

# The End of Hatred

**Gil Fronsdal**

**January 25, 2026**

**Keywords:** Buddha, kalyāṇa, kalyāṇa-mitta, non-hate, ethics, civil rights, John Lewis, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, concentration camps

---

I call it the Buddhist poem for peace.

It goes back to the ancient times. It had a big impact and down to history this poem. And you can memorize it if you want. It's short. Is never overcome by hate. By love alone is hate overcome. This is the ancient truth.

And I hope that in hearing this poem, that you feel challenged by it. Because how can we meet hate with love? But that's the call, that's the challenge. And I'm hoping that this talk I give today is a challenging talk in that spirit, in that way. It could be challenging in other ways for some of you to hear. I'm also hoping this talk challenges me. In this way, the poem is challenging. So hopefully it's okay for you to be challenged.

In the ancient texts or the teachings that survive, they were originally formulated to be chanted, to be memorized. There were no written books in the time of the Buddha. Writing was probably almost non-existent in India. And so a lot of these ancient texts are kind of boring to read in the modern way. If you're going to sit, I think you're going to sit down and read a novel. It's really boring. You'll fall asleep.

But if you understand that they were meant to be chanted, chanted together in community, in unison, you get a whole different feel for the impact and the power of these poems, these teachings. And the one that I... teaching that I have memorized, that I think was chanted together. I'd like you to listen to, maybe in that spirit of it being a communal chant.

Others will be cruel. I will not be cruel. Others will be violent. We will not be violent. Others will kill. We will not kill. Others will steal. We will not steal. Others will engage in sexual misconduct. We will not engage in sexual misconduct. Others will lie. We will not lie. Others will speak divisively. We will not speak divisively. Others will

speak harshly. We will not speak harshly. Others will speak pointlessly. I will not speak pointlessly. Others will be avaricious. We will not be avaricious. Others will have ill will, will have hatred. We will not have ill will, hatred.

And in this ancient text this comes from, this continues with 34 more of those statements. And then the people who memorize it and chant it, in the way that the text is written, they'll do it, each of these 44 statements, they'll do it four times. So you get into the rhythm of it. And it kind of, when you get into a rhythm of a chant, it kind of goes and touches you deeply. It touches something very different. Maybe it has a chance, sometimes, to touch the place of love, the place that really is a source for that kind of motivation, to not be cruel, not be violent, not be divisive, to do it over and over again, to make that kind of an evocation of that place, that possibility for us, I think is quite a beautiful and powerful thing.

And it's hard to do just that, just the absence of those things. It's hard not to respond. It's hard to respond in ways that belong to any one of those things. It's hard to respond, not respond with harshness and divisiveness. It's hard not to respond with ill will and anger and hostility. It's hard not to, sometimes, to avoid being cruel or being violent, even with our words. Human life is challenging.

Yesterday I learned a wonderful story about one of the great American dancers, a man named Frankie Manning. And he grew up in Harlem. He was a black man. And he was born of the founders of Lindy Hopp and Swing. And he died at the age of 94. He was born in, I think, 1914. And so he grew up dancing and music and in parts of Harlem, dance scene that was integrated with blacks and whites.

And then he went into the military during World War II. And he was assigned to a black platoon with a white sergeant. He was a racist. He wasn't just racist, he hated blacks. And he treated them that way, apparently, with hostility and disdain, maybe cruelty. And this story came down to me yesterday from a man who heard it from Frankie Manning himself, a student of his, then student.

And so they were fighting in the South Pacific. And at some point in one of these firefights, the sergeant was shot and wounded pretty badly by the Japanese. And he was wounded and lay there wounded in the battlefield in the line of fire. And his black soldiers were not that motivated to save his life. Some of them even thought, you know, he deserves this. But Frankie Manning didn't do this. Frankie Manning went out into the fire and brought him to safety, risking his own life in that. That's a remarkable thing to do. Yeah. Remarkable not to hold a grudge, to hold hostility, to hold even not to have what can seem like a natural thing

for humans, maybe it is a natural thing. That's why it's such a big problem.

To harbor ill will, harbor kind of a wish of cruelty to someone who's been cruel to you. But there is another way, and there is a way of love. And that's also natural. Right? And these two very natural ways, hatred and love, fear and peace, we're all capable of this. And where do we want to come from? What do we want to evoke in us? And what would you want to do for our society around us?

