So I want to thank you, for those of you who are, who are here listening, both live and perhaps are going to be listening to this after the fact and the recording. And I think what I'll do today is continue with a theme that I started last week last Sunday. But now I'll probably find some way of relating it to our new situation that we now that we have this COVID-19 kind of the event, the experience, the concern for it right in the middle of our lives, and probably many of you as well, that it's something that you're thinking about, especially those of you who might be living in places that are now quarantined areas or where there's, you know, requests for all kinds of limitations in our lives and or your self imposed ideas of being careful and staying home more, but also for everyone who's concerned about it and I talked about the topic may be in relationship to that. The current virus and things that for those of you don't feel it directly relates to you or listen to this long in the future, you can probably relatively simply apply it to something else in your life some other situation is comparable, because the, the COVID 19 virus is just representative, important representative of the human condition and the dangers that are inherent in human conditions, the risks and that we're always going to be encountering sooner or later, every single one of us with sickness, old age and death and, and natural disasters and social change and all kinds of things that we can expect to come along with as human life. And, and so Buddhist practice is not meant to help us avoid these things and just be protected in our own little isolated practice. With rather Buddhist practices, I would like to suggest is meant to make us walk Eyes, in the midst of all that, and so that we carry with us a degree of peacefulness, wisdom, presence of mind, mindfulness, that we become agents of benefit for the world that we become the kind of person who is able to have the non anxious presence that is reassuring for their people and supports other people from not getting swept up in their anxieties and fears and creeds and all the things that actually makes life much more difficult for individuals and for society. And so, what we learn what we're facing and practicing with with the COVID-19 is really the very thing I like to say that Buddhist practice was designed to address and really take seriously and find a way that that is for the betterment and benefit of everyone. So the topic that I started last week is the five faculties of faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. And I referred last week to them as, as the five divine faculties.
qualities or faculties or the five divinities, I think I said, and the reason to give them that name is that the Pali word for them is India, coming from the name of the Indian God, the Buddhist time of the Buddha, the, the ruler of the gods back in his time. And so it was Indra. And Indra was considered to be a friend of humans and protector of humans, and, and also a friend of the Buddha, apparently, and so it's meant to be thought of as a friendly supportive person, being or entity that also it has certain kind of controlling powers a ruler of the gods. And so this idea of that which controls or rules or guides our lives, that which protects our lives, that which is our friend, is applied to these five human capacities that everyone has. And that to engage and utilize these capacities in a way that they are the ones that really kind of protect us, maybe guide us in a certain way, and, and become our internal friends for living a wise and good life. And then we carry those with us at all times. And I think what's profound about this is that these are considered the faculties that come alive, and they're not identified as being me myself and mine is not the normal way in which we identify this is who I am. In fact, the idea is not to take these as being my identity. This defines who I am, but rather to be faculties that we have that are almost like an alternative to basing our lives in some narrow way, on any kind of category of identification that human beings take, whether it's appropriate, identification healthy, or whether it's unhealthy identification that people do, that there is something else that supports us. And that also, not coincidentally, our universal human capacities, something we all share, and can really identify and see and each other and support each other and, and really, at the same time maybe also be inspired by each other, when these are going well and strong. Now, in talking about this inter and especially with this the era of the COVID-19 virus, it occurs to me that it's a kind of a useful distinction, you know, tentative distinction to make between as a human being, being a consumer and being a producer that some people lived their life more from the sense of being a consumer, as a recipient, and one version extreme version of that dictum of life. And so it's all about acquiring things, acquiring experiences, acquiring friendships, acquiring all kinds of social kind of niceties from the world around us. And it's all in some sense all about acquiring, having its things. And, and certainly, we can be actively involved in going out to acquire those things. But it's still about what the world can provide me. The other kind of end of that spectrum is to be a producer of our experience producer of what's important for us. So rather than thinking that it's about the world, providing us with what we need, it's about us being the producer in a sense of what we need, the producer of not necessarily the food we eat, enough material comforts and many of the things we need, but there's something