

# 2019-10-07 Earth Care And Loving The Earth

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## SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

There is one week in October, which some of the Buddhist world treats as Earth care week. It's not enough to have an Earth Day. But to have a week that we focus a little bit on earth care. And so this is the week. And so when that happens, I like to already give some talks on this topic of Earth care. And as I was thinking about it today, and I was thinking about what if the earth was a size of a beach ball and it kind of floated kind of right here, like in the middle of the room, or we went out to, you know, to a nice field someplace and it just this amazing thing happened. There's a beach ball, this beautiful blue and white ball, it's kind of luminous. Thanks a sudden shines on it and it's all this life on it. All this water that's moving and clouds and

see you see the forests you see the snow capped mountains you see the oceans, lakes. Maybe if you get really close by knowing how much you could see but it's like you know this, if you look out into space beyond that there's nothing like it for many, many light years who around. And if that beautiful pearl like beach ball was hovering there with all the people on it and animals and plants and everything. I think we would treat it as a miracle. We treat it as something profound and wonderful and very meaningful. Something we want to protect, maybe we want to care for And, and then we might remember that we live on that planet. That's ours. And it's our home, and more than our home, it's in a sense, you can say we're in that beach ball. But we are in a sense, we are the earth. It isn't that we're like, you know, visitors to the earth we didn't actually come from, I don't think we came from outer space and got planted here. We we come out of this earth, we're born from the earth. We are part of the earth we, you know, we can't even say we returned to the earth and we die because we are or already are the natural world ourselves. And from a Buddhist analysis, that the natural world the earth that's around us, is the same Earth and world that's within us. The Buddha was quite explicit about that. He said that it's in this for him, the Buddha you find this Phantom long body of ours. That's what I called the world what's inside here. And he used the word world for the world around us as well. So there's these two worlds that we live in. That are one world really. And, and I you know, certainly I saw that beach ball floating here. I'd have a certain reverence for it all its appreciation. And the way that sometimes I do if I go to the beach and look out across the ocean or the mountains and look at this beautiful view views, the summer I slept for nights, I slept out without any tents in a sleeping bag on a ridge in the Santa Cruz Mountains. And it was a full moon in July and it was spectacular to be laying there in the full moon light laying there. Occasionally I had to take my sleeping bag and cover my eyes because the moon was so bright. And then one night that I got up at two o'clock to walk to the edge of the ridge. And there was so much moonlight, you could see these cars On Santa Cruz Mountains kind of one after the other in a row going up in the valleys going down towards the ocean. And it was kind of awesome, kind of inspiring. And then it we should live in such a place and to be able to experience this and I didn't want to come back and sleep in my bed anymore. And but I was a single parent this summer and my child was at home. So I had to come back. And so there's a wonderful term that I you know, came

across recently, biophilia love of life and reverence for life perhaps. And some people have it and some people don't. And it's a lot harder to have it. If we are disconnected from the natural world if we live you know, in inside of Foursquare world's walls most of the time. They say that in the United States, people spend 90% 90% of what the time people spend, they spend indoors. That's a big chunk. If you sleep third of the time, that's, you know, already maybe 30% or so. But and but if we can spend some time outdoors and California has a lot of beautiful nature, just locally right here, spend time outdoors in it. And a very different to relationship to the world happens than if we spend our whole day indoors inside of walls, on screens. And even if indoors, we love nature, but love the world, love the earth and have reverence for it in the abstract. At least for me, there's a whole different experience that happens when I'm actually in just walking in some of the local reserves right there in the hills here.

