

2019-10-28 Equanimity

Wed, 8/12 11:18AM • 43:12

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

equanimity, people, marbles, treasure, electricity, stay, economists, meditation, mind, thought, retreat, feels, state, suffering, retreat center, present moment, called, practice, boat, awakening

SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

Good evening, everyone. And so Good evening, everyone. Welcome time See, and I certainly appreciate the opportunity to sit here quietly. Sit here with you, all of you. So can you hear me okay? loud enough. I came back from teaching a retreat yesterday, a week long retreat that our retreat center in Santa Cruz and the theme of the retreat was equanimity. In the sense that the talks we gave six Dharma talks were all on the topic of equanimity, different forms of it. And that topic is still on my mind and still thinking a little bit about that retreat. One of the there were some jokes made at the retreat about how they equanimity one way or the other, set up, or was responsible for the power outage that happened down there. The power went off with the retreat on Saturday night, Saturday evening. But we knew it was happening earlier. So at the morning, Saturday morning, we told everyone at the retreat that what we knew, because some people came from places where the electricity was come off, maybe they wanted to go home and maybe the official aquarium needed to be, you know, taken care of or something important, or maybe they were just kind of worried about staying at the retreat center when this thing was happening. So we told them. And one of the interesting things that seemed to happen a number of people was some of them were quite happy to be gave people the option to leave. And some people did leave. But people who stayed, were very glad that we kept the retreat going. There was some discussion about ending the retreat Saturday because of, maybe we can't have a retreat if there's no electricity. Many people who stayed we're very, very grateful to it felt like more of a basis of equanimity. And, but also, there were some people for whom the whole news about electricity going out, fires in California, made them very anxious. And it's an IT and some of them who it was kind of interesting to see how some people once they're anxious, it gets spreads out into other areas. And so it wasn't wasn't just become the issue of you know, the immediate issue of no electricity there was a fear Are you know, is there gonna be danger for us to you know fire now and we close to fire was gonna be fire there we were kind of surrounded by less than a few sides by places that we're not going to lose electricity just five minutes away and some people wonder to ask if we had plans evacuation plans plans for an earthquake. So you know the connection between losing electricity earthquakes are a little bit distant, but I sympathize. I mean to go as an example, there's so much anxiety in our world these days. So I suck people and the way that anxiety sometimes begets more anxiety, anxiety, kind of spreads out. And then we're concerned about other things. And, and, and it also stood kind of a juxtaposition that this, what happened at the retreat center and there was a lot of activity, getting it ready for the electricity going out and shops to Home Depot to get lanterns and discussions about the generator we have and what parts of the building generator generate, you know, provide electricity to and what it doesn't. And if it doesn't have electricity for the fire alarm, then could we stick could we stay at the retreat was it could we, it was hosted should we stay in this building if we had no fire alarm working and there was a lot of discussion, a lot of activity going on. And the theme of the retreat was a community to be economists so some for some people, that theme of equanimity in the abstract can seem

