

# 2002-04-22 Dharma Poetry

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poem, stillness, pond, emptiness, japanese, life, buddhism, frog, mind, world, splash, people, nature, buddhist, poetry, sound, japan, possibility, cherry blossoms, arises

## SPEAKERS

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One of the main points of giving a Dharma talk giving a talk about Buddhism is to encourage people or point people in the direction of being able to participate with the Dharma. So it's not a matter of just understanding the Dharma, or talking about it, but pointing to the possibility of entering into the Dharma of being part of Dharma, participating in the path of Dharma practice. The idea in in a path practice like Buddhism offers is to be participant in the path, not just simply kind of an idle, bystander, or fascinated bystander. And besides watching amazement, oh, that's a great tradition. And it's, I'm inspired by it and I hope they continue, but to actually be part of it oneself. And often Dharma talks are pointing towards this possibility of participant participation in books about Buddhism often about the possibility participant Philosophy and ideas. In the Zen tradition, which I trained in for a long time, the idea and giving a Dharma talk is that the person giving a talk, while they're giving it, they're not just talking about Buddhism, they're manifesting Buddhism, their very presence or being the way they are, is somehow manifesting the possibility of the Dharma and their participation of it and that participation of the speaker then points to that possibility and the listeners. So one of the ways in which the Buddhist tradition has pointed to the possibility of participating or Buddhist tradition has historically sometimes tried to help people participate in it has been through the arts, and things like art and poetry and maybe dance and different things. And poetry in particular, there's a lot of poetry in the Buddhist tradition. The Buddha was a poet. He composed a lot of probably spontaneous poetry. And down through the ages has been a lot of poetry. And the idea of the audience participating in the Dharma, through listening to the poetry reading, it kind of takes it's kind of highest point perhaps in Japanese Buddhism. And Japanese Buddhist poetry in Japan is very deeply intertwined with the Buddhist tradition of Japan. And before that, it was tradition that came from China and from India. And I've been thinking a lot, some recently about Japanese poetry, the poetry of Japan and China, and how it points this process, the participation with the Dharma, and different qualities of that different aspects of it. So I want to share with you some poems this evening, and I don't know how to be successful in reading these in the way that Help you participate in the Dharma, which by the very reading of them, but that's what you're supposed to do. And so I want to read some poems. And the

poem I want to start with, is arguably the one of the most famous poems in Japan, Japanese poems in Japan. School children in Japan both memorize and learn this poem. I don't know maybe like Robert Frost poems, remember as a kid memorizing. Two roads diverged in yellow would be one traveler long I stood. And there were a few other poems like that. And so this is a, a very limited kind of essential poems of Japanese culture. And I build it up that way, because you might not appreciate the potential profundity of this poem. If you hadn't been told that person, you would just kind of, you know, bypass it. Oh, yes. What's this? You know, it's kind of odd. So you ready? The most profound poems of a whole culture.

So you're all poised and ready now right. Old pond. A frog jumps in splash. Good Robert Frost and then as well in old pond, old pond, a frog jumps in. Actually in Japanese that last line says Mizuno auto, the sound of water. That's it, a splash plot all about frog jumps in splash. So why is this such a profound poem? Why is this such a significant poem? You know, just seems, you know, it's kind of this very short, little Haiku. And so it has a kind of a nice feeling Haiku and why is it profound? So this is what I like to propose is to kind of do a little teaching about this poem. And then read some other poems, and how this poem comes out of a whole tradition of Buddhism. And Basho, who wrote this poem composed was deeply steeped in the Japanese Buddhist tradition, and was a continuation of a whole stream of Buddhist thought and, and practice that, you know, certainly goes back to China and through centuries and centuries of Japan. And the sense this poem is a synthesis is a condensation a crystallization of a tremendous amount of Buddhist understanding and wisdom. While at the same time calling upon the reader to participate, or to hear of this. So it's almost kind of it's kind of like a strong image, first of all of the poem, an old pond. And maybe you can imagine an ancient pond, an old pond that's been in the forest for a long time. And probably this is an old pond perhaps has been there without having been changed much from it a long, long time. And perhaps, you know, it hasn't been disturbed for a long, long time and it's still there's still pond, image, maybe very still pond deep in the woods deep in the forest. And somehow you're not in you know, the, the narrator is not there. But the narrator's is not in the poem with narrator's there and the edge of the pond. Maybe it's you at the end of this edge of this pond. You've gone through the woods for a long time. And you've arrived to this very still quiet place in the woods. And you enter the stillness of this pond, the age stillness, the primordial kind of stillness and quiet of this pond. And then maybe you're absorbed and very still very restless, very peaceful in this pond. And then in a moment, there's this image of a frog, just frog jumps out in, nature suddenly has movement has activity in the middle of that stillness, and then splash. And you can almost hear the splash, you get a feel of stillness, and you have splash. So it's very strong image that kind of pulls you in. And you can imagine, the person who wrote this poem was at the edge of the pond, and was very still him or herself. And then you saw the frog and in that stillness for the splash, so it's like maybe it's kind of strong image, and so it's kind of nice for that reason.

