

10_15_25 Talk*

*This is an automatically generated transcript, so there are errors.

Speaker 1 [00:00:01] Namō tassa bhagavata o arhato summa sambuddhassa. Namō Tassa bhago ato o arhato summa sambudhassa Namō Tassa Bhagavata O arhata summa sambud hassa. PURANG DAMANG SANGGANG NAMASAMI

Speaker 2 [00:00:35] So it's good to meet everyone here. I began with a homage to the Triple Gem, the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, which is a traditional beginning for talks in my tradition as a monastic of the Theravada forest tradition originating in Thailand and Ajahn Chah. I grew up in Spokane and went to college in Portland before going off to Thailand, where I lived for about seven years and four years ago. Came back to Seattle on election night. So maybe it was five years ago, 2020. And Seattle, the most secular city in the U.S. Statistically, as a monk dressed as I am. And was unsure what I would find. I asked one of the teachers I know in Thailand, a monk named Ajahn Siripanyo, about how to interact with news and the whole environment back in the US. And he said, you can watch the news, but you have to determine not to let it give rise to even one unwholesome mind state. Ethos to keep. What I found coming to Seattle. We began a project called Clear Mountain Monastery, although we don't actually have a monastery yet. Someone was looking at the website recently and just saying, it's like trying to find the self. There's no monastery, there's no self. What we found is monastics in our tradition don't use money, we can't touch money, we can ask for food or anything except water unless we're ill. We can't store food. And this was the Buddha's way of making the monastics unable to cut themselves off in a spiritual cocoon from the world. Every day, we have to go into the city and wait. We can sort of wait there or beg for food. We sort of just stand with our bowls looking like monks and people come.

[00:03:01] And what's so meaningful? Is in modern America, in the most secular city in the U.S., I went to Pike Place Market for my first day here with no one knowing I was going to be there. And within 30 minutes, seven people had given me food. You know, someone comes up to you and says, what are you? And you say, I'm a monk. I'm an alms round. They say, can I give you \$5? And you say, no, actually, we can't receive money. And sometimes they walk away. But sometimes they say, can I, can give you a sandwich or a piece of bread? Half a Rolo's. I've got all these things have happened. And what you get to see is the astounding goodness that hides below the surface of the world and which we can forget for the headlines. And I'm so astounded by how easily As human beings, we forget the bright garden our hands work in for the faint whisper of a serpent. And Rick, as a neuropsychologist, has, a neuroscientist, knows better than anyone and speaks to the proclivity of human beings to fixate on what is wrong, the suffering. And there is plenty of that, and I'm not denying that, or... The fact that we must and should look towards the change we can affect in the world. To also note that the goodness that surrounds us and holds up our lives remains and the Buddhist principle of Yoniso Manasikara, appropriate attention, literally means Yoni means womb, Manasigara means action of the mind. So action of mind that goes to the source or attention which gives rise, which gives birth to mind state. This is essential. Hegel famously said, Evil lies in the gaze that sees evil all around it. This applies to our own practice.

[00:05:13] As we develop on the spiritual path, we begin to see more and more our own imperfections, our moment of entropy, the metrics of right and wrong cease to be as salient as the language of beautiful and unbeautiful. And yet that metric becomes almost visceral. The sense of if we're using our time well or wasting it. Because once we've begun

to intuit the true power of a human life, what we can become, the goodness that can be cultivated in a human heart, then I think something in us turns towards that and Who begins to understand that any action not commensurate with that goal is in some sense a betrayal of that higher level patterning in us. I remember in college, I was at Reed for two years in the Portland state, just so hungry to meet anyone that seemed to have a purity of heart beyond what I had seen before. And then I saw a video of Ajin Shah. Paul Breiter, one of his disciples, spoke about his first meeting with Ajin Shah. He said, he looked like a big frog on his lily pad, happy, and I thought I would do anything to be like that. Just this sense that as we practice, we become very aware of how much work we have to do, how our speech can sometimes be harsh, and it's one of the great tragedies of Western practitioners that you get to see up close as a monastic or meditation teacher because people come to you and people are so good, and yet they're so brutal to themselves. This is, I think, part of our Judeo-Christian heritage. It's part of our consumerist heritage and more.

