We continue in this topic of the pāramīs. And in Sanskrit they're known as pāramitās and Sanskrit derived kind of Mahayana Buddhist traditions have different, somewhat different, lists, a list of six, which is quite famous and 10. And the Theravada that were part of has this list of 10 that I'm teaching from.

And the third one is usually translated into English as renunciation. And there's a rumor that the topic of renunciation is not a very popular topic for Western Dharma teachers to teach about. And that is a bit of a pity because it's I think it's really fantastic and wonderful virtue, quality to have, the ability to renunciation. And maybe one of the reasons why some people hesitate to teach it and why some people are even frightened, off put by the concept of renunciation is it has a lot of negative connotations of letting go of things that we maybe shouldn't let go of. That somehow in letting go we're becoming less of a person or we're letting go of things which are valuable parts of life or things that even we're attached to or something.

I think the word renunciation has a religious origin. I think it could literally means to announce again, I believe, and I think it comes from monastic life of someone who makes a public announcement or a formal announcement, that they are now entering into the religious life as a monastic perhaps. And in that sense, it's a it's almost a sacred act. And so and so the similar word, sacrifice sometimes means, you know, painfully giving up something that we don't want to give up. And again it kind of a diminishment or kind of unfortunate is to have to sacrifice something. But the original meaning apparently of the word in Latin was to make sacrifice, to make sacred. And here we have this religious connotation. So that same thing in the Pali in the Buddhist word nekkhamma, translated as renunciation, it has a very positive association. And in my reading of the ancient texts, the Buddha, it has more to do with what is gained than what is lost. Certainly it is a letting go of something, and it's a shift, but it's also a stepping. When you step into something, you step away from something else. And so the kind of little story I like to say for renunciation and what would we gain in the process of is that if you go to a winter cabin, get snowed in for the winter, and you're with all your extended family and it's a one room cabin, you know and probably by the end of the winter being there all cooped up and the snow is melted enough to open the door, is probably the idea of stepping out into the open air, the mountain air, the extensive pastures might be there by the snow is melted or something. It's just a delight and just a wonderful thing to go forth out of the cabin.
So the word nekkhamma, one of the etymological understandings of it is it means to go forth in that kind of way. To leave the dusty confines of a life which is somehow similar, confined maybe to being locked up in a cabin in the winter or something. So the idea that it’s a movement towards something beautiful and opening and freedom and is a strong association, this idea of renunciation. And if it is associated with letting go, it's what I said earlier it has to do with also what we let go into. We don't just let go of our clinging or attachments or resistance because they're painful, we can also let go because those painful movements of the mind and heart keep us from what is sacred, keep us from what is the best in us, keep us from peace, from happiness, well being, groundedness, sensitivity, compassion. It keeps us from the beautiful qualities. It keeps us from the other pāramis, these virtues, these 10 virtues.

And so renunciation is, I feel, is more like a something to be really deeply appreciated and valued. And when the when you think inside, should I renounce something such as to be let go of now, the if you feel like it makes you less than or it's a drag to let go, then it's probably not maybe not so wise to let go or be careful about what you're doing. The renunciation we're talking about in Buddhism should also make us happy, there should be some degree of joy or opening or feeling of satisfaction or rightness, in what we're letting go of. So certainly sometimes we have to let go of things that we want and even things that are valuable for the sake of other people, for the sake of our children, if we have kids or parents or neighbors who are sick and I wouldn't say that we're, you know, jumping with joy when we let go of our plans for the day in order to take a neighbor to the emergency room who's sick, but it has a hopefully it has a deep feeling of rightness that if we let go and we're resentful, or deeply discouraged or depressed by what we've done, that's a very unfortunate. There's a great opportunity in the letting go for some of the, if we can let go well, and really understand why we're doing it and how we're letting go into what's really best for oneself and for others. So we let go of our plans for the day, maybe unfortunately so, but it feels like everything is better. That we're taking in and if that's exactly the right word, but just feel so right to take our neighbor to the ER and sit there with them and care for them. And of course, that's the right place to be.

So this idea of renunciation as a third pāramī, follows the first two. First a generosity, which is a kind of giving. A giving of something is a kind of renunciation. But it's renunciation that's not obligatory. It's done from just an inspiration of generosity. And to feel how sometimes letting go of something as a gift is profoundly beneficial. And here we're beginning to learn the value of letting go, of giving up something.

