

# 2019-04-14 Being Truth

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

truth, people, buddha, life, mind, true, identities, pleasure, idea, sensual pleasures, discover, conceiving, belonging, harmed, stories, buddhism, mindfulness, fish, compassion, practitioner

## SPEAKERS

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Good morning everyone. Welcome time See? So the people hear me okay. Okay. So the topic that I wanted to discuss is that a truth. Truth is a hopefully something that we cherish, we love, something that we find to be of tremendous benefit. And we could certainly learned to see the truth. We can learn to speak the truth. We can hopefully act truthfully. But also we can be the truth. And I think one of the purposes of Buddhist practice is not just to see the truth but to become the truth. to internalize the experience of ourselves experience our life experience of what's true, so fully that it's not something that we see that's separate from us, but becomes who we are. So it's a fascinating topic. And as we, as I'm thinking about this morning, I am also thinking about how powerful our minds are, and how this negotiating or finding what's true has a lot to do with the health of our inner life, health of our mind. And the practice of mindfulness, the practice of insight is a way of lighting up the mind, meaning bringing light to it, and really seeing what's in there because falsehoods lies they do best in the dark And, and when you kind of really see light up, bring light to the mind really see and sort of recognizing what's going on. It's generally very hard to continue with falsehoods. To see a falsehood is to see, to live in falsehoods to live in lies, is to see yourself working unnecessarily. It's a lot of work to lie. It's a lot of work to resist what's true. It's so keramik It's a some work not as much maybe to be diluted about what is true. And it's even less work perhaps to not know what is true. But as we wake up and see what's true, you start seeing some of these. This phenomena one of them, which is how much work it is to maintain what's false. Part of the reason why the truth is so valued in five practitioners is that it's just a lot less work. It's, as we settle into the mind and see the mind and you start feeling the tension to the mind the stresses of the mind, the turnings of the mind. It just starts feeling like why live this way? Why keep why resist something? Why keeps spinning tales and stories? There's a, you know, I think a well known axiom that it's easier to tell the truth because then there's less to remember. But once you start a lie, you better remembered well, because you know, what, what did I say and how did I say it in the so there's a in coming out of Indian Buddhism, there's a whole series of fables that are kind of like a sub fables in Greece, called the jataka tales, meaning something like jotain means birth. So the birth tales. And many of them are kind of cute and they involve animals. And there's thousands of these stories and what they are supposedly these fables about past lives of the Buddha before that, before he became a Buddha. He had many, many lifetimes and, and there's these stories of these lifetimes and sometimes he was born into the animal. One of the things that's kind of interesting about these past life stories of the Buddha, they don't always put him in a good light. You know, sometimes he does see a robber or he does different things. But the one thing and one thing he never does and all these kind of stories, see never lies. I say they hold it up that that you know, is that important? And so there's one of these stories where

the person being that was going to become the Buddha was born as a fish. And in a lake with lots of other fish, small fish, big fish, all kinds of fish. And there was a drought, the rain stopped raining. And