However, there's echoes here are very strong, pointing to ancient China. Chinese specially Buddhist teachings. And that's kind of what most people wouldn't know, unless they've been steeped in Buddhism would know about this. It's there's three levels of understanding reality being presented in these three lines. The first level is the old pond. The second level is that of the frog jumping in. And the

third level is that of the splash. So what is this, these three levels? The first level is that can be many, many can be described in many ways, but belongs to the realm of the greatest stillness or the great peace of the emptiness of life, not the avoidance or the nihilism of life, but the great kind of pregnant emptiness that's full of possibilities for Buddhists, that is inherent in all things, that Buddhist practices to help us see how all experience all the things of our life ourselves or mind or feelings, or relationship to the world around us, has some quality of being empty. And it's empty and having any kind of enduring, eternal, absolute reliable substance essence to it. It's there as a contingent contingency, it's there, arising out of the interface of many different factors coming together. But the emptiness at the heart of it is this emptiness of the nexus of all these still Nexus in the middle of all these possibilities, it has no essence in itself. And the meditative mind can enter into and participate in this great emptiness, through a great stillness of mind. And this the, the old pond, refers both to the ancient kind of primordial essential essence of emptiness and all things, but also to the essential mind the stillness and quiet of consciousness which is there for all of us. If we had some way of turning the mind the awareness around to see it. And sometimes in our lives, we discover the great still consciousness and moment of consciousness awareness, which is tremendously still and peaceful. This still pond in our Theravada tradition. Still forest pool is a title of a very important English book by Ajahn Chah. And he talks in that book about how meditation practices like developing a mind that's like a steel forest pool. At first, the mind is all agitated and concerned with all his preoccupations and worries and ambitions and all the things that we've caught up with. And all those things are like the waves on the water that agitate the water and stir up the water and becomes all muddy. And if you try to settle the pond settle the mud by taking a stick and steering even more. The mode at the pod wants to settle. So you need to do something different and you need To leave everything alone in the sphere of awareness of mindfulness, leave everything alone and everything will settle by itself. And as it settles, the pond becomes still. And then I just said, the pond reflects all things all the animals will come to the edge of the pond, and upon reflect all the animals of your world so there's still forest pool Still, the ancient pond is a metaphor also for the quiet meditative mind. That becomes like a mirror. The ability of the mind to be like a mirror. It doesn't judge anything, doesn't criticize anything, doesn't hold on to anything, doesn't do anything with it, but but it reflects accurately what's there. something beautiful comes in front of the mirror. The mirror reflects that goes away the mirror doesn't mind. Something ugly comes in front of the mirror, the mirror doesn't mind. It should reflect what's there. The mayor just reflects What's there to the mirror quality of the mind is one of the things that's being developed In traditional meditation, the stillness of mind, the mind is not chasing after thoughts, concerns worries, the mind is at peace with itself and quiet in itself is still mine, the old pond then the frog jumps in, this is understood to be the level of activity, maybe there is a level of conventional reality of emptiness is the ultimate reality. The activity of the frog represents the conventional reality reality nature is active and involved that does things that is not in its quiet and peaceful state, but it's in its active state. Frogs can jumps quite actively kind of suddenly jumps and it pops up and there it is. And it might be peaceful for a long time sitting there and it's rock but then suddenly just,