And to be cruel and violent and hateful and to steal creates kind of a lasting impact on so many people. It has a lasting impact on the person who is cruel. And it's painful to see that. It's unfortunate to see that. It has a lasting impact. It's hard to imagine it doesn't have a lasting impact on their family and their children who live in that and experience that and maybe then perpetuate it. It has a lasting impact on those who witness it. It has a lasting impact on those who experience it. Love has a very different lasting impact.

I'm inspired by the story of Frankie in the World War II. And that was, that story comes from some almost 80 years ago. And I'm inspired by that. My parents-in-laws survived the concentration camps. And I'm inspired by how they dealt with that afterwards, after the war. How they tried to bring love into their family and tried hard to create a very different context for their children to grow up. I've known lots of people who are children of Holocaust victims, and the harm continues into the generations.

So what causes lasting welfare and happiness is one of the core questions the Buddha explicitly asked. What is it that does that? And it's hard to imagine that that happens when there's divisiveness and hostility. So the Buddha taught these ten things I just chanted from the chant, kind of, in different ways. It's very important for him.

And he has a teaching where he says, what is harmful? What is harmful is to do the opposite of those. What is harmful is to be violent and to kill. He goes through. It's kind of like, remember, it's a chanting culture. What's harmful is to steal. What's harmful is to engage in sexual misconduct, sexual harm. What's harmful is to lie. What's harmful is to speak divisively. What's harmful is to speak harshly. What's harmful is to speak pointlessly. What's harmful is to be covetous, to want other people's things. What's harmful is to have ill will or hostility or hatred.

So those are harmful. So he goes through that. He makes it clear. These are harmful. And then he makes an interesting statement. He says, what's even, what's more harmful than harmful? What's worse than doing harm? What's worse is to prompt, encourage others to be violent and to kill, to prompt and encourage others to steal, to prompt others to engage

in sexual misconduct, to prompt others to lie, to be divisive, to be harsh, to be pointless in their speech, to encourage others to be avaricious, to encourage others to have hate. That's worse than harmful.

And then he switches, the Buddha. He says, and he uses this wonderful Pāli word, *kalyāṇa*. Some of you know the word *kalyāṇa*, because the primary way it comes to us that we used in the Bay Area is *kalyāṇa-mitta*, which means, usually it's translated as good spiritual friend. And so *kalyāṇa* is translated as good spiritual. So that's good. Not going to argue that. But the primary or the first definition of *kalyāṇa* is beautiful. So rather than good spiritual friend, it's your beautiful friend.

And the word is used a lot in the texts that we miss it because usually it's not translated that way into English. But one of the meanings of this beautiful is to be beautiful integrity, beautiful ethics. And to associate ethics with beauty points to that there's an affect, a deep affect in ourselves and affect in others, when we live with integrity, when we live with goodness and wholesomeness. So the Buddha said, what is beautiful? And he said, what is beautiful is not to be violent and to kill, not to steal, not to engage in sexual misconduct, not to lie, not to speak divisively, harshly, pointlessly, not to have avariciousness, not to have ill will.

So that's nice. But then this is where it gets challenging. Hopefully this talk is already challenging. But now, listen to this challenge. What's more beautiful than beauty? What's more beautiful than that beauty? And the Buddha said... What's more beautiful than beautiful is to prompt and encourage others to not kill, not be violent. To prompt and encourage others not to steal. To prompt and encourage others not to engage in sexual harming. To prompt others to not lie. To prompt others not to be cruel, divisive, to prompt others not to be harsh, to speak pointlessly, to encourage others not to be avaricious, to encourage others not to hate. That has been beautiful.

And in this ancient tradition of Buddhism, all these nots, not to kill, not to lie, not to do with all these nots, it was explicitly understood that this implied the positive quality. It wasn't just the absence. And that's why this ancient teaching that's translated as, hate is not overcome by hate. By love alone does it overcome. The actual word is not love. It's non-hate. But universally, down through the ages, it's understood to be more than just love. And that's one of the reasons why it may be, calling it love is a little bit narrow and limiting even.