the lake began to dry out and dry, drier and drier. And all these fish started to burrow into the mud in order to both stay moist and also to be protected from being eaten by birds and stuff. But as the water kind of started to disappear and the fish were in the mud, the crows discovered these delicious meals to be had by simply pecking through the mud and pulling out these, these fish. So lots of fish were getting plucked out and being eaten. And now Buddha to be as a fish. He started feeling great sorrow. That was all his companions in the water were being eaten up, and he felt great compassion for what's going on. And so he exited the mud got out of the mud, and kind of, I don't know, stood tall or whatever way fish you know, and and, and he proclaimed or he spoke to the rain God and he said to the rain God and even though I'm a fish, a species of fish that eats smaller fish in all my life, I have never eaten or killed any being no matter how teeny and smaller is so what he's doing there is which in India is called a statement of truth, a claim of being truthful to make this something good. And it's supposed to be considered an India very powerful to make a truth statement like this. So he's making a you know, especially if it has to do with our ethics or ethical purity or something. So I've never killed I've never eaten anyone. And based on this rain, oh ring God, please, out of compassion rain on this lake. And the rain guy did. And all that animal all the fish were saved from the crows. So it's a little you know, fable story. But it speaks to two things. One is certainly this mythic power of truth that it can have. But the truth of the Buddha's that fish Enter goodness to enter probably the rain God recognized. This is good. This is a beautiful thing, a profound thing. This is a valuable thing to have a mind a heart that has this kind of purity or this kind of goodness in it. So we sit and meditate and we turn our gaze inward and see what goes on in our minds in our hearts. What do we see there? Do we see something that from which we could make a truth claim to the rain gods? You know, since the time I was born, I never stole anything. To the time I was born, I never lied. Or at least it's last week. And the there's a story of this murder who the Buddha converted to become a monk and left behind his murder. Life. And they were Buddha and this men were wondering, for alms and through the town and there was a woman giving birth who was having trouble with the birth and so painful, probably probably screaming or in pain. And the Buddha said to this guy to the to his new monk, he said, Why don't you go make a truth statement to this woman? And say, never in my life, have I killed anyone? And he looks at the Buddha. I guess he said, What? That's not true. How could I say that?

though? What I mean is, as since since whenever, since you've been born into the monastic life. You've never killed anyone. And so the monk does, and the woman gives birth easily. Some more of these fables, right? But it's Speaking to the power of the Pure Truth statements having to do with the purity of the mind the intention. So what can we find in ourselves that's like that, what can we discover that we can bring to the world? I mean, you don't want to go out in the street in Redwood City and just start proclaiming, you know, it'll be weird. But, but the fact that we become someone whose true, I think people can pick up and see, and the most important person who's supposed to pick it up and see it, is you. If you can say that to yourself, that's a powerful thing. It's also powerful, to be truthful towards oneself, about all the strange things that are in there. Some of you probably have a few strange things happening going on. And things that maybe you don't want to admit things you're ashamed of things that are challenging or you feel in conflict with things that are There's anger, there's, there's greed, there's lust. There's all kinds of, you know, very challenging material that goes on in our lives, in our, in our hearts in our minds. There's something very powerful about acknowledging that. And saying to herself, this is difficult, this, this is my difficulty. This is what's going on with me. You might not share it with other people. It's not wise. But the goal in Buddhist practice is to become a person who tells the truth to themselves, and certainly never lies to themselves and discovers the truth about themselves. And as we discover what's true, even what's difficult within us, that is creating the space in the mind this the opportunities for the mind, the heart, to begin to heal, to begin to resolve itself to begin to free itself from that To kind of repeat a little bit what I said earlier, it's, it's almost mechanistic. That I believe that this movement towards healing and, and result resolution and freedom can happen. Because to be

attached to be resisting, to be caught up in anything at all in the mind takes a lot of work to be contracted and tight, takes a lot of work. It's stressful. And the whole psychophysical system that we have, does not want to put in all this extra work, all this extra stress and pressure and resistance that goes on. And you can feel that when you sit to meditate, if you're really that's one of the tremendous values of mindfulness is to really feel and sense and experience what's really going on here. Even if it's difficult to face, to really feel it and sense it and get to know it well. You'll notice that it wants to be free. It wants to release itself. Some people will explain this, interpret it or put words to it, that a deep yearning inside a deep yearning for freedom or deep yearning for truth or deep yearning for spirituality or for meaning or something. And I think that sometimes this deep yearning is a one way or articulating the innate almost biological movement, desire almost towards for the equivalent of water to run down the mountainside to say what are you know, the, the forces of our minds activities of mind our mind goes towards the gravity goes downhill goes towards where freedom is an openness where there's not so much work. One of the words the Buddha gave for liberation is Freedom from work or put or putting all work to rest. And, and sort of feel that that's there. And you know, sometimes you've heard me say this that, it's kind of like if you have hold your hand in a tight fist to really tight fist, after a while, you'll feel that that just wants to relax. And if you don't want to relax it, then you have to put a lot of mental effort in to remember and stay on track to keep it tight. And if you get distracted, you probably the hand will start releasing itself.

