

2020-07-17 Be, See, Free, We (5 of 10) Being Stable

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SPEAKERS

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So it's sometimes thought that liberation, spiritual freedom that Buddhist practice is about is some kind of radical other kind of experience. It's quite separate from how we live our lives and what we have access to in everyday experience. But I think one way of understanding it is that it's taking what's quite ordinary and expanding it, developing, letting it grow and flower into its fullness. So for example, sometimes it's described that a liberated mind is imperturbable, can't be shaken up or disturbed by anything. But I think that everyone, I hope, can in some small way, discover how their unshakable, how the mind is stable and undisturbedable in some ways. In some little ways. It could be very, very mundane and trite. It could be as simple as you're looking for your cup, and it's not in this usual place. And you don't get disturbed. You don't get upset, you don't get agitated. You just look around the kitchen to look, maybe it's in the other counter or in another room. And in those moments, things are not as the way you wish. The cup was not where you wanted, but there was a ease, a stability, steadiness and an unagitated state in relationship to looking for that cup. Very simple. Sitting in meditation, can we recognize where there is stability? Can we recognize where there is steadiness? And rather than thinking it's something new, we have to make happen and figure out how to do, but rather the recognition. And then with the idea that, even if it's a small little kernel, that is what's going to grow and develop. And it's grows and develops partly because we do recognize it. We do appreciate its value and usefulness. We make room for that to grow. Make room for that to be there as a support for us.

And this idea that we're developing supports for practice is an integral part of Buddhist practice. That the way that the language of the Buddha, is he talked a lot about the conditions. It's very rare that he talks about causes, but rather he talked about the conditions that are required for certain things to happen. But they're not necessarily the cause for things to happen. Because there's a wide range of

conditions that come together and when they are there, then something in the natural world begins to unfold and to move.

So the same thing with us. Buddhist practice has what we contribute to the practice is we put in place the supportive conditions for the practice to grow. Rather than we are responsible for the practice growing, we're responsible for putting in place the conditions that allows it to grow and that saves the practice from trying to engineer it or trying to we're the doer or that, or the burden of responsibility is up to me to make it work and and you know and figure out what to do. But rather it's our responsibility is putting in the conditions and then allowing the Dharma to move through us, allowing this process of inner growth to happen. And kind of Dharma willing. And one of the remarkable things I've seen about this kind of meditation practice that we do, is that we don't always know where the best direction, what's the next direction our practice is going to take. We don't know what we have to face and work with and work through and resolve. The Dharma knows. Our inner life, our hearts, our inner life knows what needs to come next.

Next, as we go through layers and layers of the mind and the heart, different things will come up and we have to face them and work with them and be mindful of them. And it's not a linear process from just going from, you know, agitated state to steadily, linearly to a calm state. It's more like a spiral. And we go around and around. And after a period of settle, quiet, peaceful, peacefulness, the practice can easily open up to some challenge that arises in being agitated, not because we're going backwards, but because we're kind of going through the layers of the mind and we have different things to sort through and work through in practice. And I like the idea that to think that the Dharma knows what we need, and our jobs to keep showing up and offering the conditions that support us to be present.

So one of the conditions I'm emphasizing today is the family of things related to stability. And this includes stillness, steadiness, inperurbability, unagitated, undisturbed. And rather than feeling that you're agitated, and it's impossible for you to become still or stable because you're so agitated, and then you feel bad about yourself. Everyone I think can find some little kernel. Doesn't matter how small. Where things are stable. And, you know, in the meditation, we just did I suggested finding it where the body touches the object that support you in the from the pull of gravity. So to feel the weight of your body against the chair, your cushion, the floor, the bed, sometimes a place of contact. It's, you know, it's quite wonderful to think of it literally, if that object was absent, not there, just space there instead, you would fall further, gravity would pull you. And because that object is there, you're not going to you know, and there's not just space. You don't fall because the weight of your body is, you know, the pool of gravity is kind of making contact with that object. Maybe that's where you feel some groundedness and rootedness. Maybe there's some other places. And so that then with that is and then prioritizing that or valuing that or appreciating that little kernel of stability and growing it, spreading it, finding more of it, developing it, aligning oneself with it, attuning yourself to stability. So once you have a little feel for it, maybe then you you can relax other parts of your body to be similar.

Perhaps you can start behaving in ways that support that stability, that steadiness, that stillness inside, that an agitatedness.

So for example, if you can get a little feel for what it's like to be unagitated in meditation than getting up from meditation to make breakfast or clean the dishes or take care of the next thing that you're going to do. How would you act? How would you behave in a natural enough way that supports that unagitated state? As opposed to jumping up and running around like your hair's on fire, to take care of everything else, and then you come back to meditate. But rather how we live, how we act in the world. Can we begin to make that in harmony or attuned with the very things that support the growth of the practice? And this growth and we're growing the very things that mature with awakening. So this stability, steadiness groundedness, that we begin to find in practice. That is what's going to grow until someday, with awakening, with liberation, it has become and grown into imperturbability. The goal of liberation is found in the mind and the hearts, the body of someone's beginning meditation practice. It's there, but it's maybe hasn't been recognized. Maybe because it's just a little kernel still, a little seed somewhere, but it's there. And as we settle in and do the practice and follow the instructions that we do, that hopefully we begin to recognize more and more, the various seeds, the various supports and conditions that are going to keep developing and growing into liberation.

And one of the very important ones, is what we're talking about today is stability. And I realized that word might not work for everyone. So that's why I offer words like steadiness, stillness. There's a strong tradition in Buddhism to not use positive nouns like that, but to use, talk about the absence. So unagitated, imperturbable. And so then you're not something you have to be, but mostly something you let go of. To settle into, and open up into. And as the imperturbability, the steadiness and stability grows, then a variety of things begin having space to grow more and more. And one of them is in fact insight, be able to see clearly. Another is a greater degree of calm, a greater degree of concentration, a greater capacity to be at rest in the present moment. Where the mind doesn't it's not like I don't know if this is fair to anybody's mind but you know, you drop a drop of water in a hot skillet it immediately sizzles and the water disappears. Sometimes, you know, my mind has been so busy, it feels like every moment of mindfulness, where I notice what's happening, it's like a drop and just my mind kind of disappears right away into its distracted thoughts.

But slowly, the mind quiets down and studies and rests in the present moment. And stability allows for a deep, deep rest and peace. And that stability that we're looking at, developing, is the foundation for being able to have a clear insight into that which is unstable. And there's something that's very liberating about seeing impermanence, inconstancy, change. But the usefulness of seeing the changing nature of phenomena increases the more we have this meditative stability with a cultivated a stillness, a capacity for steadiness.

So for this morning for the stay with the ideas to cultivate stability, and then, at the four o'clock talk, I'll talk about how stability then leads to this deep insight into inconstancy. And, for those of you on

YouTube for these today, tomorrow and Sunday, these talks that I'm giving are part also part of this retreat that's teaching. And you're welcome to come to the Dharma talk that's part of the retreat. And that'll be at four, four o'clock California time today. And it'll be broadcast on YouTube just the way it is now. And then you'll get the full kind of package of the 10 talks that I'm giving this week.

So may you in the next hours, be an explorer and then enjoyer of whatever stability, steadiness, stillness you can align yourself with and be in harmony with and support and allow to grow.

Thank you very much.