And then the same thing with the restraint, involved in sīla, of living a life of ethical conduct, behaving in ways that are ethical or wise or don't cause harm. This is also not meant to be something which is a drag and but rather something that frees our integrity, that frees a certain kind of, provides a certain kind of freedom. And the Buddha talked about the bliss or the happiness of sīla, happiness of living an ethical life. And to start feeling that restraint, because this sīla is a kind of restraint, restraining ourselves from killing, lying, sexual misconduct, stealing and intoxication. It's not just losing something, it's gaining something in the process. So that we're ready and prepared for renunciation, being kind of a continuation of that. But now we're talking about something which is not just behavior, the behavior of generosity, the behavior of restraint, of how we act with our bodies, and mouths. But now we're talking about beginning to go inward. And talking about renunciation of things that the mind the heart is holding
on to, things that the mind and the heart are doing and valuing. And it's a deeper movement of letting go in the mind and heart itself.

And with that can come joy. Can come something really wonderful the joy of renunciation, the joy of letting go. And without some letting go of something, there is no Buddhist path. And some people resist that or even angry that we have to do that, but almost any endeavor that we're serious to do in our life involves letting go, usually like something else, which is also good. If we decide to go get an education in something, we want to do something of service for the world, then that might take all our efforts for a while. And we have to let go of many other things that we're doing, that we don't have time for to do now, when we're engaged in this educational project. Or someone who decides to be a parent. There's a lot of letting go than being a parent. In fact, if if a parent doesn't learn to let go, they're probably in trouble. And hopefully the parent can learn to let go, especially in the early years of raising young kids, if they don't learn how to let go in a way that's graceful and brings joy, it can be actually quite, it is sometimes not very pretty, the frustration, the anger that can come. And so to learn this, you know, we're asked in certain situations to let go, to really what we're doing but the course we're taking really requires a lot of us and we have to let go a lot. I don't know if the best example but like an Olympic athlete, an athlete that doesn't have to be Olympic, who just gives themselves all out to this is what they're doing. The other day, I was hiking up in the mountains here, and there was middle of the summer there was a high school track team that was out running and it was beautiful to watch these young high school students running in the mountains and like deer was almost like watching them. And there there's, you know, there's a joy and delight and maybe the runnings I felt there. But maybe they're doing that instead of other things.

So, it's the same thing with the Buddhist path, Buddhist practice. It's very, very valuable. And some people really feel committed to it. And it does require some letting go of other good things, even just to meditate every day, or to go on retreat or to really make it a kind of central focal point of one's life. The degree of renunciation that people do, in order to really follow the path of freedom and liberation varies from person to person, by their circumstance, their interests, their intentionality, their vision of what's possible. And each of those is valuable, but does require some renunciation. Some decision I'm going to do this and not something else. And I've seen some people who don't understand that and they're trying to do everything. And they're trying to squeeze in meditation and Buddhist practice, as if you know, they can have the cake and eat it too. As if they can have everything and add on top of it. Enlightenment or on top of it the path to freedom or something or Buddhism. I think that to enter the Buddhist path wisely, and, and beneficially, some degree of renunciation, of careful reflection, wise consideration, and realism. Hopefully with the realization that this is actually important, that it's not a diminishment. It's a letting go of other things and letting go into one of the most beautiful and profound and meaningful things a person can do the path liberation.

And that's what the Buddha did. And the classic understanding of these 10 pāramīs is that these are the things that Buddha cultivated for many lifetimes, to prepare himself to become a Buddha. That these are kind of foundational. And even that kind of mythology applies to us as well. There is a time and place to become wise and appreciate the play and feel, the benefits and even the happiness of renunciation. And so you might spend the next 24 hours on this topic of letting go, of giving up with a word giving is generosity. Renunciation, which is maybe doing something sacred. What's the best
possibilities that you know of in renunciation and letting go? What do you gain in the process? How do you benefit? How does the world better benefit from your renunciation, you're giving up? Why don't you reflect on that and think about it and think about where you've already done beneficial giving up or renunciation? And what you've learned from that? And how does this apply to following this Buddhist path and meditation path and in a way that benefits you? Talk to friends, read about it, spend the next 24 hours kind of building this momentum through the pāramīs we're doing these 10 days and spend time with renunciation.

So thank you, and I look forward to our topic tomorrow.