

2019-07-28 Five Faculties

Tue, 8/11 9:58AM • 29:49

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

faculties, bike, effort, wisdom, hill, person, discover, concentration, life, faith, people, friends, mind, meditation, trolley tracks, bicycle riding, clarity, stroked, recognize, freedom

SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

Good morning everyone. And

I was told a few weeks ago that people who are participating in the Buddhist bike pilgrimage, a few of them are supposed to start here today at 11 o'clock and do a trial run or something like that practice run. And so I was asked to give a little talk that had may be related to their endeavors. And it's been going on for many years, this Buddhist bike pilgrimage, and maybe someday it'll be recognized as California's El Camino you know, that sacred site many people come from all over the world to do this, you know, sacred bike pilgrimage. They usually end up at a monastery. And often for many years they go to a by Gary monastery in Ukiah. And sometimes they go To the nuns and in Auburn. So what I'd like to do is talk about the teaching called the five faculties. And these are important inner capacities or abilities that we have that come into play, and just about any activity humans do. So I've often used talking about them used bicycle riding as an example of how they come into play. So that's a little bit the connection between the theme and the bicyclist through here, maybe. And the and so we have these wonderful abilities within us. And you know, the lived life that we experienced that we live has a very important Genesis with inside of ourselves. And to discover that live the life, the sense of living, that flows and moves within and discover it there in a profound and meaningful way, means that that profundity in that meaning is something we can take with us anywhere we go. If you're looking for the meaning and purpose of our life externally in the world, then it probably isn't so portable. But if we discovered within something meaningful and wonderful, then you know, we can, it's always with us. And so discovering some of the things that are operating inside some of the faculties, abilities, capacities, states that are in here, recognizing them, understanding them, and finding value in them, so that they become our companions along this journey of life. So the five faculties are among these things that you exists within us. And the five faculties. The Pali word the ancient word for it is India, in India means something like belonging to the God, Indra. And Indra was supposed to be one of the Supreme gods of the ancient Indian Pantheon, who had some kind of ability to control things. And so the fact that we have a little divinity within us, that is able to control what goes on, kind of guide what goes on support what goes on a faculty. It's kind of a saying a beautiful thing, I think that to have associated with the divinity, that there is something inside of ourselves. Buddhists don't usually say there's a divinity within, but we have indras and within and so the answer these five are usually the English it's translated as faith, energy or effort, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom to offer a little different version of a translation that, in my mind, my heart represents some of the fullness or the depth of the richness in which these things can exist within us. I think of it as deep trust, deep engagement, deep honesty, deep stability, and deep insight. So, trust, engagement, honesty, stability, and insight. And so how do these work? What are they? So for this, I'd like to use a couple of a you know similes or metaphors for them. And that is if someone wants has a plot of land that's parched

pretty sterile hasn't been cultivated for a long time hard pan soil and would like to garden make a garden there but knows nothing about gardening and so the person tells bunch of friends you know want to have this plot of land I would like to garden but it just seems too daunting it's hard pan it's nothing's there growing there. And I don't know anything about gardening and you know, who am I I don't know if I can do it. I don't know if the plot of land suitable for gardening and And anyway, it's more effort than I think I could do. And so then five friends show up. And they say you know, we'll help and each friend has a different strength that carries along everyone it to make this project work. One of them has phenomenal confidence, trust faith that it can be done it can be turned into a garden maybe the person's never garden before but they've been around gardeners and seen in the world how this can be done it seemed plots of land in much worse condition. And so the enthusiasm this person has just kind of sparks everyone. And the other part another person has a lot of wisdom, a lot of understanding about soil and what kind of soil it is to Sandy is it clay, how you would treat different soil how you break a hard pan, what was needed to add to it, how you would condition the soil, how you're planting it, and has a lot of wisdom about how to deal with different soil types and different terrains. And so that person can get very specific instructions. This is how we do it here. There's another person who's like built like an ox, you know, like big and strong and full of, you know, energy can never meditate or sit down because it's just like, you know, packed full of energy. And, and so that person just raring to go you know, to get give me a x pickaxes shovel I'm gonna get to work and that person's you know, energy and dedication just kind of like it's like an the engine that drives everybody else person who works so hard and another person has concentration or stability. The person has a lot of energy gets distracted easily. And about the person with concentration just keeps the focus and everyone kind of gathers around that focus and stays presence, that presence. And then the fifth friend is the one who's really mindful, really aware of the whole scene what's going on, is able to somehow bring together everyone else in harmony they work together, pull out the strength of each one is able to track the time And when it's time for lunch and, you know, it's kind of a kind of get the bigger, you know, scene of what's going on and recognizes when the ox is working too hard and you need to take a break and, and when the when, when the one on with faith is only just kind of sitting around not doing nothing because it's so enthusiastic and, you know gets gets to do with just work or you know, the mindful one, he was very important. So these five friends, you know, make it possible for this garden to happen. So we have five friends that are available inside of ourselves, and to recognize these five friends and calling them and engage in them is a beautiful thing. wonderful thing. It's wonderful to recognize them. And sometimes that's enough. Wow, I have this inside. I have these friends inside Isn't that good? I thought I was lonely. But now I have these friends and they were inside. And then the other is one thing to recognize them. The other is sometimes to engage them. to spark them and make them present for what we're going to do. And as I said, they're present in all activities that humans do some degree, even the most mundane, but we don't wouldn't think about them because, you know, just, we do think so easily out of habit. But like bicycle riding, if you were gonna bike from here to send a Barbara and down Highway one you would, these five would come into play. First of all, you'd have to have some trust some faith, you can do it and that can be done. And, and I suspect that if someone told me that we're going to bike down to you know, Santa Barbara, you know, you want to come along. I would have some doubt that I could do it, especially at the speed in which they're going to go or maybe I you know, I'm on the pilgrimage. I'm not related bicycle shape, even though I bike down here today.

