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## SPEAKERS

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The Buddha's birthday, his day of his awakening day of his passing away. And symbolically, I think it's very nice that we celebrated all together at the same day. Meaning that the Okay, you can Okay, so now the boring part and you're either so it's a celebration of it's called the vest dock, which is, I think it just basically kind of means that Pali word for the month of May, approximately, and it's the approximately what we call the month of May the full it's a lunar calendar that had an India which approximately our month of May and it's usually the full moon. The full moon is a ways away, I think about a week or so away. But this is the closest day to the full moon that worked for our schedule to do it. And we usually do it the closest data Full Moon The it's considered the most sacred holiday in the Theravada world. And people often come to the temple or the monastery and spend a day not only doing certain amount of ritual taking refuge like we did just now, but also living by the precepts following the precepts very strictly for at least for that day, even if people can't follow them strictly the rest of the time. They follow them strictly, we're all at the monastery for that day. Yeah. I think all the kids need to be down there or be outside now. Because I need to be able to talk without being interrupted.

So so it's a celebration of life of the Buddha, and in thinking about the life of the Buddha, you know, how do we remember the Buddha? How do we celebrate the existence of the Buddha? And many of you will have different relationships to the historical person to Buddha, I'm thinking that there's two ways of understanding the story of the Buddha, very generally speaking, there is understanding the historical Buddha, who he was as a person, story of his life historical point of view, what actually factual facts, the facts of what his life was about. And then there's the myth. And the myth is a very broad word. I think a Greek myth means story. It's a story we tell about the Buddha. And people tell lots of stories and stories have a lot of functions for human beings. And human beings are probably be considered homos story makers. That's kind of one of the key characteristics of human cultures. We tell each other stories tell chosen myths. And we live by those myths. We live by their stories. They inspire us, move us in various ways. And there's a lot of myths that arose around the life of the

Buddha. So much so that it's hard to distinguish between that which is historically true. And what's the myths the story makes? was created as a result of Buddhist being inspired and telling each other stories. And in fact, in India, most Buddhists had very little interest in this history, historical aspects of Buddhism or the Buddha himself in the way that we'd have in the modern West, and some of the modern studies on the life of the Buddha, which kind of tried to piece together kind of tease out of the records what might have been historically true, and kind of a painted picture of this historical person. That kind of endeavoring, that kind of effort was not something which people did in the ancient world, they weren't interested in that. And in a sense, we have maybe better sense of historical person who was then maybe people for most of the 2500 years of Buddhism, because of the scholarly kind of tools of teasing that little details out. But it's very hard even to know which details can be teased out and what really is historical. One of the Tanisha Bhiku among co comes here sometimes was respond, responded wants to a scholar who said, the Four Noble Truths which are considered kind of the key core doctrines of Buddhism couldn't have been taught by the Buddha. They were formulated after the Buddha. And he kind of shrugged his shoulders and said he didn't really care about that, whether that was true or not, because he said, Whoever came up with the Four Noble Truths, that person's the Buddha for him. Whether it's a story person historically called the Buddha or not, doesn't really matter because it's a four noble truths which are so such a fantastic tool for helping us in our lives. And if you go back in and people tell stories about the Buddha, the stories get quite grandiose, they get bigger and bigger. So like a fish that gets you know you caught and with time the fish gets bigger and bigger. Religious people tend to make their founders bigger and bigger figures down through the ages and some of the amazing stories about Who the Buddha was in history of Buddhism, it just, it puts you know, some of the Western gods that were familiar with, you know, to shame, you know, Buddha becomes has tremendous Powers and abilities and, and becomes godlike in, in probably every sense of the word except for any sensitive a Buddhist won't admit it. And but it's terrible tradition tends to take the Buddha to be historical person and doesn't tend to deify and to great degrees as they find some Mahayana traditions, but still, in some a Theravada tradition is also this great myth about how amazing and he's the most perfect person you ever ever walked to work the world and has great powers and abilities and how much of that and again, down to the centuries these stories grow, the founders tend to grow and, and some of us, you know, feel inspired by the stories and some of us feel, you know, we don't want to get close to a religion that has these kind of great mythological stories that tradition. champions. If we go back and try to tease out a little bit of who the Buddha actually was, you know, from the historical records survive. It doesn't really jive that, well with some of the perfectionist images we have created mystory the myths you know, for example, most of the statues of the Buddha we see preserve the Buddha at this, you know, maybe the day of his enlightenment, you know, he's relatively young, he's healthy, he looks good, you know, he's probably 36 years old, or sometimes he looks like he's 16 you know, radiant and, and, but he, you know, he lived to be 8081 years old,

