

2020-07-27 Wise Speech (1 of 5) Is it True?

Mon, 7/27 7:58AM • 17:29

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

truth, speech, declarative statement, true, safeguard, meditation, buddha, statement, misleading, speak, false, harm, life, watch, faith, precept, based, exploring, releasing, basis

SPEAKERS

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So Monday morning, and we start a new theme for this next five days. And the theme has to do with speaking, mindfulness of speaking, to pay attention to use five criteria the Buddha gave, for how to consider what to say or how to say or when to speak. The and the idea of talking about this is that it's really an extension of ideally what we begin to experience in meditation. That meditation is a vehicle or means to begin experiencing ourselves without being in conflict with anything, experience in the moment, at least of meditation. Really releasing our resistance or guardedness, the way we brace ourselves in our life, or release ourselves from the push and drive of desire and wanting and having and getting of releasing fear as it exists in us, to begin to experience ourselves in some more peaceful easeful way and that experience of more calm or ease more intimacy for with ourselves.

And meditation is not meant to be only for meditation. It's really how we want to live our lives. We don't want, you know, we don't necessarily want to live with bracing ourselves against life, being afraid, being caught in the grip of desires and craving. That we want to be able to live our lives with ease, with a degree of freedom. At least that's the kind of the Buddhist idea. And if we begin to taste this in meditation to some degree, then we have a, a foundation, we have a reference point for what that might be like to do that in daily life as well. And so we want to kind of go into our life and begin exploring how we lose that ease, and how we might find it in daily life.

And one of the more significant places where this whole enterprise, our whole endeavor can be explored, is in speech. There's a Tibetan Buddhist saying that says when in meditation, watch your mind when in public watch your speech. And that's partly because speech, what we say, how we say it, is really a window to really understand what motivates us. What's the background within us for what we're going to say? And it isn't that you watch your speech because it's the ethical thing to do. We can really watch what we want to say and how we say it, so that we can begin exploring how do I get stressed? How do I get caught? How do I lose my freedom? Because a lot of our social interactions happen through speech and if we want to find how to be free socially, speeches or a fantastic place to

bring mindfulness and study what's going on for us. Speech is also kind of an ethical place in the sense that our interactions with a wide range of people in a real kind of interactions often happens through speech through what we say or through what we write, or what we sign if we so called speak with communicate with our hands and fingers. And that if we want to have a beneficial effect on others, if we want to not cause harm, being careful with our speech, being mindful of it is also very important.

So watching speech is important for the inner life. Watching speech is important for the outer life. And the wonderful mutuality coincidence is that the same care to not harming ourselves through speech is this is involves the same care not harming others, the too go together. We harm ourselves when we speak inappropriately. We harm others when we speak and appropriately and so we care for both in watching our speech

So there are five criteria that Buddha gave for how to study your speech, what to look at what to look for, and what to guide us in speaking. And so each of these five days, I'll talk about these five. And for today, I'm going to talk about the first one, which is to speak the truth. And so the idea is we can ask ourselves, is what we're about to say, is it true? And if it's not true, then perhaps we shouldn't say it. Or if it is true, then the other criteria come into play, to help us know even the truth, should we say it, because not all truth should be spoken. Some truth is actually hurtful for people or, and causes a lot of harm to people. But to begin with a question of truth. Now, this is a little bit interesting because this is a guideline for speaking is to use the reference point of truth. The precept of the five ethical precepts that Buddhism has the precept around, right speech, there is not the dedication to truth, but a dedication to not lying, to not speaking false words. And there's an important distinction, I think, between these two, that false speech is speech, which is intentionally, intentionally misleading, or intentionally trying to say something that is not true that is going to mislead someone about what's actually happening, what's actually going on. And, and that's the precept. It's easier to notice when we're intentionally consciously going to mislead someone. When we're going to speak untruths, manipulate the situation or something like that, then it is to recognize what is true. And so the precepts have a clear standard have a clear idea of what we're actually doing intentionally to too that causes harm intentionally or consciously misleading people in a way that they would later feel manipulated or hurt or fooled or tricked or something or betrayed even. And, and that is a you know, much more serious, oftentimes complication for our social interactions, so that people can't trust us because we're, we're clearly misleading them. The dedication to be true to to speak the truth is more complicated, because it's not always clear what the truth is and different people have different philosophies of what it is that we call the truth. Some people talk about now these days, I'm going to speak my truth, as if my truth is the truth. When sometimes what it is, is an interpretation, or if sometimes it's it's a statement of fact based on preferences, strong preferences, deep preferences we have and to call a statement, my truth when it's an interpretation, that's my interpretation, my preferred and interpretation, my preferred policy, my purser preferred all kinds of things, is not quite accurate for what the Buddha talked about as being true. When he talked about not lying, not misleading, not being false, false statements, the reference point example he uses for that is in our times would be considered a court of law. That we would not have misspoken, not say things which are false, in a

court of law because of the huge impact is going to have. And they're the idea of what's false. And what's not false, doesn't often fall into philosophical questions about what is true and not true. But when we start making statements about reality about life, then then oftentimes, the it's more complicated, what is actually true, how do we know what's true?