very profound That we can be the producer from ourselves. So that rather than waiting for people to be our friends, we're the producer of friendship. And we go out into the world to be friends to others be kind or supportive of others. rather than waiting for someone to love us we love rather than waiting for someone to be generous to us, we're the one who's generous, in a sense, where they were the producer, where they were the actor of the very thing that some people want to receive from the world, we actually take the initiative to allow that to develop and grow in us. From a Buddhist point of view, this is a this a related but not to comp not equal distinction between doing things which are unwholesome and doing things which are wholesome. And we let go of what's unwholesome and unhelpful, and we're engaged in producing in evoking that which is wholesome, that which Good that which is healthy for us and the world around us. And there is a kind of active engagement in something and doing things. Now when there's something happening in the world like this COVID
virus, that it's very easy to be afraid. And it's reasonable to have some fear. And I'm not going to be little or anybody's fear around this or to say that anyone's wrong for being afraid. But the question is, how do we relate to both? This condition? What's happening or society now? With the risks involved with the virus? And with our fear with it? Are we a consumer or a producer? Are we a victim? Or are we the supporter or the helper for for ourselves in the world, it's easy with fear and extreme fear to collapse into the fear. It's easy to have performed some kind of identity around fear about that involves some degree of self pity or self harm. CERN are a sense of helplessness or hopelessness, that we collapse into and feel like someone is out there supposed to take care of us someone's bent, he's needs to know what to do, the government or someone something, and that I can't do anything I have to just hunker down and, and hide and, and do I don't know all kinds of kind of versions of being a consumer I'm calling today consumer. And, but instead of letting the fear be something we collapse into, or let the fear be the motivating influence or the primary influence on what motivates us our decisions, how we see the world and how we live in the world. It's possible through this, to do to engage in other motivation and other source inside of us was which which is the basis for our decisions the way we are in the world and our motivations and to switch from something like fear we Which can be debilitating, to actively engaging. Some other approach to being in the world from inside of ourselves is a big part of what Buddhist practice is, especially when we begin it. And one of the simple things for practitioners is that we could come from a place of practice, we can have faith, the first of the five faculties, first of the five divine qualities, we can have strong confidence, that that there is another way of living. There is a way of living where we don't collapse into fear or debilitated by fear or get into fear or, or there is another way of living, other sources of motivation. So that even if we're afraid, we're really choosing to fine to look forward to reflect about and act on other motivations, hopefully motivations which are wise and good and really supportive of us. So for example, motivation to practice with fear so that we don't collapse in it, so that we relate to it in a wise way. That is an alternative to being with fear and to have confidence that that's worthwhile to have confidence that somehow being mindful and using the mindfulness to kind of pull ourselves out of from the collapse, sitting up straight being wise and finding some other way of relating to it, to be free of it to be equanimous, to be nonreactive. To be not to find other sources of motivation besides that, which is influenced by fear that is involved and that's to practice with it. And to engage in practice with it is now Where are the producer where the agent of change rather than the victim of the change that happens, and so to have faith that there isn't Another possibility, then being swept up in desire and greed swept up in hate and hostility and blame, swept up in in fear and terror and panic about these things. But but to find another way. One of the reasons through that is that most human beings are much wiser about and more capable of engaging and in responding to the dangers of our world, if they're calm and wise and reflective and can think and not blinded by fear and panic and all that. And I certainly I know that in my life, I bet I've made mistakes, where I got caught up in fear and then in a hurry, decided to do something that later I regretted that it was necessary or even caused harm. Because I came to a quick decision and acted on the fear rather than, you know, being calm and I I've had some experience and I've known some dramatic stories from friends of mine, who were able in dangerous situations to remain calm. And To their surprise, novel responses, very creative responses to it arose inside that diffused or saved them from the danger that they were in, because they were able to stay calm and
