated in a sincere, wholehearted way, but to do that with any any greed or, or hatred or you know, tying it up to identity issues and trying to prove ourselves or do something. So as we do it slow One of the things that then gets flushed out is all the ways in which we want it to be fast with the impatience we have and huge that for many people, a huge beginning of practice is to learn, practice patience. And if you don't learn patience, in the middle, in the beginning of your practice, you're learning in the middle of the practice. If you don't learn in the middle of practice, you're learning, you know, later. Because sooner or later, there has to be a willingness to just be there for the experience as it is without looking ahead without expecting without demanding without measuring what's happening just to be here with this and be patient with it. So I'll give you an A, I think an interesting analogy for walking this path of practice. And the analogy is to go and maybe go on a backpacking trip up in the mountains. And maybe you're haven't done much of that. And so maybe you don't know what to expect. Then you're out of shape and whatever. And then a member happened to me when I was 17 I went with a high school friend and went to the mouth and stick a backpack and we had no idea what we were doing. And the first 12 miles were uphill and carrying canned food and the and so, you know, you begin and it can be uphill, it's, and you can see how far away it is to go to the top perhaps. And it's like, oh, my can I manage this is so hard. It's so difficult. I should never should have started. You know, they shouldn't have made mountains so high. You know, you know, just like, you know, just oh, you know, it's so hard. And then and then eventually maybe get up to the top to the ridge. And it's so great to be in the red. The view is spectacular. And so it's easy to get pulled off and go You go off to the edge of the ridge and looking out across the great expanse and so proud of this look at me I did so well and I've succeeded and, and you stand on that most prominent prominent place people can see you and notice you and how wonderful you are. And you think the view is so spectacular. And this is like so wonderful and delicious. And you're going to hang out there and you really enjoy enjoy it and show off for a long time. But it's the top of the range is not the place to camp for the night. And now you've stayed out too late into the afternoon to get to where it's gonna be warm and safe later. So now you have to hike through the night and it's like tough, you finally make it to your camp or whatever and next day you start again and but now it's mostly downhill and it's so great and you go kind of fast and quick and you're so proud of so I'm a good hiker. impelled by all the weight on your back, you're being pushed down the hill and you know and so then you end up with blisters because you walk too fast and then you have to deal with a blister For the next while, so what I'm trying to convey is the idea that each step along the way has this, we get caught up in the meaning of it, the drama of it, the details of it, you know, there's mountains too high and look at this as abuse for the great and downhill Look how good I am, you know, just going down. And, and so it goes.

As people hike for a long time, maybe some people go, you know, you know, weeks out on the mountains, or they've done a lot of hiking at some point. They don't make all these stories up about what they're doing. They know where they're going, there's a direction to go. But they just take a step. It's about the next step, and the next step, and you just take this step, and as you take the steps, you go through all this different terrain. Sometimes you're going through some really steep, difficult places to go up. And it's just the next step. And you don't make a story about how difficult it is you don't get

caught up in the meaning of it or what it says about you as a backpacker or something, you just take the next step, because that's all you're expected. That's the only thing that works. If you try to get something in the mountainous just take the next step. And then use take it without any drama and story, just do it. And you get to the ridge and beautiful view, you enjoy it, but you take the next step you stay on the trail, just take the next step, take the next step. And this constantly taking the next step. And after a while, it dawns on you, perhaps you begin to appreciate, you know, the stepping just the walking is pretty good. There's a power to it. There's a steadiness to it, there's a goodness to it. And that just the walking has value is a refuge. That's independent. To the story and the details of the terrain that we're on. And so then after a while, there's a steadiness, there's an equanimity. There's an ease about just staying, no matter how what happens in the trail that comes and goes, all the different things that might happen in that terrain. Just keep doing the next step, keep doing the next step. So the same thing with this practice of ours, you're going to go through all kinds of difficult and easy and spectacular terrains over a lifetime of practice. And you can get all kinds of stories about this is too difficult. My mind is too hard. I have too much this, you know, this is the you know, all kinds of issues, you know, I'll never get it or you can get up to the ridge and you think you're the hottest person in the meditation center and you'll find a big good promissory place to stand and everybody sees you radiating and smiling and showing you know, like, or you'll end up you know, in places where it just you know, it's it feels really easy, but then you can if, you know you lose your steadiness and you kind of run and fall into the creek, the bottom or something, you know so, but after a while, what we learned through the mindfulness practice and the steadiness of practice, is just take the next step, the next moment of mindfulness, the next moment of showing up the next moment of being awake for this experience, next moment of, of doing concentration practice, next moment of focusing on the breath, being there. Just the next moment of practice, you do the practice, and work with mindfulness practice as you do this. After a while, and this is part of the art of it or part of the great reward of it is after a while, it doesn't matter so much what the terrain is like. It doesn't matter after a while, whether you're having a difficult meditation or a wonderful meditation. It doesn't matter if you're up against all kinds of difficult emotions you can have and all kinds of memories. have difficult things and or you have great heights and you're soaring and a great experience of emptiness is what matter what really where the power is, and where your refuge is and where the safety is. And where is the steady. take the next step show up for the next thing, just keep walking, keep going. And after a while, it's that steadiness and showing up and be mindful. And next moment, that feels so good, it feels like that's where safety is. That's where the awakening is. That's where freedom is. It's not found in getting wrapped up in the terrain. We have to pay attention to it we have to be present for it. We have to adjust our walks as we go through the different kinds of terrains, so we can't ignore it.

