So this is the last of the five talks on suffering on dukkha. That's part of a series of talks on the Four Noble Truths. And the first noble truth topic of this week in the full formulation of it. It's called the noble truth of suffering. And their earliest formulation of this, it was an insight described by under one understands this is suffering. And this word this I think is very important, because it's always it's specific. It's not a generalized view, generalized theory generalized principles about life, when it's an insight, this is suffering, this is unease, this is this is this is stress. This is painful. Whatever way we want to translate the word dukkha, this is dukkha. And so it's grounded in something specific as opposed to the generalization that life is suffering. That's a principle or a general you know, but to its you know, in the moment moment experience when there is dukkha. This is it to recognize it. And it might seem like a drag to really pay attention to our suffering or pain. Are stress. And it is little bit it's, you know it's painful, painful things are painful. But there's a way in which paying careful attention to it and learning how to attend to it wisely with ease with mindfulness is a path to the freedom from suffering to the end of it. That's not possible if we simply escape it, or ignore it. That leaves us more on the surface of life. But there's an art or way in which practice takes us deep into our life. deep deep into it to the other side of our dis ease or unease, that we have our dukkha and one of the things that would have said as I talked about yesterday, is that kind of he said that whatever is impermanent, whatever is in constant and changing is suffering is dukkha and it is painful, but is it painful because in and of itself or is it where we could see or experience pain? In the famous most famous sick explanation of the Four Noble Truths, the Buddha lays out this is the noble truth of the, of suffering. And he asked the question, what is suffering? What is painful? What is dukkha? And I the way I hear this question is, is more like the what is more like? Where do we find dukkha? What, what is the experience? Where's the what thing when there's dukkha? Where is it? Where is it found in? What is it? So the answer is rather elaborate. In the full elaboration of these, this, and I'll talk more about the full elaboration that as we go through these weeks, but it's no longer becomes direct insight into the
immediacy of dukkha. But now we're going into a full elaboration is a larger explanation, kind of an overview or a generalization of sorts. And threat Be very careful not to get lost in generalization, if what we're trying to do is to practice with the specifics, with the specific vicissitudes of our life, the details of our life, but there is this wider elaboration and I'll use the word dukkha Pali word rather than translating it. So as I've said, It can mean suffering stress unsatisfactoriness literally it means painful birth is dukkha. Aging is dukkha. Illness is dukkha, death is to come, sorrow, of grief, sadness, pain, distress and despair are dukkha association with what is unloved. The unbilled love it is Duca separation from the loved is to come. Not getting what is wanted is to come. In short, the five aggregates of clinging are Duke. In short, or In conclusion, for example, the five aggregates of clinging or do GM. And this last statement is, is a powerful statement about how widespread and total the experience of dukkha can be in human life. And it has to do with these things called the five aggregates. And when people explain this, it's often treat these aggregates funny word in English as, as a kind of ticked off technical meaning, but at its heart, these words it's a playing on metaphors. And it's a Buddha often uses metaphors to teach. And metaphors have a very different role in our lives than technical explanations. That kind of don't want to define technically what something is metaphors are evocative. They touch into our imagination, and through the imagination, maybe even to our emotional life and it gives us a maybe a visceral sense or experience or association with what's being taught. So it's a much bigger, wider kind of participation in the teaching than just memorizing a technical definition of something. So the metaphor that one of the central metaphors that Buddha talks about, is that a fire and this dukkha, whatever that might be, is sometimes seen as a fire that's burning us. And we are burning. The world is burning in a certain way. It's burning with the fire and there's three primary fires that are burning it's it's Burning with a fire of greed, the fire of hatred and the fire of delusion or confusion or bewilderment that these these fires hurt. These fires are singeing people, and sometimes just a little singe, sometimes it's full blown. You know, forest fire wares, you know, consumed with a volcano that we experienced within. It can be quite strong in the fire can really create deep scars in our hearts and our minds, the suffering this Duke guy that we have. And so, if you look around the world, the world is on fire. There's so much suffering, there's so much pain, there's so much distress there's so much stress that people are living under. Now here in the United States, they say that one in five children are now living in hunger. Normally before the COVID-19 era, it was something like one in 10. Still, to me astronomically high. But so many people have lost their work now. And so there's this certain kind of fire, the fire of hungry bellies, children, so painful that this should be the case. So we talked about this fire the fires that come from greed, hatred and delusion. That's what he's Buddhist primarily focusing on. And so when the Buddha keeps using the word suffering over and over again, it's very closely associated with these very sometimes powerful mental attitudes, motivations. mental states of greed, hatred and delusion, which when very compulsive and very strong, are like fires that will destroy lives. So that's the metaphor for suffering is fire, fire. You know, especially in the time of the Buddha, in the household fires, fires, you know, keeping people warm. We're dependent on firewood, and a bundle of wood, a cord of wood. The word for a cord of wood or a bundle of wood or branch, a stick of wood is like a trunk of a tree branch is Kunda, kh n da. And that is the word that somehow ended up into Buddhist English, translated as aggregate. It sometimes just means a bundle of something, a collection of something, but it specifically also means a piece of wood or a bundle of