present for the experience. So, you know, we kept, of course, some of us will be afraid all kinds of situations, how do we avoid letting the fear be what, you know, motivates how we live without diminished without demeaning the fear or denying the fear is an important part of this practice. And it begins by having faith that it's worthwhile to do that. having confidence that there is another way to live and to start moving into this other way. It could be making decision to be making a decision, a clear decision, that how I want to live my life, how I want to orient My life is from mindfulness to really be mindful and present and calm in the midst of whatever difficulties that I have. It could be deciding to base one's life on compassion or care for oneself and others, rather than based on greed or fear, anger or blame, to really, really make this a central focus like this is worthwhile. This is how I want to live. And then to have real faith in that this is worthwhile. I don't want to live in a world that's defined by my fear, my anger, my greed, I want to live in a world that's defined the world that I live in that I see and that I understand, through the lens through the eyes of my compassion through the eyes of my wisdom and calm and mindfulness, my acronym it my care for people, my friendliness. So to have faith in that, to have confidence in that, that even conviction like this is what is important. It's hard to it's very, can be very hard to come to that kind of faith because of the power of these other forces in us. Power of fear, the power of greed, the power of hate, the power of blame, the power of envy, the power of, you know, all these kinds of things that live in human beings as part of our human nature as well. And so the first faculty takes a while to develop takes a while to really, really feel confident that yes, there is another way. And this is the way I want to live. And I'll do what it takes to try to grow into that. It's not an all or nothing, but we do it maybe in small steps, some of us and we slowly grow and develop yet this is the direction I want to go. For some people, it might be that the only time this really gets enacted, is when they sit down to meditate. Like in meditation they understand clearly This is a time where I'm not going to slip into my fear is the time I'm going to breathe deeply. I'm going to relax, breathe through it, I'm going to find a stability, inner strength, and equanimity, so that the fear doesn't get the upper hand. So once we have that confidence, then there's the second of the five divine qualities that we all have, which is viriya. And viriya is usually translated into English as effort or energy. It's a powerful word in Indian languages. It kind of means like, heroic efforts, strong effort, and I was told recently that in modern Indian languages, the shortening of viriya as V iR Vir means soldier. And this doesn't mean that we have to be now you know, you know Samurai soldiers who go out and you know, into our life but it does point to the idea that sometimes it's appropriate to engage a certain kind of bravery or certain kind of determination or really kind of make a kind of strong effort to in practice, and you know, an ordinary meditation maybe whenever everything's Life Life is good that they have this message that to be heroic or be like a warrior little bit might seem overdone, it's easy to misunderstand it and to get tense and strive and unhelpful ways. But in this current climate, where there's a lot of fear around this virus and knowing even knowing how to work and how to be and is it safe to, you know, the other day someone lovingly didn't even want to do an elbow tap for me. Usually someone I would hug but with our shoes, Get a heel tap. You know, that was lovely. You know, it was kind of nice. It was kind of fun once and but, you know, the you know, but so in this kind of climate we're working, you know, it's fear can be big that that discussion about, you know, brave effort is relevant. You know, it's, we have very strong forces inside of us, and to have the braveness and the courage or the confidence. Yes, I'm going to practice with this no matter what, I'm not going to keep
succumbing to the anger, I'm not going to keep succumbing to my fear. Again, I can't help to keep 
underscoring This does not mean that we deny the fear or push it away. We take it into account. We 
simply don't put it center stage to be the motivating force for us. And binstead heroically was a 
strength with conviction. I am I'm going to really base my life on something which may be not even not 
even popular in the people, my friendship, my circles. And that is, I'm going to put my faith in a 
quantum mist presence to be calm presence from the middle of my experience, I'm going to put my 
faith in really being mindful of this, to pause just to long enough to really look and see and recognize 
what it is, rather than going automatically into the expected behavior of anxiety of worry of, of anger of 
complaining or you know, all kinds of things that people do. And, and that takes effort to do that to 
make that decision. It's not just something we do, sitting watching TV. It's something that we you know, 
and kind of becoming passive, that there's some there's an active quality. That's why I use for today at 
least 10 you know, provisionally this idea of we become a producer of effort of engagement. How do 
we do this And even in meditation, we have to make the effort to sit down to meditate. For some 
people that's heroic, to figure out how to do that in their lives. There has to be strong conviction. And 
we make and takes a lot of effort to sit down and sit up straight and really be here. And, and then once 
we do that, once we're there, then we have to know once I'm here, that particular effort, we don't have 
to keep making the effort to get to the cushion to this chair. And so now, what's the effort? It's needed 
now? And one of the forms of effort is mindfulness, awareness, the third of these divine qualities. And 
now, you know, learning what mindfulness is, is that, I think, at least for me, a lifetime endeavor. I 
