

2019-12-30 2020 Vision

Tue, 8/11 12:39PM • 39:50

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, person, meditation, protect, mindfulness, world, harming, lake, vision, meditation practice, destroying, stop, carrot, judgments, buddha, life, big, harmless, wonderful, externally

SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

Good evening. Last Monday of 2019 2019 and feels a little bit kind of significant for me, maybe for you as well. And one of the things that I'm kind of delighting in is this number 2020. That's coming our way in a few days. The I'm sure it's I haven't heard anybody else talking about this, but I'm sure lots of people must be thinking this. That 2020 s means kind of perfect vision.

The and so I think of with that kind of name 2020 that is the perfect year for Vipassana for mindfulness. Because the task of mindfulness is to see clearly, and to have 2020 vision, and that delight in this, the way these four numbers appear together are like this, like the two zeros. Sometimes I think of them as eyes that see, and sometimes I think of the spectacles to see, you know, two glasses to it two lenses of a glass. And, and zero is, you know, empty in the middle. And so it's clear, so we can see clearly, and that one of the tasks that we have is to always, despite most practitioners, is to see clearly and, and what does it mean to see clearly, I think what it means is to not obscure our mind's eye to them, the ability for our mind To see what's happening, to be able to see without things being obscured or being misperceived. The other day, there was a piece of cloth orange cloth that was kind of rolled up, like a little roll, like a tube or something, just sitting kind of somehow on the side, you know, but you know, I don't know 100 to 200 degrees to the side of me, and just kind of just kind of my eyes just kind of glance past it. And for a moment, I saw carrot. And I really saw a carrot in my mind's eye. And then, you know, shouldn't be carrot there on the side, you know, in the living room metal table. So I looked down and I saw clearly, I saw that it was just this little orange cloth that was rolled up and my eyes head take just very quickly picked up that pieces of that orange pieces of that shape, not the whole thing and had constructed in my mind, the carrot. I do this regularly, enough movement that regularly I've done it maybe I bet I'd done it four or five times this year when I go walking up here in the hills on the trails. And there's a, these tree branches that are kind of come up out of the trail a little bit and they're kind of you know, Snake shaped, and about the size of a snake body or something. And probably four or five times this last year I saw a snake. And then when I saw clearly I stopped to look, then there was no more snake and there was just this little roots of the tree that we're finding its way in the trail. So to see clearly means that we really take a good luck. We really take a second look a third look really stop to look and see what's going on. And you know, it's kind of cute. Maybe that's when it's a, you know, see orange cloth to be a carrot. Or maybe it's not quite as cute to see. Roots being snakes. But But we do this kind of thing in our mind all the time, where we take in just a little bit of data, and we've come to a quick conclusion, the terrible things we do that for people, and we don't really stop to take the person in, but we have, you know, sometimes we have preconceived ideas, preconceived bias, preconceived judgments, people that are those kinds of people, whatever it might be. And I heard a presentation the fall of an implicit bias, and they use the example that's so common with the person who did the talk. I use the example of old people and younger people and they did some Way of offering some kind of tests to people and, and it turned out that there was implicit bias against older people, younger people

preferred some ways and whatever the testing was, but that implicit bias was equally true for older people as it was for younger people.

