

Overcoming Hate with Non-hate

Gil Fronsdal

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Of warm greetings to all of you. As I begin this talk, there is a renowned verse from the *Dhammapada*, an ancient anthology of Buddhist poetry verse, and it goes something like this: Hate is not overcome by hate, but by love alone is hate overcome. This is an ancient truth. So hate is not overcome by hate, by love alone is it overcome. And it's possible that translating the ancient word love doesn't really capture the full richness of this verse. I'll talk about that a little later, but I want to evoke this very, you know, well known verse that it's really a central idea in Buddhism that we cannot pacify hate by adding more hate to the fire.

Hatred is considered to be a fire that burns the one who is hating, that harms the one who's hating. So to respond to hate with hate means that there's two people now who are burning and suffering, who are wounding each other, wounding themselves both. And this is such an important topic in the climate of the world. Really, I don't know if there is more or less hatred in the world than there's ever been before. But we're certainly becoming acutely aware of it here in the United States, and perhaps we're coming into an era of this country where there is the possibility of beginning to recognize the tremendous harm that hate has. That may be as difficult to see before when the hate was expressed with, you know, so violently, that people are mostly spending their time protecting themselves from lynching and riots, all kinds of things.

And hate was certainly present back then, but maybe it was not what was being addressed directly. But now we've come to a time when there's a real heightened sensitivity to what hatred looks like, how hatred speaks, how it spreads as a kind of poison through our society. And I speak about this because in the wake of the rising hate crime against Asian Americans here in California, just a month ago, there was an arson and a vandalism of a Buddhist Asian

Buddhist temple in Los Angeles, a Japanese Buddhist temple. The Pure Land tradition of Buddhism, a very peaceful peace loving form of Buddhism. And the temple was partly destroyed, not dramatically, but enough to be quite disturbing. And you know, these are, this is a tradition of Buddhism where there's been in this country for well over a hundred years.

It's possible that the membership of their temples, or at least of that form of Buddhism, other members have been here in the United States for six, seven. It's possible even eight generations by now. And to be the recipient of hate as if they don't belong in this country is quite painful for all of us, this family that we hope to be in this country. And so in some of these images we've seen of elderly Asian Americans being attacked on streets. It right here in San Francisco is one of them. And it's not like over there that this kind of violence happens. But it's close in.

And it didn't start then, but it certainly raised people's worry a year ago when there started to be hateful things said to people of Asian descent, especially Chinese descent here and locally in the peninsula because of the coronavirus, and somehow a spreading of animosity towards people of any kind of Asian descent because of a virus like this. So the ease which sometimes people hate is part of the issue here in this country. And certainly there's a need to stand in solidarity with the people who are the recipients of hate, and certainly to a sense solidarity with the Asian Americans who are struggling with this, and with fear and worry, and about what it means to be out in public. Even are out in public at night, and we know what's coming, and to offer our protection, and to create places of sanctuary where it feels safe to come, and not just welcome to come, but feeling like its home, like they belong. And it's a little bit hard here at Ams to be. May be teaching here all along these last year, but you know, it's I want this place to be a home for all people, and for everyone to come here, to feel like they belong.

And you're even not just welcome, not just belonging, but feel like it's their place where they can really engage fully and bring themselves completely here. So, you know, certainly I am concerned for the membership of M c that are Asian American, the membership of M c that are black, and all the people who are the recipients of hate crimes. Here in the United States, the word hate crime is an interesting term, because the definition of hate in this regard is different, very certainly very different in some of the other meanings of hate. And the way we use the word hate when people say that they, you know, they hate spinach, it's such a very different connotation, is very different meaning of the word that when we say we hate ethnic group or we hate one of the, you know, I think that the highest number of hate crimes in the United States is against the African Americans, and one of the other really high numbers is LGBT CUA. And so the to be riss when there's a hate crime, not just you know that an intent

dislike of some one.

But one distinction some people make also between, like, anger and hate, a hate crime is that anger is for a particular behaviour, particular event, particular situation, whereas a racial hate or gender hate or ethnic hate or something. It's hate towards a whole category, the whole person, not the behaviour of the person, what they say or do, but the whole being of the person and her family and their community. And so it's not just singular emotion, but it's an attitude and disposition, a way of seeing. It's an interpretation that's overlaid on the totality of who a person is. And that's why hate crimes and expressions of this kind of ethnic and category c crimes so total. Why it's so difficult for people and so painful is because it's the diminishment, a contempt of who they are as a human being.