boring. It can seem like it's a kind of indifference or kind of aloofness or kind of like, just toned down and kind of just like just kind of chilled in such a way that, no, you want to shake them and, you know, get there, get them a little bit more activated and animated. And, but if you talk about not so much about equanimity, but about the opposite. If the opposite is to be anxious if the opposite is to be restless or agitated. Would you like to kind of overcome the anxiety we'd like to kind of settle the mind not be restless, and not be agitated? If the opposite is to be reactive, being intensely for things are intensely against things, if they're if the opposite of equanimity is to have such strong desires, or such strong aversions, that everything else kind of all other options close down, and we're kind of obsessing about these things. If equanimity is simply the absence of all those things, does it seem more attractive and in some ways, it's might be more attractive because if equanimity is a thing is a state, then that people might feel like I'm limited by the state. But if we said we talked about the absence of these other qualities, and then it's not limited to anything, then it can be all kinds of things that could be is just we're not, we're not having all these difficult states presence. Buddhism puts a tremendous emphasis on equanimity, and our tradition in particular, they have lists of equanimity, different kinds of equanimity And equanimity is part of the treasure trove of Buddhism. The treasure trove of Buddhism is your own treasure trove. It's turns out there's a lot of treasure in you. And equanimity is just a piece of all these different beautiful virtues, beautiful qualities that live inside of us. And I was reflecting on this treasure trove and how people in the outer world will spend years chasing chasing treasures you know, if you find in the attic of your grandparents, great grandparents home, rolled up parchment of a pirate map that has been long forgotten, and it has the you know, you know, the dot, dot dot and the x Mark marks the spot and some people would, you know, could spend the fortune, you know, figuring it out spending, you know, it's a big puzzle right? finding your way hoping to get that treasures buried in the sand somewhere. And it could be years of searching that we have read about people who spent years and years searching for some lost treasure and shipwreck or something. So we have a treasure inside. And there is a kind of treasure map to find it. Sit down and close your eyes and breathe mindfully. And spend time really looking and getting to know yourself and settling in and awakening or discovering your capacities for you know, the one of the lists of equanimity. that acronym is a 10th of the 10 paramis 10 treasures. So the first is generosity, considered to be a beautiful form of wealth. It's a little bit paradoxical to call generosity wealth, because means giving things away. But no matter how poor one is, if one feels like one can give, that makes you in Buddhist terms that makes you wealthy. And if person is phenomenally wealthy, but is miserly, then they're considered poor. Versus generosity. The second is ethical integrity. The third is renunciation. And many people don't think or pronunciation as a treasure. It feels more like some people's I think image of being a renunciant pronouncing is, is the opposite of having treasures kind of being impoverished. But to think of letting go the ability not to hold on to things, the ability to be comfortable with simplicity, the ability to be at ease without electricity without all the things that literacy brings. That's a kind of renunciation okay? Well, our plans are different. We're going to sit here in the dark today. Okay. And

so then there are these 10 wisdoms, there is 10 treasures as wisdom. And then there is effort, energy vitality. It's interesting that the word equanimity comes from Latin, meaning how having a balanced or even unimas economists comes into an animus. So you're, they're equally and animated in a balanced way. So energetically balanced energy. The next that is patience and then our truth the treasure of being truth. Knowing being truthful, the treasure of resolve to be able to make a determination and follow through on things. And the treasure of loving kindness. And then the 10th is equanimity. And they say that equanimity purifies, loving kindness. Isn't that nice? Rather than losing all your love for your equanimous it actually purifies it makes it clean to say because you're not going to be caught up in being preferential. You'll treat everyone equally and so that that's a kind of a pure loving kindness treats everyone with, with kindness with love with friendliness. There's other this and one other thing about

characteristics of equanimity when it appears in Buddhist lists. equanimity is always the last one or appears near the end and so there's a seven factors of awakening. And the seven factors of awakening are so that these 10 treasures are listed first the Army's, there are a lot to do with the how we live our lives. The seven factors awakening about how we engage in meditation. And these seven factors of awakening are mindfulness, investigation, energy, joy, concentration, and tranquility, concentration and equanimity.

