So today I'll continue with the topic of the pāramīs. For the second talk the pāramī is sīla. And sometimes sīla is translated as ethics or virtue, which is often instructive and inspiring and meaningful to live with. But it also has a different meaning that is closer to I think the original, that also is relevant for the purposes of kind of going along with these developing and growing with the parties.

The pāramīs are these 10 qualities of character that can be developed, that the heart the mind character can be developed just like a muscle at a gym, and acting on the impulses for virtue develops the virtues develops our capacity, our strength, our wisdom. About how to live from these virtues and these qualities.

And if you go to practice in places like Burma, Thailand, if a meditator runs into difficulties in meditation that are, you know, pretty big obstacles, especially on retreat, it's not uncommon for a teacher to think that that person really needs to develop a particular pāramī, particular of these 10 perfections, or maybe all of them, in order to have this is the foundation for meditation practice. And so the pāramīs are often seen as qualities that we develop in daily life. And some people will actually choose different ones because they feel they're short on it or they did benefit from having having it more and really work on it, make it a theme for a week, a month a year to really develop and become wise about this particular capacity.

So they're kind of a useful kind of guide for practicing in daily life. And so it's more than just daily life practice is more than just showing up and being mindful, being aware and open and clear way to what's happening in the present moment. But it's also how we show up for it, how we respond to it.
And we can also respond through that present moment awareness with these armies. So yesterday that the most generosity and today the theme is sīla. Pali word, as I said, often means ethics or virtue.

The way it's used, at least in the time of the Buddha and his discussion, it's probably a better translation is virtuous conduct. Because sīla by itself basically means conduct behavior. In context of talking about it in terms of Buddhist practice, it's the conduct that is virtuous or, or ethical. But Buddhism doesn't really use the words virtue unethical, those are Western words. And, and so they might be complicating the discussion more than it needs to. At its essence, what sīla is, is conduct behavior that does not cause harm.

So in meditation, we're learning how to not cause harm to ourselves. And that could be the whole path of meditation can be described as deeper and deeper, fuller, more complete ways in which we're not causing harm. And that it's a process and it's only with full enlightenment that a person who really comes to the stage of where there's absolutely zero inclinations, tendencies, activities of mind and heart, that could be said to be cause any self harm. To be liberated from that.

So we sometimes will talk about being liberated from suffering. But the suffering we're liberated from is the suffering that somehow our mind and heart are generating. But then there's what we do in the world, and that we want to live in a way that causes no harm for others, no intentional or conscious efforts to cause harm to anyone. And so that is sīla, that conduct and it comes early this generosity and, and this ethical conduct comes early in the piece because they're the ones that involve behavior, and that we have sometimes much more choice about how we physically behave in the world than we do.

Thoughts we have, what feelings we have, what impulses arise more deeply. And so like that the highest pāramī is equanimity, we might have less control about just simply deciding I'm going to be equanimous now. But even if you don't feel like giving something to someone, it's possible to give. It's not quite generosity yet, but it's a physical behavior that you can give. Same thing with conduct. We have some control over, it's obvious we can see what our conduct is, we see what we do with our speech with our hands. And sometimes we have least in principle, more agency with what we do with our body and what we do with our mouth, in relationship to whether costs are causing harm or not. And so one of the important parts of the sīla, of conduct that's kind of like baseline is kind of like this is the bottom line that we really want to understand that we don't go below this line. And that is the practice of restraint that we don't do things that cause harm. And in particular for laypeople, it's the five precepts. Those are precepts of restraint. Some people complain that it's just not doing something, it's kind of a negative teaching idea. And life should be more positive coming from beautiful qualities, and we don't want to be only restricted and not do something. And that's true, for sure. But we shouldn't remember that the baseline, the foundation, what that is that we start there, and then from there, we go further. And then we can develop these beautiful armies and compassion and generosity and other things. But the bottom line is, they cannot causing harm through these five in these five areas.
Through killing people or physically harming people, through stealing from people, through harming people through our sexuality, through lying, through false speech and from harming ourselves. And the fourth precept is a little bit more, you know, variable how we understand it. Here, it's a lot to do with self harm, but said that all the other precepts, the first four precepts are more likely to be be violated broken if a person is intoxicated, so it's a way of taking care of others and being safe for others to make it so that less likely that we're going to say and do things which we later regret or which caused harm. And so this bottom line is simply simple. Simply dedicating ourselves to not being a person who physically verbally causes harm. That's the dedication of sīla. And, and if that's already, you know, you're good at that you just no question you're just very straightforward. Clearly absolutely someone who already causes no harm for anyone, then you are set to be a person endowed with sīla, possessed with this virtuous conduct. And then you don't have to listen too much to these kinds of teachings or think much more about sīla. But if in meditation practice, we're learning to notice the subtleties of what we do. And the subtle movements of the mind where there are ways in which we cause stress, tension, contraction, subtle forms of hurt, subtle forms of pain and distress, and things that maybe we put up with and don't even notice in daily life. It just seems like it's normal life we're distracted with what we're doing. And then addition as we get quieter, we see this more and more subtle ways in which we enact dukkha, stress.

