

2020-03-01: The Five Faculties Part I

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SPEAKERS

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I just came back from teaching for a week at IRC. And the people who are responsible for IRC spent a lot of time discussing the corona virus. And because we people come there and gather place for live together for a week at a time and so how do we take that into account all the possible scenarios of what might come and so, in some ways, IRC were kind of leading the discussion in terms of IMC and so IMC is just starting up now a serious discussion about how to better take care of this building people who come here and there's already some efforts to sanitizing disinfecting and things like that. So it's all in progress. And what I want to say about this is that you know, that we're, we hopefully live a wise, practical life in the world, but you know, it Buddhism we also live a wise spiritual life in the world. And, and for that, I'm kind of delighted by that, at least in my little mind that every time I hear the expression, Corona virus, I hear Karuna virus. And Karuna. Karuna is the Sanskrit Pali word for compassion. And wouldn't that be nice if there was a compassion virus that's that's somehow spread and, and you know, we all got it. But more but more importantly, the artistic play on the words. I think that's really important part of what we contend with work with in Buddhist practice is the degree to which we are self focused and the degree to which we are other focused. And what's the balance for that? What's the right place for that here and there And I think if we think of this, as you know that, that play on that is that word Corona and Karuna as being kind of pointing to both directions, that for some people, the primary concern around this current pandemic of flu that's being spread is mostly how to protect themselves. And it turns out that most of the ways that we protect ourselves, our ways of protecting others too, and, and, and I think actually to spend more time perhaps change the balance a little bit, too, so that you're actually thinking more about others than yourself. And you'll be protecting yourself at the same time. And the way I think about this is that you know, that we're all potential to the degree to which we're all potential Lee can get some virus like this or any kind of cold or flu or something. We're also the carriers of it. transmitters have it. In fact, probably for most colds and flus that go around, we're probably all of us are probably more frequently. transmitters carriers have it more than we actually get the thing ourselves. And so if that's the case, then I think it you know, it's kind of nice to shift whatever balance you have to be to live your life now in this new Corona world.

Thinking about others, and thinking about how to support and care for others. And so, you know, how you wash your hands how you use commonly touched items, what you do when you have a snuffle, or all kinds of ways that how can you do How could you you be in the world to make it better for others, as opposed to how can I protect myself and you might end up doing it from the outside looks like you're doing exactly the same, but your heart will feel so much more different. In terms of this, the you know, the spiritual Buddhist side, it your your whole demeanor and way to life will probably be a lot better if you shift the directionality of what you're caring for. And, and I think it probably has health benefits, because to operate under fear. My guess is psychology affects physiology. And fear probably is not a good thing for our immune system. But compassion is and if it's the same outcome, same behavior, choose the compassion side. So when you hear Corona, maybe you'll hear compassion, and think about how that how you can live. So is that okay? For now, on that topic, okay. So, besides that topic, since I was on retreat this last week, I don't have any Anything new think about except for the theme of the retreat. So that's what I'd like to share with you. I taught there twig with two wonderful teachers, Don Scott and Nisha Patel. And now we shared the theme through the week. And so it was kind of like what we were massaging and working. And I thought I was I was inspired by the theming. So maybe some of my, my talking today can share that inspiration. So the theme that the, the, the title or the concept that was talked about, in and of itself might not sound inspiring. And the common way of saying in English, it's a common English term is the five faculties are you inspired yet? And the and the five faculties are five abilities that we have, it could be called Five abilities that are activated engaged in doing every activity we do in life. But, you know, in Buddhist meditation practice we look at how these five are activated in Buddhist practice. Now the word for that we translated as faculties. Occasionally you see people translated as the five controlling factor of faculties. And the word control is not very popular in Buddhist circles in the United States, because maybe partly because some people control too much, controlling everything and learning to relax and not control everything is important step in people's. So it's not that often you're hearing translated as controlling faculties occasionally. What's more interesting is what the Pali name is the Buddhist word that's being translated as faculties. It's in the end indriya means something like

