

2013-10-07 Being Whole Caring For The Environment

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SPEAKERS

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For the world or, or some appreciation of the world, the coming out of the Buddhist tradition is comes from the myth of the Buddha's awakening. And that is, after his after he was awakened, it said he stayed in his in his spot of awakening underneath the Bodhi tree for seven days, enjoying the bliss of his freedom. And then he got up and from his place, and the myth says he took a few steps out away from the tree and then turned around and gazed at the tree, and then bowed in gratitude to the tree for supporting him, shielding him shading him, sheltering him during a time in which we sat there pursuing his awakening. And this idea of offering gratitude and appreciation to the natural world. I think is a beautiful thing to do. And I suspect that If I tell you all, you know, this is a good thing to do. Either I'm talking to the converted, or you just irritated by this idea that we should appreciate nature. So I'll try not to do that do it that way. The, but I will offer you another way. And that is that when we sit down to meditate, we meet ourselves, we find out what's happening here, the functionings of our mind, begin becoming clear. And it's very common people first sit down to meditate. More often than not, they discover their mind is out of control. Or their mind is in control but they're not. It's just kind of a bit chaotic a lot of thinking and reading you know. And, and then as the mind begins to settle down, you find out there's All kinds of unresolved issues or different ways in which the mind operates operating systems that are operating around beliefs, desires, aversions, fears, concerns that are kind of operating, that are kind of driving the driving the ship. And we realize we don't have to. And so we begin slowly relaxing and letting go of some of these things which are unnecessary. And in particularly, we let go of those things which are unnecessary in the moment, that keep us from being at peace, purpose or being at ease at ease or relaxed or calm. But as we do this, it also begins to remove the veils or the filters over our eyes. And we begin to see more clearly, in the process of meditation, that clarity, we start seeing more deeply some of the more more deeper operating systems that we live by. And one of the simple ways Referring to the other thoughts, the beliefs, the structures of our thinking, that operate again away of our well being. Our thoughts and beliefs that divide us. They keep us fragmented. Sometimes we're fragmented from ourselves, we have parts of ourselves, we don't like trying to push away. Things we feel like we shouldn't, shouldn't do. And there's a lot of activity trying to defend ourselves and be apologetic or criticize ourselves and used to the whole slew of things that keep us divided from ourselves. And as those activities of separation division of holding things at a distance or being critical or angry, begin to quiet down.

We start feeling more whole. And feeling more whole is a beautiful thing. And it's a lot of wisdom to treating ourselves as a whole. Rather than treating ourselves ourselves with the conflict or animosity and to treat ourselves whole as a treat all of who we are within the scope of attention of awareness, in

particular awareness that is kind and awareness which is inclusive. And awareness doesn't divide doesn't say that's bad. This is right, this is wrong. This is the good part of me, this is the bad part of me. And there's a some people find very meaningful to open up and have a certain kind of attention, that doesn't condone, or approve of everything that we are, but also doesn't continue the fragmentation separation, begins relaxing attention and had a holistic presence for who we are to hold ourselves as whole, to see us as a whole being. And as we do this deeper and deeper process of quieting the mental activities that keep us from being whole, it becomes more and more enjoyable to behold. And it's quite remarkable then to be able to hold some of the ways that were maybe a little bit unusual. Most people have a few things which might be slightly not most of you, of course, but some people you know, they're a slightly odd and I no longer see those things as problems but see them as something just you don't do celebrate them either just kind of see this, this is who we are, this is going to hold any kind of sense of whole holistic whole. And in that holistic whole, relax, relax more and, and not feel in conflict in the world. So it's quite meaningful and, and then from that place as possible to become more sensitive in a variety of heartfelt ways. So one of the things is to have more compassion. Some people find they have greater self compassion out of that some of these oddities might be a little bit painful. And so to be whole, is to be able to hold that in our compassion, rather than the narky self criticism we might there and also we begin so is this capacity for Feeling ourselves and having compassion caring for ourselves being friendly, be having goodwill becomes a stronger and more more strong thing. But that but that sense of lowering the forces of separation, the forces of being in conflict with the world. Also world works not just within our psychologically but also works with the world around us. And so it can be with our friends