And, and I do feel a kind of reverence for it. care for it. We have in local park here and Edgewood, there's a lot of deer. I don't know exactly the ecology of deer and how good the deer are for the park. They seem to be growing number. And but, you know, they're kind of used to people, because you know, people have pretty much to stay on the trail. You're supposed to us the rules and the trail. And, and so the deer don't hardly seem afraid of people. And, you know, you come across a deer 10 feet away and it just kind of, you know, beautiful deer eyes look at you. It's quite something to see it. And I wouldn't want to harm the deer. No, I wouldn't want to see anything and you see the deer with its little Fonz. And the last thing I want to do is to kill it or to harm it anyway. And when I was about 20 or so 21 I lived on a small dairy farm and five cows. And they were my girlfriends. I you know I love these cows. And back then you know there was no we go out in the fields and get them every every evening bring them back and milk them they'd stay indoors for the night and then send them out in the morning and milk them twice a day we get up early in the dark and milk them and there was no real sense of connection to one of the great experiences at that time in my life was being present for the birth of one of the calves and to watch the calf come out. I'd never seen a birth before. And I don't know if this is standard for working in cow's butt came out with its you know, feed for to the front feed for The head kind of altogether kind of poking out. But there was this sheath around it a bag or something. I think I can't tell you what it was, I don't know the biology, physiology of it, but a sheath around it. And you get it was kind of transparent and you could see the eyes through it. And the eyes were closed. And as far as I could tell, this was a you couldn't tell them was a living animal there. And, and then I guess it's a little hoofs, right? So some pointed pushing and it broke that sack broke whatever that film was, and, and so suddenly got ripped open and revealed the head and then the eyes opened. It just came alive. It was a lie before but there's something about those eyes opening up and most of the calf was still inside the mother. And it was quite remarkable to see. I wouldn't want to kill the cow. I don't want to kill the cat. I thought I would have nothing to do with that at all. And many years ago when I was thinking about vegetarianism, and I've been vegetarian pretty much my whole adult life, but one of the little tests that I had around it was would I eat a chicken or a cow or a pig or something? If I was the one who had to go kill it? And I said, No, and I couldn't kill it, I wouldn't be able to. And so if I can't kill it, do I want to eat those animals? let someone else do the killing. And how often do we carry disconnected from what goes on with animals? It's kind of a kind of a feeling. Iis this about the living being that we're, you know, involved in if we're eating it. And the way that animals are treated United States, it's one thing for us to have five cows On this beautiful dairy farm in the fjords of Norway spectacularly beautiful and, you know, then but you know factory farming and the way these chickens are all herded together and mass mess murdered, it's quite something.

So to have this beach ball world that we live in, that we're part of, and have biophilia and care for it and feel responsible for care for it, feel something for it, you know that we want to take care of it. That's why it's called earthcare week. And I think it's one of the most beautiful instincts or impulses of human beings is the impulse to care to care for each other care, care for others to care for the world to care for

life itself. And that movement of care. I think it's actually exciting somehow. I had these days. Feel is more I have more reverence for it, than I do for compassion. See that compassion is one variation of care caring, but caring takes a lot of forms besides compassion as well. And, and caring I think is you know in there for each of us in our hearts in our being to care for this world, take care of it. And there are people these days who are quite distressed about the state of the earth in terms of the environment and climate changing change. People feel a lot of distress, a lot of grief and a lot of anxiety. Some of it's paralyzing to some people and some people who just don't know what to do with it then are running around in circles and pretty upset but and some people feel it's no point to do anything. Because you know, we only have a few decades left and everything's everything couldn't be extinct, humans are going to be extinct. So all coming to an end so I don't know the science of it exactly. I'm not a scientist. And I can't really speak for it. But I've been interested in this topic of environmentalism since I was in college, I was environmental science major for a while. So it's been a keen interest of mine. And in some of the doomsday scenarios that are being told now, we're told 50 years ago and, and now the evidence seems to be stronger and stronger. Some of the scenarios that came out then are coming true now. So you know, there's a lot of this was known for a long, long time. And then, I studied Environmental Studies at UC Santa Barbara. I was at this university California University in 1972, which was only a year or two year and a half after its big oil spill down there. That was quite something to be there and still feel the it was not so much so much in the beach anymore a little bit it was there. But it was just you can still feel it in the atmosphere and the people there and everything that this has gone through a major trauma, and with this huge oil spill of oil wells down there off the coast. And probably that influenced me a little bit to go into the field of environmental studies. But so there's people you know, a lot of people are news about this, and there's all kinds of relationships to it. Some people ignore it. Some people want to deny it. Some people say well, there'll be a technological fix, we'll figure out something we always do somehow. And, or some people are just it's too much. And, you know, they turn off and get numb. Some people just feel really numbing anxiety or fear and distress around it. And why bother? Doing anything, because it's all going to go to hell anyway. So why do anything at all? Why not? And I read there's articles a long article that went around the Vipassana world that went through it by a journalist connected to the Vipassana teachers who had a long journal long article about all the science that she had gathered together to make a really convincing case that it's getting really really bad what's coming. And then she ended the article by saying well, it's all going to hell go to hell basically. And you should live your bucket list. Literally, she said, Have you done the house greetings whole thing I think I was kind of like wow, this is quite an article. Wow. And then you know what, where's she where's she taking us with us? Do your bucket list and could you go on vacation and do different things. I don't know what and have a good Some groups of people you can share some of the feelings that you have what's going on. And that was kind of stunned by someone who was so well informed and been studying this for decades would end up with such a to me depressing or discouraging kind of scenario. The image I have is