of

the god Indra and Indra is a God of eight mostly of ancient India. And that ik times and came into Buddhism It was a, you know, well respected God in ancient Buddhism. And it had certain qualities in Indra. Indra was considered a friend, friend of Buddhists, friend of the Buddha, it's kind of a, also a protector God and protected people and associated with protecting people from evil and bringing beneficial nourishment and nutrients into people's lives. So, is it kind of the benevolent figure, but Indra was also the, the, for a certain period of time, the ruler of the heavens, the ruler of the gods. So of Indra. So he Hear in this wonderful way which the Buddha sometimes reframed, flip things around, at least in you know, as I read it is, rather than focusing on the day, the Divinity that's outside of ourselves, he's pointing to the divine or the Divinity inside of ourselves, that metaphorically, these five faculties have such important role, that they are divine or divinities are associated with this great ruler of the gods. And that says a lot about the early Buddhist view of the human being that we have these

wonderful faculties within us that have huge potential and, and their potential protectors, they have the potential to be our friends and nourish us, protect us from evil or bad, bad tendencies. And they have also the bits to guide us to lead us to move us in a good direction. And so in that sense, they're kind of like rulers of our inner life. And what I find fascinating about this is that the idea that there's five capacities inside of us, that protect us that guide us that kind of control in some way or rule or move us in a healthy good direction, that are not what we normally would take as being me myself in mind. The degree to which we organize ourselves around self, around our self identity about me and what I supposed to get and what I'm supposed to do, especially in terms of control and accomplishing doing things and you know, I'm in charge, I'm going to protect myself, I'm gonna get something i'm, i'm i'm, and here there's these five things which are within us. But in some ways can feel that we have some, we live in relationship to them, we support them and develop them. They're within us, but they're not us. And to have these powerful things within us when they become powerful course through us. And we really feel the goodness and the strength and the power of them as they work through work through our system and feel there's something you know, maybe it's unfortunate to say, impersonal about them. That seems kind of dry. But, and then we have in California transpersonal, which, you know, is no longer the transpersonal Institute of psychology it used to be and now it's Sofia college, you know, but they went from this transpersonal idea to the feminine wisdom. them. So one of the five faculties is wisdom. So, something which is within us, which is not what we normally identify as us, and we're evoking them and developing them. So I'll give you the common English names for these five. And as I give this talk, what would be ideal is if, as you listen to it, you identify these in yourself, not in terms of ideas, and you know, yeah, I guess I have that I read about that. But rather you recognize it in action that how they operate for you. And some of the words I'll use initially, maybe don't speak for you and I'll offer other words as well. So commonly, the five are faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. So we begin with faith which may be Most inspired at the moment talk about some maybe that's what's good gets the most press. The Pali word for faith is sada shraddha in, in Sanskrit, and I can be I'm beginning to feel like I like to give more the Pali names sounds good more than I used to, because I'm appreciating how many people come to IMC, you have an Indian background. And so when especially use a Sanskrit, those words mean something for them, it's part of their modern language as well. And, and so, the Strad our sada is, is a wonderful term. And it's a term which is kind of a concept or an activity of the heart. When we say use the English word, faith, it all too often for some people, is associated with believing in a creed. Like is my faith and you have not believed something You have to believe something on faith means you have to believe it on based on no evidence whatsoever, but you should believe it, something like that. But that's certainly not what this sada means in Buddhism. But it's also what I like to point out is that rather than seeing faith as something we believe, we can maybe see, faith is something we believe in. If we look at the ancient, ancient, the original meaning of the word belief, that etymological source of it, the word believe in the Middle Ages did not refer to the creed in which you adhered to, you know, the ideas that you kind of this is what we read in English we call I believe in God or I believe in something. And you know, it means that you think it's true. The original meaning of believe was what you love. What you hold, dear, dear what you care for? And then you have a whole different feeling for what believe is what do you love? What do you put your heart into? What do you do wholeheartedly? What do you