If we could really turn and look at what goes on here, and be honest about what's here and hold it in our kindness, then things begin to move and change. And I think one of the saddest things that I know one is very sad thing I know is people I meet who are resisting, acknowledging what is true that they're holding back closing down looking in other directions. Looking externally, rather than really turning the mirror back into themselves, saying what is really true here, what's happening here. The and I think of mindfulness practice, a synonym for mindfulness is honesty. I think the two are so closely together. And to not be honest, is to go diametrically opposite direction of what the whole purpose of mindfulness is to do is to be to be honest to really recognize and see what's there. The emphasis on truth word in Pali is such. And in Sanskrit, it's Satya. And Mahatma Gandhi had this great expression that he coined Satyagraha, which means I think usually translated in English as the power of truth. I think it literally means something like holding to truth. And that became the, the inspiration, I think, for Martin Luther King to come up with a term, soul power. So translated into his idiom. And, and so the power of truth. And there's one discourse in the sutras that talks about four truths, not the four truths we usually think of in Buddhism. That, that is kind of touching to read. There's a bunch of religious people who are having a discussion. I think it's the subtext kind of is like they're having an argument about what are the real truths that other religious people or religious spiritual seekers? What's the real truth said that spiritual life What do we mean? So the Buddha comes along They say he asked them, What are you talking about? He says, we're talking about what there might be their real truths of spiritual seekers or something. And, and so then, so the Buddha volunteers, just tell them that being asked to tell them well, these are the four truths. These are the four truths that I have proclaimed. Having realized them for myself with direct knowledge. So the Buddha says I know things. Here, a seeker says thus, all living beings should not be hurt to not be harmed. That could be a great first truth. To no one should be harmed. I like this a lot. Oh, living beings should not be harmed. Speaking this, a practitioner speaks truth, not falsehoods. Then interesting idea, this is what's true. It's not you know, it's, it's, it's a principle That's true. As opposed to you know what's true in reality. It's true for the heart. If you want to be free, if you want to do this inner work, this is a true statement. No one should be harmed. We should not be harming people. But then there's further idea of what this truth means. The Secret or the practitioner does not on that account. misconceived oneself as being spiritual. One does not misconceive I am better, I am equal, and I am worse than others. So they recognize this trip.

And somehow appreciated maybe as a spiritual seeker practitioner. But then we don't compare ourselves to others. And even the idea that we're equal to others in Buddhism is, is unnecessary. It's this extra work. This all these comparisons, even come, you know, there's a lot of work to compare. Tremendous amount of human suffering comes around comparing. And if you really sit quietly and look at your mind, you'll see that even come even conceiving, I mean, having the ideas doing the inner work that says I'm equal to everyone is extra work. It's so much better to sit peacefully and not compare yourself to anyone. And you get a sense of that and meditation, right, you finally, finally the thinking mind starts one stops wandering off, you stop being preoccupied and the mind is peaceful. And then you have maybe it's very quiet and settled. And then this thought comes up, you know, wonderful thought. To everyone. You feel how it's like, oh, I was so peaceful. Why should I be thinking that? Why should I design my mind with that thought? It's a nice thought. But let's let's, it's better to go back in to the peace.