[00:07:19] But we fixate on the evil, on the bad, and the Buddha said that if one thinks, I will go to a negative state because of one's past bad actions, then that will condition the mind in such a way. But if one thing, one should think, that was not good. But I cannot undo what I have done. And just as a conch blower would make themselves heard in all four directions, even so one develops the heart filled with loving kindness, compassion, rejoicing, and equipoise, the four brahma-viharas, and even so any limited karma does not remain there. And the sense that the bright luminous mind can let go of these past actions, and that it's very important as practitioners that we notice the brightening in the heart, even as we do notice the things that we're letting go of and skimming off the surface to achieve a greater purity of spirit. So there's a sutta that I love that addresses both of these points, and a sutta is one of the Buddhist discourses, as most of you, I think, might know. And it's called the Gold Washer. And the Buddha says just as a gold washer would take gold and wash out by washing again and again the coarse gravel and grit until just the moderate impurities remain, sand. Then he would take the sand and wash it again and again, or the gold, and wash the sand again and again until only the fine impurities remain. Black sand and fine black dust, or fine sand and black dust. Washing these again and again, the gold washer would be left only with gold, but it would not yet be malleable or workable. And so heating it again and again in a forge, he would heat it until it was malleable and workable, and then whatever instrument or ornament he tried to create from it, he would be able to.

[00:09:43] Even so... A practitioner intent on heightened mind cleanses the coarse impurities of heart. Misconduct by body, speech, and mind, that's the gravel. Having cleansed these, they cleanse their mind of the moderate impurities. The intention towards sensuality, the intention towards ill will, the intention towards cruelty. Having cleansed the mind of these, they cleanse the heart of the fine impurities. Thoughts of one's home, thoughts of one's vana, that means caste, and it literally means color. So occupation or family, in this particular moment I like to think in terms of the color of red in blue. Cleanses the mind finally of thoughts of not wanting to be despised. After having cleansed the mind of these, they are left only with thoughts of Dhamma. But the mind is not yet malleable or bright and is held in place by the fabrication of forcible restraint. But after cleansing the mind again and again, the mind becomes luminous and bright. And then whatever purpose one turns it to, they may achieve. So I love that simile. I like it on so many levels. Begin with the coarse impurities, the gravel we wash out, misconduct by body, speech, and mind. These align with largely what we think of as the five Buddhist precepts, not killing, not stealing, not lying, not engaging in sexual misconduct, not taking intoxicants. But these undergird a life and in the West we've forgotten that we know that inner proclivity affects external action.

[00:11:54] So we like someone, so we give a gift, but what we've forgotten is that external embodied action affects internal inclination of heart. So if we keep that first precept of not killing, even a mosquito, you find after two or three years. Spider in the bathroom you used to think was just kind of ugly is actually a little bit cute and you might actually name it. This happens quite often with spiders especially because you can sort of form a relationship with a spider. They don't go anywhere and they're way more scared of you than you are of them. I'm reminded of Ajit Amaro who got a houseplant and was frustrated because it became infested with aphids, and there was a lot of suffering. Until he decided to stop keeping a house plant and start keeping an aphid farm. And there's a teacher of Ajahn Chah, Ajahn Tung. And the instruction his teacher Ajahn Mun gave him was to keep the five precepts absolutely perfectly by body, speech and mind. And by many accounts that was enough to carry him to full purity of heart, awakening.

[00:13:10] So this sense of refining our actions, and once again, often this isn't the sense of right and wrong. Many of us have let go of most actions that fall into that capital W, wrong. But what does it mean to take action that is un-beautiful versus beautiful? And what we find, I think, in many Buddhist lives, or sorry, practitioners' lives, spiritual, whatever tradition... Is we usually measure our life on this X-Y axis, success and failure. And when you practice, you begin to move through a Z axis. It's a whole different strata of growth. It's profound, but often your life looks the same on the outside, the same job, the same marriage, the same relationships. And yet everything is changed by the fact that your intention for it in that life is towards awakening and purity of heart. And you can make everything a gift. And sometimes that refining of body, speech, and mind are just the smallest things. Like when you take out the laundry of your partner or your roommate, can you fold it into the laundry basket? I've used that example so many times in Dharma talks now that I always have to do it when my co-monk actually finishes his laundry.