maybe it is hopeless in 100 years maybe who knows I have no idea maybe it's all going gonna be over? No, we're not 100 years left so why do anything Why bother? And so I had the summer 10 point I think I talked about here. I found an injured squirrel outside our door and it was kind of looks more stunned it didn't see any injuries was stunned. It was laying there wasn't moving hardly but it's clearly alive. So you know What do I do? What should I do with this squirrel? I could explain to it you know, in 100 years, you know, it's all gonna be extinct. It's all over. It's done. So I might as well just leave you there to die. I don't need it. You know, the squirrel was, you know, I put a squirrel like matters that it lives. You know, now it makes a difference, that squirrel to do something. And so what I think I didn't know how this how this works, but I've figured out the ASPCA has a whole Wildlife Department. Specifically they care for wildlife like this and they said put a cardboard box over it and we'll come out. And this amazingly compassionate young man came out and he was so tender and careful by the time

he came out the squirrel, much more revived and was you know, was kind of is able to move a little bit and, and he was just so tender and careful and They're all up nicely and say, What are you gonna do with it? And he said, Oh, when it's injured like this, we don't know what happened to it. But there's a chance it's gotten, you know, some kind of injury maybe infected. So we'll take it back for two weeks given antibiotics, and then we'll release it somewhat close to where we pick it up. And wow, that's nice. I thought, so that the contrast between giving up because in 100 years, something's gonna happen. And that's the type of squirrel. That squirrel made difference for the squirrel. We took care of it. It'll make a difference to your neighbor. If they're sick and you go take care of your neighbor. It'll make a difference to the poor communities of California, Central California. If the Bay Area can figure out how to create less smog, that gets carried down into the Central Valley. It'll make a difference those children have grown up there for index decades or something they're alive now makes a difference for them. So the idea of giving doesn't make any sense. The idea of being so frantically upset and not know what to do and just rushing around and going around and spinning around or something. I don't know if this is a fair image but I had this image of someone who's maybe it's a poor mix of metaphors but waiting for at the train station for a train to come. It always comes at four o'clock and the person's there half an hour early and the person is kind of pacing around the train station really anxious and nervous about the trains that coming and when's it coming and just kind of like making everyone on the train station nervous by author, this person's nervousness. When you know it's that's good. You know, why? Why be so nervous about train is coming anyway. Why not do something the image included and another person comes and the person comes in sits on a bench, and is so calm and so tranquil that the person affects everyone around them and everyone calms down and changes their lives. I thought of that little story because I was told the story today of a Zen master that I studied with in Japan in 1980s. Now he's at and I had never heard the story about how he got started into Zen training. He had grown up in