When the tradition understands the negative, the absence of something means the positive, there's many more positives than love that we can live by. So love, generosity, respect, dignity, appreciation, valuing human life. There's all these beautiful things we can do, but we summarize it all in love in such a nice way.

So, we have examples in this society now where all the things that Buddha was talking about, these ten things are being enacted in plain sight. We're seeing it in all these videos we get. And it's remarkable what we're seeing, the violence and the cruelty. We have a president, he was cruel. He was making America cruel again, rather than making America care again. And it's painful to see that. It hurts to see that. It's painful to see him and the pain that he's living in. It's painful to see how ugly it is when we know he's capable of beauty. We know he's capable of love and care. And that's what we want to see come out of this man. That's what we want to see. Can we bring it out? Can we support it? It's a tough task.

We know that the people, ICE in Minneapolis, don't have to be the way they are. They're being egged on, they're being encouraged, they have a whole culture. Who knows that have supported them to be so cruel as they are. They might even been told they're doing the right thing, but they're capable of another way. They're capable of doing things beautifully.

One of the kind of beautiful examples that I've come to my, that I reminded of this morning thinking about all this. And it doesn't sound beautiful, it sounds awful. The act was awful, but what the recipient did of the act was beautiful. Was John Lewis walking across that bridge in 1963 or so, 64, with the police with the baton sticks waiting for him and the civil rights marchers. He was... and he was hit over the head, knocked down. But it wasn't the first time he was hit over the head and went unconscious.

Earlier in the civil rights movement, he was in a Greyhound bus station, and young Ku Klux Klan members came and beat him up, hit him over the head, and he was unconscious. But he did not have hate for them. He was in a movement that was really working on love, speaking from love, being reminded of love, having love for the people who were attacking them. That was beautiful, to not respond in kind.

And then there's this wonderful story that the man who beat him up, I think he hit him over the head with a chair or something when he had a concussion, and John Lewis became a congressman for many years in Washington, D.C. About 40 years later, that man came to Washington, D.C., to his office in Congress with his own son to apologize. The way that John Lewis behaved and lived his life set the conditions, I think, for this man to be able to apologize 40 years later in the presence of his own son.

So we have this horrible what's going on. We have cruelty and violence being done to children. Right. Witnessing it. Gratuitous violence being done to people who, you know, in awful ways. We have people being killed and we should be... If they follow the Buddha's instructions, we want a prompt that encourage people not to kill. But can we do it with love? That's the challenge. Can we stop it with love?

This is... Buddha's message is not a message of passivity. It's not a message of just going and meditating and... wishing well. I think it's a message to go and show up. So I'm inspired by what's happening in Minneapolis because it's clear that what's happening there, the amazing cruelty, is not just cruelty. There's cruelty, violence, killing. I don't know if they're stealing exactly there, but the president wants to steal. It's kind of amazing to have a president be publicly saying, you know, he feels he has a right to steal. And he's going to steal. And, but, you know, that's, there's another way. You don't steal from your friends. One of the Ten Commandments is you don't suppose to steal from your neighbors.

So, but that's not beautiful. It's ugly. It's terrible. It creates lasting harm for all of us. Can we encourage the other? Can we see the possibility of other things? Can we stand up in love and say, no, not in our name?

And then there's lying. I mean, it's so amazing to see so many lies come out of the administration. I mean, it's not like a political issue. I mean, because of all these amazing video culture we live in, it's obvious that what we're seeing on video from many different angles is completely different than the made-up stories about what the ICE is doing in Minneapolis and other places. It's blatant lying. For one of the most powerful countries in the world, to have this leadership blatantly lying that everyone in the world can see undermines the integrity of the whole countries and the view of others. This causes lasting harm.

We won't do that. Let's not lie. They lie with hate. They lie with cruelty, the lies. We won't do this. Let us do the opposite. Let us do what's beautiful. Let us find a way with love to encourage others to change and bring out the best in themselves.

And you can go through these lists that the Buddha talked about, and I think you can probably find all of them speaking divisively. The Buddha put a tremendous emphasis in speaking to create unity. He was very explicit about it. To bring together those who are divided. To create concord. To create harmony in society. So how did we do that?