They had it as well just kind of built in there. And it kind of was, you know, sort of a surprise that, but it seems like everyone, you know, as a generalization kind of does it. And so we do it to people from all kinds of ways we do it. So to stop and really take the time to see someone. And I think it's a wonderful thing, to stop long enough to really try to see someone to really take the time to take them in. Take the time to have clear seeing. Take the time to kind of be able to take your time and see them without the preconceived ideas or the judgments or the quick kind of impressions you have, but what do we, you know, what can we look and see another person when we see them clearly, who may have 20/20 vision. And I think we see their beauty. Just like we see with our mind's eye and the kind of seeing, I'm talking about the inside our ability to perceive. We're also kind of tuning in and seeing that person's inner life a little bit. We're tuning in and notice knowing this is a human being who has had, who was born grew up with, certainly, hopefully had joys but probably had lots of trials and challenges. Maybe this is a person who sat in a infant chair and dining room table with their parents, caring for them and feeding them and just delighting that they were there and just loving them for who they were, that this was a person who probably had challenges going through puberty and teenagehood and into adulthood and sometimes life is really hard for people. And I once took a workshop from Steven Levine on death and dying and in the courtyard before it started, all these people were milling around with a brace waiting to go in. And, and they were all if you allow me to just say this just for the purpose of the talk, they were all completely normal people, whatever that is, and just like, you know, everyday normal people, you know, and then we went into the workshop. And personal after person stood up, Stephen, the line was a brilliant interaction. He was he did. He was a pioneer in the whole death and dying movement United States and, and he would do these phenomenal workshops. And people still stand up one after the other and talk about their grief that they had or their condition they had. They just lost a child or they just been diagnosed with cancer, they were dying. All this stuff was coming. And I kept looking, my eyes got wider and wider. But these are normal people. You know, the normal people don't have those things. And so I was really young. So maybe you'll excuse me for having such a naive thing. But it was kind of eye opening for me. And after that I don't take people for granted anymore. I don't think of people as being normal in the way I thought before. Now I think there's depth in people, the real depth of life of life experience of situations of challenges and things that they have in their lives. So what is it like to stop and see clearly, that sees the person in kind of some fuller humanity of who they are. So that enough so that we can respect them enough so that we can care for them or appreciate them and value them? We need we have a world where a tremendous number of people are underappreciated, undervalued, under respected. And to see clearly to see others clearly is to respect them to see them stop long enough to see them. So that's one of the things that clear seeing means. Another thing that clear seeing we put on the Vipassana mindfulness glasses to see clearly and you clean the lens. So it's really clear and you see well through, there's no obscurations How about seeing yourself? Can you turn around and see yourself clearly? And that's one of the things we do in mindfulness. We stopped really take a look and see, you know, hear what's here. happened here. Today I was talking with someone and he said something like,

you know, kind of a little bit diminishing his value and in relation to other people and said that he was like a little pipsqueak or something, some language like that. And it was kind of painful to hear it. And, and in the conversate in that pipe my role in the conversation I was in a position where it felt appropriate to say that, that that's that's not a there's no need for that. Your job is to not be squeak Your job is to stand up, stand tall and, and hold your ground and these people that he was kind of diminishing himself in relationship to really look them right in the eye and stand equal and be present in a strong way. And so the CFC when self is less than other people seeing diminishing oneself and feel

feeling embarrassed or apologetic or feel like we're not adequate? Is that really seeing yourself clearly? Or is that obscurations? Is that kind of your personal equivalent of seeing the carrot? When it's a cloth next to you? Do we kind of have these quick judgments? And because when the person said it, we came out of the mouth so quickly, it was like, you know, it's like, almost like a passing statement. That wasn't really supposed to be that important. But I thought that was the most important part of the conversation that he would see himself that way. So to stop and have clear seeing of oneself, so these judgments, these negative criticism, critical ways of seeing ourselves maybe are not there. And can we see the full humanity of ourselves? And that's a very important task of Buddhist meditation is to in some languages in western Language and English, sometimes we say being Whole becoming whole, in the ancient language, the language was unification. The modern language, sometimes we call it integration. But a call gotta wait for us in there or echod are these two wonderful words that relate to meditation practice have to do with bring coming into some kind of wholeness into a oneness, all the different parts of ourselves. So, meditation is meant to do that, not to divide ourselves to bring everything whole. There's so many ways we're divided against these ourselves or we're fragmented by our thoughts or concerns preoccupations by our emotions or feelings or trauma we carry in our body. And the wonderful, really inspiring image for meditation practice comes from concentration, the similes for concentration. And that is that if you imagine and up Beautiful, beautiful lake and, and the water is refreshing and cool and wonderful. Maybe and there's no streams that come into the lake and no rain that comes into the rain thank the only way the lake is refreshed is an underground spring in the middle of the lake that that's the water flows out from this underground spring up into the lake and it flows like a fountain you know if you could see it you'd see like just like a fountain you know just kind of go up and spread out and, and fills the lake with this wonderful water and study of filling the lake fully. So no part of the lake is not refreshed by this water. So the lake becomes complete. There's no kind of dead spots in the lake or there's no walls in the lake. It's all kind of flows everywhere. Is the image for meditation to sit and allow The whole kind of flow of vitality of life of presence, kind of flow throughout our whole body. That cannot happen if we're too much in our head, trying to be up in the control tower meditating. Or if we're in the control tower judging, if we're in the control tower, you know, fighting the control tower, or if you know, if we're in a conflict with what goes on, to become hold, you can't be in conflict. To be whole, you can't be distracted.