in a nice Buddhist temple. His father was a temple priest, Buddhist priest, but he rejected it had no interest whatsoever in it and didn't have any respect for it at all. And, and he was, I don't know how young he was young, but I don't know what that means teenager, early 20s. And he got on to the bus station. It was a lot of people, a lot of people crowded and that was people were crowded into this bus and he kind of had to make it all the way to the back of the bus to get a seat on the back of This bus was an old Buddhist monk sitting there. And he was reading a book. And the Buddhist monk was had had a radiance of tranquility, and luminosity and peacefulness that he'd never seen that anyone. And it was a such contrast to the people in all the other but everybody else on the bus who seems all kinda know what they were like, but they were not that way. So when this the old, there was old, it was a Buddhist priest and monk, the old monk got off the bus. This young guy, got off the bus and followed him and followed him back to the monks temple. And when the monk went into his temple to the temple gate, he didn't go in. But later he came to join him and became a student. And now he's one of the great Zen masters in Japan. And so what does the world need? At this time? What is the planet needs? I think it needs what it's needed for hundreds and thousands of years. It needs people who know how to find that piece that can represent that kind of care. It needs people who can care for each other care for the planet. Even if the world wasn't coming, going to hell in 100 years, it still needs us to care for it for care for each other to care for this world, with care, respect, to have reverence for it, and to be able to and to have representatives of people who know how to be at peace, know to be tranquil, know how to inspire people in a whole different way of living. So that it's kind of like we all can share living in this world as it were, you know, the ridge in Santa Cruz mountain that full moon night, looking down across the rolling mountains going down and seeing the pristine elegance or beauty or reverence of that scene. So here's an example. In this case, it says Zen story of what it might look like in this very small kind of way that represents something much bigger. what it would look like to live in a different way that maybe the planet needs us to do these days. There is two Zen monks were traveling, and they were going visiting a monastery, they're going to check out famous habit, maybe to be a student or study

there for a while. And, and they were kind of on the road going up towards the monastery. And next to the road was a creek that came down from the monastery. And as they were walking past this creek, they saw a single lettuce leaf floating down the river on the creek and clearly had come from the monastery and clearly it was a you know, edible lettuce leaf. And, and the two monks look In each other, this is not the place where we should go study. If they're that careless with the resources, they should not do this. This Zen teach I'm gonna jump come back to this the story but the Zen teacher that I studied with in Japan, who I told you about, follow the guy home. Now one of the great teachers in Japan. I was in his monastery, and I was in the kitchen one day, and we were either four or five of us were cleaning up after a meal. And he came through the kitchen, and he looked into the sink where the pots had been cleaned. And in the middle drain, were three or so strands of udon noodles, noodles. And he said he kind of like showed his displeasure that that's where they were. We can't waste anything he said, and he reached down and pulled up the noodles today. And that's caring for the world in a certain way, not letting anything be wasted. So then, so the story of these two monks and let us leave there today, we can't go, we're not gonna go to that monastery, if they're that careless in that monastery, they don't care they let go that is kind of, you know, be wasted that way and get away. So it's not for us. But then they saw us another mark from the monster was running down the creek and came down and ran after the lettuce leaf and picked it up to bring it back up to the monastery.

They said, Oh, this is the place where we should study. So I love that story, that that somehow the care or the resources, care of this world of ours, not wasting anything. rearing everything is actually one of the great values that we have. And nowadays, there's a lot of ecological arguments for not wasting the resources. consumerism is a dangerous ism that doesn't do much good for our planet and doesn't do much good for the people who have bought into the consumer religion. The concert consumerists maybe none of your consumerist use occasionally buy things. But, but the whole message of the religion of consumerism is a message of selfishness, some message of desires and greed, and a message of ignorance and not paying attention to what's going on. And Buddhism really is here to teach us the opposite. It teaches us to be selfless. It teaches us to have a few desires not be caught up in the world that desires and it teaches us to be harmless. Not to cause harm. Those values important in this world of ours, how important are they that is something we want to train to do. Or this is a way to become the kind of people who can be care for that beach ball that's floating there and, and hold it up and care for it to reverence and care. What is your equivalent of a load of a lettuce leaf that you left or Udo noodles that you just kind of like that doesn't really matter just, you know, just let it drift off and throw it away and not care for it.

I don't think consumerism is made many people happy and fulfilled. But there's such a strong pull into that world for so many people to have to have to have. One of the radical things to do is to consume less But I think that's what's really needed as well. I needed another shirt, short sleeve shirt. And so the way to consume less and less of an impact is to go and buy used clothes. And this shirt here was brought to the second hand store. Very happy with it. Don't say look okay for a Dharma teacher to wear this. I think I did. Well \$7 that's pretty cheap. How much do you think I saved? How much is a crusher like this shoot normally cost. Do you think? I don't know I'm not really a consumer, right? You do the brand. Oh, The