where I've, you know, one of the beautiful things I found from being meditating with people, maybe some of you have experienced coming to IMC, I hope so. Some of you maybe have been on retreat and experienced that there. And there are other situations in life where this can happen. Where the usual divisions which we live by the fears of certain people, the judgments of certain people begin to fall away as well. And we're able to be together just as people And we stop seeing people as roles. Whatever. The when I was live in Japan, I was told that this operates in the Japanese baths that used to have me public baths and like many people would go to public baths debates didn't have showers and stuff in their homes. And so in Japan in Japan is somewhat of a article stratified social structure there. And people have to speak differently, depending who you're speaking to in the different class structure and all that. But when you go to the baths, and everyone's naked together, it's understood that all the social hierarchy and differences falls away and people are just there as people and it's kind of a more egalitarian place. So it's possible to come to meditation and be around people for some while and the mind begins to quiet down, quiet down the forces of judgments and criticism and, and fears of people and something begins happening where the people around, you become just people, we're just here together in a simple way, the same people who you might have seen outside and talk in public, and they're the kind of person that well, you're not so sure about maybe something right, and here are some experiences set on that go. And then I would like to say that then we become a little bit more whole, because we're more inclusive, we're not creating boundaries and separations. And, and, you know, it's quite dramatic if you go to a retreat, these like we have seven day retreats and the feel the difference between the as a community the evening we open, and how it's like the afternoon we and seven days later, and in the sense of being you know, the separation the differences we have between us become less and less important, and our sameness becomes quite important to are quite meaningful, partly because to live caught up in the differences between people. Take work. It's an activity of the mind. And as we begin quieting down that sense of coming more holistic and more inclusive. It's partly a function of the forces of thinking and judgments and all these forces in the mind activities mind, quiet down. And so we find in our community begins to extend out and there's an inclusive, more holistic sense of a community. But it can extend further and I'll offer you maybe kind of a

maybe it's a very small but over the top example of myself of being on retreat, and, and during the retreat, I was talking to someone or standing with someone, and the person plucked a leaf off the tree that was next to us. And it was painful for me to see the leaf being torn off, because it seemed like a violation and like damage to the tree. And if I had been on on the on a retreat, I don't think it would In that sensitive, I hope this is not a negative advertisement for retreats. But rather positive ideas, I think it's quite quite a wonderful thing that someone has that level of sensitivity. And so they're those kinds of inclusiveness and a sense of connectedness to the tree that gave me a different relationship to how to care for it or how to feel for it. Then you know, if I was busy running around and hardly even notice the trees because I'm, you know, my, my little drama of my life is what's important. So as the dramas of our life as the neck as a thoughts and activities in busyness of remind preoccupations reminds settle down. One way of understanding what happens is we become more whole, and we become more whole and ourselves. whole meaning. We include all of ourselves without being in conflict. We also become more whole as a community and we become more whole in relationship to the world in the universe. And then the question is, how do we behave differently? When we feel the sense of connectedness, a sense of hold sense of inclusivity? And I suggest that then we begin appreciating much of our world that we can't appreciate if we're preoccupied.

