

# 2020-05-17 Four Dimensions of the Inner Life

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

welfare, life, people, care, conceit, buddha, refers, settled, deeper, mind, concern, sense, word, psychologist, buddhist path, greatness, tend, grow, desires, quality

## SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

So greetings from Redwood City, from IMC and I want to begin this talk by referring to a sentence. The passage in the teachings of the Buddha that I found a little perplexing, became a source of thinking and reflection what it could mean. And the Buddha refers to people who are going along engaged in their life without any concern for the welfare of themselves, or the welfare of others. And the way that the ancient language Pali talks about this literally, it says what Without any literally it's it's it says they're engaged in neither the welfare of self, nor the welfare of others, neither the welfare of self, nor others. And the word for self is aka that many of you know the word because of the word anantha which means not self, often considered to be a central teachings of the Buddha. And this passage he talks about people who have no concern for their own for their own welfare for yourself or for others, and makes me wonder, maybe wonder who is it that has no concern No, for the welfare of both themselves or others, what kind of person is that or how does that happen? And one hint that how to understand this sentence has to do in fact with this word attā often translate into English itself. And because of this strong emphasis often that people use teachers use that insisting that Buddhism teaches that there is no self or this not self teaching that nothing qualifies as the self. Often there's very strong resistance to use the word self in any kind of way that people can maybe that implies that there is a self. But the word attā also sometimes refers to something, we'll say it this way first, that the focus here is on self and other, attā and para. And this is one of the fundamental orientations, perspectives, perceptions that people need to have the to know where their self is, their body, their being and where others are in space. If I'm crossing To the road where there's a lot of traffic, I need to have a strong sense of where the self is, where I am, where this being is, and where the cars are. And I hope they are the drivers have a strong sense of where they are and where I am, and really have a sense of self strong sense of self and other to navigate that. If someone is watching from the sidewalk, and they might see that yes, these people, me walking across the people driving, they all seem to be finding their waitress nice nicely. And they have a clear sense of who's who. And we behave in the world often with a very strong clear idea of there's myself here and there's someone else over there. And that's observed from the outside this, that there is this clear clear behavior in which you people

behave by, by whether there's a clear sense of who they are, where they are then space where they are socially. And so this idea there's a self here and other there is part of healthy living. It might not be on the inside, so conscious, or the forefront of their thinking about themselves. But somebody observing from the outside will see there's one person there's another person and there's a clear sense of differentiation going on as part of they navigate the world. And so this teaching that some people have neither care for themselves or care for other their welfare of self or welfare others are, I think, are people who don't have any connection to their inner life, to their attā. And the word attā here is doesn't refer to a singular thing, but rather an abstract notion of this being here. This inner life here, the sense of personhood, that here that I have a feeling and sense an experience. And by using the word attā, it's a very rich word nature in India. And it refers to something really rich and valuable that's here. But it's not something permanent is not something unchanging. But rather it's the overall feeling of how we are at any given moment, the inner life, how it is. And sometimes Bhikkhu Bodhi, the great translator, who will occasionally translate the word aka, self, by the word English word mind. Because in the context, it's clearly refers to something inherent internally within us. And so, it means more like something like the mind as opposed to the soul or some central thing. Self. And, and so this idea of the inner life, probably one of the most common words that the Buddha used is in fact, the word mind a very rich word called citta. Citta means mind heart. It's the kind of the totality or quality of this inner life that we can have. In this inner life, this inner sense of vitality, of quality of peace or agitation or happiness or unhappiness or whatever it kind of the feeling is inside. That's not a thing. That's not an unchanging essence. It's rather a Gestalt of all the shifting, changing things that are going on for us that it varies from day to day, occasion to occasion. But in Buddhist practice, we are caretaking for it. So someone has no connection to this inner life. In themselves also will have no understanding of the inner life of other people. And so, will have no sense of how to care for it. Other people can just become objects, maybe objects or their desires or objects of their wrath and anger, objects of people who interfere with a free expression of desires, this free wanting of things or getting rid of things. But once we start having a deeper and deeper inner life, we stop living on the surface of our desires, on the, you know, in the, on the, on the, you know, the, you know, on the surface of desires and hates and preoccupations, that kind of, you know, just don't really have any depth to them and people who live in that surface of life will just go around from one addiction to another one, maybe essential pursuit to another one kind of belief. expression. And often it looks very like can be a lot of conceit in someone who lives in the surface of their life because it's all about their desires and wants, and what they don't want, and without any care and concern for other people at the most extreme level. And so the Buddha seems to recognize there were people like that. And for but that all begins to shift when there starts to be an inner life. And then there's more care for others and a deeper kind of care for oneself because one knows what to care for. We know we've been knowing what is real welfare, it's not just being able to buy what everyone wants, or having whatever recreational opportunities when once but those things might actually not support this deep deep kind of flowering of our welfare from the inside out. So this idea this sentence, that some People are neither engaged in the welfare of self nor and the welfare of others comes from a very interesting teaching, where the Buddha refers to four kinds of people, according to these categories. So the first one is engaged in neither the welfare of self nor in the welfare of others. The second is someone who is someone who is engaged in the welfare of