there's not much of a savings. I didn't get a good deal. Or do I should have been supposed to go after the brand? Oh, I didn't really, I didn't understand that. Like I said, blewett Oh, well, but I think I saved some money. The point being that it's not so difficult to consume less to be more frugal to have less of an impact. But this is what's interesting about it is there is savings and consuming less. Don't save that money unless you really need to make a savings and then take the money that you saved and donate someplace that makes a difference. You The money you saved, and then buy something else, maybe

you have to buy, but choose the green version of it, the one has less impact, even if it's more expensive. Start using you're using your savings and your money in a way that begins moving more and more in the direction of walking more life on this planet, having less of an impact will make a difference. Just a few people doing it. It'll make a difference to the equivalent of a squirrel. It'll make a difference somewhere don't don't kind of look at this the total picture that was hopeless, you know, I'm just one person there's 5 million or some people here in the Bay Area and you know, they're all driving cars and you know, nothing makes a difference for me to make it you know, if I just do drive my car less so what you know it's not gonna make any difference at all. So I might as well drive with impunity. But you don't know What difference it makes, maybe it'll make a difference to a squirrel somewhere. The other day driving up here, a little raccoon ran in front of my car. And luckily, I think I was lucky. I wasn't driving very fast. I mean, the rakuen was lucky, I wasn't driving very fast. Because, you know, I thought I kind of slow down, I thought, I'm sure I hit it. But when I looked around behind, it was not It was nothing. There was no evidence of that as get away. But if I had been hurrying a little bit more, or been more interested in getting somewhere faster than paying attention to the road, I probably would have hit it by driving more carefully made a difference to that raccoon. So don't underestimate the impact that you can have on this earth carry week. It makes a difference, and the person who's going to make the most desperate difference to my hope is to you yourself. You're all here at a Buddhist meditation Center, where kind of, I'm assuming that people who come here are interested in interchange. Somehow they believe that meditation has some value. Orientation has to do with transforming our inner life in important ways. And if you're really going to care for your inner life, your heart, the way you'd care for that beautiful beach ball of the earth. Caring for the earth is one of the ways to care for yourself. You'll benefit as much as you maybe more so than if you do things for the world. So this is earthcare week. So you might, at least for this week, give it some thought that this is a good week with there's other people around and the Buddhist communities who are also kind of caring for this week and thinking about it. And I hope that you do more than just save a squirrel So, we have about 10 minutes. So if anyone wants to make any comments or questions or have some kind of report about something they've done that took care for the earth might be a lovely time to hear something.

Yes, if you can take this mic by this stage

you just push the button on the middle side. The green light comes on. Can you hear me? Yeah. It might not be honest, a green light on. Okay, hold on, hold on. Okay,

yeah. So I just recently started taking on that practice, and I'm line drying my clothes instead of using my dryer. I ended up maybe spending five more minutes by doing that. Since we all live in California, it's pretty convenient to dry our clothes outside. I stopped using paper towels. My husband was like, we need some, but I realized that you can just use rags right that we have and to wipe. We're so used to using paper towels that you know, we really don't need it. And so I decided to refrain completely from buying paper towels and just forcing myself to get into habit of using using rags I started not using plastic bags as well, not completely, but to the extent I can I stop using plastic bags when I buy vegetables, like when I go to a farmers market and we take a plastic bag and to fill my vegetables, but instead, I would reuse bags. Now I rinse them I reuse them. So there are actually a lot of ways we can help contribute to this. Yes. Try to ride my bike instead of it takes

a little bit takes a little bit of work to think about it but something once once it once you figure out some of these things second nature to do them.

Yeah,

I've gone grocery shopping for vegetables and fruit and bring with me from home. They're composed compostable green bags that we use to collect the compost that I bring the new ones right. And I use those and then when they come home, I have you know, use them for compost anyway.

Yeah. And I ended up sharing on Facebook and now a lot of people are adopting the same thing.

Yeah, and these things add up over time, especially for a lot of people do them. Someone else Thank you.

become more conscious of

washing clothes. And the fact that I don't have to always wash something because I wore it one time. I wear more than one time. So if you don't want to sit near me that's

other comments, any kind, any questions anything?

