

Wise Speech (5 of 5) Do I have Goodwill?

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SPEAKERS

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So greetings again. And today is the final talk on wise speech. And there are these five questions that we can ask based on the five criteria that Buddha suggests for what is wise speech for when we should speak.

And so the first is the question, is it true? Is what I'm going to say timely? Is it kind or nourishing or supportive or pleasing? Is it gentle? The opposite of harsh. The fourth is is it beneficial? Today is not so much about the words themselves. But the question is, as I speak, is there a mind or heart of kindness of mettacitta, a mind, a heart of loving kindness of metta? That that if we can speak from a mind or with a mind of goodwill of friendliness, then we speak and, and so this is a kind of a high standard, but we're interesting place where the Buddha applies these four criteria is if the monastics talking to his monastics, there are occasions where someone in other monastic needs to be admonished or needs to be received some feedback or needs to be criticized even maybe.

And so that he gives us five criteria for when we go towards someone in order to provide this feedback that we have to give. And and so if we have some difficult words to talk to someone and we have to really talk to them about the behavior, are we going to stand up in a demonstration and you know, protest and speak or express ourselves in very clear and strong terms about what we feel is right and wrong or what we want to clearly feel that we want to oppose the from the Buddhist point of view in those situations, because the Buddha recognizes there are times when that's appropriate to to have these difficult conversations, to ask ourselves these five questions ending with is do I have in my heart of kindness?

Certainly don't speak that way and reproach someone from a mind of hatred or ill will or anger about anger that has hostility in it at least there can be very strong fierce, know, that some people might say is anger, but there's no hostility. In fact, there could be goodwill, that somehow kindness that somehow towards the person that is included. And this is a high standard in challenging situations where there's

difficult discussions, and some people might feel that to have kindness and goodwill. friendliness is to highest standards, then it's hopeless. I'll never be able to speak to someone. But the Dharma does have high standards. And that's why we have a practice that's why we look at ourselves and work with ourselves and grow gradually, gradually learn move in the direction where we can live a life of goodwill, that we can have that heart. It doesn't mean that goodwill means we don't act and don't speak up and don't even protest or don't talk strongly and in feedback with people that needs to receive it, or we feel need to receive it. But we do it from that place of goodwill, that place of really considering that is it beneficial for all everyone? Am I speaking from the place of benefit into myself? So I'm not harming myself as I speak. Is it beneficial for our communities beneficial for the person I'm talking with? Am I doing in ways that are not harsh is in doing it in a way that you know, so these criteria so the Buddha does recognize the importance of speaking up, but then these criteria this idea of acting and speaking with kindness, with metta, is taught in a very particular place where the Buddha says that this is where a monastic, there's a tremendous emphasis on non violence, non harming. However, if a monastic is being attacked, physically attacked, the monastic is allowed. That thing I think the language means to strike out for the purposes of escaping. In other words, it's possible to maybe throw it back you know, back in those days, to throw up your arms to block someone who's who's gonna hit you, in order to stop the hit. But so that you can leave so you can get out of the way not to fight the person, but to become safe so you're allowed to to kind of discuss in the Buddhist monastic community, a lot of certain degree of content Like this.

However, and the reason I'm telling you this, however, there is a criteria that's required if the monastics going to do this. And that is, there has to be kindness in their heart, there has to be loving kindness metta, a mind of loving kindness. And this monastic precept or rule is behind, probably behind what this famous Indian teacher then when Indra Ji, who was a teacher for Joseph Goldstein and Sharon Salzberg in India kind of introduced them to vipassana. There was a Western woman who I think was accosted or something or some on the street, maybe India and so she came to Mahindra and said, What do I do if someone comes in it costs me in some way. And Mahindra said, with all the loving kindness, you can muster, you hit them over their head with your umbrella. And I think the idea is in order to escape in order to make yourself safe. So the emphasis here I want to make is, is that it's not so much that we are supposed to hit people all the time with the umbrella. But there are ways in which we're supposed to take care of ourselves and make ourselves safe. But this very high standard, to do it with loving kindness to do it with metta. And I'm sure that there's people who will strongly protest that if they do that they can't be safe. It's not appropriate. people deserve our hostility, they deserve something different. That will be too, too forgiving, too soft, too. not strong enough in our protest or in our caring for ourselves. And I would like to suggest that loving kindness might look maybe kind of soft because there's a softness to it, but it can be also very strong. That there can be strength in showing up with kindness, a strength and not giving into hostility, a strength to not be harsh inner voice. But to be strong. This whole idea of these five questions five criteria for why speech is not meant to be wishy washy. It's not meant to be evasive or just kind of vague or kind of, say things in such a broad, soft way that no one really knows where we are and where we stand. But it's also possible to be quite definitive, to speak or speak our mind or what's going on, to really be clear and