You can't be drifting off into the future or the past or something. And say that meditation is just to really see oneself clearly. Is this process of becoming whole being unified or complete? And then can you respect yourself Do you see yourself? So how do you see yourself so you can become whole? How do you see your full humanity That's kind of the task of meditation practice. And so how do we stop and take a good look at ourselves? So this idea of having glasses, clear seeing, the two examples I gave is to look out into the world and to look in towards oneself and to be able to see clearly without reactivity with equanimity, with without our judgments and ideas, and also without the without the obscurations the cloudiness that happens by emotional reactivity. And if we're going to go into 2020 that I'm kind of hopeful for 2020 I feel very good about it because of this wonderful name. Hope is more than that. But I kind of expect good things in 2020 and but in for that to happen. We really have to Have people who see clearly and we have to see what's happening with the environment, the global environment, climate change, we have to see what's going on with the hate in our country and maybe around the world, we have to see clearly what's going on with the violence and racism and economic inequality and the, the rhetoric that's used in politics, which is so awful these days. And, and, you know, just so many things that we can see that are going on, that can give rise to emotional reactivity, anger, despair, grief, fear, all kinds of things. And when we have those, those emotions are nothing wrong inherently in having those except they do obscure the vision, or they can obscure the vision to sit and behold, even with those feelings, so those feelings don't have the upper hand. And those feelings don't get in the way of our ability to see clearly. And this is the metaphor of also of sitting in meditation, and sitting still and

upright. Really being still. in meditation, we're learning the lesson of how to be present. without picking up anything getting involved with anything pushing anything away. We're sitting still in the middle of being home, we become the lake in which the underwater spring could kind of flow through it. And so we can see clearly. And I think if there's going to be some hope for this world of ours, in 2020, and we need a lot of people who are seeing clearly have learned to do that, to see what's going on and become wise with that. So this idea of looking outward and looking inward and when do we look outward when do we look inward? meditation time is a great time for looking inward. The rest of the time, maybe it's 5050. I kind of like the 5050 idea that we're constantly. There's one idea that you have to we have two eyes, one to look in and went to look out. And, and so to this idea of a balanced, looking at the inner universe, and being familiar with it and being wise and knowledgeable about it, and looking at the outer universe, and becoming knowledgeable about learning about it, for me, that he of stopping to look clearly when we look into the world, is to take time to learn what's out there. If something has really arouse your interest or your reactivity or you're upset about something, your curiosity about something, take time to learn about it. You can learn a lot nowadays with the web without spending a lot of time. The

I had a long conversation with someone over this last few days about a particular politician. And, and so I got curious, this little bit alarmed by this person. And so I might, I went to see the person's Wikipedia page. And it wasn't a famous politician, but I was surprised how long the entry was. And it was a quick way of learning a whole bunch. And, and that's one that was one way of using this ability to stop and see, when we talk about what's going on in the world. It's not enough just to be silent mindfulness people. That's not clear seeing. It's also good to clear see we have take a time sometimes learn and look under the surface and look beyond what's on the surface. Just like when we stop and get to know a person. It takes time, to take to get to To get to know them and really stop and look at them get to get take them in their full humanity to get the full is probably no such word globality, the full globality of this globe. The wholeness of this world. It takes a little bit of research. You know, if you if you just read the headlines of the news have just read the first paragraph. So the news, just read the, what's you know, the top articles in the news, you don't learn that much. It's not a really cheap way to see. So there's a wonderful little story in the ancient world and the Buddha. There is this king named serenity, and his wife mollica. And presentity asks his wife that India story has a little bit more pizzazz. If you think of him as being rather arrogant. So in that arrogance, he asks his wife, Hootie, hoo, dear, who do you hold as being most dear? And probably in his arrogance, he's expecting her like everyone else in the kingdom, as opposed to well, you, dear. You know who the king is the most dear person. So he asked me well, Queen, who do you hold most dear? And she said, I hold myself most dear. And because she was kind of smart, she then maybe she saw the eyebrows go up. She, she said to him, and who do you hold this most dear? And he said, while I hold myself most dear, which maybe is not a surprise for someone who's arrogant. So then, but this was this conversation apparently was significant enough that the king went to see the Buddha. They were kind of they known each other their same age. They'd known each other for a long time and so they King often consulted with the Buddha Apparently and so he came to talk to the Buddha and explained this little story What happened? And, and probably because he maybe didn't agree with it. And the Buddha said, Oh ma the Queen moloko is right. Each person holds themselves here last year. And I love that little story that we hold ourselves dear. But is that enough? How do we hope but if we hold other people dear as well, we stop and use our clear seeing to see other people. So there's a different story that it's, it's kind of nice for you to know if you haven't heard this if you have to think about different ways in which you can apply the story and different ways in which this little teaching apply mean is as meaningful. So the story is, in ancient India, there were these two acrobats As the Acrobat and the acrobats apprentice that says and they were they've gone public and do these acrobatic tricks for donations. And so the master Acrobat says the apprentice let's go and do our, our show. And while they do it, you watch over me and I'll watch over you. You protect me and