don't feel like I have come to the end of understanding all the ins and outs all the qualities of 
mindfulness, mindfulness practice in particular. And part of the delight and joy For me of doing this 
practice, is how it keeps opening up. I understand mindfulness, I understand myself being mindful in 
new ways, all the time. And so whatever I say today, please don't take this as the final word or this is 
what the only thing it is. But mindfulness is there is an engagement, there is an effort that's needed for 
mindfulness. Initially, when we sit down to meditate or Newton practice, when the practice is doing has 
a momentum to it, the mindfulness becomes more and more something we allow for and don't, not to 
produce or for, but that's when it has momentum. But when the momentum is not there, we have to do 
a certain kind of effort to evoke it. And we have to do it again. If the mind wanders off, and we have to 
bring it back again. It takes some kind of effort, but what that effort is, is part of the test to discover as 
we do practice meditation practice is kind of a laboratory, where we're discovering what kind of effort 
Do we need in order to be properly mindful. And in the circumstance in the current situation, we're in 
how I am today. And now, there are times when that effort, you know, needs to be maybe stronger, 
strong and fierce. I've had situations where my mind was consumed by anxiety or anger or something 
like that, and I kept being swept away in it. And, and it took a fair amount of effort to keep coming 
back, keep showing up for it to keep showing up for it. And there are there are times where I've made 
too much effort, I was trying too much and I kind of overrode overshot maybe the situation and had to 
learn to kind of not make effort I had to learn to relax and become and just kind of be at ease and let 
go and kind of be much more receptive and allow the experience to come into mindfulness. So it all 
depends on what's going on my mind, you know what I do. But the idea that somehow there is some 
effort involved, even the effort to be receptive and allow the experience to come into awareness has 
some quality of effort, some quality of engagement that we're engaging, and to learn how to do that
engagement that's in harmony with the state that we're in, if we're relaxed, and it's time for receptive, relaxed awareness, how do we engage and come back to that, awaken it, recognize it, so that it's in harmony with the very way that we want to be? One of the things about mindfulness is interesting is all the things that are associated with it all. That's why part of the richness of it, all the beliefs, attitudes that come along with how we're mindful, and it's hard to see how much extra stuff we bring along in our mindfulness. Little attitudes almost subconscious or unconscious attitudes towards it. So for example, if you're sitting quietly, and maybe it's something so simple as the room you're sitting in is warm. And so you're aware of heat in your body. And just, you know, that atmospheric temperature against your skin someplace or against your body someplace. So that warmth you're feeling is a present moment experience. And if you recognize and feel that warmth, you are mindful, you're aware. That's, you know, pretty simple. But based on some of the ways I've practiced in the past, with being mindful of things I've been capable of sitting there and clearly, you know, knowing it's warm, but having all kinds of little subconscious attitudes going along with it like that. I'm not really mindful because I'm being mindful of the wrong thing. That somehow the warm that's not really doesn't really count. But the only thing that counts is really some kind of zeroing in on breathing. And that's what the present moment that really counts or subtle attitude that is, I'm not really doing the practice the way it's supposed to be. I'm not really present. Because I have some unarticulated idea or just a policy idea that if I'm doing mindfulness, it's certainly not the right to mindfulness, not what you know everyone else is doing or what it's really supposed to be like. So I don't know what it's really supposed to be like, but certainly if I'm doing it, I can't be doing it the right way. So even though I'm aware of my warmth, I'm not really aware of it in the right way. And I better know what the right way is. Or I might have this subtle attitude. Yes, I'm aware of the warmth, but I'm supposed to be Really zeroed in. And there's some kind of special kind of way that I really connect to it and really become somehow dramatic and clear. And I get concentrated and it has a clarity to it that's powerful and enlightening. And, and I'm just kind of with it, I don't know quite even know how I'm supposed to connect better with it, it's by certainly has to be with greater clarity than I have now. So I don't know if this speaks to any of you. But this kind of is kind of a little attitude, but maybe there's others evoking ideas for you to reflect on yourself and what you bring along a little bit extra with it all. And maybe a whole other attitude to have this more useful is they headed to that. If it's present moment experience, like the warmth I'm feeling that it's just right, whatever way that I'm experiencing and know it that is being mindful and, and you can maybe even say to yourself, rather than using a mental note of warmth, you can say to yourself as you experienced the warmth, you can say to yourself the word calmly, softly, you can say yes. Just Yes. Yes to the warmth. Oh, yes. This is how it is. As if, of course, this is mindfulness. This is my mindfulness this moment. There's nothing wrong with it. There's is nothing that has been different. I don't have to do this any different. Yes, this is how it is now. Maybe it's a bit vague. The feeling of warmth. Maybe it's no specific place in the body. Maybe it's not as clear as your mindfulness has been in other times. But yes, this is how it is now. Yes. And then come back to this yes to Yes. Rather than some equivalent of No, no, this is not right. Nope. Like Yeah. And then building on that. This Yes, this is how it is now. This is how it's obvious now the experience. It's not like magic key of some subtlety you have to go find, just yes to the experience as it is now, this moment, it might change over time. That yes might help greater clarity that yes, my creative receptivity that allows you to experience it in