But the wonder of the sense of momentum, the sense of inner power or the inner sense of dedication or involvement to her, that's where our sense of where we're home is. His home is in just doing a steady ongoing practice showing up being mindful, finding a way, not getting sidetracked by what comes up, not getting making huge stories about it. Not being discouraged by it not being greedy about it not being aversive to it. Not, you know, just steady, stay there. Keep going. Okay, show up for this. Show up for this. I have to I have to shop for this. Yep, show up for this show for this. This too. Yep. Show up for this show for this. And, and if you can learn this art to learn, it makes life so much easier. Then getting somehow swept up into the details of the terrain. What the terrain means and how it reflects back to who you are, who you are as a person and defining yourself by putting yourself down by it. There's so much extra stuff that we add on top of our life that's not needed. And this, the steadiness of mindfulness can let all this other stuff fall away. And that steadiness is neither slow nor fast. I like the idea that it's slow. Because of this as an antidote to or to the conceit of being, you know, getting something. But it's actually neither slow nor fast. It's just the next step. It's just the next moment of mindfulness. It's the next place to be present. And perhaps, have a some taste some experience of what it's like to be free. In, in this step that we take in this moment that we find ourselves in. And we can't be free if we're

caught up in the terrain caught up in experience of the moment whether it's experience around us, or the inner experience. There's no experience, which is the point of practice. We're not looking for an experience. We're not looking for a particular state of concentration, a particular experience of emptiness, particular experience of great, expansive consciousness. It's not about an experience. That's all just the terrain. It's the freedom we can find the non clinging we can have in the midst of any experience. And that's the practice of mindfulness. A moment of clear, simple mindfulness, where there's no clinging to what's the experiences and we talk about experiences in this practice. There are experiences that come along with the terrain nails are useful. If they teach us about non clinging. They're not useful if we make those experiences the point. And that's a little bit hard for people to hear because many people in our culture are kind of experienced junkies. They want to have some thing, experience that you can, now I have it. And non clinging you can't really have non clinging. You can't like you know, hold it and hold it up and it doesn't have any color. So you can't tell anybody Look how great it is. You know, it says beautiful color. You know, it's not like a thing. But that's non clinging is where the freedom is. So the steady steadiness just the next moment, being present, being mindful is a protection from being all the different ways we can get tripped up by the experiences. Come along, you have lots of experiences as you do this practice. And some of them will be healing, some of them will be painful. Some of them will be wonderful, some of them will be difficult. All kinds of experiences will happen, you can count on it. And, and chances are that it's not going to be the experience you're hoping for in any given moment. But it does, but if you get into the groove of this steps, walking the path, just one step at a time, the groove just mindful here next mindful that Be mindful with this. Now this now this, this to this to, you'll start finding that freedom and that ease you'll find how to live in this world without being it being sticky. You being sticky with all the stuff that happens around you and caught up in it and preoccupied by doing so much and this ability to be not stuck unsticky by just having a steady mindfulness and really valuing it and loving it and finding strength in it or refuge in it, finding home minute, finding freedom in it and taking your time,

Don't be in a hurry to get there. Don't be in a hurry. To be in a hurry, he's already to be caught up in the terrain one step at a time. So I appreciate very much that you've been here today. I love you. I say this every time I do these dialogues from May 30 to five, how much I appreciate it and I repeat myself because I do love it. I do appreciate it. And I say it also as a kind of an affirmation of all of you for being here and affirmation for the goodness of navigating and negotiating a steady practice on your own. For the most part, you're here in community but you know, there's not a lot of distraction from the teachers. telling you what to do or giving guidance. But you know, it's okay sometimes but you know it can be overdone. And it's really important to be find your, you know, find your way on your own and with the practice and for you to learn those steps, those steps to keep doing the steps because it's your steps that you have to take not anybody else's. So thank you very much for doing this and I hope it's been nice for you and if it hasn't been nice, then nice it's just an experience and not nice it's just an experience. Just keep going. He just doesn't go Don't get caught up just doesn't matter. Just you did it. You were here. Just show up for the next one. Excellent. So then