And we learn to let go of it and quiet the mind or quiet those activities, stressful activities. But that sensitivity to subtlety translates into daily life to be aware of the subtleties in which we we transmit hurt or we cause hurt the subtest ways in which through our speech, especially through our speech for many of us, but also through our actions, you know, we interrupt people, two people are trying to use someone else's trying to go to a line same time as you and then you go a little bit faster to cut them off. Is that really? Yeah, maybe I don't know. Maybe it's not causing harm maybe, but subtly it does those maybe very subtle disrespect. Or maybe insisting that one should have one's own way because one should be free to do whatever one wants, not noticing that someone else then becomes afraid or distressed and how uncomfortable they feel. And it's a pity that we have the opportunity to not make them uncomfortable.

People who have very good reason to be very, very concerned about the corona virus, they have immune deficiency, they have all kinds of issues. They get frightened when they see someone who doesn't wear a mask. And do we just blow off their fear? Do we say without, you know, my ability to do whatever I want and not wear a mask has priority. And we can make that policy, we can have that kind of politics. But if we're really attentive inside, we can feel how that attitude probably causes some kind of self contraction. And also, we're concerned about the subtleties and how we may cause other people to be afraid or contribute to that fear. And it isn't that we have a moral obligation maybe to not make people afraid. But as we practice more, more deeply, there's a greater sensitivity to what this means harm and not causing harm. And it becomes more and more natural tendency to be careful and sensitive, aware, and discover that it's actually greater ease in the world, and not to do anything. It asserts ourselves in a way that causes harm to others. In fact, more often than not, if we assert ourselves in a way that's harmful or stressful for others, chances are we're also harming ourselves.
And I don't want to say that as a, you know, a declarative statement, but I say it so that that may be as you meditate, and discover this more and more subtle have greater sensitivity to what's here, that you become more sensitive to how asserting yourself over someone else, whether it's your opinion or your other things, that sometimes that that is a kind of self harm. It isn't always self harm if other people are harming us, asserting ourselves is not a form of self harm. And, but, but this deeper, deeper sensitivity to where the harm is, where the harm is, where the harm is not, and learning how to be careful with that. That has to do with sīla.

And as a minimum, as I said, it's the five precepts. And that's kind of like considered the heart of sīla.

And so in terms of the pāramīs, there's no obligation to cultivate the pāramīs, but these are really held up as qualities that are amazingly supportive. For the process of liberation, in fact, not only the supportive for that process, they're also supportive for the process of compassion. If what we're interested in is a life of dedicated to liberation for self and others, a life dedicated to compassion for self or others, these pāramīs are both the support for that. And they're also an expression of that. And it's beautiful ways in which both support and expression are the same thing makes it kind of seamless and beautiful to kind of cultivate these things.

And so, if and this is a big If so, this is this is not you should, but as we delve into our intention for what do we want our life to be about, the fundamental purpose or intention or motivation upon which we live our life. If that is liberation from suffering, liberation from harm, and compassion, the caring for the suffering, caring for the way people get harmed, and trying to ameliorate and end that. Those are beautiful motivations in Buddhists and Buddhist terms. That's kind of like the most important purpose of human life is to live for live for those two things. So if that's kind of the purpose, that's what the pāramīs are for. That's what the pāramīs support and that's what they allow us to express.

So, for so for the next 24 hours, until we do the next pāramī, I'd encourage you to really consider sīla, virtuous conduct, the conduct that doesn't cause harm for self and others. And maybe talk to friends about it, reflect on it, practice it, the best you can see what it's like. To really live with this in the forefront, write it in a piece of paper and carry with you to remind you or sticky notes someplace. And maybe read about it if you listen to a Dharma talks about, maybe during this next period. And the reason to encourage you to do that it's good for its own sake. But it's also these pāramīs. As I said yesterday, our journey is unfolding that builds over time, one after the other. And so if you do 24 hours kind of living with each one as we talk, maybe you'll start feeling the momentum and the growth and the way they kind of flow from one to the other. And, and by the time we get to equanimity, equanimity will be, you know, really have much more meaning for you.

So thank you very much and, and it would be an inspiring thing if there's currently over 500 people listening to this, if there were 500 people today. If we knew that all of you were going to live a life of a
greater life, a more thorough life of non harming. What a great thing to celebrate and appreciate. So I thank you all very much.