So equina Mini

with the seven factors of awakening, it has to do with being able to engage in meditation practice in it Continuous way to stay in there and not be thrown off by anything that comes up, not be dissuaded that the task at hand is to stay present in the moment. And not to get involved going off into other thoughts, other ideas, other concerns, hold the course. And the example I like is that of being in a ship. And that is that if you're on a boat, going across water, the bow of the boat plows through the water, and the water washes off the side of the boat. And the water doesn't stop the boat, but just didn't bother to stop for the water just washes everything by with the seven factors of awakening with equanimity in particular. We hold the course of whatever happens in meditation, meditation practice, and we don't let anything thing get in the way. So we just fall off to the side. We let everything kind of like so we're think going along and meditation staying in the present moment. And we think, you know that what am I gonna have for dinner? And the mind gets stopped, don't they? are what happened yesterday what's gonna happen tomorrow? Or you know is there going to be an earthquake and, and so we're no longer staying on the course you know staying with the breath. Stay here with a breath, stay in the present moment. Just be mindful, be mindful. And the ability to be acquired missed and seven factors of awakening has a lot to do with not getting distracted and not getting sidetracked. Stay holding the course holding course. And equanimity has this factor of holding together these other qualities mindfulness investigation effort Joy, tranquility, and concentration and keeping them on track because those are the kinds of elements of the boat and all these beautiful qualities we have. Stay here. Just keep going through the water plowing into the next present moment. And so if time is the water we swim in, then we're staying. So we're just keep going into the next moment into the next moment. A way of losing the next moment is a retrospective thinking. So if you're kind of like going along, and suddenly you have an itch, and you start wondering, that's a funny itch. Is that a mosquito or do I have cancer? I wonder when I can call my doctor. What just happened back then? I have an itch that I had the wrong kind of thought and a thought, you know what happened? So now we're into retrospective thinking, we've been derailed from sahadi. We're no longer in the present moment we've gone off into this kind of thinking about the edge. So equanimity is that the ability to, to hold the course stay balanced. Don't be for or against anything. Don't get caught up in the reactivity. Don't hate something, don't love something, and thereby lose the next present moment. Because you plow ahead into the present moment at the present moment. I don't know what you think of this analogy of time being an ocean or water and that we're going in, we're both heading into the next present moment, next present moment. Unless you get you stop. Kind of and we stop all the time. mindfulness practice is the practice of not stopping. We keep going, we keep going. We stay in the present moment we learn how to be in the present moment with whatever's coming. And the equanimity is the capacity to do that continuously. And as a part of the seven factors of awakening, there's also equanimity that is talked about in Buddhism. In concentration practice, concentration practice is laid out in a series of very dramatic quantum steps that moves through four different stages called

jhanas absorptions. And, and it goes through some wonderful experiences of joy and happiness. Sometimes it can be rapture and bliss, feeling almost because of the concentration. But the idea is that to really get into the depths of still mind that you had to let go of the joy and the happiness that's there.

And when those fall away, we're no longer interested in those things. That the mind is very, very still and quiet. The mind becomes very economists, so much so that for some people is the primary way they, they primary primarily to scription of the state that they're in the physical and mental state of being. Primarily the whole state feels Aquinas. So it isn't just like one particular thought like the, the, the captain at the rudder of the boat that keeps the boat going straight and straight and Captain just one thing out of, you know, the whole boat. It's the whole boat is economists to the equanimity but everything's economist is kind of very deep feeling of tranquility, of serenity of peace that feels embodied and Suffusing the whole body. It's a state where the equity so strong that the ordinary experiences of the body as a solid body with kind of sharp sharp boundaries kind of get diffused and dissolve. And, and, and there's very little or no pain, no pleasure except that this economist state is one of the most pleasant things you could imagine. It's just like one of the really really sweeper there's no physical physical pain or pleasure or physical pleasure is just kind of almost like the body's porous or, or light or something. It's through this light poorest there's a laughing and atmosphere or wind, equanimity. It's quite phenomenal. So equanimity here is a state not like a tracking your mind and seeing us Don't bother with that. Don't be bothered with that. Then there's equanimity which is an list. And that has to do with the those four stages. There's these four stages of jhanas for jhanas. There's also a whole series of steps. Also a little bit quantum steps changes in the path of Vipassana practice, insight practice. When people do pure mindfulness practice, they go through these different phases of stages. And they're also the final stage has to do with equanimity. And I want to kind of give you a very simple overview of these stages of Vipassana I call the insight knowledges. Because one way of understanding them is that they have to do with with resolving or working through what's called or coming to a new relationship and economist relationship with what's called the three characteristics. There's a our tradition puts a tremendous emphasis on the characteristic that that what our experience, all our experiences are characterized in three ways. They are impressive Permanent and constant. They are, in some ways suffering Duca and satisfactory. And in some way they are not self. And so as we meditate in the mindfulness practice, at some point, as the mind quiets down, and begins no longer being caught up in its thoughts and ideas and where the rich come from, and just staying present, becomes a very, very clear and very stable present moment mind that everything's shifting and changing the changing nature phenomena. And things come and go. And to kind of rest in this flow, this current of change can be quite a blissful thing, quite a wonderful thing.