[00:14:29] But little things like that, I know one practitioner who... His determination was to try to put away the dishes as quietly as he could to make every motion as beautiful as possible, in part because his wife got quite annoyed when he made a lot of noise, but also just for the sake of mindfulness. Just the subtle, un-beautiful acts of speech, you know, what would it mean to stop gossiping? This is the Achilles heel of so many, where the short-term closeness felt by sharing a story about someone is so outweighed by the knowledge that a friend has because you won't gossip about them, about anyone else. You won't be speaking about them behind their back. And it's a profound integrity and dignity that comes from that practice, actually. Saint Teresa of Avila was known for never saying about someone something she wouldn't say in front of them. And that's a bit much. Sometimes there's moments where you have to speak honestly to another about concerns you have about someone, but can you carefully frame those moments and say I usually don't say things like this, but I need to quickly speak about a concern. But then after that, to pull back to this ethos of just not speaking gossip. And for many practitioners, this is a real weak point. So refining body, speech, and mind. Not lying.

[00:16:08] The second and moderate impurities, the sand. The intention, what are called the three wrong intentions in Buddhism, the intention towards sensuality, the intention toward ill will, the intention to its cruelty. One cleanses these from the mind and heart. And I think it's significant that of those three, two of them deal with anger. It is so easy to live life in a low grade level of aversion, to dwell there, and to not even notice after a time. One teacher I know says that the keys to mindful practice for most people are keeping your sila, your virtue, clean and not dwelling in ill will. And there are several practices which are really useful for this. In the Visuddhimagga, one of the most comprehensive commentaries

of the ancient world, the section on dispelling anger is the longest of any of the sections of dealing with defilements.

[00:17:16] And so one thing you can do is, from the very beginning, the moment you wake up, you'll notice the mind wants to crystallize around something, whether it be anger or aversion or that argument. And just to The moment you wake up, be on guard and help your mind, gently steward it to crystallize around something wholesome. So for the first 15 minutes of your day, can you be really on guard and just bring to mind loving kindness, a mantra, even play a chant or a wholesome kind of a Dharma talk or something on your phone, whatever it takes to not let the mind crystallize round anger, even before you move. Can you bring awareness to the heart and kindle that sense of love there? Think of baby owls, whatever it takes. And that shifting of the trajectory of the heart at the very beginning of the day will change the whole trajectory. It pays dividends throughout.

[00:18:12] The next thing is just forgiveness of those we feel resentment towards. And forgiveness in a Buddhist or spiritual context is, sorry, I use the term Buddhist a lot, I'm a monk, but for all practitioners, is predicated on an understanding of conditionality, where if you truly understood someone's conditions, you could never be angry. We've all had that experience of not understanding why a boss or a loved one is acting a way, a certain way. And then you learn what happened in their childhood or what's happening at home. And there's a sense of, oh, of course, of course it's like that. And anger and exasperation give way to compassion. Anger is predicated always on delusion, always. And it... It really cuts off the heart. And to note that it's true sometimes there's truths that speak through that anger and you can notice those. But in Buddhist practice we you know there's a BBC special where they interviewed all these different religious leaders and the Dalai Lama was the only one that said there's never a place for expressing anger. We do not support repression. Repression is saying, I'm not angry. But we do support suppression, which means you acknowledge you're angry, you understand its truth, you let it go, but you don't speak from that place. In a context of, in the Vinaya, the monastic code, we have to meet five conditions before we can give feedback to another. We have to speak at the right time in a truthful way. After asking and receiving permission from a mind of loving kindness and have to speak to the matter at hand.