And here's where the Buddha makes a very, very interesting ideas about truth. One is he has this wonderful teaching called preserving the truth. So our safeguard the truth. So if you dedicate the truth, how do you safeguard it? And, and he says you safeguarded by stating to people, the basis upon which you make a statement, like a propositional statement. And the basis of it means the ground or the reason or the where it comes from that you have this point of view. So, for example, if we believe something is true, but it's a belief, if it's the article of faith, then we would preface our statement, I believe, x, or it is my faith, I have faith that x is true. Now, that is a true statement because you're saying you're you're not we don't know if x is true or false. But we do know that you can reliably say, this is my belief. This is my faith and you for the Buddha, you've preserved the truth that way. So you're allowed to say what you believe, but to preserve the truth so other people have a clearer sense of what's going on. And can responsibility respond to you understand you cooperate with you communicate effectively with you. You say it's my faith that this is true, as opposed to making a declarative statement, x is so. Then there's no room for conversation. It's hard for people to be in dialogue. Sometimes declarative statements are statements of aggression even. But to say, it's my faith, or this is my assumption, that that's what we call the basis for what we believe or what we're going to say.

And the Buddha gave five criteria for, for how to safeguard the truth or five basis for making statements. It's possible these five have to do with more spiritual or feels philosophical truths more than the kind of truths in everyday life. And the first two Bhikkhu Bodhi says are more emotive emotional. One is based on faith. And the other is based on our simple gut approval just feels right. We just approve it because it's just, you know, we think it's right. And so there's no reflection, no analysis of the situation. But it just, and we might say, it's, it's my assumption this true or I prove that this is the case or you know, I, you know, and so again, that you safeguard the truth by saying it comes out of me, the out of my this is what I approve of, I haven't thought about it. I haven't reflected it and analyzed it. But this is what I make take my stand on because I believe in this. And then there's again, more room. It's not a declarative statement that it's hard to be in conversation with.

The next one is to is a reasoning based on analogy, or reasoning based on anecdotes. I think that we have an epidemic of anecdotal claims of truth, meaning that there's one instance one example of something's happened, and then that becomes the proof that something is true. But if you say, it is my, it's, I've come to the conclusion, based on this one example. Then there's more that's closer to being being a truth statement, as opposed to saying this is true. Because, you know, and so there's a humility to our statements of truth. There's a willingness to not make declarative statements of

authority. This is true, but rather based on x based on this anecdote or this analogy, I take this to be true.

The fourth one is, you know, for safeguarding the truth is using to rationally logically work something out. And so then you could say, logically, my logic tells me that this is true. Then if you say that way, then people can participate in logic, or you can lay out the logic for their people, and they can participate in coming to that conclusion. But if again, if you just make a declarative statement, they can't participate, they can't figure out what's going on.

And then the fifth one is in the ancient language when there was no written text, that literal expression is oral tradition, based on oral tradition based on tradition, I guess we could say, this is what I've been told. This is what my, my religions, I believe is my method, the tradition of my elders. This is what my culture believes this is, this is a traditional thing to believe. Then again, if you say it that way, then there's a context for people understanding where this belief comes from, as opposed to as I keep saying, a declarative statement. So and then, the Buddha and giving this teaching someone asked, how do we discover the truth. And then for that the Buddha talk to, we discover it through our body. He literally uses the word body here. We witnessed it through our body, and what that is shorthand for is is the truth that he's pointing to not all truth, but the really truth, the spiritual truth that he's looking for is discovered through our direct experience. And to be able to know and say, through my direct experience, this is what I know. That also is safeguarding the truth. Because direct experience is a particular reference point for understanding what's going on. So this care around truth, this care about the statements we make is very important in our current world of society. There's a lot of willingness to kind of spout opinions, make declarative statements that don't really allow for harmony, allow for communication, allow for real dialogue. And so to be careful and speak about first, don't mislead, don't speak false evidence. Ask yourself if this is true. But then more important or more importantly, but then in addition, ask yourself, On what basis do I believe this to be true? And then share that basis with others. This is a way of safeguarding the truth.

So, thank you for today and I look forward to our exploration of this topic. Thank you.