care for? What do you hold dear? And that has a whole different feeling that in English. The other thing that belief is used for an English way, I think is a beautiful expression. When you say when someone tells you, they believe in you, what a great expression, I think, to believe in someone means to have confidence in them and kind of really trust and have value who they are, to have some sense real clear confidence in the direction their life is going and what they're doing. Why did somebody tell you I believe in you, you know, that's kind of you know, if it imagine a child being told me being a child growing up with no one ever telling them that they're indicating that and imagine so much child growing up with people believing in them, you know, No You can do it you can find your way and your value. So what is it that you love? What is it that you care for? What is it that you value and esteem? What you know, here and, and in the early Buddhist tradition, the word sada had to do, specifically most concretely about the kind of faith, belief, confidence with which you would start your Buddhist practice. As a beginner, you don't know anything about it, you've never meditated every day any practice at all. And, and it would be like learning, you know, you know, a musical instrument or learning a craft or something, you've never done it before. And you have to have some faith or belief or confidence. It's worthwhile to learn if you can do it. And so you would, you would You know, and that that will get you going. And once you once you got to going for a while and did the training and the instrument or if you got your Everyone's so self conscious now it's for now it's like, you know, we should hold everybody in our hearts the so you have to you know, so you start learning your musical instrument or your craft whatever it is. And after a while you get the hang of it, you develop a skill, and then it's no longer faith, I could do it. But now you have evidence that you can do it. And now you have evidence based confidence. Yeah, I can do this. You know, so first of

all, you know,

I had to learn how to snap my fingers. I remember still with learning doctors, a teeny kid. And you know that was hard. Now I don't have faith I can do it now. I have confidence at least for now. Before arthritis. gets worse. And so Buddhist practices the same way to have faith is how we get started. And you know, if you go take a simple class and mindfulness now, local YMCA or community center or something where it's available so many different places, it doesn't take a lot of confidence. To do it, it doesn't take a lot of faith. It's just like, now your doctor prescribes it or something your therapist prescribed it to you, everybody, your mother prescribes it. And so when people try it out, you know, without any without a really high expectation for it'll do for them and maybe just a matter of little bit of stress reduction, which is great. But in classically, the Buddhist path was much more than just a little bit of stress reduction or pain relief. It was really a path for liberty. And to really step onto that path for its full potential of freeing the heart from whatever afflicts it freeing the heart from although any ways in which it's contracted or limited, or held down or, or caught entangled in its web of preoccupations and self concern. to really find freedom from that is a phenomenal path to be on. It's a path of a lifetime. And to step onto that, as a beginner, takes it a little bit higher degree of faith or confidence than it does, you know, just going to the Y for a little bit of mindfulness. And so and so the side that has a very important role. And so how does it get triggered? How does it be awakened enough so that it really becomes something that enlivens us or engages our something? This is what I want? This is what I

believe in. This is what I have, give faith in provisional faith in, in order to try it out. So some people get that from meeting someone else who really simply somehow embodies some of the qualities of the Dharma or practice or freedom. That really inspires them a lot. And certainly that was my case, when I was in the early years of practice, even when I was practicing, I would meet these people and say, Wow, this really speaks to me. This really resonates with something inside me. This is something that I want more than one that this is something that I believe in I love I called dear. This speaks to something about who I actually am or what seems to be a place of being at home or being in this world in a complete way. For some people tearing teachings or reading teachings That sometimes the teachings are so clear for them that I've had people tell me the scales fell from the rise. And, you know, they're from what reading a book. And from one book to you know, just the scales fell from eyes, one person said, and then you know, her whole life was changed in a radically different way. Some people, it's here a Dharma talk and that Dharma talk somehow does something to them. Wow. I had no idea. One of my favorite little stories, which is not uncommon, is people go to a Dharma talk. And the Dharma talk is about suffering. These Buddhists, and their and their suffering, and they are so inspired, because and it's life changing, because they grew up in a situation in society and a culture of family schools, whatever. No one ever talked about suffering. It was all hidden, pushed away, denied, avoided and off cost and or explanations were given for it interested in make any sense to them to indicate there was an understandable and then to have here teachings where suffering is put centerstage we address this we look at this, we take it seriously, where are the people who really looked at suffering, not to suffer better, but rather to work through it to the other side. This idea of liberation from suffering is the simplest way of talking about liberation in Buddhism. And so some people here this is life changing, wow, you can do this someone's finally talking about it. Finally, some my life makes sense. This all makes sense. This is what I want to do my life and then some people will change their life and do different to something totally different. One of my favorite stories of someone to kind of suddenly being changed by their encounter in Buddhism is a friend of mine who was out riding his motorcycle You know, he just drove over the state that his motorcycle young man and, and drove down this long dirt mountain road and came to the end of the road and it was Tassajara Zen monastery. He'd never known anything about Buddhism or anything, but he there it was. And he didn't leave. You know, later he left but me, but but you know, he became a Zen priest that is in teacher the whole thing. So, you know, people encounter things and, and, you know, meet things and some people, their faith is May I don't know if it's a negative faith. Some people come to a point in their life where they, they not only have they given up faith and everything else, but they reached rock bottom and nothing else matters anymore. Nothing else works. And they just like in that total desperation of quarterly nothing makes sense in my nothing works somehow or other Well, I might as well try this Buddhist thing. And so they put themselves into that practice and then something begins to begins to cook into work for them. And then some people are inspired because something they hear or see in the Dharma resonates very deeply with something inside that something they already know and something they've touched and experienced, that maybe they don't have words for. And they say, Oh, here it is. This is what I've been looking for. This is what I've been trying to find a place for, to express in my life or to, to touch into again. It's not uncommon for people to have for example, spend time in nature. A lot has kids. I've met people who grew up in the countryside and farms and stuff and they