wood. And that's the few that's the fuel or the basis upon which the fire grows. The next part of this metaphor is the word padana which can mean clinging. So the five aggregates of clinging but upādāna also means of fuel. So the Khan does this, these bundles of wood or fuel, or the gasoline we put on the woods, so it really burns is the fuel. And so this combination of there's the firewood there's the fuel, and then there's a fire that comes from it. And, and this using the same word, to mean clinging and fire or fuel or fuel for the fire means that clinging is the fuel for the fire. Fire. clinging is what fans the flames of our suffering. clinging is both is the is what keeps it going. And so whenever there's a reactivity that has to do with some kind of clinging or then that's adding more fuel to the fire. And but what do we cling to? To what's the clinging you know, clinging requires something that we're clinging to. And it's these condos, it's these bundles of stuff. This mass of wood is always something that we're clinging to. And what we're clinging to are these five aggregates, these five bundles, these five cords of wood and when the Buddha says in short in summarize, what is this suffering? He saying it's these five bundles of clinging, it's these five bunches of wood that are the fuel for the fire. That's where the fire is. The fire isn't the clinging. And what's important about this, is that that the suffering he's talking about here. And the ill the stress the painfulness, he's talking about here is the pain or the suffering. That comes from clinging upādāna. This is a bit of a tautology. What's the suffering that the Buddhist talking about? It's not everything we might in English call as being painful or being suffering. But it's a suffering that arises from clinging. Whenever there's clinging, whenever there's craving, there will be suffering. Every time Maybe some of us say I'm suffering, it might not involve clinging. But what the Buddha is addressing is that suffering that arises with the clinging and clinging hurts. If you cling, if you clench your fists for a long time, it'll hurt. The release of that clip that that clenching his freedom for the fist. So this kind of understanding now that the world of suffering, the world of impermanence we're looking at is the world of what we cling to. And if we cling to what's impermanent, in what's constant, what's flowing, then we will suffer. If we're in a river standing in a river, and we're trying to stop the river, it's not going to work. If we tried to take a fist full of water and hold it our hand is not going To work, if you try to move the river by pushing against the bank and have it go flow in different direction, it's not going to work. fighting the, or resisting or clinging to the river doesn't really work. If you take a bucket of water and pick up a bucket full of water and go back to town and say, Look, I have the river in the bucket. That's silly. You have water in the bucket. We don't have the river. clinging to the river of life that's changing is guaranteed to be a source of stress, be painful. The alternative is to see this world of impermanence and change and inconstancy, to relate to it in a different way, in a new way. So that the changing world becomes the medicine for our life. Not the illness or not the poison or something. The fire The five aggregates, the five bundles of who we are our body, our feelings, our perceptions, our mental formations, and our consciousness are constantly changing unfolding phenomena. And if we cling to it, we will suffer. But if you're allowed this psychosomatic ways in which we experience and see ourselves to just flow and move, and then we can find our ease, then we can find our freedom. So and this is kind of some of the tasks that are the second noble truth, which we'll start again on Monday. The second noble truth we go deeper into this world of suffering, and how it arises and how to find freedom. And in a few minutes, or even a minute or so, I'll take some questions if you'd like. I'll stay here for a little while. And it's Friday. So it's nice to have a little back and forth. And for those of you who are like this 7am, time to sit, Nikki Mirghafori, one of the teachers here
at insight meditation center is going to offer a 7am sitting tomorrow morning. I think it's a, she teaches happy hours. I think she's going to probably do some kind of loving kindness practice, but I'm not sure but she's a great teacher and you have some continuity into Saturday if you want. And that'll be on zoom, rather than on YouTube. So you have to go and IMC's calendar to find your way with that. So we'll see what kind of questions you might have and nice nice messages coming in. Thank you. Yeah. When one comes to the end of suffering or the outward causes of suffering still present, but one's relationship to them has changed. does it end if clinging ends? It's a good question. Maybe it's useful to make a distinction For the purposes of understanding the Buddhist teachings, between causes and conditions, that the conditions for suffering are in the world, but the primary cause, if we use the word cause that we're interested in, as practitioners, and I want to emphasize this word as practitioners, if we're really walking the path to try to end come to the end of suffering, at that time, in that context, in those circumstances, then the direction of attention is not to the conditions outside, but rather to the contribution we make to our suffering. And this is a very mature, very strong, courageous thing to do. There's definitely in conventional language, causes for suffering in the external world. And, and so we don't want to deny that we do Don't want to stop, you know, taking care of that in their proper way. But if we want to set our heart at ease in this deep, liberated way that the Buddha emphasized at that time we turn around and we really look what is my contribution to it. And and so we would say that the conditions for suffering external, the cause for it is in our own hearts, in our own clinging. So as the person says here, yes, so it's our relationship that