and he talks about himself you know, as being this old wrinkled and bent over and his old age he wasn't this you know, embody of you know, stressed shut that he didn't talk about himself, at least in the records of being this you know, shining you know, Yogi he just kind of, you know, was perfectly fit, he had a bad back, and probably that later People who kind of wrote stories about the Buddha and

kind of built up the myth, they probably didn't add that in. Because usually you don't want your founder of your religion to have a bad back. It's not good press. scholars think probably that actually happened. And that was just preserved. But the you know, the popular image, you know, the statue is someone who's quite looks quite perfect, at least in different cultural ideas of what human perfection looks like. And was the Buddha perfect person. How is he perfect? What kind of person was he? Many of us would like the Buddha type in you know, phenomenally loving person. And he certainly talked a lot about the importance of love, of loving kindness. It seems to be one of the pillars of what he wanted to teach. And probably he had a lot of loving kindness and compassion and his 45 years of going around teaching in India was probably an expression of that. But when you look at the records that survive the accounts of him meeting people and talking with people He was very connected, very involved. But you don't get a sense of someone who was very affectionate in the way that maybe we want our religious leaders to be affectionate, you know, there's no record of him giving anyone a hug. Rather than record him kind of always being a little bit kind of, you know, you know, people always kept the distance from him, he was always a little bit, they always bowed to him, he never bowed to anyone. The Buddha never bowed to anyone that's kind of, there are no records of him doing that, and no sign of kind of, kind of, you know, sweet, sentimental affection. You can do there. There's lots of records over someone who had a great intellect and great power of discernment. And use that power of intellect and discernment, to help a lot of people to understand their lives better so that they come free. And you know what? So you know, what was the present what was it like to be in the presence of the Buddha. And we use our imagination then to imagine what that was like. We don't have a lot of records of what that was like, except that people were relieved. Press by him. And, and on one hand you have the teachings of the Buddha. And the other hand, you have the impression that he made on people. And maybe the two don't exactly make a perfect fit. Maybe they do, I don't know. But it's very interesting. The first one of the first records we have of him encountering people after his enlightenment, where people who made a promise made a commitment before he showed up, to not offer him any respect. They knew and before he was a Buddha, that he would be within his companions for many years as doing ascetic practices. And the Buddha had stopped ascetic practice, and it taken some rich, luxurious foods. And they were really disgusted with shocky Guney with siddhartha. For doing this, he left to sit in his ascetic life and taking the soft life. And they said, well, we're not going to offer him anything. We're not going to get up and stand when he comes. We're not going to offer him any respect. And he walked into their mitts and They felt so compelled to stand up and bowed to him and offer him a seat and wash his feet. And to listen to him. There was something about his presence that caught their eye that really stopped them in the tracks in his innocence and, and compelled them to treat them in a very different way. And was an expression of you know, boundless love is the expression of great peace of serenity, of great power of strength. What was it that the Buddha was manifesting in his being in his presence, that got people's attention? Who have you met in your life that have stopped you're in your stop you in your tracks, because they seem to express a tremendous amount of love or joy or peace or feeling at home in the world in a way that was contagious and made you feel at home or peaceful rather than the Buddha being someone who expressed a lot of affection. I think of the Buddha as someone who experienced great peace Rather than the Buddha being someone that we have to emulate and be like the Buddha, I think of the

Buddha as being someone who discovered a capacity we all have for having not being in conflict with ourselves anymore or in conflict with the world, which can be another way of saying to be at peace. And I don't feel like I need to be inspired by the historical Buddha, that he has to be fit all my criteria of being the perfect human being that works for my model of perfection.