you know, it's often not much sometimes not much grace to her For jumps even, it's just like, you know, in your great still quiet pond like mind, you would like you know, graceful things to enter it. But

you know, the frog is not particularly not always accommodating. And so this frog jumps. So it This represents kind of the activity of the mind. So you're sitting there quiet, you're quiet meditation, your mind is quiet, still, perhaps mirror like mine. And suddenly a thought arises, which I have for dinner, or I had the wrong thing for dinner. Or, you know, or, you know, that person who was sitting near me was very interesting. Maybe as a sexual partner, I wonder if I could talk to the person that went into the city. So a thought arises, all kinds of possible thoughts might arise into that quiet and oh, gee, you know, I was so quiet and now I'm having those kinds of thoughts, you know, give me a break. You know, that's not here for that. I'm here for my silence my meditation. However, it's a function of the mind to have thoughts It's a function of the mind to do various kinds of things. And to kind of discard that or push it away in favor of emptiness and quiet and stillness. The ultimate is actually a kind of a violence towards ourselves to violence against nature. Because nature is active, it's part of the active functioning in nature. So we have these two realms, the Act, the still empty is still essential source is and people like to say, of reality itself, which is always peaceful at home in itself. And then we have the active functioning, which sometimes is as seemingly as natural as a frog, but also sometimes seems like you know, unnatural, because we sometimes judge some of the activity of human human mind and creations of your mind as being a natural and unnatural means not going to accept that I can have that as part of who we are. So there's two levels. And then there's a third level which is a splash In the splash is the wonderful synthesis are coming together. Over the first two levels, you have the quiet pond and you have the activity of the frog jumping. And the frog lands in the pond and the landing of the pond and coming together the pond and the frog is a splash. That's the interface between the ultimate realm and the conventional realm, the relative realm, the realm of of great peace and the realm of activity is that's what's represented in the splash. And what's the Buddhist tradition of China and Japan tried to do was to not leave a person with a bifur by fork ation of reality between that part of reality which is the ideal, some great stillness, which is a real possibility of nature. It's, you know, great stillness and quiet, of emptiness or there's still mind on one hand, and the other hand that World of activity and being involved in the world and nature that it's active. They didn't want to have a separation a wall between these two different, you know, spheres, their real spheres and sense dimensions. But if you have a separation of the two, then it can add to suffering a person for example, some people might choose one over the other. Some people who are adept meditators sometimes will choose the world of emptiness, the still mind the quiet mind, or the ultimate kind of point of view of reality, and try to rest there and stay there. So this is that, you know, I'm gonna hold everything else at bay, I'm not going to be involved in anything else. I'm not going to validate anything else I've got, you know, all that's all that's illusion, Maya in Sanskrit, and only what the only thing that's really real is this great mirror like mind, the stillness of the mind, essential self that's there. And, and what what the Chinese and Japanese did is they didn't want to make that division. They want to, they want to allow for it, because there's two different important dimensions of Life, but they wanted to harmonize them or synthesize and bring them together so they could be there in not just harmoniously together as two separate things, but actually see how that the same thing. They're not separate. And the splash represents that union of the conventional or relative world and the absolute that the Buddhists talk about. And somehow, what happens to your mind when you sit quietly, and a thought or a feeling or

whatever arises in meditation? Do you see it as an intrusion as an obstacle as a problem? Or can you see that in a very, it's a very arising in and of itself is the same thing as