I'll protect you. And the apprentice says, No. You watch over yourself, and I'll watch over myself. And that way, we'll be safe. And so again, that that someone went to the Buddha and said, they said, had this conversation, this little disagreement about how they should do the acrobats. And the Buddha said, No, no, that apprentice is right. That you should watch over yourself. And that way you protect the others. That's what he said in the pros. And then he made a verse Where he said this

protecting oneself. One protects others. Protecting others, one protects oneself. So you start by protecting yourself. And if you do that you will protect others. So that's the kind of CO on that's the, that's the kind of the task of the poem to understand. How does that work? And if you're protecting others, then you will protect yourself. So it goes together. So the wonderful mutuality that goes on. So protecting oneself from protects others, protecting others, one protects oneself, and how does one protecting oneself protect others? By the repeated and frequent practice of mindfulness? And how does one and protecting others protect oneself? By patience and forbearance by a non violent and harmless life by loving kindness and compassion so we protect ourselves by being mindful. But in doing that we protect others. How does that work? If you protect yourself, you're really protecting yourself against yourself. That's the whole thing. If, if you get, you know, really, really upset by something that's happened. You're harming yourself in some way. If you get filled with greed, really full of lust or something for something, you're harming yourself. If you have hatred, you, you're harming yourself. And so there's ways in which you stop and take a look and really see what's going internally. You'll notice you'll become very sensitive to the ways in which your minds activities is harming yourself. You'll feel feel the pain of it. Some people don't feel their pet the pain of it. They're so externally focused, for example, people of hate or an angry that, and maybe they're, you know that they don't really stop and take a real deep look and see what's really happening deep inside what's going on for themselves. I've known people who have people come and told me about having anger or resentment towards others for years and years and years. And then at some point, realizing that the other person probably has forgotten who they are. And the only person who's being harmed is themselves by carrying on the resentment. And these particular people, it was naturalization that allowed them to put down the resentment when they realized how much they were harming themselves in that way. And so if you're mindful you start seeing what you're doing in your mind. Seeing how you're what you're doing, that's harmful. I did. I did. I did a wonderful thing. I have one that was wonderful. It was wonderful conversation. But it was kind of was a little bit unique. I've never been, believe it or not in an Uber or Lyft. Until this weekend, I was with someone. And so we got in. And so I like to tip in the front these things in your taxi taxis and stuff and talk to the people who are driving and. And so, for example, I said, Oh, I told them this is my first time I've ever been in Uber. And then people I was with in the backseat said, Gil, it's a lift.

So the driver asked, and what do you do to me? And I said, I'm a meditation teacher. And he said, Oh, I used meditation because I had an addiction to marijuana. And I use meditation to overcome it. And it really made a big difference. I started to meditate. And I started to see how I was thinking. And I saw that my thinking was all wrong. And so I changed my thinking. Isn't that cool? So this is how we protect ourselves through mindfulness, we see what's going on in there. And we start relating to it differently, we start doing it differently. But how does that protect others? The things that when we harm ourselves, those are forces inside of us. They're the same forces that harm other people. The forces that harm other people that we have inside of us, is simultaneously harming ourselves. So if we have mindfulness and really pay attention to what's going on here, you're not going to want to do that much longer. You'll want to change and the very forces of harming other people is not something you want to keep doing. You will protect your other people protect other people, and who are you protecting them from in the story? you're protecting them from you. And that's quite significant. So then it goes on, and how does one in protecting others protect oneself? By patience and forbearance by a non violent and harmless

life by loving kindness and compassion, by patience and forbearance? So this is when you know you don't give into resentment and anger. I think that's the main purpose of patience and forbearance is to not give in to anger, frustration, irritation, you know, in ways of spillover that causes more harm to yourself or to other people. And then, to be non violent than harmless. People feel that you're harmless when I was in my 20s Someone challenged me to a fistfight. And then you know, the person was pretty serious. And, and I wouldn't recommend this as the obvious solution then. But I wasn't planning to be in a fight. But there I was. And so what? what I did, there wasn't premeditated what I did was I dropped onto one knee and open my arms really wide looked up at the person said, I can't fight. So, I put myself in a pretty vulnerable space, right? I mean, I and person who got furious, spun around and walked away. So, you know, I, I protected myself by not willing to fight to be harmless. So there's probably a lot better stories than that be told. But that was my story. By non violent and harmless life, by loving kindness and compassion, be friendly, Be kind, be compassionate. People tend to tend to respond to you much better. There's no guarantee, of course, but people tend to. So if you're protecting others in this way, then they'll tend to protect you and treat you well. So this mutuality is coming around and around. So this ability to see clearly, and really think of the seeing clearly 20 vision, being both internally and externally. And this said, this is also true at this global level, with our environment that we live in. If we don't see what we're doing to the environment, then we'll keep destroying the very thing that supports our life. If we cherish our Life, then we want to cherish that which supports our life. To see ourselves clearly, to see the world clearly, I think is to start living a different life. To see that consumerism, for example, as an ism, it's not going to work. We can't have a planet of getting close to 8 billion people. And everyone having the lifestyle that those of us in this country, on the average, have, it's not gonna work.

