

Introduction

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Hi, Abby, thank you so much. And Rob, thank you very much indeed for, well, for the nice introduction and also for inviting me to participate and offer something with the Satti Center. It's a real delight and honor. You know, I've been a kind of long distance admirer of Gil Fronsdale for a long time. I used to, during COVID, there were a couple of periods when I did a lot of those early early morning sits on YouTube that I think he's still offering and absolutely love them. And I love the particular, I love the Darmets that he would offer at the end.

Oh, great sits and then great Darmets. I don't know whether, I kind of imagine that a lot of you are familiar with Gil and what he offers. There was something about the particular... path that he's had where there was quite a deep immersion in Zen that then moved into a very deep Theravāda training of different kinds as well that really resonated with me. I'm, I don't think I've gone quite so deeply into either, but I've certainly tried, you know, and I'm feeling more and more called to a you know, somewhat sort of ecumenical approach, if we could call it that, or not quite such a sort of silo-based approach that is one of the, I'm going to introduce things properly in a moment, but just a little aside here still on Gil and his approach that, you know, the idea of, I mean, the great thing that's been happening in the Dharma in the last 50, 60, 70 years in the West has been this particular thing that hasn't, I think, ever happened before in quite the same way in the history of the Dharma, where different Dharma traditions are really, really having to reckon with one another.

Right. are having to meet one another there's been such a strong thing that you know if you're living in rural Japan and you know you know there's a Shinto temple and there's a Zen temple you know you're not you're not and you're the priest or the officiant at a Zen temple there you're not gonna know really about other kinds of Buddhism. You're just not really going to be exposed to that. You're going to know this history that your Zen place is directly

connected to Śākyamuni Buddha 2,500 years ago, 2,400 years ago. And there's a single line of succession that leads from Śākyamuni Buddha to the particular priest that you are in this remote Zen temple. And you'll have no idea really that there are multiple other streams of Buddhism. And it's sort of not your fault. It's quite natural. That's the way most traditions evolve, convinced that they are the one true line, you know. And it's okay. They may be one very good line, actually.

But we're having to reckon... Many of us now who have been in a deep immersion in a single tradition at some point reckon with this marvelous pluralism that must be developing, you know, just even just within Buddhism, which is somehow, I think, inherently well designed to be pluralistic. Actually very open to a breadth of, of, of views, you know, because it's such a sort of systems, complex systems based approach to existence really I think deep down. So it's it's it's inherently good for pluralism and you know Gil is manifesting that in a beautiful way I'm trying to uh I'm trying to offer something that is inherently more open to different facets different sides, different dimensions of practice because basically we human beings are multifaceted and multi-dimensional. And it's not likely that one single approach is actually going to meet all our developmental needs. That's my conviction. And I'm very open to being persuaded otherwise. But for now, that's the way I see things. And that's what this approach of original love is really about, and that's what the book is trying to convey.

So before I go deeply into sort of what original love is all about, what I mean by that term, how I see it sort of breaking down and the particular forms of practice that I am trying to offer at the moment and the view of practice generally that I'm trying to offer. Before we get too much into that, basically I want to get us into a sit. And so that's where we're heading now. But let me just say that I do believe the kind of calling out of, you know, love is a, I think it's a, you know, it's rather a, you know, maybe a sort of strong way to put it. But anyway, the calling out of compassion. of kindness, of understanding, of empathy, of a more open-hearted approach is actually a really important thing at this particular time when, as we all know, you know, the fires of hate, the second poison in Buddhism, the three poisons, the fires of hate are being destroyed.

Stoked, you know, and, and, and hate has become, or at the very least, you know, highly, um, uh, sort of oppositional and, um, I was going to say sectarian, but that's not strong enough, you know, deeply oppositional, um, positions, you know, in the body politic, in social life generally, in, in, um, in the understanding of, of our place in the world and self and other. That's become, alas, in a rampant and really fired up. As we all know, you know, the last decade or two, social media has obviously played its part. Actually, there's nothing new there.

There have been successive waves of social media. highly, yeah, hate is being normalized exactly. There have been waves in human cultural history, particularly European cultural history, where this has happened before.

There was a, the English Civil War of the 1640s actually was preceded by the arrival in the UK of small, cheap printing presses. which allowed the printing of pamphlets, which were basically single long sheets in those days, where anybody could rant and rave about anything, print off 100, 500,000 of these sheets, post them everywhere, and just get a whole lot of foment riled up, get people riled up. And that led to the upheavals, that ultimately caused the civil war with a lot of death and slaughter. And there's a great book on this subject called *The World Turned Upside Down*. And then, of course, in the early 20th century, the invention of the radio led to fascism, basically. The ability, the possibility of mass media where one belligerent, man could speak to millions of people directly through the radio. You know, that hadn't happened before. And, you know, look at what happened in Europe in the 20s and 30s and 40s. So this is, you know, something like it is happening again now with social media.

So all the more reason for us to do our best... you know, in our practice, in the, in the, in the incredibly valuable space that all of us here know about, which is a meditative practice, to be actually discovering within our own intrinsic capacity for caring and compassion and collaboration. And I would argue, you know, more than that also, our own intrinsic belonging in, um, a wider, this is, you know, I may get a little woo-woo here, but a sort of wider experience that we're actually plugged into of the whole of creation, the whole universe. We're actually part of it. And to discover that is to discover among other things, maybe, a sense of a kind of boundless love. That I think is you can see traces of it in all the Buddhist traditions that talk about awakening, non-dual experience. You can see traces of it. It's often not called forth quite as explicitly as I've done with this term original love, but it's there. And I think it's, I mean, I'm open to being, corrected, definitely. But I believe, I feel that it's a good thing to be calling out, especially at this time. Anyway, so that's my little manifesto.