the ultimate. It is not to separate the ultimate from the life as it lived, but it seems to us being one in the same. That's part of the challenge of I think it was kind of practicing Buddhism, making some sense. Yeah. And this is you following along, okay? is interesting enough to have an analysis of a poem by someone who's not a poet. So, this is a very, very famous poem in Japanese culture and, and there's other ways of analyzing this poem. And, but this is, you know, kind of the Buddhist way of looking at it. You see the same kind of idea now, now, as you kind of understand a little bit how about about how Basho might write a poem. You'll understand right away some aspects of the following poem, because it follows the same kind of three levels and kind of same kind of sequence. Basho writes, in the silence of an old temple. Now, you may have been to Japan visited and some hillside in the ancient temple, and is a great stillness there with a moss, rocks and fine trees. Using the old word, roof and building, really exquisite can be in Japan very exquisite kind of silence in the old Japanese Buddhist temples. In the silence of an old temple, a cicada is sound, split the rock. So again, imagine this person, imagine yourself, you're in this great stillness of the temple. So it might have really happened but it also has this resonance with this other Buddhist teaching about the silence and emptiness and the ultimate. And, again, something from the natural world something comes and interrupts that silence for you. And here it's the sound of a cicada. Yeah, good cicada and cricket And this time the here the last one last line here is to the sound of the cicada splits the rock. So it probably doesn't break a rock into pieces, but somehow splits the rock somehow something about splits the scenes but the consciousness puts the awareness of being absorbed in maybe the rock garden or something. But the rock here can also be symbolic of something else. And that is it can, it can split the rock, or the hardness, the hardening that happens sometimes in our hearts or in our minds. Sometimes you enter into a world of stillness, meditative stillness. And it's not the stillness itself, which is to transformative experience. But rather, in that stillness in that concentrated state, there is something that happens it's not of your doing something from outside, perhaps the sound And something about that sound, the meaning of your silence and that sound awakens in the mind a sense of, of the ultimate or sense of participation in the ultimate. Maybe that's the immediate together the ultimate and the conventional reality is that the union of it is in our positive participation in it. And so here that splash is here and heard from with a very fresh mind, a clear mind into that stillness. And it awakened something awakened to possibility, participate participation, wake up, wake awakens, a kind of immediate presence in the present moment, the present moment suddenly becomes vivid and alive. In because of that stillness, in a way, maybe it's never been before. The present moment stands by itself. unencumbered by our ideas of what it is or what it's like or where it came from. What's next or what's before all the fantasies we might live in the phenomenon preciousness of really being present for one moment, as it actually is. Many of you who've been on retreats for example, perhaps have the experience of sitting and meditating for days on end. And then maybe going out to the end of a session meditation outside the building. And suddenly the trees and the flowers and the walkway and the candy wrapper even on the ground seems phenomenally precious and vibrant and alive. And it's

just like, wow, they didn't like you know, who's the jerk that threw the candy wrapper there. It's like, wow, this is

like, like, this is like, you know, Michelangelo party put it there. It's like most amazing, beautiful thing you've ever seen the way the light kind of shines off the candy wrapper and the way it's kind of all crumbled up. It's just exquisite. A mind which is can be very present for things as they are and see its freshness without judging or criticizing it or doing anything with it is one of the great things one of the great experiences we can have as human beings. So But he this case splits the rock. And here the rock can be understood as being the hardness, not in the, in the heart. The heart is transformed by that perhaps Bashar came into the tempo with some bitterness or some anger or some, some hardening of his heart. And some are entering into that stillness and having a cicada sound. Awaken his consciousness in awaken something in the midst of that stillness. A lot for the release of that hardening of the heart, splits the rock up but that's one way this poem has been understood. The Silence of an old temple, a cicada sound splits the rock. And then a little bit these kinds of way in which Marshall writes poetry gets turned upside down a little bit, the next poem. I'm awestruck to here. So here we have the big problem begins. With being awestruck, perhaps you can imagine the first phone, the splash is heard kind of a call and are hearing that splash. Or the cicada sound. So it's kind of all the preciousness that is expressed in, it splits the rock. But here it begins to Palm with its, I'm awestruck to hear a cricket singing. So a cricket sing is kind of like the second line of the other two poems, right. But the third form is third, third and final lines become the first line. I'm awestruck to hear a crickets singing in the cavity of an old helmet. And he's about shows entered an old battlefield where this Japanese soldiers fought and died. And they're still you know, later from the battlefield still there. The helmet of a of probably some soldier who died on the battlefield is still there. And so he's They get much more pregnant. They're not just a naturally, then it resonates with all our associations with war and fighting and killing soldiers and how people treat each other like to each other. But it's all gone, it's disappeared is no longer there and still is the cavity of the helm of the helmet. And so, they what it does here for by show, the sound the cricket ties into his his, his whole emotional, very strong emotional connection to the idea of an empty helmet. But it's still just the cricket. The sound of a cricket in the context of the helmet makes it very different than the context of an old steel pond. The same three levels of reality of understanding Buddhist understandings of reality, the ultimate, the conventional, and the union of the two is expressed in the following Chinese phone by One way, one way writes empty hills. No one insight. So you know who's seeing it? Empty hills, no one insights. So you're out there wandering in the hills all by yourself. And I suspect that in saying this the author is saying not just simply he or she doesn't see anybody in the hills. But there's a sense that the writer it's him or herself has disappeared. And maybe you've had that experience of walking in the hills and somehow feeling you've disappeared. There's no sense of self or sense of, you know, you separate from nature there you as a person kind disappears. The sense of aloneness is is that complete, empty hills no one insight and the experience of Buddhist practice is points to this possibility of having a selfless experience of ourselves in life around us. Empty hills, no one insight Only the sound of someone talking that changes the kind of but it's kind of the juxtaposition of knowing insight and someone talking so what image that for me works the image of you know I'm out there walking but