And to have that repeatedly, to be a recipient that you, as a human being, are somehow worthy of my hate, is quite difficult. And then to know that that's a lingering disposition. A lingering attitude that stays means that, you know, it's not just a mistake of the moment or an incident of the moment passion in the moment, but it's something that stays. And it'll be here and continue and continue, and to be the recipient of the victim of hate crimes. It's not just the individual who suffers, but also the families and the community, because it's known that it's, in some ways, relating to all those together. So it's really a fabric, a tear in the fabric of society. It's a rupture in our ability to be together cooperatively, harmoniously, as fellow citizens, fellow companions in our humanity.

It's also a kind of diminishment of people's humanity. And this is. One of the great tasks I think of our society, for ourselves and our times, is to learn how to see the humanity of other people, and how to share our humanity with other people. There was I saw an interview recently of a thikanmaā, the religious leader of a mosque, and the neighbour of the mosque, a man who had been high on drugs, heard about some violence, I think it was the Paris shooting, a massacre where less people died in Paris by some IS kind of followers. And he came home high on cocaine, and was just, you know, angry at Muslims there. All his idea was that he said he had been listening to a lot of social media, and so he thought that all Muslims were somehow violent and terrorists and terrible people. And so he shut up the building next door, the mosque, and no one was hurt, but still he shot at it.

So he was arrested and went to jail, and for that forward he did, and he apologized for what he did. And you know, he, when he was no longer high. He understood what he had done and the mistake, the huge mistake he had made. And when he apologized, the people in the mosque, the religious leaders of the mosque, forgave him and apparently brought him food and little gifts in the prison. And when he was released because he lived next door, they in-

vited him over to the mosque, and they were able to tell him a little bit about them, what their form of Islam was. And he was shocked. He found these people to be fantastic, wonderful people, and peace loving people, and who had forgiven him. And then he brought his friends over to see them, and they were all kind of discovering the humanity of each other, sharing each other's humanity, getting to know each other, which is not so easy, not possible when there's hate, not possible when there's that categorical idea that someone is somehow contemptible.

And so how do we respond to hate as individuals in society? And from a Buddhist point of view, we don't respond with more hate. And so to take lot of care. It's hard to avoid doing that. It's hard not to be upset with them, those people who are doing it. Of course there should be. Of course there shouldn't be. Of course we should take a strong stand against the acts of violence against these acts of this level of hate and I hope stand up and help protect our fellow humans who are struggling with this kind of situation. It affects all of us, but we shouldn't hate.

And so in this *Dhammapada* verse it says, Hate is not overcome by hate, and common translation is, By love alone is hate overcome. But the actual language of the original language of the line it literally says, By non hate is hate overcome, and so non hate is a larger category, larger points to a wider range of responses than love. Love maybe it's too hard, too difficult to draw up love and expect what always was to be loving, and maybe it's not even appropriate as the first response or as the response to situations of hate. And so the question is, what does non what does non hate mean? And most literally, it means not to hate. And so the idea of loving, I think, is a great one, and the motivation to love. It can't arise out of deep meditation practice.

In meditation practice, when we let go, we quiet all the fevers of greed, hate, and delusion which suddenly discover a deep level of peace. And well being within a settled, peaceful, contented, reassured heart. We discover that there is a way of living, a way of being that becomes more important, like one of the most precious things: how to live. There can be a feeling of kind kindness, love, friendliness, compassion that radiates from within, and this is this feels like home. This is this has integrity. This is the place of a value of how to live this life, and then to feel a commitment that this is how I want to be.

And so what can exist? Rather than being loving, there can be the wish to be loving. We can't always love, but maybe we can always have the aspiration to love, and sometimes that aspiration to love means that the best we can do at today is not to give in to our hate or hostility. Maybe not giving in to hate may be the wish to love commits us to pausing sacred pause to

hold in check any movement we have to hate, or to hate we hold in check, or our tongue and don't speak words of hostility. We hold our hands in check and not express any physical expressions hostility. That this learning to hold ourselves back because we want to love is not a kind of repression, but rather, it's a kind of expression of something that's deeper, that wants to come out, something deeper that's saying, Wait, hold it. There's something more important here. Don't lose yourself. Don't give in to something which adds to fragmentation, alienation. Don't give in to something that is going to burn yourself.