And so I have some doubt that you know, I'm not And condition how to train for that. And but then, you know, I train and after being training, preparing, then I have some confidence and faith that I could do it. And when that I tip over into having confidence, then there might be actually a spark of enthusiasm. I'm inspired Yes, I want to do this that sounds great. Going down that winding road in Big Sur, that's like the best. And so and then, as you bike along, you have to kind of track your effort level, your energy level. And it's kind of intuitive for many bike bike riders, and they don't think about it so much, but the system

is tracking this. And so if you see a big hill coming up, you might want to pick up some speed on the flat to get some momentum. As you're going up. You have to change the gears you have to maybe change how you make effort and really apply yourself the I live up in the hills here. Like up that hill, it's kind of takes some effort. And, and takes a lot of faith that I can do it. There's a last little piece sometimes when I go up in the hill sometimes can I really do this? Really, you know, but you know that have the scale, you know, just put more effort. And so I put more effort and I make it and so that's nice and but then you come to the top and you know the effort has to change and you can end up going downhill. You make a very different effort. I don't quite go all out huffing and puffing going down hill I kind of catch my breath. I rest I coast down the hill. So it's a you know, very the effort we make. The there has to be a lot of mindfulness awareness. If you get it. Mindfulness has a lot to do with being undistracted If you're distracted, riding down Highway one on a bike, you're not going to get to Santa Barbara or district a, you know, to the monastery up north you go, you can't be you have to be undistracted if you're riding a bike. And your attention has to be alert you have to have it two or 360 degrees you have to see the road in front of you the conditions are the road, the traffic, the curves, the hills, the gravel, you know, all kinds of things. Remember what's coming down when I was a kid coming down a hill and I had to make a turn the bottom the hill and I somehow I didn't know that gravel is relevant for bicyclists. I was too young I inexperienced. I had no wisdom yet. And next thing I found myself on the ground, bicycles, you know, spun out from underneath, you know, slip Merman do me. So and then there were the train tracks the trolley tracks in the road I didn't know about either. So that was you know, so there's all kinds of things you need to know. So you have to track all this stuff and be aware of all this. And so the there has to be awareness. And so a bicyclist might slip up a little bit and get distracted, lost and fantasy and something happens and say, Oh, I can't do that, again. I have to be alert. And then it takes some concentration to do a long bike trip. Concentration has a lot to do with persistence, continuity. Just keep at it, keep at it, keep at it, keep making the effort, keep making the effort, stay there, stay there. And some people when they go on, you know, great hikes, runs, bicycle trips. It's some of the great pleasure of doing that is in fact getting into the zone. Getting into a concentrated state where the mind is not really distracted anymore, but you really feel like you're present in a continuous alert, clear. Way, and it's just a great pleasure in life to have that. And then finally, there has to be a lot of wisdom. When you do a bike trip, you know, you have to know about the gravel, you have to know about the trolley tracks and what to do there. You have to know how to read the traffic and look up ahead and there's a wet spot than what you do with a wet spot or you have to know it with what to take with you and what not to take with you. And you know how to it's a big you know, pilgrim Richard, lots of people you know, have to have wisdom, but how close you can get to other people who are writing because I have known of big accidents that I think I wasn't one when I was a kid. Also, I did a lot of bicycle accidents as a kid. And I think riding side by side with someone and talking and doing what other kids do side by side. This is not a good idea, because it can feel on the ground again. bump the handlebars hit each other or something.