So then the question is, what kind of world do you want to live in? You want to live in a world that you meet with meat is you've made it there, see it with appreciation? Or do you live in a world where you It's so easy to be dissatisfied with how things are the saddest how much you have? There's so many things to be dissatisfied. There's no shortage of things to be dissatisfied. I'm sure each of you can come up with a long list. We've spent all night coming up with a good list of things that are worthwhile to be dissatisfied by and you're justified to be dissatisfied. But you know what, you know what a drag you know, to come up with a list And, but to live in a world where we can appreciate our world, I think his contribution to the world, there's a lot to appreciate, we can also come up with a big long list of things to appreciate. But it doesn't have to be forced. You know, let's appreciate things and squeeze appreciation out of you. If you relax, if you open up if you develop your mindfulness, and see in this more inclusive way, I think they appreciate more, much more appreciation is going to be there. And then how will you respond? So there's a story Why should I like to tell? I tell often, because I like it so much. of Gary Snyder in Japan, he was an American poet who was practicing Zen in Japan in the early 1960s. And he tells a story of a Zen teacher who gave him particular teaching. And the teaching was in zen, there are only two things There's meditation. And there's sweeping the temple courtyard. And the temple courtyard doesn't stop at the gate of the temple. Meaning the whole world's your courtyard. So sweeping is cleaning right and, and there's so much sweeping in court in monasteries in Japan, it's almost like their religion to sweep. I did so much sweeping every day you sweep. And, and so the idea that you're caring for the place that you live in. And so it's natural to care. It's an unnatural it is. But I think that if you're relaxed and feeling a little bit space and feel connected, that it's completely natural to want to clean up the mess in your house. You know, you leave your dishes piled up high for weeks on end. And you know, at some point, you probably start cleaning it up. And so I think just caring for your environment. That's local is probably fairly natural thing to do. And the so one of the one I think very important crucial issues for us as a human race is how do we expand that sense that our courtyard doesn't stop? You know, and the door leading our house does not stop at the edge of our property does not stop edge of our immediate neighborhood. How do we expand out further? And two things I'd like to say one is that I think that as we develop this greater holistic attitude, feeling connection to the world, then partly it comes natural. But partly it doesn't. Because part of the extended world that we live in the courtyard is not within necessarily our doesn't come with in our sights. We don't necessarily see it. We don't we there's a lot a lot of things that Our life touches, involves and supports our life, that we don't see it, where it comes from. And we don't see where it goes when we get rid of it. Out of sight, out of mind, out of sight, not responsible someone else's problem. So it takes some education, to appreciate

how our courtyard goes beyond the world that we can see and that we're involved in. And there's, you know, a lot of lot of lot of our world that has impact on us has impact on our neighbors impact on our commute within your community. In fact, our environment, that we have some response ability to some connection to, but we don't really feel that it's inside our courtyard. Or we don't have we don't have the sense of inclusivity sense of wholeness that all this is part of our life as well.

So what to do we just meditate more, or do we educate ourselves? about what's going on further afield for people who meditate I hope very much hope that meditation is one of those ways to cultivate this kind of sense of holistic inclusivity that then allows the our empathy or care to flow kind of naturally from there, our generosity, or goodwill, or caring could just flow as a natural thing. But kind of some people like to say it's kind of like your hand, you know, you, you feel connected to your hand, and you probably care for your hand, you clean it, you've cut your cut, you cut your hand, you put a bandage on it, these kind of things you would do for your hand. But why should you? Why should your world stop at your edge of your hand, to feel the same connection to you know, other people the natural world is possible. Some people feel that that natural world is just an extension of themselves or their extent or their extension of the natural world. But why, why Why be interested in this. And we could certainly give you the moralistic reasons. And that, you know that we're in trouble as a planet. As you know, there's so much damage happening. And but a lot of you know that already and just kind of just kind of not be meaningful for me to say that to you. But what is meaningful, I think is that I think we can take care of the world take care of our communities, while taking care of ourselves. That is not so separate for these things aren't separate. Just like caring for your own house and keeping a clean is not something hopefully, hopefully for most of you is not a burden. Something you do kinda actually are caring for your hand is something you just do. As the divisions in our mind, as the activities of our mind, begin to come into balance. So some of the negative forces in the mind stop operating so strongly. fear, anger, greed. laziness, discouragement, despair, all these things begin to settle away. They don't get in the way of acting doesn't get done in a way of caring and doing something. And as, as those forces settled, we're better for it. It's nice for us. It's freeing. And at the same time as as for fall away, I think it's more easier to want to care for the world around us as an outcome for that.