others, but not in the welfare of the self. The third category, those who are engaged in the welfare of the self, but not in the welfare of others. And the fourth category are those who are engaged in the welfare of the self and the welfare of others. And these four categories. And I like to think of these four as being four dimensions of our inner life. I also like to think of them as a little bit of as a developmental model of how some people can grow and develop this inner life over time maybe. And we find that the teachings of the Buddha he was very much, probably in these modern world, he'd be considered a developmental psychologist, because he, he saw in so many different ways that people's inner life grows and develops over time. And that it's cultivates and it gets cultivated. as something that we bring conditions together with we tend we care for, and allow it to deepen or unfold or grow and develop gets stronger over time. And he had many, many or perspectives in which to appreciate this potential for inner growth and change. Given all the different models, he has, this four categories here, I think represents little bit. The four, these four dimensions, he's forced, maybe even stages of growth that people can have. So, you know, to have no interior interiority at all, no sense of connection to the inner life to the heart to what goes on, maybe is how some, you know, babies are born and, and, and so you know, and as babies grow up, grow up at some point. Little infants are very oriented to towards others. And, and it's the belonging and modeling and mimicking and learning from others is kind of the name of the game and tuning into how the others the caretakers are feeling and how they are, is. Maybe not they're caring for them, but there's sense of very strong oriented out there. At some point as we grew up, we were not looking for everything we need to learn and do and be taken care of from others. But we learned to take care of ourselves. Some babies learn to self soothe, you know, relatively early, but to learn to slowly begin to take care of this inner life, be and become a little bit more and more autonomous, and taking care of our own welfare. And if all goes well in the childhood development, then at some point, we have a good sense of how to take care of ourselves, and certain autonomy in our own inner life. But there's all kinds of ways in which is that stunted growing up, if we don't feel safe if we don't feel loved. If we don't get the feedback system from the parents around us and the family around us, we're not getting our needs met as a young child then It's hard to feel that understanding how to care for ourselves and how to care for others and we tend to kind of recede to the surface of our life, maybe just to be safe, or because we don't know anything interior so painful in there, that people recede to the outside, so they don't have to feel inside. When my one of my son's was maybe a year and a half to two years old, he had a playmate who, another boy, who started getting into this habit of hitting and biting other kids. And the parents were quite distressed and they went to a child psychologist. And the psychologist said that whenever the son began doing that, they should smother him, just fill him with love. Just hold him, hug him, just care for him and love him. And the first instinct of the parents was that That just rewards the behavior. And the psychologist said, No, no, just do it. And they did it. And very quickly that behavior stopped, that somehow, that little kid wasn't getting this kind of reassurance and subtleness that he needed. And so he was lashing out as a kind of substitute for that, or as an anger of that frustration of that. So this idea of tending and finding what's in here and having it settled. And having in these different stages of development, having these be done well, so that we can care for ourselves can care for others, because of this reciprocity, that we grew up learning from family and community and others, that there's we learning as intimates we should prosity mirroring of mutual support and so eventually becoming more and more autonomous