[00:20:09] And if you can keep those five conditions in your relationships it will have a profound effect because people can sense the slightest splinter of annoyance in what you say. And if just wait, often it's just five minutes or an hour or maybe a day until you can speak to that same thing from a place of care and non-ill will. Then an action undertaken from love and from non-anger is always more powerful than that undertaken from anger. The Buddha said, hatred never dispels hatred. This is eternal law. The next is understanding that if we as practitioners have so much difficulty meeting our own standards, cleansing our own hearts, how can we be so unforgiving to those who don't have our same tools? How can we so stingy of heart with people who don't have access to these same trainings and teachings? And can we find forgiveness there? We can reflect that in the Mahayana, They talk about how. Bodhisattvas will kind of split off part of their heart and come down and have it manifest as some difficult boss or a homeless person on the street, something to test you. Because that's the only way we grow into broader depth of heart, into greater compassion and patience is by difficulty. This is the cleansing flame in that forge, in that crucible of the gold.

[00:21:42] There's a famous story of Gurdjieff, a Sufi teacher in Europe, and he had one community member who annoyed everyone in the community and was extremely troublesome. And one day Gurdjieff was gone and this community member finally just went

too far and all the rest of the community chased him away. And when Gurdjaff returned, he said, where did that guy go? And they said, oh, he just, it was too much. We just told them to get lost finally. And Gurdjieff said, you need to bring him back right now, I pay him to be here. And the sense that these are our teachers in life, this is the way we develop greater breadth of heart is the people who are difficult in our lives. And there was a monk I lived with that, Abhayagiri for years, who would criticize me for everything from how I closed the door to, you know, how I pulled up my socks or didn't. And it was annoying. Until I realized that if I had a teacher trying to refine my conduct at that level, I would take it as such a gift. And so for that year, that became my practice, was taking him as my teacher. And there were moments where I had to have some real nonviolent communication with him. Marshall Rosenberg, you know, observation feeling need request framework. I had draw boundaries, but in general, he was my teacher that year. And it was one of the most meaningful practices of my life.

[00:23:10] So can we take the difficult people in our lives as our teachers? And to develop loving kindness through all of this, 10 minutes a day at the very least. One useful practice there Ajahn Sona says if you can't spread loving-kindness to someone spread it to their chair I like that and the Buddha also says if he can't spend loving-kindness to someone don't bring them to mind You know there's a conceit in Western psychology that we have to always confront these things head-on But there is a place for just if you really can't bring someone to mind with a wholesome state of heart Then write their name on a piece of paper put it in an envelope and put it into a cupboard for three months and just say, I'm not gonna think about this person for these three months and then take it out and see at that end of that period if you're ready. But it's okay, we have a duty as practitioners to protect the heart. Spiritual practice is like ripping a bandage off and we have to keep the wound from getting infected because it will only truly heal when we've taken the scab off. But we need to protect it. So the final, the fine impurities that the gold water, the gold washer washes off. Thoughts of home, thoughts of one's vana, caste, color. And I think right now I would like to emphasize political party, blue and red, and thoughts of not wanting to be despised. These that practitioner intent on heightened mind purifies. And what a list. But focusing on that second, you know, for those who are alarmed by how the world is right now, the difficulties and the polarization. To first acknowledge these are real issues and one should interact with the world and bring goodness to it as one is able, absolutely. But as practitioners we have a duty to protect the heart as well because the greatest gift we can bring the world is a loving heart that is devoid of defilement. I've seen what that does to people. When they meet it. It's astounding. What this means is that's a real part of the equation in our lives now.

[00:25:43] So when we decide how much news we're gonna watch or which news, how much do you really have to watch to stay informed in the things that will actually you can take action on? Can you take one day a week at least to take a news fast? Can you avoid looking at the phone until after practice? And can you avoid it looking at it after 6 p.m.? Or can you really just pull back even more and stay tuned to the things that are truly meaningful, that you can truly take action on. And also to understand that you're part of a deeper storyline now as practitioners. For many, the fact that you are on this call at all means that you have intuited a deeper truth that much of the world does not see. And you may have spiritual friends, but it is a vast majority of the world that doesn't necessarily. And you might be the one representative of someone's life, whether they're Republican or Democrat, you may be the representative of that path, the one glimmer of gold, if you will. And to really take that into account, like do you have to talk about the same old debate, or is there room to find your way to someone's four noble truths, their true suffering, what makes them happy, what brings them joy, their spiritual path, because that's where

humanity meets, the initiating wound. And that's where true communication occurs. And it's also the gift that we can give the world as people that are touched into that. That's not a small thing. So there's a lot of ways to interact with the moment. There's understanding that. There's also understanding that this conceit that it's worse now than it's ever been.