then at around the bend yours down below in the woods below you hear someone someone's picnicking or talking or the Boy Scouts or they're, you know talking in the in the distance and maybe it feels like it's just part of nature, it's part of the scene. It's not an intrusion. It's just, it's just kind of the sound there.

And so again, having this meeting of the stillness of the empty without absolute in the conventional of human speech, human speech causes a lot of suffering. And then the last line is, late sunlight enters the deep wood, shining over green moss again that woods, the forest and Buddhism is often understood to refer to the forest of samsara, the forest of desire of clinging. samsara is what is a world that gets born from our clinging in our desire. So the forest of desire of clinging samsara the late sunlight enters a deep forest. So you may have seen you know, late, late in the afternoon, the sun kind of an angle light shines through the forest and lights up the moss kind of goes through the trees and you kind of see the light rays kind of coming through. It's quite beautiful. So he's alone, empty, empty hills, no one insight. late in the day you see the sunlight shining through the trees, onto the green moss. The sunlight, the light here represents our ability to see the sunlight, the light of awareness, of insight of wisdom. And so what's it called being called upon here is our ability to see through the forest ever desire, again, it's not a call to get rid of them. To say this is wrong or bad, but rather is to, in a sense transcend it or instance become free of them. By having the insight or the awareness, they can see it clearly for what it is and see right through it. And so here he is walking in the hills, he hears the sounds of other humans. And he's not troubled by that. He has the wisdom and insight. To see it, it's just part of nature or something to judge or criticize or just allow it to be as it is. Light sunlight, late sunlight enters a deep wood shining over green loss again. So, you know, when I first encountered these Japanese and Chinese poems, I had no idea that there are references in these poems to and you know, very elaborate system of Buddhist teachings. And maybe you could argue, maybe there's not there. But these people who wrote they were deeply steeped in Buddhism, Buddhist culture, And I think that their Buddhist understanding is coming through, either intentionally or unintentionally, in these poems that they're right. Here's a little different poem by soy and Shaku, who was one of the people who brought that into America. One hut, built on the whole universe. One hut in Zen tradition refers to the place you're sitting. If you're completely at home, it could be present. Where in the spot that you're sitting, it's your hut. So one hut built in the whole universe. So that's an image of you know, you sitting in your place feeling so grounded right here and right now, but somehow, it's built on the whole universe. It's kind of like your, I don't know if it's a delusion of grandeur, but kind of like your, you know, the Lord of the universe. You're sitting there for the whole year, kind of the pinnacle of the universe right there and you're 100 built on the whole universe. From here, I can see mountains, rivers, and the good earth has my own garden. Once I was annoyed with human language of good and bad, liking and disliking. From here, I can hear these voices like music from Paradise. So here we see that saurian Shaco has been somehow changed in the course of his practice in his life. Whereas, his involvement with conventional relative life of human language and bikes and disliking and good and bad, and I was annoyed with the human language of good and bad liking and disliking. I read this that he was also annoyed with himself he used them himself. He wasn't like just judging other people. But he was caught up in that also. And but from here from that perspective, of the peace or being at

home with oneself sitting or owns hot The meditative piece of you can have spiritual peace. It gives you different eyes in which to see the world. Again, he's not rejecting it or pushing away or stopping having these things. But now he sees it as music from Paradise. It's like you look at children playing games, and, or saying something to you, and you have an adult adult being has a very different perspective on what they're saying. Then the children themselves Do you know, four year old, my son, he loves that word silly. You silly had, he says.