I've been trying to raise consciousness at my office with recycling people just aren't doing it at all. And I met with a lot of hostility. So I wanted to ask If anybody had any suggestions about what to do about the reactions

That's a hard one how to how to deal with hostility. But I think that maybe those are not the people you should try to change. But maybe you could invite them to go for a hike with you in a local park. And, you know, or spend a little bit of time outdoors and I think the idea of getting more people connected to the natural world, and so they love it is biophilia. I think that it's very, you don't want to shame people you don't want to, you know, make it a big obligation and about to quit doing. But somehow ideally, you somehow rather help people or tap into people's love and delight and appreciation of the natural world. They feel a connection to something because we tend to care about For what we love and so what can you do to kind of cultivate love for the natural world for what goes on, rather than a sense of guilt or something around obligation around this three pack.

On a similar note, I work in a flower shop and it's me and my boss and she, when we're processing the flowers will just dump like plastic and rubber bands into the compost bin and it's driving me insane. And I don't know what to do about it. And I'm constantly trying to like move things around. But I don't know like, once there is a certain amount of plastic in the compost bin or whatever, like how I don't want to have to dig through it, but sometimes I do. Like I said, I don't Just similar On a similar note, like I don't know how to bring it up to her, it's, it's all about efficiency, you know, like

maybe maybe you don't bring it up at all but you just start take pulling plastic out.

I mean, I do

calmly happily do it and then you'll see it after a while and after a while she'll she's into efficiency. It's not efficiency to be paying you to be pulling babies to get the message after a while.

So I'm pretty new to Buddhism. So forgive that ignorant question. But um, I am trying to get educated and I took a class the other day in a Tibetan and told me that there is no oneness in Buddhism, like, that's just not a concept. And it was in the context of the Heart Sutra and emptiness and stuff and I guess I'm just hoping to hear any words of the Buddha that would contradict that. or help me feel that

feeling again because it really like hit my heart and the bottom drops out and and, you know, my concepts of oneness and connection to others coming from yoga Vedanta and, and Native American spirituality and this is what I'm trying to invest in. So

yeah, I mean, these are someone to say like that tends to be a little bit dogmatic and philosophical and narrow minded. I think that the experience I think they actually come with like a mystical experience, experience, experience, deep experience of interconnectedness with the world with other people that can be experienced in a non conceptual level but a heart level is one of the ultimate experience. human being can have and is appreciated in Buddhism, etc. But what Buddhism says about that though it's important and valuable. But it's, it belongs to a certain domain of life. That's different than the domain of liberation. The liberation belongs has to do with a radical independence from that interconnected world. And the art of it is to be able to hold both as being profound and reverence parts of life. To over overemphasize, interconnectedness is to miss something out to overemphasize this independence, maybe what the Tibet nine is emphasizing, leave something out, but to be able to hold them both together. And, and respect and see each other in their own domain as being very important and valuable. That's, that's, I think, we're the specialty of Buddhism is to do both. And in zen, they kind of have they kind of in terms of oneness. In zen, they kind of expressed that with the saying, not one, not two. So it's not you can't reach out really just without oneness is not quite right. But you know, diversity is not there or Tunis is not right, either. Or another way they say things then is merging, merging of difference and unity. So what's that? And so but, but yeah, interconnectedness has an emphasis on compassion and loving kindness and the teachings of dependent arising. There's a lot of teachings in Buddhism to emphasize interconnectedness. But more important than the teachings is when you really do serious Buddhist practice. It'll open up into a world of profound interconnectedness. You can't help it because as we practice deeply, the said the self centeredness that way in which we are caught up in ourselves, that makes boundaries and barriers between us and others fall away. And then you feel this kind of open connectedness to others, that's so thorough that you don't really feel there's a separation. But that is profound and wonderful. And ultimate is that is in a certain kind of way. That's not the final purpose of Buddhism. So what the final purpose doesn't negate this profound experience of interconnectedness. It supports it.

So do I understand you right, that I don't have to choose between feeling connected and developing this, this independence and emancipation and I

think ideally, in my world, ideally, you would really understand their what their world their interconnectedness and, and move through that and understand it knowing it's understanding. It's so well, you would find the door to what's independent with through it, not away from it. And then they can live together. be mutually supportive. So to go along with your interconnectedness, great.

Thanks that that helps me support the earth.

Great. So thank you all. And I think it's time so yeah, he's been here before and it's a little after nine. So I think that Jim could come and ask to talk to me afterwards if you want. Thank you all.