were left alone to roam around and spend, you know, lots of hours in the woods and, and they touch something in there that was so important for them and somehow when they come to Buddhist practice or to or encounter though that's where that's they're talking about that. Sometimes it's in all kinds of small things that we have as children, maybe that we touched anything, not, not a few people come to Buddhism, and rediscover, not their inner child, but the inner goodness that they experienced here and there's a child and oh, for me, I remember it was after I started doing meditation retreats, that during my meditation, sometimes I had this experience of that was kind of in my chest kind of feeling of wholeness warmed certain kind of person. Quincy of goodness that kind of fell out there. And that's it. Oh, this is the experience that I as a little kid, maybe 789 years old that I called on the on the edge of the pillow. I always happened as I was going to sleep at night. So I was laying on the edge of the pillow I guess. And I would just be laying there peacefully. And at this feeling with well up inside my chest and my and my this warmth, this wholeness this goodness that. And I used to go just feel that and I didn't know what it was, you know, I didn't have any context for it or never occurred to me to do anything with it or think too much about it, except I just thought there it is the edge of the pillow experience. How nice. And then some, you know, 2020 years later, something close to that meditating on a week long retreat. Hey, wait a minute. I remember this. I hadn't thought about it for many years. Wait a minute, there it is. That's the experience. And that certainly inspired my faith. You know, wow, this is good, I'm touching something, it's accessible in a way that I never know you could access it, access it, you know, kind of, not exactly on will but, you know, do something that would touch into this childhood thing. So there's many things that inspire faith. And that faith that gets us started. Some people prefer to call it confidence. And some people translated that way. However, confidence I'd like to reserve for confirmed faith. And that's the idea as we engage in practice, that are that what started us in the practice, something begins happening to us, we experienced for ourself at Oh, this is right. This is true. This works. You know, we start learning the musical instrument and after some time, wow, yes, it's true. I can learn an instrument. It took many hours, but I could do it. And so I can meditate I can live a life that's ethical, I can cultivate my compassion kindness, I can do these things. And I am doing it and that can give birth to a little bit of confidence. Yeah, I can do it and I'll get around to it when I'm retire. No, not there. No, do it you know, on my deathbed. But then, you know, you might forget. And, but, but to awaken kind of a enthusiasm. Yes, I can do it. This is not only worth doing. This is maybe worth doing, putting at the center of my life. And so then it becomes a confidence and the word there's actually a Pali word for this kind of confidence. There's two kinds of faith there's a sada, I reserve the word faith. And, and then the confirmed confidence is called a vet shot basada which has the meaning of confidence, born of knowledge. confidence comes from knowing something for yourself. And now you don't have to believe it in terms of taking someone else's word for it, you know it, and if you know it, now you can believe it, in the sense of loving it, of caring for you have something you care for, it's valuable and now I believe I love I care for and this Bhikkhu Bodhi the big the big translator for our texts, he translates this Vecher prasada as unshakable confidence, unshakable faith or uncheck Confidence I forget maybe unshakable confidence that you have unshakable and, and certainly, myself and other people that I've been practicing for a long time, you get this sense of you know, this is unshakable, I know this, for sure this is true, this is really possible. This really is something that I want to organize my life around. And it's not uncommon for people to some point as