deeper way. And, and maybe some of the subtlety becomes more obvious, but we're not sitting there to have this subtlety or to have the clarity. We're sitting there just be yes and aware, to the way where we're, we're aware at this moment. We're there to experience to enjoy to, to really kind of almost like savor almost like value. How it is at this moment. Yes, that for now. It's like this. Yes. For now. It's like this. I don't know what it's gonna be for the next moment. But the next moment will come And then yes to this because now it's like this now it's like this. So, to keep coming back to that mindfulness is a powerful act, to really do it consciously and with some kind of appropriate effort is an alternative to succumbing to fear, succumbing to some of these unhealthy movements that we collapse into or identify with. We are beginning to use an ancient metaphor to blossom be the Lotus that blossoms out of the muddy water. We are stepping back and away from being entangled and caught up in our inner life in a way that’s not useful. We're not denying the inner life. We're just stepping back to see it more clearly. And that makes all the difference. It allows us to begin having a common to have more choice, where we come from, with more choice about the motivations and commitments and values that we feel are most important for us who want to live our life that are an alternative to fear, for example, being caught being motivated by the fear or the anxiety. So then the fourth divine quality inside of us is Samadhi, usually translated into English as concentration, I think of Samadhi can be defined or explained in different ways. But one of the meanings of it is, is when the awareness we have or the present moment is continuous through time. There's a stability and steadiness in the awareness that the awareness begins, starts becoming really sent this. We're kind of beginning to become centered in the awareness through the awareness so the awareness we have starts becoming encompassing or unified or whole, because we're centered in the middle of it, as opposed to example centered in the middle of our thoughts and distractions and preoccupations and stories and our fears that we have. And so the Samadhi is what allows us to really steady centering in the midst of our experience or what we're aware were of, and the develop that steadiness and to settle into it allows over time for all the distractions to kind of settle down, and the capacity for the mind to be at rest. In what's sometimes called one pointedness, to be at rest, at the center of our experience, which might be the breathing might be something else, but really kind of, kind of at home or at ease and unified composed in our experience. And to do that, we have This continuity of wareness over time to be centered in our experience, takes effort takes courage takes commitment takes conviction that it's valuable to do that, that it's valuable to come to whole different radical when somebody is strong or radical different experience of body and mind, then the divided the scattered the fragmented experience of body and mind that can exist in a, you know, when we're over identified with our thoughts and stories and concepts and fears and greed and all that kind of stuff. And what's feels really beautiful about somebody when it gets strong, is that it feels like we're, where there's an integral feeling of wholeness. That net is kind of like now, I'm really whole now I'm really present with all of me in a rich, balanced way. And to come out Have somebody or to carry with us that sense of wholeness into our life is one of the great gifts of, of meditation. Some people will just go identify very strongly that now I'm calm. And that calm is what now I can bring into my life. Other people will have a sense of wholeness and integrity, that they come into the life in a much fuller way that they're really fully present rather than kind of just partially present for what their experiences and Samadhi that fullness allows for this idea of being a producer much more fully. You can bring more of yourself into the production of your life more
of your of who you are into being friendly with people into being compassionate and caring into being a quantum Miss unkind into being wise into kind of living in life in a way that you're an agent for, for living in a world that you want to live. Given that you're happy to live in that you feel like this is a this is a good world. I'm not waiting for the world to be a good world and everyone else has to arrange for it. I'm, I'm actually in certain kind of way, creating my world as I live in it. And then the fifth divine quality is wisdom. And classically in Buddhism, the best fullest forms of wisdom that we can experience and have. The wisest ways in which the mind can operate is a mind that's supported by mindfulness are supported by all four are the first mental faculties are our divine qualities. And, but in particular, it's supported by the wholeness