You know, you love I don't know, he likes to use the word he's learned. And he says he's silly. This is silly that and some of his little childhood friends sometimes get upset when he calls him silly. But his parents, you know, if one of you called me silly, I mean, okay, you know, that's, I wouldn't be happy with that. I mean, that's serious. But, but when a child calls me silly, you know, it's like I'm just so spacious and allow and that's, you know, he's not you know, that's just you know, music from Paradise from that perspective. But we're here so in Shaco he sees this whole world of good and bad liking, disliking the world gets involved in his music from Paradise. From the perspective of this one hot this meditative, quiet and calm. That makes sense.

So here's another poem about it change your perspective. In the cherry blossoms shade, Japanese cultures loves Jerry's familiar glasses like foundational Japanese culture, in the cherry blossoms shade. There's no such thing as a stranger and immediately comes to mind the idea in Japan, when you go into the room, you go into the hot baths and this stuff saunas, all the classes thing And social distinctions Japanese have falls away. And everybody becomes, you know, strangers, everybody comes equals and talks freely, you put on their clothes again. And then it's immediately everybody's stratified different hierarchy of social status and different language they use for each other. But in the past, everyone's equal in the shade of the of the blossom in this cherry blossom shade. There's no such thing as a stranger. And so hopefully it's not just in the shade of it, the cherry blossoms, but it's in perspective for your life, where you see, you can see everybody in such a way that no one's a stranger. Everyone is someone you're familiar with, or someone you're willing to meet as a friend or some familiarity, not as a stranger that you don't know. And so this, you know, speaks to the idea of Buddhist idea of loving kindness of compassion, that the cultivation of them kindness and compassion and Buddhism is meant to be cultivated universally for all beings everywhere. Not leaving anyone out, not leaving somebody. out as a as a stranger, reopen rights. So here again is a kind of transformation and the person being described the what is the heart of this old monk like a gentle wind beneath the vast sky. I love this because of the gentle winds. He describes his heart, gentlemen, which is quite quite nice, quite nice feeling and gentle breeze your hearts a gentle breeze within you, your peace at home with yourself. There's still movement and activity, but it's gentle and peaceful. But he sees it in the context of the vast sky. So, you know, he's not troubled by there's all this spaciousness and sense of great room to let that heart that breeze, whatever it might be, to flow freely. So he's kind of feeling of great peace because of the spaciousness that allows us to see what's going on and probably will developed through meditation is ability to see our experience, any experience anything at all, with the kind of acceptance spaciousness, that doesn't condemn or criticize. And this is one of the famous Japanese women poets. Again, she is now a very different take on the wind than real can. Although



the wind blows terribly here, although the wind blows terribly here, so she referring to the wind because it's a windy place, or is it like Rio Khan says gentle wind in his heart, she talking about the wind in her heart for her soft, gentle wind. Although the wind blows terribly here. The moonlight also leaks between the roof planks of this ruined house. The ruined houses is often used as a metaphor in Buddhism, for the self for oneself. And so she's kind of familiar Have a little bit sad or kind of poignant expression. Here's a woman who's maybe ruined, broken some way. Roof planks you know their house are kind of broken, she's somehow crippled or something's off for her something's not right. Ruined house. handicapped in some way. Mark we all some ways handicapped and, and in her heart there's wind blowing she's not maybe not at peace with herself. But the moonlight also leaks between the roof planks of this ruined house. So the wood the very way in which the house has ruined then it's cracked, flows the wind to blow through is that which allows the moonlight to come through in the moonlight and Buddhism is one of the preeminent symbols of enlightenment of the ultimate reality. So somehow in for her death which allows her handicap her Suffering to be there is the very thing that allows that which is most sacred for her to be there at the same time she sees them together. So she, she's not again fighting against herself or criticizing it just kind of acceptance here of it all. Because it's all together, it's all happening together the merging of the ultimate and the relative in some way or other.