[00:27:34] In some ways, there are some things which are worse than they've been. But there's many ways where it's always been this bad in a lot of senses. At the Buddhist time, child mortality, 50%, famine, war, one of the Buddhist chief disciples was murdered by his son, King Bimbisara. By the commentary's account, the whole of the Buddha's family was murdered right after his life in a massacre. And yet you see how the Buddha walked through that world with love and equipoise, receiving and understanding that peace in this life does not come from thinking that things will never fall apart. It's knowing that if they did, we would never compromise our virtue and our hearts. The Buddha said there's five kinds of loss. Wealth, health, relatives, right view, and virtue. And he says that the first three are trifling. We will lose our health. We will lose our relatives. We will use our wealth. Like that meditation, we'll have to let go of it all. But the last two are deeply important. To keep our virtue, to keep our right view. To remember the greatest gift we can give the world is this practice and a breadth of heart that can hold all beings.

[00:28:51] In some sense, the language of happiness can grow cheap in the face of the difficulty of life. But the language of duty and purpose does not grow cheap. There's one teacher who said, I dreamt that life was a duty. I woke and found that, sorry, I dreamt that life was joy. I woke and found that life was duty. I acted and behold, duty was joy." And there's one poem that I like to end by Mary Oliver called The Journey, which I think speaks to this intuition many of us have of the path and of the fact that our lives are meant for much more than just a well-adjusted middle-class existence. Not that that isn't part of a good life, but it can't be the end aim. Or for many of I think we intuit that there is something more that we want of our hearts and of our path and to give the world. So she writes... You knew what you had to do. Though the voices around you continued to cry their bad advice, and the wind pried with its fingers at the very foundations. Mend my life, each voice cried, but you didn't stop. You knew what you had to do, though their melancholy was terrible. It was already late, and a wild night. Road filled with fallen branches and stones. But slowly, as you left their voices behind, the stars began to burn through the sheets of clouds. And there's another voice that you slowly recognized as your own, calling you deeper and deeper into the world, telling you to do the only thing you can do, telling you to save the only life you could save.

[00:31:02] So I wish all of you all the best and to remember that even as those impurities rise to the surface and gather such power in our awareness that we can fixate on them, to not forget the gold that begins to glow subtly, continuously underneath the heart and that that is what true allegiances too, because it's the true... Undiluted orientation and resonance of our minds that we wish we could cultivate and can if we continue to stay sincere on this path. So good luck everyone.

Speaker 3 [00:31:41] Thank you. Would you like to take questions now or have people enter questions into the chat or raise their hand? We've got a raised hand already.

Speaker 2 [00:31:53] Let's do that then. That sounds good.

Speaker 3 [00:31:54] Okay.

Speaker 4 [00:31:59] Thank you for your wisdom this evening. And I also wanted to let you know that I really enjoyed the interview you and your fellow monk did of Roshi Joan recently. I saw that as well. It was wonderful. But I wanted to ask you, you talked about the five conditions, your. Has before speaking and I didn't get all five of them and I'd like to have you repeat them if you would.

Speaker 2 [00:32:31] Thank you so much for bringing those up, Janet. No, these are, honestly, I feel like if people could just take these on, it would, I mean, they're a profound list. So there's a few different mixed ones, actually. The Buddha gave a few lists, but by the Vinny of the monastic code, part of it is we have to speak at the right time. So, you know, not right, you now, with monastics, we eat once a day, so not before the meal, that's for sure. But yeah, waiting for the right time, we have speak. Honestly, so truthfully, we have to speak after asking. We have to ask and receive permission from the other. That's a big one. We have speak from a mind of loving kindness.

Speaker 4 [00:33:17] Just a moment. I'm trying to type this in.

Speaker 2 [00:33:20] No, no, that's fine.

Speaker 4 [00:33:21] After asking and receiving permission.