Just like I don't care where the person who discovered the vaccine for polio, you know, was a really nice guy. You know, I'm really happy that he discovered the vaccine. I'm really inspired by the idea of the Buddha discovering his fantastic path of peace. And when I when I think of the Buddha, when I celebrate the Buddha's birthday is enlightenment days a day of his passing away. I certainly want to offer my respect To the historical person who set it all in motion. And all of us are in this room today, because of that person. Probably if it wasn't for the Buddha, we'd all be doing different things. We wouldn't be together as a community of people. So there's something about the power of what he said the notion, power of His teaching, his experience of enlightenment, his presence, that was very compelling to a lot of people. And that compelling nature continues down through the ages. But what I find most inspiring is not to the Buddha was, but that the what the Buddha represents. And this is where the story making comes into place the mythmaking. It represents maybe symbolically, a potential possibility for each of us. And what is that what is what's the symbolic meaning of that myth, which is like a logical meaning for ourselves. There's some way that we can find our condition of our individual lives in the story of the Buddha in a way that helps our lives. Or shows potential of how our lives can change for the better. So part of the myth of the Buddha is that he took the seven steps, and then said heaven above earth below, I'm the greatest. Does that have any meaning for you personally? If it just, it just has to do about the Buddha, you know, maybe inspires you to offer more respect to them then if he's the greatest, but is there some way you can see that myth? That story that we tell the Buddhist tell each other? To be true for yourself? Is there some way that that's actually literally true for each of you? That you're the greatest now, logically, it doesn't make sense that we have the world filled with everyone thinking they're the greatest? Because, you know, usually we think only one person can be the greatest. But is there some way that you can honor and respect yourself so deeply? When you feel like you yourself are so important that you can say that for yourself? And the suggestion in the Buddhist tradition is that you should find that place where you can say that, at the same time, that's not entangled with conceit and arrogance. self love is considered to be a very important quality in Buddhism. In the West, we're very confused about self love, because we think it maybe might be narcissistic or arrogant. But it's very important quality in Buddhism to cultivate a certain level of loving kindness towards oneself. And that becomes a basis for being able to do that to other beings also to other people. So can we find that place of self love, self respect, where we can maybe say the same thing as the Buddhist said in the myth? The story of the Buddha that continues whether it's true or mythical? I don't know. But the story is that he was kept isolated from the suffering of the world around him. As he was growing up, his father didn't want him to become a religious person. So I thought, well, I'll just make him really comfortable and never show Many suffering, he won't be inspired to do spiritual life he won't be inspired to get find the truth won't be inspired to find the great potential within us to be awake and to be free. And so the Buddha then was put lived in the suburbs, which is one of those places where you don't suffer sequency a lot of it you know, you know, I

grew up in the suburbs of Los Angeles and there was never a happy we never had an ambulance in our street that I could remember there was never anyone who died that I knew on the street was kind of a ghost town actually, because everyone had their, you know, electric garage doors and they would just drive into the garage and, and then something happened behind the walls but not in the street. And it was you know, we pretty up our life, we don't see suffering. I first dead person I saw was when I was 11. And I went to, to India, Nepal, and in Nepal, I saw a four people care During a stretcher, where there was a corpse wrapped in white sheets, being carried out to the river where they're going to burn the body at the cremation grounds, and that was the first time I saw a dead body. I grew up in the suburbs of Los Angeles where those things weren't kind of just public displays. So the Buddha grew up in the suburbs of Nepal, and didn't see the kind of normal suffering that people see that people in suburbs often don't see. I remember when we used to be in Palo Alto,

how little out of seldom I would go to East Palo Alto. And what a difference between the suffering of East Palo Alto and the suffering of Juniper Palo Alto. So to degree so the story is a story of someone who was isolated protected from seeing the suffering of the world. Does that happen to us? Is that something that happens in our lives? To what degree do we protect ourselves from seeing the world as it actually is? And then At some point, the Buddha jumped the wall and the palace left the suburbs went East Palo Alto or someplace like that. And lo and behold, he saw a sick person which she'd never seen in the myth, an old person she'd never seen and a dying person. And I imagine as an sick, old and dying person in ancient India was much, much more dramatic scene than it is in the modern medical world of our our society where people get printed up nicely, you know, you get old and rather than having gray hair, you can get you know, get a dyed or you get you always always get fixed. You know, you can have false teeth, you know, so you lose your teeth, you could fall seated, you look like you have real teeth, Ninja India, if you're old. They didn't have the kind of devices we have nowadays, to make it look better. So he saw an old person probably was had a big impact on him. So imagine someone who's 29 years old. And this is the first time he has a full impact of seeing the suffering of the world. Symbolically, I think for some people, some adults, there's usually something that happens in adulthood, that gets their attention, some suffering in the world, sometimes it's their own suffering. Sometimes it's the death of the parents or death, or their spouses or loved ones or some kind of great tragedy in the world, like September 11, it really gets your attention that wakes people up to the condition of his life we have, and people stop becoming complacent, or stop, or start looking very seriously what what are the values and priorities by which I live my life? Some people live lives of dilettantes. And I think St. Francis is a story of someone who lived a life of a dilettante until something woke him up. And then he lived the life of a saint, whatever we think of that. Something catches our attention and I think that most of us, most of you, who have come to meditation practice as adults, there was something that caught your attention. Some suffering probably, it said, No one comes to Buddhism, except through the door of suffering. And some people experience it much more powerfully. And the more powerful the suffering, the more powerful is the motivation, maybe to get to the bottom of this life to understand it, to clarify it, to find the peace that's possible to, you know, to find a different way of living. It's been pointed out that some of the great religious figures of humankind, like the Buddha, I don't know them all. But I know the Buddhist tradition which I'm most familiar with. It's this is