precise and even strong in our statements. But in doing that, people will feel that we're not here to diminish anyone. We're not here to, to hate anyone. We're not here to dismiss anyone and we're really here to speak strongly. With Kindness with looking for what's beneficial with a kind of caring voice, or kindness, or not a harsh that is harshness that's almost like hostile. And they begin feeling that when we speak, we know how to speak what's true, or to say a different way we know how to speak, what's actual, what's really kind of close in and we can rely on those words because these are not wild interpretations. They're not assumptions. They're not judgments, they're not or you know, or abstract blame. They're really kind of staying close to the experience what's happening here. And it's timely. People feel like yes, this, if not now, then when this is a good time.

So to say so to cultivate a heart, the mind of kindness, of goodwill, of friendliness. And there's all these different ways of translating metta into English. And probably each of you will find some of these words more useful than other words, the word loving kindness. That's a common translation for it. It's beautiful translation of metta. And for some people is maybe a little bit too high, too idealistic or too little bit vague, but how do you do that? Because it's possible to have goodwill for others without loving them. And if the idea is you have to have loving kindness for everyone that might be asking that might be to highest standard. But to always have goodwill to always approach and be with people with well wishing The everyone for the person you're in conflict with, with oneself with you know, that yes, there's there's a well wishing, and I don't have to love you. I don't have to, you know be gushing with kind of kindness and, you know, but basic human friendliness, goodwill, well wishing that that is where we're coming from. And to do so is beneficial for ourselves that is nourishing. Because in the Dharma, we're always using as a reference point. What is it that nourishes, supports our own inner growth and development that doesn't have to exist, apart from our engagement with the world. In fact, the engagement in the world has greater value for the world. If we're staying close to the development the growth of our own freedom or kindness, our own honesty, our own capacity for being present in an aware way to be nourished from the inside. So these five questions, I'd encourage you to experiment with them and become adept at it, then maybe talk to other people and have conversations about each of these five questions and what do people think about it and really massage and work and make them part of your life, if not just for this coming weekend, but maybe for a while and see what how it begins shifting and changing your perspective on things and your understanding of yourself and what you'll learn in the process to become wise speakers to become a wise person.

So thank you very much. And I have one announcement I'd like to make and that is the Buddha that you see behind me here as a custom of monastics, they sometimes go on arranged retreat. And so the Buddha, Sunday afternoon is going to go off for a while. I don't know how long he's going to go off to meditate on his rains retreat. And there's his place on the altar here at IMC is is going to be replaced is taking his place will be one of the great female monastic disciples of the Buddha named Patacara. And so her statue will be here starting for all you and Monday morning and maybe Monday I'll talk a little bit about Patacara. And but I'm telling you this now partly because on Sunday afternoon, we're going to do have a 30 minute unveiling and placing or have that statue on the altar here. A group of students here at IMC have gifted this set beautiful statue of Patacara to us. And we're going to

unveil it here. And then eventually it'll live at our retreat center at the insight retreat center. And you'll see a photograph of Patacara on the homepage of the website, if it doesn't just pop up right away. On the What's New section, there's an old announcement about this event on Sundays. And it'll be on YouTube, this live channel here. So some of you might want to come and otherwise I'll be here Monday. I look forward to being with you again. Thank you.