So there has to be some wisdom and understanding how this works. And so maybe my examples are not the best ones, but maybe you can fill in better for yourself that these are five faculties we have that are coming into play. And they probably come into play when you're washing dishes at home. But you know, that's just rote almost you don't even think about it. But you have some confidence you have to effort you have some attention, some attention when you do dishes, I have no one to break dishes in my kitchen sink, I'm not paying careful attention. So you know, you need some and then some concentration, and then some wisdom about it. And so in recognizing these things within us, and recognizing how they work, it can be a delight. Wow, look at that. I have trust I've confidence, some inspiration there. And the effort thing for some people have a complicated relationship with effort, but our ability to engage you know, that's where a lot of the pleasure of life comes, I think of in meditation. Myself, I think of it more as an engagement of something we I do. And the doing is mostly an undoing,

mostly and kind of the doing, of letting go have all the doings of my mind, but it's still a doing and I just delight in it. I just think it's so much fun when you get into it. And, and you know, and to kind of track my mind and have faith in what I'm doing. Have the effort to apply myself and not doing to have awareness that tracks at all that has a continuity of practice of concentration that what I'm doing, and then a real insight and wisdom of what's happening. insight into the coming and going a phenomenon, knowing where we're inside about where wisdom about where I put my attention so that I can get less and less caught up, less attached. That the mind To become more peaceful and clear and more settled, I just find that one of the not always but but I find that one of the great delights. One of the ways that it's a delight to meditate works the same thing. Same way, if I go for a bike ride or go for a run in the hills here sometimes the first few minutes are a drag. Really, I'm gonna do it. I'm gonna run up this hill. You know, and then I don't know about if this is a common for other people, but maybe I'm peculiar, but I start my run going up in the hills here. And there's something in my body, some physical kind of sensations. That feels like a screaming kids. Stop. You and I have enough experience with this little kid inside the group his physical sensations to, to know that this is not something to live listen to. So I have to persist, I have to override it in a certain way. And sometimes when I sit down to meditate, the same thing happens. It's not a little kid Exactly. But I don't really want to have my mind stop what it's preoccupied with. And I've important things to think about right. And, and so it takes a couple of minutes to kind of get into it. But as I get into it, then the usual preoccupations, the mind quiet down, and some of the protests of the mind, quiet down, then it's such a pleasure to get into kind of the flow of the engagement, the effort is being there. And to have these different faculties come into play, to have a real sense of being inspired, which is a correlate of being having faith or confidence, or trust is a real, real delight. It's a gift To have that kind of friend inside, to enjoy making efforts like this is fun. Some people actually think about meditation is kind of like play. I don't quite see it as play, but I'm kind of delighted and amused by it. And then to find real joy in the minds capacity for clarity for being awake and aware and present, to have real joy in that arises, if we kind of settle in to a continuity of practice, it's kind of like we're in the groove or in the zone. It just like one of the great joys, it just seems like almost like there's a physical, it's like a cat being stroked. You know, why does a cat purr when it gets stroked? You know? No one's actually told me that I don't really know it's just the cat. The guest is enjoying it. The

but why do I start kind of lighting up with joy when I'm just kind of getting concentrated in my breath or my meditation. I don't really know why it just seems like it's not a reason. It's not like an evaluation or idea that it is a good thing and I'm happy about it. It seems like I'm being stroked, you know, stroked by awareness. Mindfulness is stroking me in, the system begins to purr. And then to have insight is one of the best things. I oscillate between being delighted and amused. When I can really have clarity of mind, and to see the terrain and what happens in the mind and around me. There's something about seeing phenomena, thoughts, feelings, experiences, Arise and pass the clarity of seeing something exist, that didn't exist, and something that didn't exist. Now it doesn't exist something it did exist now. It doesn't exist. momentary arising and passing of things. There's something that I find immensely delightful. In that, I think what I find a lightful is the clarity of leaving it alone, of not getting attached to it, not holding on to it, it just exists and I'm free of it, just right there. And, and that I think is one of the greatest things to have the five faculties involved involved in the five faculties to be involved in our capacity to not get caught in our experience or thoughts or feelings, our capacity for the mind to the heart to be free. And for that becomes second nature. To be such a common endeavor of the five faculties. It's kind of, we take it with us all, all the places we go, to have faith that no matter where we go, the best thing we can do is not Not to get not to clean, not to resist, not to clamp down and get contracted. But to stay free and open. The best things we can, one of the best things we can do is to put in the effort to stay free. One of the best things we can do is to stay have the mindfulness and clarity that helps that freedom to be there to be an opening to express our life and understand our life. To have the concentration on this

