So today is the fifth day, fifth talk on the ten pāramīs. And these ten pāramīs, perfections, qualities of character, are one of the values of them is that they really intend to bring our practice into the wholeness of our life. Sometimes it's easy to focus just on meditation practice, and to hear the teachings of Buddhism, the teachings of all through the kind of vantage point of just how it relates to my meditation. For some people, Buddhism is mostly a meditation practice. And that's fine. Meditation is fantastically useful. But the opportunity is to expand out practice to include our whole life. In fact, one of the turning points for me in my own practice was I was meditating twice a day, morning and evening for 40 minutes each time. And it was very meaningful for me to sit that way. And I felt a feeling of integrity, authenticity, wholeness, that I had not been familiar with before in my life. And then one day I realized that why do I have those feelings of wholeness, integrity, authenticity, only in meditation? Isn't the line between meditation and non meditation in my life, kind of an arbitrary line? Why don't I have those in my life as well? And that was the beginning of my expansion of the practice, out into my life. And then for years, the really kind of, I would say, the inspiration to deepen and engage in Buddhism more and more. Meant going to live in monasteries and practices and really was not so much to go deep in meditation, but to find a way to expand what was happening in meditation into my daily life, it wasn't so much to become a Buddhist, as it was to allow the goodness, the integrity, the wholeness, the freedom that I was discovering meditation, to discover how that can exist in my whole life everywhere I went.

So these pāramīs are part of this whole life endeavor of Buddhist practice. And now we come to the fifth quality, which is viriya is the Pali word, v i r i y a. And it's generally translated into English as effort. An effort maybe is a nice kind of compromise word, or middle, middle way word for all the different ways it can, it has been true translated into English. And maybe I'll explain that as I go along here. And this viriya has an interesting etymology in Pali and Indian languages, and that it comes from the word hero and hero is, so it's kind of has connotations of heroic effort. I'm very aware that for English speaking audience, especially in the United States, because of cultural, sociological conditionings, we
have the word effort can give the wrong connotations, and it can feel like kind of excessive work or striving or pushing too much involvement of self in it, and that we talk about heroic effort, and it's even worse for some people. But a friend of mine told me yesterday, talking a little bit about this word viriya connected to heroic. And she pointed out and how that nowadays we consider a lot of people who've been for years have been going to work day in and day out, without maybe much of this, seeing as heroes are continuing to do this. And now there are heroes, people in the medical professions and first responders who are really working with in the forefront of the COVID-19 epidemic. We have been working in hospitals and putting their own lives at risk, some of them actually dying. And we really appreciate their heroic efforts, what they're doing there.

So this word viriya, a heroic effort, is kind of the connotations about this. And there is in fact, an heroic aspect, or, you know, tremendous effort. That's can go into really deciding not just to do some meditation practice, or we have to be very careful about the kind of effort we make. But a kind of effort to really make this practice fill our whole being and really fill our lives to take the fullness the potential of this and see that this is not only about stress reduction or relaxing or being kind of some open and peaceful and but this is not only is it something that this practice is a freedom that's meant to be total, full, and then expanding outwards in circles beyond ourselves into the world itself.

The Buddha was heroic in his efforts to teach his efforts to practice. Imagine he didn't have any manual book teachers, Audio Dharma, to to learn something about meditation and practice and he had no one to practice with for the what he was doing, discover his freedom. And he talks about it going against the current of popular culture of his time what he was doing. And he discovered something he discovered the depth psychological heart depth of freedom, the release of goodness, the pāramis, the kind of a full flowering of the human potential in a certain spiritual way. And was he heroic and doing that and are we the, the recipients of that heroic effort? Maybe.