That some of the dramatic images of hate in metaphors for hate in Buddhism is that of a poisonous snake which is biting itself, or that of a fire that is burning itself when it burns. So hate, the fire of hate burns the person who is hating. The poison of hate poisons the person who hates. And one of the dynamics of hate is that, for sometimes hate is a person's response to their own pain, their own hurt. And it's often said that hate, that hurt, can evoke hate. A kind of blaming others and trying to avoid the pain we feel ourselves by attacking other people and blaming other people, and now turning the attention outward. So hurt can evoke hate, but then hate in return evokes hurt, and then you see there becomes a vicious cycle. One leads to the other round and round, and gets stronger and stronger. Hatred evokes alienation, and alienation is a condition that promotes more hate, that when we end up hating, we're separating ourselves from the humanity of other people, and then we're more alone unless we then find companionship in other people of hate. And we think we're connected then in the mutual cause of hate, what we're hating.

But it's not really a very deep connection, it's a shallow connection, and to get somehow supported or feel enlivened by hate is a kind of self alienation. And the more we are alienated from others and alienated from ourselves, then the more that drives further hate. Hate brings alienation, and alienation promotes even more hate. In Buddhist language, Buddhist ideas, hate is a form of bondage, and to be, to be free, to freely, you know, do the wishes of our jail keepers or jailers, is not real freedom. So to freely have the freedom to express the hate and feel them, be free and wonderful to express it freely is really doing the work of our jailers. I'm just enslaving us or jailing us more and more in bondage that people who are hating are in fact caught and diminishing themselves and jailing themselves in these very strong feelings. To find freedom is to find freedom from hate, to find ability to allow something that's deeper than hate to come forth and move through us.

And so, for those of us who are practitioners, one of the great possibilities for us is not to diminish ourselves because we might feel hate, or we might feel animosity, or we might feel have prejudice and bias, but rather to turn the light of awareness on that, to really be honest

about that. Learn to see it and recognize it in whatever form it takes our anger or hostility even to anything. Keep turning back a hundred and eighty degrees away from the object of our hostility, our prejudice or bias to what it's like for us to have the bias, the prejudice, the hostility, or even the intense hatred that occasionally can exist. And really be honest about it, and see it. And if we want to love ourselves, then we want to have the sacred pause, and don't give into it by looking it deeper and deeper and deeper what's going on here. And then to find by and bring with that the awareness that's calming, the awareness that is peace making, the awareness is not hating or in conflict, non contents awareness. So we can start relaxing and settling the fires, relaxing the hurt, the alienation, relaxing the way in which we recoil from pain, feel our own pain deeper and deeper until we find where the healing is, where there is peace, where there is wholeness. Maybe where there is love.

And we discover that when we respond to hate in the world with non hate, that maybe it takes the form of generosity sending presents, meals to someone in prison who hated us maybe takes the form of forgiveness. The imam who was talking of forgiving the man who shot at the mosque said it may make sense to forgive him because he had apologized. And so to discover the ability to forgive, to forget, discover the ability to be friendly. We don't have to be to love someone, to be friendly. And in these all these expressions, maybe we do discover how to bring more love into the world, how we bring more of a peaceful, settling, a pacifying presence into this world to benefit this world. That's so a challenge here.

So I think one of the great tasks these days in the United States, and perhaps many countries in the world, one of the great noble tasks, the important tasks, is for us to stand in solidarity with everyone who is the recipient of hate and hate crimes: the black people, United States, the indigenous people, the Hispanics, the LGBT PT KU, the Asian Americans, and list goes on and on. And also, but really more than just stand in solidarity and support to be actively involved in making this world a better place, in a safer place for all, and to understand as deeply as we can the roots of hate in ourselves how this works, and to learn to develop the strength and the courage and the confidence to always wish, always want to be loving. It doesn't mean you have to be loving. That's It's a difficult task, but we can always want to do it. And in wanting to do it, maybe we pause the sacred pause to avoid causing more harm. We, but like, don't express actively our hostility to anyone. And maybe then slowly we can begin learning how really to meet the challenges of this world with expressions, ways of being, and loving, and caring and standing up and speaking up in ways that are going to heal the great divides of our society. Let's discover the common humanity of all of us so that we don't live fractured, but we live together as a community, fellow family, a society that cares for each

other. May all of us care for everyone we encounter. Thank you.