Maybe that's motivating. The fact that caring for yourself and doing this inner purification, this inner work of transformation, you don't just do it for yourself, but you make yourself into a vehicle of someone who can operate and care for the world around you around you. We don't do it as an obligation. We do it as a transformation, we do it as something which is inspiring and beneficial for all concerned, including ourselves. I imagine that most people who come here most of you are probably already concerned about the environment already somewhat informed about it. But are you doing as much as you can? Probably not. Do you want to do more? I don't know if you want to do more. But perhaps if you keep developing your practice, you don't have to think about doing more as an obligation or as a should. It'll be just more of a natural thing that comes out of you more of an easier thing to do, to want to change what you do, perhaps require it requires but there's a fair number of people in the kind of communities that are here in the peninsula, who could probably live simpler lives, probably live lives where they don't use as much energy or spend a little bit more money to invest into doing clean energy for their homes or for their cars.

You know, is that does that diminish your life? Is that a burden to do that? It could be with a wrong attitude. But what I'm suggesting is that there's a way of kind of this deep spiritual transformation that Buddhism points to. That allows us to simplify our lives in a way that feels like it enhances us. It doesn't diminish us. And I think that is inspiring. How can we be models of simplifying our lives or living in more environmentally conscious ways, in a way that it feels directly or it is directly a way that be feeling enhanced rather than diminished. So I can give you one little example. I live about a mile mile and a

half way from here. And whenever I can I come down here with either I walk or I bike. Now I'm very aware that that's much better for the world than me driving down here. But I love to walk or to bike down here. Even if you told me you know, it's 5050 whether it's good for the environment or not, you know, it just doesn't matter if you walk or if you drive. I would still want to walk. It's a great exercise. I feel energized by it. I love breathing the air usually. I like the trees that I walk and see what sort of walk down I get to think a certain way. I love how I think when I walk, preparing to come down here at Teach. I just feel my life is enhanced by having a time to walk. Not very, not uncommonly, there are times when I know I can walk or bike down here, and I have the thoughts, I have a lot to do. You know, I have a lot to do to go down to IMC and help figure out how to teach people to be calm and relaxed their lives and be mindful and do things. So I had these thoughts, you know, I should strike down, it's, I get down there and do what I have to do, right. But when I don't, I feel like my life is enhanced by this. So it's a small example. What we can do, you know, so the issue is not what you can do, but what you can do. That comes from a place that's from transformed within us. And what we can do that feels like it enhances your life and then diminishes it. Because when people feel that they're going to be diminished their life, then they're not going to do something I was really struck by a study I read. I don't think I can represent it well study I read about have pointed out that they study the people, the kind of people who are most likely it's about five years ago, to recycle, take their own initiatives to recycle live green in the variety of ways. And they found that the people who are most likely to be interested concerned by this were people who were well enough off in their lives, to be able to fly on vacations to places like fly to Hawaii or something. And if you do an energy audit of where you most of your energy is used, like I did some time ago. We do one airplane trip, usually a year to Boston to a family gathering to see all the family get together. And so we plug that into these energy energy audit websites. You know, figure out how much energy you use Including everything else you do. You know, it's very interesting. If you haven't done it, I encourage you to do an energy audit. You can go lots of websites do I do it? The Nature Conservancy has a energy audit you can do and, and I was somewhat surprised we're kind of eye opening to see that half of my annual energy consumption was the that one plane trips to Boston and back. And that was quite something, right? So if you're cut turning off the lights in your house, and you know, which is a good thing to do, don't stop doing it to do all kinds of, you know, you know, things you can do that live more green, and then you fly off, you know, to Bali for your vacation. You know, it's you know, it's still worthwhile to turn off the lights but so anyway, this study found that the people who tend to be live most screen were the ones who would just kind of go over the top but you know, the energy uses by these flights. So these both these somewhat well enough people with people who are well enough off to fly on vacation, Should they be told don't fly? I don't think that's going to work. That's, you know,

but what maybe it would work. Maybe some people are choosing to this. I know lots of people are choosing to fly less when they realize this, and some people are taking I know one friend of mine is taking a train whenever you can. It's interesting if you could do the energy audits. And you plug in, let's say you fly to the east coast, and you see how much energy is take a plane. And then you do the same thing with a train. It's dramatic. The difference how much less energy on a train. And I was surprised by this, if you put in a car, it's less than a train to driving yourself across you think I would thought there was a lot more energy. But airplanes use so much that even driving across your bed in terms of energy and gas and carbon and all that usage. You're much better off driving across country but then you have to have five days right? So instead of asking people not to fly. What's always possible to do is to mitigate. And this is one of the big movements in the college environmental movement is how do we mitigate? How do we compensate? How do we compensate for some of the ways that we live that cause harm. So one of the ways that people like to mitigate is to make donations for these carbon offsets. So you can find out how much carbon offsets you need to do to balance your energy use. And then you make a donation to some people who are reforesting parts of the world. The Nature Conservancy had this a few years ago, where they were reforesting parts of Mississippi, they had a