So, as a pāramī, effort follows wisdom. And this is the protection for effort, because the idea is to have wise effort. And the idea of wise effort in Buddhism is, is to very simply it says is to avoid effort, which is unwholesome or unskillful, but to engage in effort which is wholesome, or skillful. And one way and I kind of translate this into modern English is to avoid the effort which is not helpful, but engage in the effort which is helpful. Now, how do we know what effort is helpful and not helpful? And this is also something I've seen in myself and also in people I've talked to a strong tendency to want to have or to have a singular definition or understanding of whatever it is, and then measure everything, everything against that one idea of what it is. But in fact, effort is something that changes all day long. The amount of energy that we apply to what we do, what the endeavors were involved in. The amount of effort we put into those endeavors amount of energy put into it is, is quite variable. And we were constantly adjusting and changing the energy level, the effort level that we're doing. And in a sense for Buddhist practice, there's never going to be a final perfect. On the mark effort, energy level we make. We're always adjusting and changing through the day through the days, weeks, months, years, we're always finding it. And part of helpful effort is this finding of right effort, which becomes second nature.
so it's not so self conscious. In the same way that someone riding a bicycle is constantly shifting and changing the amount of energy they apply themselves, to making effort. Bending under when they're Hill going up. Hill downhill, whatever is going on. And it proved good bicyclists it's kind of second nature to adjust and change.

But Same thing with Buddhist practice, it's a constant kind of becomes second nature to know when to make a strong strong effort and when to make almost no effort at all and everything in between. Now, the word energy said, is sometimes a very nice translation of viriya. But the energy does not, does not say anything about what we're doing. And the very other right effort also has an implication of, of knowing what to do. The endeavor, a particular endeavor, there's also we're engaged in the right eightfold path factors right endeavoring. And, and the Buddha says something like if you take a something like if you take a piece of gravel of rock. And no matter how hard you squeeze it, you will not get oil out of it. To get oil out of, you have to squeeze the olive and then you'll get oil coming out. So the idea that making a lot of effort for the wrong thing is not helpful.

So what is the helpful thing to do? And again, as I said, this comes from wisdom. Wisdom teaches us that how not to be harmful, how not to add stress, how to understand where freedom is, where letting go of clinging is where letting go of selfishness and self consciousness is and to engage in an effort to keep opening to a way of engaging and working and being in the world. doesn't have a lot of selfishness or a lot of self consciousness, self preoccupation, self measuring, both in positive ways and negative ways to engage in effort that's not greedy, or not pushing or striving. But still, to engage, to make effort. And but what's the effort we make? There's so many different kinds of endeavors we do. And one of the most powerful ones we can do is the continuity of simply inclining ourselves to the, the freedom, the teachings of freedom, that a lot the practices of freedom, that Buddhism is about the difference between someone living ordinary household life and work versus someone living in a Buddhist monastery is not so much they have lots more time. To practice, but rather the context of the monastery puts them in the inclination and a reminder about the values and the possibility of freedom and thinking and dharmic ways throughout the day. That doesn't take a lot of effort. But you're just constantly there and being reminded, being reminded to live a life where we're simply inclining throughout the day, towards freedom towards the Dharma, to kindness, towards mindfulness, he doesn't really quite necessarily acquire a lot of self conscious effort, just to be reminded over and over and over again. That's one example of effort and an exactly what that heroic effort is, because I said changes, but it's supposed to be wise effort. And the more we become wise, by really learning a lot from the fourth part, me The more the efforts we make our onward leading or liberating our, and our delight, so that we lie, it's just so happy. It's I don't know if it's reasonable to say, but sometimes the effort feels like play. It feels like, you know, it's just in the playground of the Dharma. And there's a lot of energy that's put into it, but its energy of play, rather than the energy that obstructs or strains or gets tight or exhausting. And I hope that you will consider your relationship to effort, the ways in which the word effort, maybe points to what you know, gets in the way of practice is not helpful. And what you know about effort that is actually helpful and meaningful and maybe even a kind of play something you delight in enjoy and feels really good to get in the flow of just really doing it. being carried along. May
you make wise effort. And part of wise effort is to understand your relationship to effort and free it from all the ways in which effort is a hindrance.

So, thank you very much and I'll see you on Monday.