Speaker 2 [00:33:25] Okay. Mind of loving kindness, Sumetta.

Speaker 4 [00:33:30] Yes.

Speaker 2 [00:33:31] And then to the matter at hand. Okay. So not like you did this thing way back when just like you're doing now, you're always like this, you know, high-level abstractions are the death of conversation, so.

Speaker 4 [00:33:47] I am a Rotarian, which is an international service organization and we have a four-way test and ours is, is it the truth? Is it fair to all concerned? Will it build goodwill and better friendship? And will it be beneficial to all concerned?

Speaker 2 [00:34:11] Oh, that's very good.

Speaker 4 [00:34:13] But I liked yours. Thank you for sharing them with us.

Speaker 2 [00:34:17] It's welcome. Thank you. And that's called the Rotary Four-Fold Framework, something like that.

Speaker 4 [00:34:20] No, it's the four-way test.

Speaker 2 [00:34:23] Four-way test, okay.

Speaker 4 [00:34:23] Okay, four-way test.

Speaker 2 [00:34:25] I'll look that up. Thank you. Yes. And with those conditions bird and management, really to note the loving kindness one, it is, yeah, if you can just wait until the splinter of annoyance is gone, it changes the conversation completely.

Speaker 4 [00:34:41] Yes, I get that. Absolutely. Thank you.

Speaker 3 [00:34:47] Okay, Rick, I would like to ask a question, so I'm going to ask him to unmute.

Speaker 5 [00:34:54] Thanks, Art. John, yeah, I don't know what to say. I mean, it's such a beautiful and deeply moving profound talk that you gave. And the meditation for me felt like a journey. I don't know quite how I'm never really experienced anything quite like that in the sense that I really had to confront letting go of everything. And it was really hard to let go, in particular, of relationships. And I found myself becoming really quite melancholy, very sad about that. But then... I started to see myself from a different place, a little bit outside the body. And I don't know if that's what death is like. But even in that place, I did feel like if happiness is to be found in relationship, we still have relationships after we die. And so I'm wondering, if you've let everything go, You know, if you've let absolutely everything go, then, you know. What or who are we and related to. And maybe that's an assumption I shouldn't be making, that happiness is to be found in relationship, but I kind of think it is.

Speaker 2 [00:36:42] Thank you so much, Rick, for just, I mean, your poise asking that question and just, I can hear the weight of it in your words and that meditation floored me the first time I heard it and I usually try to bring it to our community twice a year or so just because there's something about it, you're right, you don't realize what it would be like to let go and you don't realize the strings that are tying you and intuitive luminosity often emerges when you're able to move away from those a bit. With the relationship. I would agree, and what I find so interesting, Western Buddhism and many spiritual practitioners now, I think we're in a difficult bind because the articulations of Buddhism that came to the West were very much couched in secular language to avoid a lot of the difficulties many had with Christian upbringings and everything, and that's fair. And there's many elements of Thai, Buddhism, and cosmology which just aren't necessary for practice. But what we also came away with was a very sterilized language. For me, the Buddha's brilliance, I mean, he doesn't say your path is predicated on a binary of belief at the beginning. He just says, look, meditate, see how it goes, see what you can do with the mind. He does speak about nirvana at the end of the road, you know, the cessation of greed, hatred, and delusion.

[00:38:26] And it's... You know, and he uses this apophatic method, it's called via negativa, articulating truth by what it's not. He says, let go of the body, you're not that, let go the personality, you not that. But then what you are once that all is let go off, he's very vague about. And yet I find for a lot of Westerners, there's something in the heart that intuits relationship and love and luminosity. And we haven't needed us to call to that and to invoke it and to invite it and to get relationship with it. And I think the word the divine is how we do that. I use the meditation word God all the time, even though I'm a Buddhist, because it invokes in my heart something that's quite profoundly true. So, and I write poetry. I think that's one of the most profound ways we can have communion with the divine. So yes, you're right. You let go of relationship, but as you intuited, when you let go of something the hand is clutching. You just have to take a second until you realize your palm is filled with light, and we miss that, because it's so hard to keep our palsied shaking from clenching again and go around something new. So yeah, I think using art to call forth that, I thinking using language that works to catalyze that in the heart, like the divine, whatever it is, there's a place for that in Buddhism and in the spiritual path, as long as we hold it with proper wisdom as a means. Understanding that whatever the ultimate reality is, it's beyond language anyways, so we shouldn't try too hard. How does that land, Rick?