the practice deepens to understand that this movement towards freedom, this movement to long no longer be operating under any kind of attachment or clinging, or, or self fishness that so much of life is organized around, that this is not how I want to base my life on anymore. This doesn't make make sense to keep that at the center of my life. I'm not going to practice in the direction of putting this the Dharma at the center of the practice at the center. Which in very personal terms, I hope mean something like, I'm going to now push to the center, my heart's capacity for freedom, my heart's capacity to live with goodness without greed, hate and delusion, without selfishness without being closed or tight or caught up in my entanglements. It's not easy to do that. But that's what I want to be involved in. And that's what I want to put out the center of my life. So for, you know, so there's a range of what faith and confidence can mean for people. But as it gets stronger, it becomes a force inside of us. It's not just a, you know, policy that we have like, Okay, what should I do today? Well, I think I'll have faith. You know, check it off, you know, to do the to do list. Yes, I have faith and that's it. But rather it's something that is integrator integral to What we are realizing for ourselves what we're experiencing for ourselves what we're actually seeing in ourselves, that change the movement of practice, what it's like to show up and be mindful and, and to hold things in a way that is not perpetuating the clinging and the selfishness that can exist. And so that becomes kind of like a force, like a power that protects us. That guides us. That is our friend that wants the best of us that's going to protect us from evil, our own evil, strong word, I guess none of us have evil but, you know, lousy stuff. And, and, and so, we call it indriya. Something of the day ad, Indra and maybe now you can begin appreciating that Why we might want to interpret this, this idea that we have this something that's so special that will happily borrow the English word divine. Or if we want to add them or modifies it, let the writer do pre modifies it as a, you know, call it, our divinity inside the divinity, the divine qualities of faith that we can have. And faith is only one of these five divine qualities inside. So each of the other ones also can be developed and understood and really had this beautiful quality, beautiful kind of force momentum that lives in us It grows and develops over time. And we don't have much time to go over the next four, but maybe I can do that next week. But I want to say the other thing other than each of these, they give you maybe a little sense they were awakened a little bit of a sense You have of, of how we can relate to these are the role we can have in our in our lives. There are five actions that we can do in relationship to these five, five ways of relating to them. So the faith, oh, we can trust, trust the faith. The second energy we can enjoy. Most people don't think of him like effort like, you have to make effort as enjoyment, but this energy this effort we can enjoy. That's the that's that when it becomes a power, it has more of that quality. Mindfulness, we can love mindfulness something we really can assess it as a kind of object of love. And after all, mindfulness loves you if you give it half a chance. And then the concentration. I prefer the words Samadhi concentration, you can reveal fear. Concentration is something to have reverence for. Isn't that something that so that's kind of speaks a little bit to the specialness of what the Samadhi is that is something to revere. And then wisdom is something to something to heed. Something to listen to. You can you have within you the capacities powers, momentum, divinities, divine qualities, of wisdom, of understanding of discernment. That's that can guide us and support us in the directions we go in our life and how we find our path and how we live. And it's your wisdom. It's not like someone else is telling you what to do. And when that wisdom quality has Been evoked then the relationship we have to it is to heat it. Listen to it, go along