But sometimes that's all this change, things coming and going things going can be also challenging because some people like to have stability. Some people want things to be unchanging? Because then they hold on to it. And many people are orienting themselves in life through a stable sense of self, a stable sense of what they think is happening around them. And with very deep inside practice, there is no stability because everything is changing, everything is flowing. And so in order to keep moving along in the practice has to be a lot of equanimity, a lot of letting go a lot of acceptance of how things are changing all the time. And so part of the path of Vipassana is to learn peace, and equanimity and ease with how much things are changing. And it's a great life lesson because then you come out of meditation and turns out, there is a lot of change in our world. They turn off the electricity. And so Oh, it's here. Things are different things have changed. Okay, I know about change. And then as the practice deepens, then people set goals Sometimes go through this next phase of practice, that is the second characteristic called dukkha. And so then they start feeling, having somehow come to terms with the aspect of human life that is suffering that's painful, that has spiritual unsatisfactory, in some way unsatisfactory for lasting happiness. And, and for some people, this is a difficult area to learn that some people have very strong aversion to pain and suffering. Some people get confused by it. Some people get overwhelmed by their own pain and suffering. People have some people have huge backlog of unresolved suffering that they and emotions that they carry within them that are ready to come to the surface. And so as they sit quietly and thinking they're just going to sit quietly meditate and have a nice,

quiet, peaceful time. All this unresolved stuff comes up grief and difficulties and fear and sometimes with a tremendous sense of danger in the world is there going to be an earthquake and you have earthquake plans. In case there is and so in order to move through this phase of practice, a person has to learn equanimity about suffering, learn how to be nonreactive learn not to get caught up in trying to fix it all the time. And three to every form of pain, every form of suffering and discomfort that we experience in meditation has something to be fixed. And to always be involved with trying to fix it and improve it or run away from it or change it. You know, as soon as we have if we're too uncomfortable meditation, and we get up and go off and do something different, you know, and to avoid it, and to as the practice deepens, to be able to also be also find our comfort with discomfort, a different kinds of equanimity. And so to be able to sit this is painful And I can breathe with ease. I cannot get wrapped up in their mind I don't have to get contracted or tight or versiv. And then they move into another state where the mind now is getting pushed through that is developed a lot of equanimity, a lot of peace, a lot of being able to be present. And it becomes clear and clear. That ideas of self selfing identification me myself in mind, is an agitation of the mind. Being myself in mind, ideas having to do with me myself, and talking about ideas, the assumptions, the imaginings we have about self don't really make sense anymore. The mind gets so still, that it's kind of like I just heard a car out there. I heard a car go by. It's pretty clear to me that that sound of the roar of the engine that's not me. You know, it's You know, I heard it, you know, but it's not that's out there, that's not me to have arise in the mind. The thoughts like, my meditation is lousy, or my meditation is good. And see that thought arise. And see, just like the car sound out there, it's just a thought. I don't have to believe it. I don't have to get involved in it. I don't have to identify it as me myself in mind having a thought. It's just a thought, I don't have to even boot I'd have to believe it. Just Just a thought come up. But there's no me and that thought that thought just arises.