So rather than Miss conceiving having these thoughts about oneself, having directly known the truth, one practice is simply out of compassion for all beings. And if some of you were here last week, the word it's been translated here as compassion is under compa out of care for all beings. So that's the first truth don't harm anyone and practice out of compassion or care for others. That's the first truth of Buddhism that's pretty good. Again, a practitioner realizes all sense pleasures are impermanent, unsatisfactory and subject to change. So all sensual pleasures in the Buddhist analysis of human life, the pursuit of sensual pleasure, sensual comfort is one of the primary characteristics of human life. That and it doesn't take a lot of analysis to consider that most it's true for most people. In Thailand, there was a teacher meditation teacher, who would place people in a very, very comfortable, comfortable recliner. You know, the softest one he could find, I guess in the monastery and then tell people don't move, sit there and don't move. And even sitting in that beautiful, comfortable recliner after a while, it starts getting uncomfortable unless you shift and move. And that's shifting and moving was his people started doing that was there less than six you're pursuing comfort or essential pleasure trying to make yourself comfortable all the time. I don't know if that's the best way to get that lesson but but it was certainly an interesting way. And but I think that a high percentage of human life has to do with making themselves comfortable I have have pleasant things pleasant food plus environments, pleasant experiences pleasant conversation pleasant, whatever. And, and a fair not fair amount of what people do at least around here. In terms of livelihood and earning money, is probably goes into buying things that aren't really essential for a healthy good life, but are buy things that in order to be more comfortable, buy a better car you know, more than just to get yourself around. But something that brings you pleasure to have a bigger house that brings you pleasure to have nicer clothes, newer clothes because it brings since a pleasure perhaps he goes on and on all the things that people are doing. To try to have more pleasure. And so, anyways, that Buddhist analysis and so to emphasize that sensual pleasures are fleeting and permanent, in some in some kind of way unsatisfactory. There certainly are pleasures that can be enjoyed. But if we are depending on those enjoyable pleasures, to provide us with lasting, secure, stable happiness, and that's all only way we know how to be happy, then it will, you know we'll live a shallow life and in Buddhist analysis of fragile life, because these potential pleasures are so fleeting they come in and go, then we have to constantly renew them. There was a very passionate teacher many years ago told the story of being taking an un long day hike, I think into the mountains, some natural park and And it was supposed to be inspiring and beautiful. And she said, the whole experience was one, discomfort after another. And, you know, some of us have, you know, there are discomforts and hiking in beautiful places, but sometimes the beautiful the pleasure or the beauty somehow outweighs the, you know, the sore feet and the blisters and all the things that can happen, but, but he was kind of shocked, like, the whole thing was uncomfortable. I don't know, you know, what lesson we want to make from that, but the anyway, so for the Buddha, so, there's some kind of truth around the nature of sensual pleasure and the pursuit of it, that the Buddha felt was very

important for human beings. second only to this idea that the truth of don't harm other beings. So that's a pretty you know, I don't know, you know, it's a pretty lofty or important direction. emphasis. So it's I think it's worth considering reflecting on. speaking to us, the practitioner speaks truth, not falsehood. When does not on that account, misconceived oneself

as a practitioner, when there's not misconceive I am better I am equal, I am worse, rather having directly known the truth in that way, when is practicing simply for the disenchantment with sensual pleasures for their fading away and cessation. And then the third truth. Again it practitioner says this, all states of becoming are impermanent, unsatisfactory and subject to change. becoming one of the easiest ways for us in our culture, I think, to understand this Buddhist word becoming, is to think of them as identities. All identities are impermanent, unsatisfactory, for lasting happiness. subject to change. And then people say What do you mean? Oh, my identity, you know, I'm a man or something. I'm a woman and what? How is that changing? If you sit quietly in your mind, we can watch how we construct identities, we pick them up the ideas that we latch on to. And these ideas of who we are shift and change very quickly if we're really watching the moment moment unfolding of the mind. And in the ordinary busy life, we don't necessarily see how quickly our ideas or thoughts or concerns are shifting and changing. And it can feel like we're kind of latched on like these things are permanent, they're always there. And they can impress us or we can get attached to them or be holding on to them or, or something. But to start seeing that these things fit through the mind. Very rapidly they come in and go, they're not always there begins showing us the gaps, where our identities are not operating. And to sit in meditation, such a wonderful laboratory for seeing the mind. And to see how much peace and happiness well being there can be in those gaps. When I'm no longer a man or woman or some other gender, I'm just, I'm just breathing. There's just awareness. And that begins to change our relationship to identities. Some people are deeply attached to their identities, attached to negative identities, positive identities, and identities of equality that we have. And we're oppressed by them where we're trying to defend them. We're trying to hide them, we're trying to assert them. The whole idea of our identification, who we think we are and how we represent ourselves can be A source of tremendous suffering. And these are all in to really see the truth of their changing nature is considered one of the liberating insights of Buddhism. And then this riff, almost like a refrain for each of these truths, kind of points to this idea of becoming of identity. speaking to us, all states of becoming are impermanent, unsatisfactory and subject to change. Speaking Thus, a practitioner speaks truth, not falsehood, when does not on that account misconceive oneself as a practitioner. When does not misconceive I am better I am equal and worse, that's all becoming, being someone I am this way. Rather having directly known the truth of this one is practicing simply for disenchantment with all states. Becoming all states of existence of identity for their fading away and cessation. And then the fourth truth. Again, a practitioner says this. So this is a little bit fascinating they would have brought to read it's kind of maybe it's I am not anywhere, the belonging of anyone. I am not anywhere, the belonging of anyone. It's kind of interesting statement. That's true what it means. But, you know, certainly they had slaves back in the Buddha's life. But the fact that we're independent, that we didn't actually belong to anyone that were free. of, you know, we're in relationship with people, but there's not a we're not in possession of anyone. We're not obligated to anyone. You know, and maybe this refers back to, you know, the idea of slavery and serfdom that existed in the time of the Buddha. So that there was really understood as a powerful statement.