effort, be free, to have the wisdom to be free. That's one of the best things going. And there might be protests. That No, no, there's better things are that's kind of like you know, that's, that's self serving or self indulging and, you know, to focus on your own freedom and there's important things to do in the world and all that. It's not like either or, to discover the freedom of the heart and the mind. That becomes the A vehicle within which we do everything in our life. It's not that we don't exclude everything else. It's the medium in which we can live our life and take care of all these other important things that we take care of. And to have that the second nature, just like maybe it's second nature for some of you to walk. And you know, you don't think about walking, but you'll walk for many reasons, you know, set up an either or scenario. I'm either going to walk or I'm going to go to the store. You know, no, you can't to walk because you have important place to go, you have to go to the store. So you're stuck, you know, you can't walk because you can't do both. It's ridiculous, right? So the same thing with his freedom of the heart and the freedom of the mind that Buddhism kind of reveals. For us the practice reveals, and is that it's something we can always do. And everything else we do can come along and be part of that. It's not not either or. And it turns out that nothing whatsoever is worth clinging to. And we should always select that. So nothing whatsoever is worth clinging to. And so

to discover that it's even beginning, the rudimentary small discoveries of what it's like not to cling and not to close down and not to get tight around things, not to get tight around resisting things in the mind, to discover what that is. And then to relate to those things with the five faculties to discover, to awaken faith and inspiration around non clinging to have the effort to live a life of non clinging to have the awareness that supports that To have the concentration on doing it, and to have the wisdom that this is a good idea is a great thing to have. So five faculties needed for your bike trip, those of you are going and needed for meditation and needed for freedom. May the five faculties be your friends for your discovery of freedom. So those are my thoughts. And in 15 minutes, there's a potluck. So what I'd like to propose to be 15 minutes before the potluck is to do what we often do before the potluck is but then to add something to it. So I, so the first is to just turn to you know, have one or two people next to you and just have a little conversation about these things. faculties are, what do you know about your five faculties? Have you appreciated them before they have a role in your life? Can you imagine they can have a bigger role in your life, especially in terms of meditation or especially in terms of living a life that doesn't cling to things. Just to share a little conversation and don't have one person give a long monologue about everything they can possibly say about this. It's mostly about making a connection. And so just kind of save just a few words like go back and forth ping pong kind of thing. And then after we've done that a few minutes, then we'll read gather I'll ring the bell. We'll read gather here and I'll save save some five final words before the potluck. Okay, so why don't you join up with a couple of people and have little conversation

was one of the loudest little Sunday this discussions we've had, I don't know if it was a topic or I set it up in an exciting way or so. So some of you came here to meditate and now you're all roused up.

The so in this five faculties are called this indriya. And, but they there's another list that's called the five powers. Bala and it's the same list and how I understand that if you take the English words faculty and power is we all have faculties we have capacities, but maybe they're not well developed. And then when they're developed, then they become powers. So there is a power as we develop. People don't often think of meditation in association with power. People think about calmness, perhaps or relaxation or things like that. But in fact, I think the idea to become, internally psychologically, spiritually strong, is a important part of this. And, and to have this inner strength that develops together with letting go of conceit, letting go of selfishness, letting go of attachments, is a beautiful combination. Because as we have this strength that holds us up and engages us in the world in a nice way, then it's, I think it's more useful or meaningful or, or safer to let go. We're not asked to let go and be left with nothing at all, All

you're giving you the nothing you're left, left behind, nothing you leave behind is yourself. But the strength in their capacities and the wisdom and the joys that are possible, gets stronger and stronger and better and better. So the five faculty are part of this. So I hope that you will discover you have these wonderful friends. You have wonderful divinities divine friends, within, and that you appreciate them. And if you appreciate them, they'll appreciate you. So thank you all very much. And a few minutes we'll set up for the potluck and everyone's welcome to stay encouraged to stay and, and just enjoy the community. Thank you.