with it, let it guide you. So five divine qualities side. I think occasionally in English people call them five spiritual faculties. They are five faculties that you use, probably in every activity you're involved in. And it's a fascinating exercise to do to take some ordinary activity, like driving a car or cooking a meal or you know, almost anything you do. And you can actually see how each of those five ordinary, very human faculties in some way, come into play. In what you're doing, sometimes they come in play because you realized that one of the five is missing or is weak. And, and so that's one of the things, why it's kind of you're getting tripped up in how you're doing it. But you'll see that it's a place all there. And some things you do are so natural, so easy, you don't realize it, that you had these these are operating or present until you get injured or get sick or something happens and you can't do it. You know, people everyone think, you know, people, people who could walk and go walking is nothing. And then when you have injuries in your leg, you know, walking is not that easy. And so then it becomes a whole other thing I realized I had I used to have a lot of faith in my ability to walk. It was just so easy. I didn't have never had to think about it. But I certainly did and now I'm not so sure I can. Anyway it's interesting to look in your all your choose some activities during this week and analyze the process. essence of these five faculties. And, and you might find very interesting and enlightening to see how these five play out. Or if you don't understand the other four yet, come back next week. So we have a couple of minutes if we have any questions that you want to ask or you want to say about it. You're welcome to. Mike. Did you want to say something? Oh, yes. Yeah. So I'm just recollecting that in the Dharma pod, I think it actually says, to really, it's especially exciting and cultivate to five faculties to constant. It's like one of the most important things that we can do. And I think you're hinting at the balancing of the five, how they balance each other out. Faith and wisdom, energy and Samadhi. And mindfulness is sort of the anchor in the center. So I just wanted that comment. Great. Thank you. The Yes, can you move it? straight back? You've got to turned on what is causing Yeah, yeah, come back next week. If I can get to two of them, and then I can get to the, you know, to concentration next week. But concentration I the simple idea for the purposes of this, these five faculties is that the third one mindfulness is our ability to be aware or to recognize what's happening. concentration or Samadhi is the ability of our whole system, not just our control tower to sustain that awareness through time. So there's awareness and then sustained awareness. And those two aren't radically separate. But many people can have moments of mindfulness, but to have the mind the awareness, continue in a smoothie, the kind of momentum of its own, that really keeps us in the present moment with our experience. That's the function of somebody. Great

One last one. Yes. Do you mind expounding on the difference between having say unshakable confidence and no attachment? Because it seems like they're kind of at a can be at war with each other in some ways.

I have unshakable confidence that it's good to keep my hand open and not not grip anything.

Or to think about that.

So there can be a powerful confidence in the value of non clinging that actually supports us to be relaxed and clinging. And it's interesting you asked this because the word pasada that's in this unshakable confidence, the word for confidence, that it's the word Posada, which also has the meaning of serene or peaceful and so it's not zealous confidence. It has it's unshakable and strong, but it built into is this feeling of peaceful. And at the retreat, one of the teachers was talking about the energy factor, the second effort. And she talked about that the effort and effort needed is should be relaxed and relentless. So there again, we have a problem that you're pointing to, right something's like we have this idea that these things, these things can coexist. And but being unattached doesn't have to come with being, you know, now, having no energy can come with tremendous upsurge of wonderful, healthy vitality, that flows into our life doing things wholeheartedly. So we're going to stop Yes, yes, yeah. Yeah, we need to be sure we clean our hands off there. Oh, Richard says that when you pass the mic, you know, these days, we want to clean our hands afterwards. Because who knows who? What came your way. And but you know, that's true. So one of the ways of living a generous, compassionate, caring life for others, is to pick up a new practice. And, you know, they say that you can be awakened fully, totally enlightened, in any activity that you give yourself over to wholeheartedly really do this activity like it's the only thing you're doing at that moment is the most only thing to do the most important thing you do. Nothing else you're there for that. So that, who knows, you might get fully totally enlightened, you might be the next Buddha. If you do that with washing your hands, wash your hands like this is the one thing that needs to be done. Don't do it. impatiently Don't think about what's next. Don't get over it. If you want to get through washing the hands quickly so you can do the important things in life. Then I guarantee that you won't get the full practice potential of washing the hands will be shortchanged. You'll shortchange yourself. So go forth into the world and take on the practice the enlightening, enlightened, enlightening practice, make it enlightened, make it an enlightening practice, to love and have all five faculties come into play as you wash your hands. Enjoy your week. Thank you