Speaker 5 [00:40:04] It lands pretty well, thank you. No, it lands, it's amazing. Because I hadn't thought about, I mean, I actually didn't think you would answer the question in that way. The divine, I think that resonates for me. So yeah, I that's what we're being welcomed into. So thank you.

Speaker 2 [00:40:30] Thank you, Rick. Yeah, Ajahn Paniyavada said that if one investigated God at the very end, they would find awakening. I've always remembered that.

Speaker 5 [00:40:39] What I'm sorry, could you say that one more item quick?

Speaker 2 [00:40:42] Ajahn Panjavada, one of the senior Western monks in Thailand, said, and he was a very dried down-to-earth scientific mind, which is why they surprised me so much. He said, if one investigated God to the very end, they would come to awakening.

Speaker 5 [00:41:01] Great. Once again, very inspiring. Thank you very much. Appreciate it.

Speaker 3 [00:41:09] Elaine has a question.

Speaker 6 [00:41:11] I've been just wondering about the language, and thank you so much for your talk and meditation. That was just really beautiful about language because if you, you know, dedication is often um or meta let me say this meta is um wishing people well and compassion is is you know wishing people well, may you be healthy, may be at ease, may not have pain or however you say it. That to me sounds like a whole lot of relationship. You're not like sitting there and saying, may I be, I mean, part of it is to say, may I, be happy. But I mean you teach and your teachers have said, you need to go out and be dependent upon the world. And I, and you give the permission for people to give love to you along with the food, which is beneficial for them in doing that. It's also a blessing for them. So I mean, to me that unless I'm getting this wrong, it sounds like a whole lot of relationship. It may not be gravity relationship or ownership relationship, but it seems like the highest form of relationship, you know, like mutual. I guess interdependence and care and even love for each other. So it's, it's like maybe the richest kind of relationship. Is that like okay to

Speaker 2 [00:42:52] Yeah, you're completely correct. Yeah, and thank you for bringing this up. People do have, first, the monastic form. Sometimes people think it's sort of retreating to a hut where no one ever finds you. But honestly, one of the powers of the lineage I grew up in is the communal life. We live with people all the time. It's really hard, as many of you know. But it's also a great refinement. Exercise in the meditation of letting go of your relationships, there is that distinction between... One of the Buddha's most profound teachings is called the Adita Pariyasutra, the fire sermon. And at the time of the Buddhist teaching, spiritual fire, heat, tapas was considered the supreme quality. And the Buddha takes this teaching and he inverts it and says... Our clinging and feeding off of the world is like fire. We burn through people and through things. And that's not wholesome. What we need to switch so the quintessential movement in spiritual practice I'd say and especially the Buddhist articulation is a switch from the energy of fire clinging consuming turning to ash into the energy light which is blessing bright and radiant and it is exactly what you said where you know we do need to be in communion with the world and with more than the world with something else, like Rick was pointing out. You begin to notice more and more the difference between a relationship feeding off of people and giving

because you can't truly love someone something as you're feeding off it, at least not completely. And so when we cultivate this internal wealth of spirit and happiness through meditation and practice and virtue and giving and brightness of heart, then we have something to give and we are less, we have to cling less to people and feed off of them less. So for me, that exercise of letting go is just letting go of that side of things, but you're right. For me, I feel surrounded by love more and more, and that's never, it's the difference between relationship as intertwined strings and sympathetic resonance, where you pluck one string and all strings that are tuned the same resonate in time. It's less entangled, but it's far more powerful in the long run. I think, I hope. Beautiful.

Speaker 6 [00:45:29] And instead of feeding off people, you feed them.

Speaker 2 [00:45:32] Yeah, yeah. Well, they do feed me sandwiches though. That is accurate. Yeah. Thank you, Elaine.