or the fullness or stability, of Samadhi of concentration. There's something about being able to be addressed in ourselves in a calm, full embodied kind of way. That It kind of makes space and room for some of the creative forces of the mind to operate, to really be able to see wisely what's going on in our life. And the greater the wisdom is, the more more we can wisely we can use the choice that we have to make wise choices. The big part of wisdom, the word is translated as wisdom, is, is the discernment to be able to discern where the freedom is, and where the entrapment is the entanglement is. And as we go through our life, moment by moment and the small details of our life and in the big details of our life, where is the freedom now And where's the entrapment? It can be as simple as walking into one's kitchen and saying, where's the freedom now, as I look for something to eat, I'm hungry and perhaps without question, And that discernment that we don't go to the junk food that we might have there. And we realized as I kind of feel gravitated towards the sweets that I've already had plenty of today do feel the entanglement and the loss of, of our stability, loss of our freedom, loss of something as we kind of collapse into that kind of approach. And we can see with discernment with wisdom, where the freedom is, the freedom is to say no to that the freedom is to go get something healthy to eat, I'm hungry, or it could be in the large issues of our life. Whereas the freedom in decision bigger decisions mean it could be for some people, they might have the opportunity to see it, when they are choosing a new job is this job we place where I'm going to the choices I make this is expressed my freedom, or my entanglement with something or my entrapment and some values and ideas and fear The future? Is this really the direction? What I want to support? Or where's the freedom? And what is it? What are the values I want to live by and go by. So then it comes full circle. Because once we have the wisdom and the discernment, we can see better our values and the basis we want to live by the commitments we want to live by what's most important for us, but we want to orient ourselves around. And then we come back to faith. We can then have a lot of faith in what we now duly discover for ourselves. And then we have her with a faith we apply effort with effort, there's more greater mindfulness. With mindfulness grows, there's greater Samadhi with somebody there's then greater wisdom and it's a wonderful spiral that goes that you know, develops and develops over time until these five faculties really become powerful forces inside of us that, you know, have their own momentum. And we feel that we're supported by them, and they're guiding us. And it's not really something we have to actively engage in, but more allow for. And at that point in Buddhism, they're called something different. They're no longer called the five injury as the five divine qualities, but they're called the five powers, and that we've kind of awoken these powers that exist within us. And even though they're powers within us, they're still not something that we identify as being mine. They're certainly within us in part of who we are, but they're not to define what we are. It's
very clear with the growing power of wisdom, that we that that movement towards excessive identify, that that identification is entangled with identity is not a movement towards freedom, and that the movement towards freedom is to disengage. Angle ourselves from being trapped in identity and being defined by identity. So kind of like no longer being defined by what defines us. Isn't that kind of an entry? I think that's interesting idea. So the five divine qualities, how do they relate to a life that has inherent danger and it's become abundantly clear right now around the globe. In this now, I would say, kind of a shared experience for anyone who's connected to the news, who's aware of what's going on, that the whole globe is, is being thinking about and being concerned with the same thing, particular virus called COVID-19. And, and the fact that we all share this particular concern and interest gives a whole new new opportunity to us A whole new motivation perhaps, for becoming practicing with this circumstance, if we can practice wisely, engage the five faculties around this current situation with this virus and what's happening in our society, then perhaps we're contributing to the welfare and well being of all people everywhere that, that everyone's noticing and seeing, and if we're able to be a non anxious presence, just that. That itself can be a phenomenal support for the people who are anxious. I hope that during this period, that all of you who are interested in this practice will be motivated or inspired or just delighted happy in the opportunity to have a practice where you can begin exploring and discover for yourself, the possibilities of a non anxious presence, even while you're anxious, that you base your life on that place inside of you, which is not anxious, so that the non anxious parts guide you in what you do, rather than the anxious parts. I hope that you take good care of yourself, I hope that you care for yourself. And I hope that this practice and these teachings are support as we go through this together. And finally, I'd like to say that, given that we're going to be doing more of this online programming, if you stay in touch with I MCs website, probably on the What's New section of the website, we will have regular updates now I hope for the different opportunities and scheduling of things that we're doing to do so. are now extensive online community. Thank you very much