

The Dharma (3 of 5) Inviting Seeing

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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

ehipassiko, ehi, passiko, come, see

Gil Fronsdal

This is the third talk on the five characteristics of the Dharma. This saying is meant to express the kind of confidence that some people have in the Dharma:

The Dharma is well spoken by the Buddha. It is visible here and now, immediate. Inviting us to see. Onward leading and to be personally known, experienced by the wise.

Today the topic is *ehipassiko*, which is sometimes translated as “inviting inspection,” “inviting us to come and see.” It is a compound of two words. *Ehi* is kind of an instruction, “come, come here.” *Passiko* has the word “to see” in it, “come and see.” It's the same root as *vipassana*, which has *passana* in it. *Passa* is “to see” as well. So come and see.

The Buddha, early in his teaching career, when someone wanted to become ordained as a monastic, he would say to them, “Come *bhikkhu* (monastic).” Simply,

“Come, come here, come into this” was the ordination ceremony, nothing more. I like this because *ehi* (come and see) has an association in my mind with a movement to step into the spiritual life, dharmic life, really fully. “Come, come *bhikkhu*, come into this.”

The Dharma beckons us to see, invites us to see, it says, “Come look.” It is not telling us, “Come learn, come read these books, memorize these teachings, believe what I'm saying.” Rather it's saying, “Come and look, come and see.” It is beckoning us.

The question is: “What is doing the calling? What is inviting us to come and see?” Some people have suggested it is the world. Everything that is there, there is a request that we connect with it, that we know it. We really are present for this world because everything is important. I have known some wonderful spiritual practitioners. You get a sense when you're with them that everything is important, every little detail, everything we do.

An inspiring event that I witnessed many years ago in the late 1970s was an unusual gathering, maybe the first time, of about seven, maybe the only seven, full Zen teachers in the United States. Most of them were Japanese who moved here to teach Zen. They had a meeting one evening with a panel for us Zen students. They were sitting around a table answering questions. A

Zen student came along with glasses of water for them. The student reached behind them and put the water glasses on the table for them, kind of innocuously. As he went down the table, he came to the last teacher, Maezumi Roshi. When the student left the water, the teacher turned around as if the person bringing the water was the most important person at that moment and bowed in appreciation and thanks.

The fact that none of the other teachers had done that startled me: “Wow, this is important for this teacher. This is as important as anything else.” The other teachers seemed to me so involved in the Q&A that they didn't notice, maybe. But there is this idea that everything is important.

Later I was sitting in a retreat next to a Japanese Zen monk, and I saw him bow to his teacup. I thought, why would you bow to a teacup? So everything is important. What is inviting us to see is the world. Be present for it. Everything is important.

Another way of understanding what we are being invited to see is the seeing itself. Seeing is important. Come and see. Come and be involved in the seeing. Freedom is found in how we see, how we are aware, how we know. As we start tuning into how we see, how we know, a fantastic thing begins to happen. We start recognizing how our awareness, our seeing, our

knowing, gets hijacked, caught, and utilized by our attachments, greed, agendas, and conceits.

We feel it get tight, frozen, pressured, assertive. The knowing is not spacious, relaxed, open, or peaceful. “Come and see” I take to be partly an invitation – not so much what you look at, or in addition to what you are looking at – to the act of seeing. Come really see. Learn about your seeing. Learn about how you are aware. Learn about the richness and value of this present moment ability to be present and to see.

What is calling us to see is the seeing itself. The seeing itself wants to be free, open, and available. The analogy I have for this is – if you sit and meditate in a nice way and come out of meditation very calm, centered, and present, then the seeing of the world around us happens naturally and easily. Things begin to sparkle and stand out in highlight in a way they weren't when we were busy and stressed in everyday life before meditation.

I remember the first time I had this experience. I felt everything was sparkling. I said, “Wow, has someone gone around and cleaned while I wasn't paying attention?” Or sometimes taking a nap during the day I've woken up in a place where there's sunlight coming in through the window, and I can see all the dust particles playing in the sunlight. That is completely

interesting to see. Not because the dust particles are so interesting perhaps. What is so compelling is the very relaxed, open way of seeing that just seems to happen on its own. A way of seeing that is free of attachments, agendas, and all this stuff.

So come and see. The Dharma is come and see. See each thing as important. Come and see. Be in the seeing and the freedom that is there. See deeply.

As we do that, there is a lot to see. One of the things to see is what we'll talk about tomorrow. Another amazing quality of the Dharma is that it is onward leading. What is that onward leading? Well, I'm getting ahead of myself now – that is for tomorrow. I got excited.

For now, it is our capacity to perceive. Our capacity to know. A capacity to see literally and representing all the acts of perception. There is something that is welcoming us, inviting us, to let that come to the foreground. There is some feeling of invitation, some calling to it. “Come” is part of the Dharma that is within us. This call to be present, to know, to see, lives within us. That gets obscured, covered over, by preoccupation, strong desires, strong aversions, being in a hurry. But as we are no longer in a hurry, we live in this extended present moment where time gets stretched out or is more open or seems timeless.

I think maybe you'll feel the call to being aware. Being aware in a way that has been set free of our thoughts, preoccupations, stories, past, and future. Where just being alive is enough. So, *ehipassiko*. Come and see. Come look.

May this be the day when you explore and consider this. What I'm suggesting requires giving yourself that kind of extended time of now. If you're in a hurry, you can't feel the call, the request, the invitation. From time to time through the day give yourself that extended time and see what you can discover that might be similar to this call to attention that is free, peaceful.

I hope you enjoy your day and your exploring of this wonderful invitation to be present. Maybe responding to that call can be entering into a deeper, fuller life. Thank you.