and be able to care for us. selves. And then at some point that autonomy outgrows the sense of self outgrows a sense of limited sense of me, myself and mine, it breaks forth, the breaks down the bear at the boundaries, the artificial boundaries between self and others, not to kind of return to some childhood, you know, indifferent non differentiation of self another, but rather to be clearly differentiated. But to have that differentiation without any hard boundaries, barriers, maybe barriers is a better word, between self and other, where the inner life of others and analyze ourselves as something we can enter ourselves is something we're acutely aware of and sensitive to. And that deep inner life is deeper than conceit, deeper than any self fishiness It's the place where our goodness comes from our care, kindness or love can come from. And so there, the concern then becomes the care, the welfare of both, attā the self, the mind, the heart, and the care of others. And because we really know the quality of our inner life, we're like in touch with it we've cultivated, the greater we've kind of cared for this, the greater is our sense of empathy of care, of love, or our resonance with other people as well. And so of course, we're going to be concerned for the welfare of others, maybe equally as we do for the welfare of self. So four stages of human growth, where the word, attā, self is used in a very positive way. Not as a reified, made real, essential self, but rather the self as the quality of our inner life, the quality of our heart or mind that we are the gardeners for were the care attenders of. And part of the function of mindfulness is to keep coming back here to really cultivate this deep, deep place that allows our care for the world to arise out of some of the deepest places we have. Within the there was this one passage where the Buddha says, it's a poem, having let go of conceit the settled mind the settle the settled self, the good mind is everywhere freed. And here it seems that settled self and the good mind maybe are almost the same. Maybe they're synonyms of each other are closely related. And here again we have the word attā, but it does again doesn't mean this essential, permanent thing. It just I think it just means something like the citta, mind, the inner life, the quality of it, having let go of conceit, the settled self, the good mind. Everywhere freed, to dwelling alone in the forest, diligent, when can cross beyond the realm of death. I think a nice poem have been let go of conceit the settled self. The good mind is everywhere freed. dwelling alone in the forest, diligent One can cross beyond the realm of death. What does that mean? to go beyond the realm of death? And then here's another interesting poem that the who loves the self, who wishes for greatness should deeply revere the Dharma remember the Buddhist teachings? The idea who loves the self. So this whatever this attā is, there is a place for this inner life, to be loved to be cared to be tended for. And it's very curious to expression who wishes for greatness. I don't think the cat is as conceited greatness like I'm so great and so wonderful. I think it refers to this again. inner life, this inner mind state of consciousness state of mind state of heart, that that becomes magnanimously great, that becomes boundless, the full and large, that this movement on the path of liberation is not one, that we get more and more small and constricted. But there's some boundlessness in there and openness than fullness, that is there maybe a fullness and greatness that is there because the limitations and constrictions of a narrower small sense of self has been dissolved or let go of in a deep way. And finally, at two more verses if one knows one's self or if one knows the self is dear The sage would guard the self with care. And the word guard is to watch over. But it also means to nourish that both to nourish to guard to watch over. If one knows when self is dear, this Sage would guards would guard oneself with care would nourish oneself with care. So again, this you know, there is something here to tend to, and the

deeper we tend to it and settle. any concern you might have that's being selfish will dissolve, because it can't be sustained. And then, finally, oneself is the refuge of oneself. What other refuge can there be? The self is there refuge for oneself. The mind is the refuge for oneself, what quality and care of one's inner life becomes one's own refuge. So, tend to your garden well ba K, be a witness be a tender, pay attention to what goes on within. Notice that quality of it not so you can be a you know, selfishly kind of looking to find pleasure for yourself, but rather to really discover how to set it free, so that whatever painful movements of greed or hatred or delusion conceit that lives in there, can be resolved can be healed can be settled. We can go deeper and deeper to the depths of what's really good, what's really wonderful in this inner being in our life that we're capable of having. And when it becomes so settled and so free, then we get turned inside out. And it doesn't really make sense anymore to talk about the inner life. It's your cell life that we live the quality of this life that we live and share with others. And then, we become that character, we may we become concerned with engaged with the welfare of the self, and the welfare of others. And this whole enterprise of the Buddhist path is in the direction goes in the direction of caring for self and caring for the whole world. If you want to know if someone is enlightened in Buddhism, see if they're helping the world that's really the litmus test of mature Buddhist maturity along the Buddhist path. So, thank you. And thank you for this morning and giving me a chance to share my thoughts and I look forward to more times like this together. Thank you. I see that there are some chats here about the references. The reference these four different categories of concern for welfare of self and welfare for others, is from the numerical discourses of the Buddha 4.95, chapter four, the 95th sutta. And, and these poems that I've been reading, the first couple of them, come from the connected discourses of the Buddha 1.9 and 6.2. And then last verses from the Dhammapada. It's wonderful. Thank you.