But do we relate to other people in our lives as if we're the possession or we belong to them or they belong to us and they're obligated, we're obligated in some way? Is that where freedom is found? Maybe that's comfort is found there, safety is found there. Maybe identity is found there and that sense of belonging. But when we sit and meditate again, this powerful reference point of a quiet mind, is a reference point that begins questioning the operation of so many of the different ideas that we think are

necessary for our life. And the idea of belonging, a possession of somehow is to other people. Is that really conducive to the deeper peace and well being? But it's possible for us. Then he goes on, nor is there anywhere, anything in any place. So this is like pretty powerful statements, nor is there anywhere, anything in any place that is mine. What do you mean? I bought it. I made it, you know, nothing that is mine. So, it's certainly worth considering. And if I may do this one more time, the reference to meditation practice, a quiet and peaceful meditation practice. The thought the idea this is mine can so obviously be experienced as more suffering. There's an example that's given sometimes on meditation retreats that you have your cushion You've been using for many days on retreat. It's the question of the retreat center, you took it off the shelf first day. But it's you've been using it for three or four days. And you're not also at your place in the hall. And you come back after some meal or something and you're looking, someone is sitting in my place on my cushion. And this anger and fury and indignation and self righteousness and hurt and all this stuff comes up. But then somehow you get it back and their retreat goes along nicely for another three, four or five days. And, and then somehow you put it back on the shelf at the end, and you'll never remember what your question was yours again. You know, they're all they're all they all look the same, right? So. So, the idea that his mind is a construct of the mind. Is it the wisest and best construct, to use in all kinds of circumstances? And when do we want to question it? When do we want to find how to be liberated and free from that? When is it useful? And when is it not useful? And for the Buddha to make to claim this is the fourth truth, I think is a occasion for some kind of pausing. We don't have to agree with him in our ways, but it is a powerful kind of statement to reflect on and kind of like a one of these wonderful practice slogans and carried with us and wonder where is this true and how is this true and how is this useful? I am not anywhere. I am not anywhere at the belonging of anyone. And maybe we can say there is no one anywhere who is my belonging nor is there any wear anything in any place. That is mine. Zen master Suzuki Roshi has a wonderful wonderful story about him about this idea of me myself in mind my things. And he was in San Francisco in the 60s and there's a happens to be a photograph of him that was taken. He's talking to small group people. And then what happened someone had actually happened take a photograph him just as he was saying it. So it's kind of a nice memory. You know, if you've seen the photographs, photographs of him holding his glasses like this in front of his face, and maybe putting it on or taking it off to demonstrating something, and he says, These glasses are not my glasses. But you know about my old tired eyes. So you let me wear them. That's kind of reframes, you know, the idea of not mine.