true for the Buddha and for Dogen semester dog and they lost their parents as children. The Buddha his mother died when he was seven days old, probably died giving birth to him and dog and he lost his mother. I think When he was six or seven is a huge psychological suffering involved with losing a parent. And so they were really part of because of that suffering, they were phenomenally motivated to live a different way to find a different way. If a person is suffering just a little bit, just a little bit of stress, then the motivations may be very different. So, the Buddha was someone perhaps his suffering was quite immense. And that's what really are is his encounter with suffering was really significant enough to propel him to do something very drastic. And what he did was he left his family to become a renunciant a monk, and to kind of find out another way of living. Some people are horrified in the modern Western world American world to be a deadbeat dad. You know, he just is considered terrible thing you know, to leave your family and he left his wife with a young child in danger. In Indian culture, he probably left after he had done it, the horrible thing he would have done in ancient Indian culture is left his wife and his family without giving birth to a son. That's the important that's one of the great sufferings not to have created the next generation. And so he took care of that responsibility.

And you know, his wife was basically a queen and his royal family and so there's lots it wasn't like, she was gonna become a welfare mom. But he took care of that responsibility in that culture. That was what was needed to be done. And then he left and explored the religious life. And what he discovered was the possibility of being a piece of no longer suffering, he found the causes of suffering in the human heart. And he's pointed to the possibility of pulling out the BB, of that suffering, the era that suffering resides in our hearts. So that our hearts can be free. The sure hearts release how we live our life once the hearts been released depends on our personality. Some people are very loving in a very kind of beautiful ways. Some people are more great intellects, some people are more, can we different ways that we express our personality. But the key thing is not our personality. The key thing is that in the car through our personality, there's peace. The Buddha, the night of his enlightenment, which is one of the things we celebrate on the Buddha's, the the, on today also can be seen symbolically you just look at look at how does your life relate to the story of the Buddha's enlightenment. The story of the light Mint is someone who sat down to meditate and he meditated me He learned lots of meditations before there were techniques and he gave gave all those up for what can be understood as a technique plus practice, where he sat down with a childlike openness because what he remembered was what he was like when he was six years old. And he sat under a rose apple tree the edge of the field is situational. He was left alone in a nice comfortable warm day. And he sat there probably cross legged maybe children can do and attain settled into himself settle into a mechanic concentrated peaceful state that was very happy. That didn't require any doing or any making any technique just kind of his natural state just relax the settle into this happy state, as sometimes children often experience and, and then as a 35 year old adult. Remember that experience as a six year old? He said, I've tried every other path that India religions have to offer. And none of them work for me. Why don't I try this one, I try the path of a six year old. So it's not like this great, difficult thing to do. a six year old can do it. And it's a practice of not having a technique at all, but rather sitting down with childlike openness to whatever arises, not resisting or judging or pushing anything away or making anything happen, completely open to life as it is. The other half of that story is that he sat there with

adult like stability. And it's that combination of a kind of childlike openness with a tremendous adult like strength, which what carried him over into his life of his alignment to his enlightenment, because what happens when you open up to that kind of childlike openness to allow everything to bubble up? Is that all the psychic forces All the demons that we've been repressing or denying or hiding from, sometimes have a chance to just explode. And in the myth of the Buddha, they exploded in the form of Mara. And Mara came with tremendous force night of his enlightenment. And the Buddha hung in there had his adult like stability that allowed him to keep open, the childlike openness. Then the story continues, that Mara used his last weapon. And his last weapon was doubt. And he asked the Buddha, What rights do you have to become awakened? And what's significant here is that certainly, maybe the doubt is maybe one of the last hindrances each of us have to face before we realize the possibility of being a piece of radical unconditional trust in life. What's Significant here, I think, I think is that what the Buddha did in response. Until then, all the four, when all the Mara hurled all this forces onto the Buddha, the Buddha just stopped, sat there with his adult like stability.