And I'm certainly hoping in giving this kind of talk I'm giving today that's meant to challenge all of us is not to create divisiveness in our society, not to perpetuate it. But this stuff has to be named. It has to be addressed when it's so obvious. And of course there's differences in politics, different opinions, different values that people have, and those differences should be respected, and the people who have them should be respected. But it's not okay to do such ugly things. It's not okay to intentionally harm in such awful ways. It's not okay to bypass... a whole long tradition of law, law and order. It's not okay for the administration to be the now represent the party of no law and no order. I remember when I was young, Republicans were the party of law and order. But they can come back to that. It's possible.

It's possible to return to... It's possible to come and get the best of our country out into the public again, out into the world.

And I think it begins with us. Not because we're so special here at IBC, just because you're you. And how could any of this start without it being everyone who's me, everyone who's you? It has to start with you. Can you love me? Can you care? Can you meet the world in kindness? And can you do the beautiful thing, which with love and respect, in ways that promote, give the possibility for unity, possibility for concord? Can you and me and all of us stand up for what's beautiful, to encourage?

I love this word, prompt or encourage. It's really difficult to do. It's easier to protest. It's easier to protest. It's easier to go up and yell hate back. It's easier to kind of fight. It's much, much more difficult to do what John Lewis did, which was not to hate, not to fight back. But people like John Lewis, Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi, in their unwillingness to hate, change the world. And now it's our time to change the world in our way.

And... We go through these cycles. This happens. I grew up with this. I grew up with riot police on American campuses killing students. And I'll end with a story of a friend of mine who eventually became, Blanche Hartman, eventually became the abbess of the San Francisco Zen Center, wonderful Buddhist teacher. A turning point for her in her life and moved her into her whole spiritual path as a Zen Buddhist and a was she was on San Francisco State University. Back then it was called San Francisco State College, I think. Now it's called university. And there were, that was the campuses were kind of the center of a lot of the anti-Vietnam movement and other things.

And so there was a protest he was at, demonstrations he was at, and the riot police were there. And at some point there was a long line of these riot police and their gear. And she was somehow in the way she was positioned in the demonstration, the crowd there, she was pushed up against the riot police, like chest to chest almost. And so she looked into the eyes of the officer who was there, and he looked into her eyes. And that changed her life. She saw his humanity, and she saw her own.

So love is not overcome. Hate is not overcome by hate. By love alone is hate overcome. This is the ancient truth. Ancient truth for me means, it's kind of encoded in our DNA, that we have this capacity to care and love and to change the world, not through violence, but through love and care and respect. So that's the challenge. And it's a challenge to learn how to do this. It's a challenge to trust it. It's a challenge to meet it. And just like some people will die with violent change, some people will die with nonviolent change, that's what happened in the civil rights.

I'll tell you one more story. I've said this before. So it's really remarkable by what, you know, that I meet so many people, you know, when people come on retreats and other times, and people really want to share often some of the major things that they've gone through in life. And it's remarkable what I read in the newspaper eventually comes to, comes into my care, I guess.

So there was a, this was maybe now, probably almost 30 years ago. There was a woman who had been a white woman who had been a civil rights worker in the South during the 60s. And she had been in a variety of different kind of demonstrations. And she told me that she was at a street corner with a group of people with signs protesting the racism of the times. And a pickup truck came by filled with white racists, young white men. And they jumped out of the bed of the pickup truck and they started beating them up. And then they drove off.

So they went back to the same corner the next day, stood there maybe with bandages on. The same truck came by and the guys did the same thing. Third day, they went there to stand. And the same thing happened. These guys jumped out of their pickup truck and one of them was standing over her, she said to me. And she looked up at him, and he had his fist up, you know, lifted up, and he looked into her eyes, and he said, what in the world are you doing? He was just stunned. Like, why, what's happening here? He'd never seen anybody like this. And then they had a conversation. That day there was no violence.

That takes courage. That takes a lot of love, a lot of believing that something like this is possible. So that was, so here we are. We live in our time of challenge. All of us, every generation, maybe every life, lives through these kinds of challenges. This is ours. So that's my talk today. And maybe some of you came to be, to leave with a big smile on your face and happy and delighted by everything. And, you know, and didn't want this, it's kind of heavy. But I'm pointing to something beautiful. I'm toying some profound, impossible. So I hope that it's a challenge you're willing to take on.

So we have a potluck in about 10 minutes. And as it's nice to do is to introduce