Although the wind blows terribly here, the moonlight also leaks between the roof planks of this ruined house. Next time you're miserable. You're probably trying to find trying very hard to be miserable. Instead of being unmeasurable want to see if there's moonlight there to

another wind farm and cherry poem by aq break open a cherry tree and there are are no flowers. But the spring breeze brings forth myriad blossoms. So if you're there kind of a sledgehammer doing your spiritual practice, nothing's going to happen. But the spring breeze brings forth myriad blossoms. There's so there's a there's a natural process in spiritual life, that you have to allow for the actual process to unfold on its own. If you're trying to force the blossoms out, nothing will happen. The blossoms will come into nature of the blossoms took natural territory to blossom. With the right conditions, the gentle breeze, it's a nature of you. It's our natures to blossom also, if we allow it, and a lot of spiritual life is about allowing something within us to manifest and mature within us by getting out of the way and part of the function and meditation to learn how to get out of our own. Way to learn how to let let go of a sledgehammer. And then the last poem is by the Zen master Dogen. And here again is someone who is going to bring together at the end the or try to heal or bring the union of the absolute and the relative to absolute convention not to see them as being separate. He wrote this at the end of his life. All my life, false and real, right and wrong. tangled, playing with the moon ridiculing the wind, listening to birds. Many years of wasted seeing the mountain covered with snow. This winter, I suddenly realize snow makes a mountain many years wasted seeing the mountain covered with snow. The mountain is also a symbol of enlightenment or a symbol of the path, the path up the mountain practice for many years wasted seeing the mountain covered with snow. So think well there's there's the mountain that's covered with snow. And someday the snow will melt and I'll see the mountain and I'll just keep looking at it, you know y'all for many years to see the snow. And but then right near the

end of his life, you realize that the very snow itself is what makes the mountain it's not a matter of getting rid of something, but rather a change of perspective. That allows him to see that itself is also the ultimate. When I was in my early 20s, I spent a lot of time living out in the woods and nature living in communes, various places. And I was very happy there. And I had to, you know, I was all about being organic and I was inflamed environmentalists and, you know, is quite down on, on on the consumer society we live in. And then I found myself wanting to practice Zen at the San Francisco Zen Center, which is in downtown San Francisco kind of in the kind of back then kind of a seedy part of town, very much, you know, urban center area, asphalt, sidewalks and car fumes and all kinds of wonderful things that goes with the cities. And, and I was challenged for a little while about living there because that nature was where things were at. Until I realized that if I was not able to see nature in the asphalt, I didn't know what nature was because where else was okay? Carry on. It can come from is something something very dangerous about dividing the world. It doesn't mean we can't make distinctions and try to alleviate suffering by being not you know, by not paving everything over. But is there some way of seeing everything exists in life, through the eyes of wisdom, the eyes of some sceptical perspective of spaciousness, openness, of a heart or a mind, which is very spacious, very allowing a heart and a mind. That's not quick to judge or criticize or want things to be different, but sees the preciousness of every moment of life. Every everything that arises in consciousness is phenomenally precious.

When I was studying at Stanford, there was a I took a class in Japanese history, religion History of Japanese religion and we would need to do we did various things in the class we read papers and read books. And somewhere near the end of the quarter I went to the professor we're talking about some assignment or talking about something. And I said

also if this is not so important, then we don't have to pay attention to that Dewey. All right, that's that's not that's not that's not so important for us to study as it were. He looked at me and said, everything is important. And every individual thing, every person you meet every candy wrapper on the street, every frog that pops in his pond, every cherry blossom you see every motorcycle that drives by Is there some way to be yourself at home and you're one hut on top of the universe right now, no matter where you go at all times in all places, why not? What takes you away from that? So that's the challenge of the Buddhist tradition. And I hope that each of you will find your own frog. Thank you.