And we can't have an economy that's built on more and more consumerism is just not gonna work. It might work for another year or two years or 10 years. I don't know how long but the amount of destruction is going on. environmental destruction is just phenomenal. The scale of it is finished. nominal. So we're destroying. I grew up with in the Adriatic coast. And I used to spend vacations and coastline of Yugoslavia. Becca was a communist country. Beautiful, beautiful islands. beautiful coastline. Partly so beautiful because with all Stark rock, no trees 2000 years ago, all those islands were forested and they were deforested. And then the soil washed away, and now nothing grows there. And this, this movement of humans destroying an ecosystem has been going on for probably two or 3000 years. People say Where people over farm people destroy the trees, people do various things over water over use of water, and then destroy the very environment in which the humans were living in. This has been going on for a long time. It's not a new thing or theoretical thing. It's just a scale of it. So big. The first time I heard this was I snuck away from high school in I don't know when it was 1969, maybe 1970 and Richard Leakey was giving a talk at the university there near my high school. Richard Leakey was a very famous archaeologists anthropologist, who I was, I think he was the one who discovered Lucy I think so earliest human. So he's very famous back then and an archaeologist, anthropologist. So he's giving a talk at the university and he's In 1969, so that 250 years ago, he said in the natural world, animal world, that animals that over specialize, become extinct. And I think the example he used was like big metal things matter Dark Matter Jones, matte mammoth, big elephants, you know, they had these really talked about I forget exactly what animal was, but has really, really, really big tusks. And these tusks are so big, they became so cumbersome, they couldn't really protect themselves anymore. They couldn't really function very well. And so they went extinct. That was the exact something some example like that but 50 years ago and you know, isolated as a teenager, I didn't know what to make of it. That sounds like an interesting theory. But over specializing over using so how do we with our 20 20 vision, how do we see that? And the Buddhist way of seeing is that there's a mutuality, protecting others, we protect ourselves, protecting ourselves who protect others, protecting the world, we protect ourselves, protecting ourselves, we protect the world. ideas, look around and

around. And one of the ways if you protect yourself, turn your mindfulness inward, is you see the pain, the suffering that comes with over emphasis on consumerism, on well on things and acquisitions. You know, there's all these ways in which we want more and more and more all these ways. We're not paying attention to the impact we have. And if we see the suffering, that the dissatisfaction of that lifestyle and we'll Want to live a different way. And then the Buddhist idea of renunciation is not a diminishment of ourselves, but rather an enhancement. Remember that meditation is to make ourselves whole. Make yourselves unified, to make ourselves from the inside out wealthy, to make us feel really like brus, deeply contented and happy and delighted and filled with well being. Without searching for well being externally, buy things and people and experiences, but you really have it inside. imagined imagine to be wealthy spiritually,

and not to need then satisfaction from things, experiences and things out on the world to be a certain way, then it's a lot easier to renounce things of the world and to live a lifestyle that doesn't harm the world so much. That doesn't really In the exploitation of other workers around the world, and to take really into the world, see clearly what's going on out there, take that time to learn what's happening in the world and care for that, that which supports us, then we can then will care for that. And that in turn supports us. If we let consumerism, the ISM of consumerism, and economic growth and all the greed that involve that involves to keep kind of barreling along, destroying more and more of the planet. Guess Who else is going to be destroyed in the process, or over a specialization of our life will end up in the same place as the woolly mammoths and the dinosaurs, and the dodo birds, all these things that the now extinct so 2020 vision is a great thing. And maybe as we go into this next year, we'll be reminded probably every day 2020. And, and, and maybe instead of writing the date, you know, one 120 maybe we should all like one 120 20 just to be reminded over and over. Let's look clearly, let's see clearly. And let's have a vision. Let's have a vision of a better world that we can live in. So, best wishes for the New Year's and I hope you keep your glasses clean.