And this is one of the remarkable things about a very, very still quiet mind is that all these things that we often take to be me? In the moment to moment appearance in the very subtle details of the moment? It's clear it's not self It's like you're sitting minding your own business and meditation. And suddenly for no with no plan of your own. You start thinking about song that you sang in high school. Haven't haven't sung that song or thought about it for 2030 years. Where did that come from? I didn't plan it. I didn't want it. It just popped up. And that thought is that you see, oh, that's just that's not me. It's just, I don't know where it came from the unconscious, but I don't identify it. I don't take it myself. It's just a thing floating up. Like looking in the sky and seeing a cloud going through the sky. Just to see it just a thought. So he starts seeing as mind gets deeper, that all these little details of thoughts of impulses of it have feelings that it's no it's no self in that and remarkably even that, the ability to watch all this there's no watcher there's just watching but there's no watcher because to posit a watcher is actually an extra layer of agitation is not needed it's not like somebody else is watching Of course of course you're the one who's watching but with a mind to latch on to it that's who I am the watcher that's extra and to sit so at quantum so still, that we're not latching on to self we're not making things into self. We're not there isn't a acquisitions and acquisitions if it increases, yes thank you. have taken some This is who I am or this negative kind of thing. This is not who I am this you know this is going to be explained to you now. This is not me because this all this stuff around self that's going to self game that human beings play. To be in this query quiet serene state of mind. We begin questioning and seeing how we construct itself and, and, and then and seeing the agitation, the restlessness, the compulsions that are operating and have them all these compulsivity around self drop away. Then the final stage of the stages of insight is equanimity towards everything. Imagine that. So no matter what you experience, whenever whatever comes up in meditation, anything that arises Anything you'd become aware of, to really clear the mind has now become completely economists. Meaning it doesn't go it doesn't react, doesn't go towards it that doesn't go away from it and push it to just hold on to it. Doesn't lean into it, it doesn't make anything out of it. It doesn't make a story out of it. It doesn't make a self out of it. It just things are this

there. And in generally in the state, the equanimity is so deep and pieces so deep, that things that arise just seem almost almost like they're floating in a kind of vast ocean of peace or stillness, those things are there they come, they go, very, very peaceful. And, and they say that this very deep state of equanimity of peace, we're not so but so. So in the first stage, we're working through our equanimity and peace with how things change. The second we're working out our relationship to how things are difficult. And the third stage we're working out a relationship to kind of the selfing and wanting and be in mind and so quick to have worked through these Three, and came to a place where you're actually able to stay peaceful and nonreactive and just letting things be as they are in a very still and quiet way. Then that remarkable thing happens. And that is that if I can try to think of a new analogy, if

you know I kind of knew exactly but you know, I saw this when I was talking my little kids, these museums, Exploratorium science museums. Some of them had these big bowls that they might have been some of them might have been five feet wide or something really big. And at the bottom of the bowl, they had a little hole, just about the size of a marble, maybe teeny bit larger. And then they had these marbles lined up on the edge the kids could drop into this bowl and the marbles would just go up and down the sides. and around and around, but everywhere you threw in the marbles who sent a manner since it's sideways that spin around and around the ground or straight down to the middle, they'd go jump right over that hole and keep going. And, and mostly whenever it came over the hole, there's a lot of momentum in the marble, you just keep going to jump over the hole past the hole. But if but the marbles eventually slow down and slow down more and more. And so when the first throughout the marbles they are you know, you can say there's a lot of momentum is a lot of agitation in them and we say in English as soon as marbles are loose, right? So you know, most of our marbles are all loose in our head and there's a lot of momentum we've been spinning them and throwing them out for a long time and then we get in there we push them, you know, keep them going. But if we finally stop pushing our marbles, throwing new marbles in through our head, and it all gets you know that mentum goes down and quieter and quieter. So the marbles begin kind of less momentum, they go slower, they're going to go so high up the edges anymore, come down slower and slower and slower. And then they come to a place where they're almost so still, they almost you could almost, you know, it looks like there might stop as they come over that hole at the bottom. And when they kind of go over that place they fall through. And so, in meditation, your marbles get slower and slower, slower and slower. And then finally, you're, you know, you're so quiet, that you come to that place where you can find they let go in a deep way. Finally, like, Oh, no, maybe it's this idea of the analogy of you know, falling through the hole in the bowl is frightening. But it's Great place when the other side of you knows what's under there, the you know, in the museum, we don't know, usually the marbles come back. And so that happens to us too. We come in, you know, we drop through the hole, and we come back Also, don't worry. But we come back transformed, become changed in some way. And one way it's been transformed is we know how good it is to let go. And we know how good it is to be, how appropriate it is and how healthy it is. To be economist to all things to not hold on and be so reactive. And to learn the outer reaches or that most, most further stretches are possible greatest possibilities of really letting go. Letting Go letting go just letting go of everything for a moment. It's life lesson. It's phenomenal. So all these trends from the Buddhist point of view, we have a tremendous amount of treasure inside. We have all this riches Then we can cultivate and develop and, and you could just develop a lot of them and, and just it's it's such a portable, you can take them with you, you know, they're, they're much more compelling, much more valuable in a lot of things that people pursue in life. But as you cultivate these is from Buddhist point of view, these beautiful, wonderful qualities, a grow as we do this path of practice. And some people because as they grow, they trust the path of practice more and more, they trust this is good to do this, it's good to grow this way, it's good to develop these things. And then as they grow and develop, then it supports this process of the marble slowing down. And generally that that always but sometimes it's, you know, you go through the difficult stages you have to work through your relationship to suffering,