When the last weapon of Mara came hurling at the Buddha, that of doubt, the Buddha didn't stand there anymore, sit there firmly. But the Buddha reached down and touched his hand to the ground, and called upon the, the, the, the goddess of the earth, to bear witness to his right to become awakened. And to me, that's psychologically tremendously significant. Because at some point in the path to becoming deeply at peace, to resolving all our deep conflicts in our hearts, we can maybe no longer rely on just our own powers and strengths and vulnerabilities. We have to somehow turn to something it's larger than us greater than us, maybe nature itself, the goddess of the earth, and he called upon nature, to bear witness to his right to be awakened. And that was what he needed then to withstand the forces of Mara the last weapon. And then he became awakened, became someone then who became three. Then today, we also celebrate the Buddhist passing away his death. And symbolically, I think it's quite beautiful. His death. As far as I know, none of you remember having died before. Some of you have been pretty close with I don't know what kind of how close how much you remember. And but the idea that we're all going to die sooner or later becomes important for us. Some people hold it off as much as they can. I know one man who's 72 years old, who refuses to talk about his dying just even get anywhere close to it shuts off and walks away. Sooner or later. We have to face this death and decide what we're going to do about it. I think I've said this a lot. But I think a lot of the I used to think that people got wise that they got older, because they had a lot of life experience. But now that we're getting older, I think that I think that some of it, I think part of the wisdom of the elders in our society, is because they feel the proximity of their death. And that feeling your life next to death, in the relationship to death, changes a person's priorities, and changes the way we see understand our human life. And it can, it can breed a lot of wisdom, or a lot of suffering with a 72 year old that I know shuts off.

So sooner or later we have to kind of relate to this death. The Buddha in the story, the myth of the Buddha, he died peacefully, and I find it very inspiring to have this model of someone who found some way of living a life. So in living a life, he could also die with great serenity and peace. And the story is that he was about 8081 years old. And he was quite sick in the last days of his life, and he talked

about how painful his body was. And sometimes the only way he got some relief from the pain of his body was to go into very deep states of meditation, where he kind of removed himself from the physical bodies. It takes some rest there. And he made his way kept walking. He was going somewhere, no one knows why he kept walking. He kept walking until he came to a place that was kind of near a little village kind of out in the woods a little bit. And he laid himself down between two solid trees between two trees. And he let the number of people come and visit him and it gives him last teachings. And then that night or the Full Moon in May. He laid himself down and said on his right side with his head with hand holding his head and entered into meditative states. And when one last round toured all the meditation states that he knew a tour of them and then entered into the meditative state of greatest equanimity, tremendous place of tremendous peace neck equanimity. And from there, he passed on or passed away or he gave up his his life that we understand, even life to be like in the model of someone who has great control, great, peace, great. Ease, trust, is able to lay themselves down to die. Have a control over how the dying process happens. Choose the state of the mind that he's gonna be or she is going to be in at the moment of death and probably chose Let go, that final letting go. That's the letting go of dying, chose that moment. And that ability I find tremendously inspiring. And I don't know if it's true, it was the myth, the Buddhist tell each other. But I find if myself psychologically, very inspiring, that's something maybe I can try to find high resolve all of my conflicts and my fears, so that maybe I could find a way to lay down myself to die was my time to die. If I'm blessed enough to die, don't die slowly, to die in such a way that I feel at ease, without any conflict that any regrets, doubt any fears. And just like lay down and let the natural process unfold as it does, while I'm at peace. So for me, I feel tremendous gratitude to the Buddha I'm not sure whether that gratitude goes towards the symbolic Buddha or the mythic Buddha or the real Buddha. But for me, it doesn't matter so much, because it's points to a potential and possibility that we all have. And each of us has to somehow relate to the potential we have in our own hearts, to change ourselves, to transform ourselves, or to align ourselves to live a life that has no conflict, where we feel at peace and at ease. In each moment, each step we take in life, we feel at ease and at peace, without any internal conflicts about who we are and what we're doing. And the figure of the Buddha represents that possibility. So how do you decide how do you relate to that potential that you have? So those are my thoughts. And I hope that they were appropriate enough. The what I like to do, now it's a little bit late, but hopefully you'll indulge is what I like to do is first take the precepts, we took the refuge before and then recite the five late precepts, and then we'll end and then if you'd like to come up as we leave, you can come up in, wash the baby Buddha. And you can understand that washing any way you like. But one way is that you understand one way you can understand that is when you wash the baby Buddha, you really washing yourself and what are you washing away when you wash yourself? So the precepts I'll chant half of each line and then you could repeat after me. For the sake of our practice together,

I vow not to kill for the sake of our practice together I vowed not to take what is not given. For the sake of our practice together. I vow not to lie. For the sake of our practice together I vowed not to misuse my sexuality. For the sake of our practice together I vowed not to intoxicate my mind with drugs or alcohol.



And may the precepts be a great support and help for you to understand how to have a heart that's free of all conflict. They all love you. Be happy. May all of you be peaceful and may all of you be awake. May all the Buddha in your hearts flower into your life. Thank you