whole Natural Area preserved someplace they land and they did enough reforestation there that they closed that project down. And now I think they're reforesting some place in Central America. Trees make a big difference for you know, getting this carbon carbon out of the atmosphere and trying to somehow mitigate that some of the damage we are doing. So plucking the leaf off a tree. Maybe that's over the top to feel that pain, though I don't think so. But it doesn't you don't have to look around very far to see things that do hurt more dramatically. One of the things that I saw that made a big impact on me was a documentary with Joanna Joanna Macy, where she went up to the Alberta tar fields, and Alberta Canada, which is where these big tar fields where they're getting oil now for the these pipelines that there's all this pressure to put into cross the United States. And she's in his little plane and she's flying over the tar fields, talking about What's going on down there below and you can see these tar fields below. It's like completely denuded, clear cut, denuded, destroyed, churned up, ground all black that goes on for miles and miles and algae. So watch is flying over at the plank over and flying over it just amazing. The size of it. And then they said something that I couldn't believe I had to go and do some research. I had to go. They said that the size of these churned up tar fields is the size of England. So how could that be? I couldn't be the dumbest, dumbest mistake. So then I went from kind of looked into it and in fact, England is about 15 million square miles in size. And the Alberta tar fields are about 15 million square feet in size so you can stick kind of England inside of these big turf. That's a you know, I think England's a big place. You wouldn't do that to England. I was people there. So that's like a big leaf to pull off a tree, to see that, and, and then to have we have our practice, come back to our practice. And so we don't despair, to feel the despair, to feel the grief to feel the concern that we have. But the degree to which that separates us that ends up feeling conflict, that has a chance to soften to fall away, not so that we forget about the turf fields, but so that we don't see it through the eyes of our despair, but see it through the eyes of our compassion and care. And then perhaps we do something. And what do we do? We can't we can't be involved in all the good causes in the world. So I find it that when I encounter suffering in the world that motivates me that touches me. I can go take care of everything, meet everything by any means, but they're just wonderful. alchemy, of allowing you to touch me and be motivated. And then using that motivation to say,

I'm going to try to do what I can do better. So it might not touch the people who are concerned or that part of the world that I'm concerned with, but I'm gonna try to do what I can do better. And so it's something that makes sense for in my life, given the circumstances of my life, and also, given the circumstances of the kind of capacities that I have. I'll do this some particular thing. And so this suggestion is everyone has something they can do. Whether it's, you know, I mean, I don't want to say whether but everyone has gifts, everyone has something, some place that makes sense for who they are. And rather than feeling responsible for the tar fields, to feel responses to take that energy and be, you know, let's do something here. Maybe I can drive less. One of the great things that so many like ups discovered some years ago was that if they planned their routes, so they take more right turns in their cars rather than left turns with the trucks, they use less gas. And they had a big fleet. So you have all these ups trucks going around clockwise around the world. And so that's nice, small little thing do you guys do go clockwise around your, you know, probably never thought about it. When you have to do your your various shopping trips and planning, okay, but you go clockwise, you tend to not use more heat and because it's easier to make those right turns you have to wait to make a left turn. And so maybe you can do that. Maybe it's that simple. Or you can write a letter or you can vote for someone. There was a Do you know that the biggest city city in the United States that has the largest The city with the largest population that has a Green Party mayor. You know where that city is? Anybody? No? Portland? No. Sacramento? Nope. Closer than that closer in Sacramento, it's like in your neighborhood. You don't know this up. So this is good to educate yourself. Right? Is the mayor of Richmond and you know what else is in Richmond? Chevron oil refineries. So maybe there's a reason why there's a green layer there. She's been there since 2006. So they've been quite a long time. Do you know how many