but generally it goes you know, it's really feels right really feels good. So much so that the You're ready for the, you know, you're ready, when the time comes for your marbles to drop through the hall to really let go. And, and it's been a great journey all the way there. And one of the great parts about this practice, I think, is that because it's so good along the way, you don't have to go the whole way.

Buddhism offers a whole path. But it's not necessary to go whole path. It's just necessary to discover how good it is to be present, here and now. And to really feel a satisfaction of this moment and really feel connected to here, not be agitated about where you're going, what you're getting the then you've stopped the boat. But if you can really be content and settled in mind In some deep way here, then it's onward leading through the water. And if the if the boat takes you to the bowl you kept not allowed to mix metaphors are you then and then he's great. And if it doesn't, it's been a great trip. It's been a great, great adventure a great life. So, to be a quantum s with this moment, and then discover what this moment has to offer. So those are my thoughts and kind of I hope they were okay it's suddenly lose the sound. They go down Yeah, I think okay, but you can turn it up again now I think. So you can so anyway, so that was my thoughts and just what what I had to say coming from a retreat. I hope that was okay. Hopefully I wasn't too calm to economists. And I was going to tell a story. I forgot but I have five minutes you want to share a little story? equanimity story?

I told them at the retreat for the first talk and equanimity. I told the story equanimity story, the nice story. I think they there was a Zen priest and teacher monk in Japan some 200 years ago named Huck Quinn and somewhat famous Teacher, and he was a village priest. And at the village temple where he lived, and there was a teenager in the village who got pregnant. And the parents realized this, they were upset. And they demanded to know who the father was. And it was, in fact, another teenage teenage boy in the village. But she didn't want it to tell the parents because she didn't want to get the boy in trouble. So she said it's awkward in the village priest. So, when the baby was born, the parent the parents brought the baby tonquin and said, This is yours. And he said in Japanese, ha so deskah which means is that so he took the baby and took care of the baby and Then I'm you can imagine maybe what his reputation what I did to his reputation in the village and what he did to asleep, and all kinds of things. And but he said, Okay, so Is that so? And then after some time the mother decided to tell the parents who the who the real father was. So she did and then the parents came to mcweeny said, there's been a mistake, we're sorry. We'd like the baby back. And so hakuin said, Oh, is that so? And he did. So, is that so? is an equanimity phrase? Would that be a useful phrase for you to carry in your back pocket? You leave today and you look for your car and you have a flat tire? Who is that? So? We try it Is that so? You're on. You go home today and electricity is still off or it's turned off? Is that so? As opposed to Oh? Which would you rather live by rather live with? Oh? Or would you rather live with Is that so? Oh, is that so? Okay? I'll live with this I'll take care of this baby, oh, baby, every flat tire or the baby have no electricity, whatever it might be. So you might try that this week, think about equanimity. And just kind of as a little experiment, just try to keep that maybe write it on notes or something carried with you or, you know, write it in the palm of your hand Is that so? And then use it whenever you remember to use it, and see what that does for you. Does that change your perspective what's happening or change how you are and what's available to you? That's so and if you want to do it in Japanese it's they add this so this for the first was not a word. It's more like a kind of like an English it's but I like to think of it as wow they say ah ah and how you how you say that in Japanese a world of meanings. Ah is a very well so discuss so in English we could maybe you want to try wow Is that so? I like while because it's kind of like mixing more exciting. Ah, Disco, disco, Disco, disco. So you are now preparing For the next power outage Thank you