changes. We're no longer relating with clinging, or we're relating with openness and ease with it. And then perhaps we can be wiser. So if clinging ends, the suffering that we contribute our contribution to our pain or difficulty, and as well, and since so much, it's such a very, very deep way. Some of the deepest existential suffering we have arises from clinging with clinging. It's phenomenal to go through this process of coming to the end of clinging. Let's see. Even when I can connect with DB's, there's some part of me that's on guard, like a sentinel. That can't seem to let go. How to practice with this. You want to befriend the Sentinel. You want to sit down next to your Sentinel next to that guard and accompany it and listen to it and feel it and get to know it. Spend time with it. Don't be in a hurry, to stop being on guard. Really kind of bring easeful kind, loving attention to it and really getting To know it, listen to it. Hear what it's here in a sense what it's really afraid of. And, and maybe that fear that underlies the Sentinel that needs your love. Even when I can connect with DBS, there's some part of me that's on. That's the one I just read. What's the difference between ease and complacency? complacency if you're mindful and really mindful and really attentive to it really sensitive and can feel and tune into what that's like will have some kind of stress, dis ease, pain suffering as part of it. It doesn't feel good to be complacent there is a kind of resistance or kind of shutting down and kind of narrowing or contracts constriction, ease as the opposite ease a sense of openness, sense of possibility, a sense of no resistance to what's going on. Ease can come with a lot of care and attention. complacency is just you know, so what you know, it doesn't matter kind of ease just means that our care and it does matter is done in a in a peaceful way. Wrong way Much easier to be with the hindrances. Great, fantastic. I have stopped reading watching all news because my perceptions and mental formations get activated. Most I continue to be without these current events in order to maintain some kind of serenity. Maybe for the time being, you need to do that maybe eventually you don't. But, you know, there's good reason to lose your serenity and to be agitated by
the news because a lot of it is written in order to arouse emotions in order to make people excited. So it's kind of a genre of writing which is trying to get us to buy newspapers and get excited and believe what's being said all kinds of things. It is good to have some sense of what's happening in the world. And so there are places you can go to read the news that is laid out much more with less much, much less of an emotional charge than some of the major news outlets does. And so I'd like to say that, you know, all the major news is also found in Wikipedia. Whether Wikipedia is less or more accurate than some of the newspapers, I tend to think it's more balanced, because if that's what they're trying to do, and, and Anyway, there's very little emotional charge in Wikipedia, so you can read it there. The other thing is good with the news is, you know, most news is old. It's not things haven't changed so much in the millennia, really at the heart of it all. There's not necessary to know the news. When it's new. It isn't useful to be well informed, but you don't have to be up to date by the minute or even by the day. I found it very useful sometimes. I haven't done it for some years now, but I always wish it was time I would regularly read the news a day or two or three late And I saw that my relationship to the news changed. I knew it wasn't the cutting edge and up to date. So you might just kind of follow up behind the news for a day or two and, and maybe you'll have a whole different it won't take away your serenity so much. It's meaningful for me to know that aggregates are translated from bundle of wood. I feel like and understand more clearly about the five aggregates now. Great, happy to hear that. too, maybe the risk of complicating things a bit more. The there's a strong tendency in many teachers and scholars who talk teach talk about Buddhism to treat The five aggregates as the Buddha's way, they'll say, the Buddha says there's no self. But what's the self these five processes five activities called the five aggregates. That's what defines the human being. And that's a very common statement. However, if you go back and read the teachings of the Buddha, He never says it that way. He only says that there is five bundles that they are the, what people get attached to when they cling. He doesn't claim that those five aggregates as a total is what makes up the human being. He actually never really wants to define the human being in its totality. He just wants people to be free. And the focus is on these things. People tend to cling to these concepts, these ideas, this particular way of dividing up the human being. And there's other ways that he divides up the human being that he doesn't see As a source of, of suffering as what we cling to, so much, and oddly enough, he uses the word citta for the mind and Kāya for the body and this distinction, but these if you really look and see what he how he talks about the mind and the body, this citta and Kaia it that also is not what the person is. Rather, cita and kāya are, how the mind constructs its experience of body and mind. And there's a way in which that's constructed. That is not a problem. And cittas never seen to be suffering. The citta is suffering, the way that the five aggregates of clinging are. So if we generalize and see the five aggregates of clinging five bundles to be everything we are as a human being, then it lends itself To kind of all kinds of complicated questions about, well, if they drop away if we don't cling to them, who are we? It's the five aggregates are a particular thing. There. They define what we cling to, not who we are. Okay, maybe. Okay, well, I think that it's eight o'clock and I actually have another teaching to do teaching a retreat this week, online retreat, and in 15 minutes, I'm supposed to be giving instructions there. So I think it would be greater ease for me to stop now and, and get ready for the next. Thank you for this week. And thank you for our time together and I look forward to next week when we go through the second noble truth. Thank you.