people were hospitalized last year? Did you know there was a fire at the refineries last year in Richmond. Anybody know how many people were hospitalized, went to the hospital after that fire last August to 20 What 250 and other guesses? What 10,000 other guesses? 15,000. There were 15,000 people went to the hospital a year ago in Richmond, but most of you didn't know that, right? these are these are your neighbors. So when we don't know things, it doesn't motivate us. We we don't know things we can include it in our holistic hearts. How much do you want to hold in your hearts? My hope is you hold it all. And I hope we can hold the whole whole world in our hearts. Wouldn't that be great? And I'm confident that your hearts big enough to hold it. And it's worthwhile cultivating and developing a heart they can hold it all. And we live it we live in a better world. I was very kind of moved. When I heard a talk on climate change. The climate change expert in the spring. And he said, climate change, global warming is going to be an issue we're going to be facing for the rest of our lives. It's like, like, like, like we're gonna go you know, we'll take care of it this year, it's gonna go away, you know, this is gonna it's gonna be here for the rest. This is something we have to cope with deal with respond to try to. That's quite a thing, quite a statement. I thought, this is here for us. And so how do we have a heart that can hold all that? Then I'll tell you something, which will either despair you and abuse you or enlighten you. If I can say it right. Kind of from the Buddhist point of view

We're never going to make paradise. We're never going to make this into a perfect place. There's always has been, always will be lots of problems for you, for us in this world. And so we try to do the best to improve to make the situation better. We don't ignore it. Maybe we're passionate about trying to make it a better place. But we keep our hearts relaxed and open. And okay. In a certain kind of what okay is the wrong word, but we keep our hearts open and relaxed, with whatever way it continues to develop. And open and relaxed heart in the midst of whatever direction it goes, is probably a heart that can be more responsible in a good way. So I hope that one of the one of the things I really hope about this practice that we offer at IMC and Buddhism and all that is a practice that can help us deal with our own hearts. So that the forces of division in our hearts and separation fall away, and we can have this parts that can hold the whole world within it. That's my hope. So then the last thing I'll do we go is this. So when we started thinking about having a earthcare we can just this is the first year that it's happening this Buddhist communities invented earthquake to celebrate as Buddhists and Buddhist groups all over teachers all over the world actually have now taken it on. And the idea was to make this an annual event. And this year, there was so little lead time that everyone's gonna like what do we Do we have to plan or do something? So hopefully next year we can plan ahead and do something more interesting than just me giving a talk. And but we did it and thinking about what we could do. It seemed the right thing to do was to not take any of the regular donations dāna that we have out there for the teachers or for IMC. But let those donations be used for something that would mitigate the energy use the whatever damage that we were responsible for, for our community. And so in looking around and trying to see what could we do that would be useful and meaningful. We came up with the idea that we would like we've had study already is to have a solar water heater at our new Retreat Center. In terms of our ongoing into the air conditioner just came on. It's like talking talking about this the You know, the turns this building doesn't actually use that much energy. And so putting solar you know, voltaic panels on our roof probably would doesn't make a lot of sense. But the place in you know, in our community that has makes my biggest difference in our energy use is having a solar water heater at our retreat center. We use a lot of hot water down there. And during the cooler parts of the month of the year, we use hot water to rate to heat the building its radiators. So we would like to install solar water heater down there. And for those of you who like to mitigate, you know, all the you know, ways in which you use gasoline and diesel and jet fuel and all those wonderful things that you do. That's one way you could do it is can help us by this for our community that we have Anyway, so the idea down there is, as you'll see by the door, there's a sign on the dotted box that all the dāna, this whole week that I've been teaching here goes for that purpose. So some of you might be inspired. And if you're not inspired, at

least you should know that's happening. So you don't think you're doing anything to me or whatever. So thank you for listening. I hope this was okay talk. I didn't know how to give this kind of talk. You know, because I thought I was talking to the converted and I didn't want to preach about how important this is, but I hope he was respectful of you. Thank you.