So Truth. There's a truth about ourselves truth to be discovered about ourselves or the working of our minds. What's true about our goodness, what's true about what's challenging about ourselves, the truth about our, our, our, our inner child, you know, inner challenges that we want to face and be present for. And there's also a truth about certain principles about life that are often emphasized as being important or really true if you want to be free or want to live a good life. And that the first truth that the Buddha here evokes is one that's based on compassion, I think is a wonderful thing to consider. To live a life of care and live a life of feeling connected and concern for the welfare of others, and to be dedicated to not harming anyone, the truth the importance of not being involved in harming to begin shifting our relations. to ship to pleasure and to discover a wise relationship to pleasure is the kind of truth that the Buddha here wants to emphasize. And so we look at our relationship to pleasure and we try to be honest about what that is. What are we using pleasure for our all the different purposes of pleasure that we're pursuing? Is it really for our betterment? There's a lot of people who pursue pleasure to avoid to avoid their suffering to avoid what's difficult to distract themselves. Is that really what people? Is that really the best thing to do in our life? Or do we want to somehow see that we're doing this, see the truth of that, and then look deeper. And then there's a truth of identification of identity, becoming and asserting ourselves, making yourself conceiving and self it's also a huge part of human psyche, to turn around and use the mindfulness practice to be truthful and honest about what you're really doing around self identity and how you can see how you conceive of yourself how you think of yourself how

you are hiding from other people or asserting yourself or, or pretending there's people who pretend to be a certain kind of self, and it's very difficult. So to be honest, should really look and see and be honest in that. And then to discover that that doesn't work. And then maybe there's another kind of freedom to be discovered. That isn't that doesn't involve the pursuit of pleasure. And then this whole idea of belonging that you're you are someone else's that you're responsible or obligated or enslaved in some way to others to a group of people to family to partners to even to children to parents. I think that it's it's a very complicated and tender area of our life, what is our responsibility to each other as human beings? And when do we have responsibility? And when Don't we have responsibility for others? How much do we belong to someone other other? How much are we connected that we have to take care of them or they have to take care of us? At what point do we become independent? You know, that idea. And I remember for me that growing up, you know, I took my parents take care of for caring for me completely for granted. It never occurred to me that the universe was constructed in any other way. And, but at some point, you know, it didn't make any sense anymore to count on my parents to take care of me. And so there was a weaning of myself. From that parental, you know, and then at some point, the tipping tipped right. And then I became the caretaker of my mother who now has a little bit of dementia. And, and so how much do we care for others? What's our what is the responsibility? And how much do we belong? And where did where does that line and it's not an easy thing to explore and discover, but to, again, turn the mindfulness back on ourselves and see what drives us. What are the fears? What are the attachments? Where are the identities that come into play? With this whole idea of responsibility for others?

This whole idea of mine, what is mine? And to like the mindfulness shine the light on that? What do I feel like? Is what I possessed? That's my thing that I own or, or this is, you know, you know, is it your opinions that are mine? That Hold on to? Is it your things? Is it your relationships? Is it your status? Is it what is it that you take as mine? And is that really useful to do that? And to answer all these questions, in whatever way you can, but to answer them, try to find what's honest the truth of it to really turn back and look at yourself, but to discover a truth, which is not personal, but the truth of the freedom from all these attachments, the truth of the mind putting down its burden, its preoccupation, the mind, no longer bound to its thoughts, its concepts, ideas, identities, pleasures, impulses to hate and anger and violence, to discover that freedom and that truth shines light on all the other aspects of our life in a very powerful way, very meaningful way. So we sit to be true. He said not to discover only discover the truth, but to be able to relax and let go into who we are in a certain way. But it kind of who we are that needs no words to explain, needs no definition, that we can just be the truth. And we know or be that we're being truthful because we're not lying. We're not conceiving, we're not making up things. We're just here and open and clear, and hopefully kind way for this world of ours. So truth may you be a true person. So thank you. And I hope that many of you stay hope that many of you stay for the tea that we have. Have and enjoy the company and those of you who might be new especially, this is a Believe it or not a friendly group even though they sit in silence for a long time, but if you just say hello to someone next to you or say hello, people will be kind and say hello and introduce themselves. So thank you